Modi, Trump hold phone talks 2 amid signs of progress in trade ties







ECI can't treat voters with doubt, SC told

Arunachal: 18 dead, 3 missing as truck falls in gorge

India names Sindhu, Lakshya 12 for Asia Team Championships

INDIA IS ONE OF THE FEW DEMOCRACIES **OVERLOOKING MARITAL** RAPE: THAROOR Diplomat-turned-senior Congress leader Shashi Tharoor on Thursday said he was shocked that India remains one of the few democracies where marital rape is not viewed with the seriousness it deserves, despite having stringent antirape laws. Speaking at a programme organised by the Prabha Khaitan Foundation in association with the FICCI Ladies Organisation, Tharoor

FULL REPORT ON P2

VISITORS THRONG GLOBAL SUMMIT VENUE FOR THE SECOND DAY A large number of general public and students visited the various government and corporate company stalls set up at the Telangana Rising Global Summit organised by the State government on Thursday. From morning onwards, large crowds lined up to visit these stalls. The second day's programmes of the Telangana Rising Global Summit began with a remarkable conference titled "Discover Telangana: Cultural Heritage and..

FULL REPORT ON P3

'HUMANITARIAN **GROUNDS CAN'T OVERRIDE PUNISHMENT' Humanitarian considerations** cannot override the statutory minimum punishment mandated by the legislature, the Supreme Court said on Thursday while refusing to interfere with the sentence imposed on a woman in a narcotic case. The apex court delivered its verdict on an appeal by the woman challenging a June 2024 order of the Madras High Court which upheld her ... **FULL REPORT ON P4** 

MAMATA SLAMS SIR, **URGES PEOPLE TO PROTEST Bengal Chief Minister** Mamata Banerjee continued her tirade against the "mischievous implementation" of special intensive revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in Bengal "with a one-point agenda to help the BJP, asking the people to descend on the streets with kitchen tools and resist the "nefarious designs of the BJP Government" if a single name was deleted from the voters' lists. "They will take away the rights of mothers and sisters in the name of SIR and then... **FULL REPORT ON P5** 

#### **QUOTE OF THE DAY**



THE STATE GOVERNMENT IS DETERMINED TO DEVELOP TELANGANA INTO A CENTRAL HUB OF SCIENTIFIC STUDY, **CULTURAL PRESERVATION** AND KNOWLEDGE **PRODUCTION** 

> MALLU BHATTI VIKRAMARKA, **DEPUTY CHIEF MINISTER**



## Voters surge, 84% turnout

45,15,141 cast their votes in Panchayat polls

PNS Hyderabad

Over 84 per cent of eligible voters exercised their franchise in the first phase of Gram Panchayat elections in Telangana on Thursday, the State Election Commission (SEC) said.

Claiming a decisive victory, the ruling party's state unit president B Mahesh Kumar Goud said Congress-backed candidates won more than 90 per cent of the seats, reflecting people's trust in the Congress government.

Of the 53,57,277 eligible voters, 45,15,141 cast their votes (84.28 per cent), an official release said.

The polling, held from 7 AM to 1 PM in 3,834 Gram Panchayats, concluded peacefully, and the counting of votes began at 2 PM.

Amid elaborate security arrangements made by police, the polling was held peacefully, Additional DGP (Law and Order) Mahesh M Bhagwat said.

Extensive security arrangements have been made for polling. All polling stations have been classified as either critical or normal, with police deployment based on the sensitivity and vulnerability of each location.

A release said unanimous elections took place in 396 gram panchayats.

"People have endorsed our slogan of welfare. social justice, and developvictory of Congress candidates in the Sarpanch elections is proof of that," Goud said. Telangana **State Election Commission** on November 25 announced a three-phase schedule for gram panchayat elections to be held on December 11, 14 and 17. CONTINUED ON >> P2



#### 'A REFLECTION OF PEOPLE'S TRUST IN

**SIGNIFICANT VICTORY** THE CONG GOVT' IN LOCAL POLLS Though the Panchayat Elections are held on non party

**BJP CLAIMS** 

basis, both the Congress and BJP claimed significant victory in the polls. The leaders of the parties said their policies ensured victory for them **PNS** ■ Hyderabad PNS Hyderabad

TPCC President and MLC Mahesh Kumar Goud stated that winning more than 90% of the Sarpanch seats by Congress-backed candidates across the state stands as a strong testimony to the people's trust in the Congress government. He said that these results, which perfectly mirror the aspirations of the people, reaffirm their immense confidence in the government. Mahesh Kumar Goud explained that the Congress party treated the Panchayat Elections as highly prestigious, and he personally played a crucial role in coordinating and supervising

State BJP President N Ramchander Rao claimed victory in the Panchayat polls. Rao said the significant victory achieved by the BJP clearly indicates that the party is gradually strengthening in the villages and that the people are looking towards the BJP. Ramchander said the changes being

brought about by the Central government in the villages-schemes like new roads, street lights, crematoriums, free rice for the poor, pakka houses, toilets, Ujjawala gas connections, are significantly transforming rural life. CONTINUED ON >> P2

#### **DECEASED CANDIDATE WINS SARPANCH ELECTION!**

the election process.

CONTINUED ON >> P2

A surprising incident took place on Thursday in Chintal Thana of Vemulawada Urban Mandal, Rajanna Sircilla district. According to the details, a surprising development occurred in the sarpanch elections held on Thursday in the R&R Colony of Chintal Thana Vemulawada Urban Mandal, Rajanna Sircilla district. Cherla Murali (50), a sarpanch candidate who died of a heart attack two days before the polling, contested on behalf of the BRS party and emerged victorious in the results announced on Thursday. Election officials revealed that Cherla Murali secured more than 700 votes in total, winning with a huge majority of 378 votes over his nearest opponent. Despite the candidate's death, his name could not be removed from the ballot papers, so voters cast their votes for him. Since the person declared the winner is no longer alive, the authorities stated that the subsequent process related to the sarpanch post has been temporarily suspended, and

they are discussing further legal actions. The entire village is now anxiously awaiting the outcome of this unusual situation.

#### **PHONE-TAPPING CASE**

## SC directs former SIB chief to surrender by 11 am today

In a crucial turn in the phone tapping case in Telangana, the Supreme Court on Thursday directed former Telangana Special Intelligence Bureau (SIB) chief T Prabhakar Rao, who is an accused in the phonetapping case, to surrender before police by 11 am Friday.

A bench comprising justices B V Nagarathna and R Mahadevan said the order was passed for the purpose of further investigation into the offences against Rao.

"We direct the petitioner to surrender before the Jubilee Hills police station and the investigating officer by 11.00 am tomorrow... The custodial interrogation is to be done in accordance with the law. List on Friday. Liberty is



reserved to the petitioner herein to have food from his home as well as medication regularly," the bench said.

During the hearing, senior advocate Sidharth Luthra, appearing for the state, submitted the iCloud accounts, which were opened but do not have any data, and the email addresses do not open. On Wednesday, the state

that Rao was still withholding his iCloud accounts despite the court order.

The apex court on May 29 granted interim protection from coercive action to Rao and directed him to give an undertaking that he would return to India within three days after the receipt of his passport. Rao has moved the top court challenging an order of the Telangana High Court, which dismissed his plea seeking anticipatory bail.

On May 22, a Hyderabad court issued a proclamation order against Rao in the phone tapping case. According to the order, Rao may be declared a "proclaimed offender" if he does not appear before the court

CONTINUED ON >> P2

#### 'Telangana aims to be a role model in digital safety' PNS ■ Hyderabad



Minister Duddilla Sridhar Babu emphasised Telangana's goal to become a role model in digital safety for other states in the country. He stated that a comprehensive roadmap has

been included in the

"Telangana Rising Vision - 2047"

document to achieve this objective. The minister highlighted the increasing threat of cybercrimes, with 265 million cyberattacks reported across the somware attacks were reported on key sector organisations and companies last year. He said the Cyberabad Police Commissionerate alone registered losses of over Rs. 800 crores to cybercrimes in the past year, stressing the need for smart policing, leveraging cutting-edge technologies, and citizen participation to combat cybercrimes.

He said the government is working towards creating a safe digital environment, with initiatives such as creating awareness among school students and developing them into "cyber warriors".

Cong brass commends Revanth

for investment push to TG



Court issues NBW against Min Surekha

**PNS** ■ Hyderabad

issued a non-bailable warrant (NBW) against Telangana Forests Minister Konda Surekha for failing to appear before it in connection with a criminal defamation complaint filed by BRS Working President KT Rama Rao. The court issued the NBW against Surekha over her absence from the proceedings and posted the matter to February 5, 2026. CONTINUED ON >> P2

## KTR rejects proposed Seeds Bill

#### Says it is against farmers' interests

PNS Hyderabad

BRS working president KT Rama Rao severely opposed the union government's proposed Seeds Bill and demanded its immediate withdrawal. Commenting that the Bill gives importance to corporate interests over farmers, adding that it removes the role of state governments in seed regulation to protect farmers' interests. He stressed that the union government should not formulate such a crucial Bill without consulting farmers' unions, urging the government to place farmers' interests at the centre of the

Slamming it as anti-farmer,

KTR SAID THAT THE BILL LACKS CLARITY ON CURBING SPURIOUS SEEDS AND FAILS TO GUARANTEE ANY COMPENSATION TO FARMERS WHO SUFFER LOSS **DUE TO FAKE SEEDS** 

proposed Bill. He revealed that BRS had submitted detailed feedback to the

Explaining his opposition to the Bill, KTR said that the Bill lacks clarity on curbing spurious seeds and fails to guarantee any compensation to farmers who suffer loss due to fake seeds. He stressed that a strong mechanism is needed to curb spurious seed and

also provisions to blacklist the companies that produce such kind of seeds. He demanded that the quality of seeds must be tested and released to farmers only after proper trials. Alleging that the Bill sidelines the role of state governments and agricultural universities and gives excessive control to the Centre over agriculture-related

## PNS New Delhi president Congress

Mallikarjun Kharge and general secretary Priyanka Gandhi on Thursday congratulated Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy on the state's recently unveiled vision document, describing it as a roadmap for the state's future.

Reddy called on Kharge and Gandhi at their residences in Delhi, where they discussed the vision document released on Tuesday at the Telangana Rising Global Summit. The Congress leadership com-



mended Reddy for securing significant investment agreements for the state during the summit, according to a state government statement. Reddy was accompanied

by Telangana minister Vivek

of the Act. The three-judge

described the 2014 Suhas

Pophale judgment as "palpa-

bly incorrect", "unjustified"

and "bad in law"



Venkataswamy and MPs Suresh Shetkar, Mandadi Anil Kumar, Porika Balaram Naik, Dr Mallu Ravi, Kunduru Raghuveer Reddy, and Gaddam Vamsi Krishna. On Wednesday, the chief

minister paid tributes to former president Pranab Mukherjee on his birth anniversary, lauding him as a great leader who dedicated decades to public service".

Minister Venkataswamy, MPs Mallu Ravi, Chamala Kiran Kumar Reddy, Gaddam Vamsi, Anil Kumar Yadav, and leader Rohin Reddy were present on the occasion. Reddy had also attended a private event at the Delhi residence of NCP (SP) chief Sharad Pawar, where he met the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi, and MP Priyanka Gandhi.

#### **EVICTION OF UNAUTHORISED OCCUPANTS**

## Central law prevails over state rent laws: SC

PNS New Delhi

In a significant verdict that may help public sector undertakings (PSUs) reclaim their properties, the Supreme Court held on Thursday that the 1971 Public Premises (Eviction of Unauthorised Occupants) Act prevails over state rent control laws.

A three-judge bench of Justices Vikram Nath, Sandeep Mehta, and N V Anjaria ruled that the provisions of the PP Act apply ret-

rospectively, meaning tenants who have occupied premises belonging to government corporations like Life Insurance Corporation (LIC), other insurance companies, and nationalised banks even before 1958 or 1971 can be

evicted under the central law. The bench was dealing with two conflicting judgments on the aspect of the overriding applicability of the PP Act as against state rent control laws.

FOUNDATIONAL PRINCIPLE THAT PRECEDENTS MUST BE

OBSERVED WITH INSTITUTIONAL FIDELITY, NOT

COURTS, BUT BY THIS COURT AS WELL

MERELY BY THE HIGH COURTS OR SUBORDINATE

adjudication by a threejudge bench. The key issue was whether the provisions A two-judge apex court let out prior to the

bench had, on March 17,

of the PP Act would prevail over the state rent control laws in relation to premises THE DOCTRINE OF STARE DECISIS EMBODIES THE

2015, referred the matters for

Authoring the judgment, Justice Anjaria stated that the 2014 bench had failed to follow the binding precedent laid down by a fivejudge Constitution bench in 1990 in the Ashoka Marketing Limited vs Punjab National Bank case.

CONTINUED ON >> P2

### 'CM is misusing public funds for his football pleasure'

**BJPLP leader terms it as a financial crime** "The government

PNS Hyderabad

The Telangana BJPLP leader Maheshwar Reddy has accused the CM Revanth Reddy of misusing public funds for his

football pleasure, adding that he is spending Rs. 100 crores on a football match with Messi. The BJP leader has termed it a financial crime and an insult to the people of Telangana.

is spending crores of rupees on the match, but hasn't fulfilled its promises to the people during the elections" He said that the BJP is demanding answers from

the CM on the expenditure and purpose of this match. He guestioned the involvement of Singareni Collieries in sponsoring the CM's team. CONTINUED ON >> P2



## 'Strengthen the BJP in Telangana'

PM urges party MPs to be active in social media

PNS Hyderabad

Expressing displeasure over the failure of party MPs to utilise the opportunity given by the people both in Assembly and Lok Sabha elections, the Prime Minister Narendra Modi said to have asked the Telangana BJP MPs to be active to make the party stronger. Asking the MPs as to why they have failed to act as a strong opposition in the state, Modi said to have told the eight MPs representing Telangana, Modi advised them to shun differences and work in coordination. "It is your responsibility to fulfill the hopes and aspirations that the people of the state who elected you. You must shun group rivalries and should work as strong opposition by strengthening the party across the state." Modi said to have told them. Unfortunately, the BJP lost a chance to come to power in the state, Modi said, asking the MPs to propagate the Central government schemes among the people in a united manner. He said that BJP

has a strong political in Telangana and

it stronger. Asking them to be active in

social media, Modi urged them to have

active relations with people and fight for

party MPs should work proactively to make

## Modi hosts dinner for NDA MPs, vows to work together

PNS New Delhi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday hosted a dinner for MPs belonging to National Democratic Alliance (NDA) constituents at his residence here and vowed to work together to strengthen India's development

"The NDA family represents a shared commitment to good governance, national development and regional aspirations," the PM said in a post on X.

working to strengthen our nation's development journey in the years ahead," Modi said. The MPs travelled together in buses to Modi's residence at 7

"Together, we will continue

The PM's dinner comes after the NDA's landslide victory in the recently held Bihar polls, in which the coalition secured

Lok Kalyan Marg.



for the welfare of the people

and said, "With great victory

comes great responsibility".

202 seats in the 243-member state assembly.

Among the alliance partners, BJP won 89 seats, JD(U) 85, LJP (Ram Vilas) 19, Hindustani Awam Morcha (Secular) five, and Rashtriya Lok Morcha four. On Monday, NDA leaders from

At the NDA parliamentary party meeting on Tuesday, the prime minister said India was Bihar felicitated the prime minnow in a full-fledged "reform express" phase, where reforms ister for the coalition's massive

are happening rapidly and with them to work with more vigour

Modi emphasised that the government's reforms are completely citizen-centric, not just economic or revenue-focused, and the goal was to remove everyday hurdles of people so that they can grow to their full

### Gurukul students march to police station over lack of amenities in Medchal

PNS Hvderabad

Students of a BC gurukul in Shamirpet village of Medchal-Malkaigiri district, frustrated by the lack of amenities at their school, took matters in their own hands and approached the police station to voice their complaints.

Talking to the reporters, ruling Congress for abandon-students complained of ing gurukuls. worms in their food, bad condition of the utensils and the dilapidated condition of their school. They said that the water tanker is polluted with algae and the broom used to clean toilets is also used to clean the tanker.

They alleged that despite repeated complaints to their principal, they were either dismissed or asked to focus on studies or hit by the teachers.

A video of this incident was shared by the Bharat Rashtra Samithi's(BRS) X handle, which slammed the

ing gurukuls.

"Worm-eaten rice.. Building in a state of collapse.. This is the situation of Gurukul students under the incompetent Congress rule! Students have expressed their grief that they are experiencing hell due to the lack of basic facilities in the BC Gurukul in Shamirpet, Medchal district. The children ran to the police station to complain about their wall, which shows how bad the situation is. The incompetent Revanth government cannot provide even basic facilities and basic facilities to the students," the

#### 'US to reject tourist visas If the purpose is childbirth'

PNS New Delhi

The US government has tightened the issuance of tourist visas if there is any indication that the applicant will give birth during their stay in America. The Trump government, as part of tightening the visas, specifically said in a circular that the purpose of a tourist visa is to give birth in the US. "US consular officers will deny tourist visa applications if they believe the primary purpose of travel is to give birth in the United States to obtain US citizenship for the child. This is not permitted," said an X post. Earlier this year, the US Department warned that foreign parents who come to the States for the primary purpose of giving birth to obtain citizenship for the from entering the country in the future.

Terming it as "birth tourism," the department said the move was to protect the higher interests of American taxpayers.

Under the 14th Amendment, babies born to non US citizens traveling to the United States automatically attain citizenship.

## India is one of the few democracies overlooking marital rape: Tharoor

Diplomat-turned-senior Congress leader Shashi Tharoor on Thursday said he was shocked that India remains one of the few democracies where marital rape is not viewed with the seriousness it deserves, despite having stringent anti-rape laws.

Speaking at a programme organised by the Prabha Khaitan Foundation in association with the FICCI Ladies Organisation, Tharoor said, "I am shocked to find that India is one of the few democracies in the world where the case of a husband raping his wife without her consent is not treated with the seriousness it should have been." He pointed out that while India has strong anti-rape laws, there are exceptions for husbands, which is nothing but marital rape, violating a woman without her consent.

bands) be exempted?" he lios did not look into this is violence.'



said. If one doesn't respect aspect," to prevent such their life partner and rapes her against her wishes, citing a conjugal relationship, that is a violation of the law and violence against women, he added.

He said the current provision rests on "an outdated assumption that marriage is a sacred sacrament and that whatever happens within it cannot be classified otherwise.

"We think a proper law against domestic rape is massively necessary in the country. It is, however, sad that even women ministers "Why should they (hus-holding particular portfo-not part of conjugal love, it

atrocities, he said. Tharoor said the exception is a "travesty" of justice, and it offers impunity even in cases where couples are separated but not yet divorced...

Tharoor was replying to a question by a female college student during a 'tÃate-Ã -tea' with him and his sisters, Shobha Tharoor Srinivasan and Smita Tharoor, at the GD Birla Sabhagar here. Observing that there is

an implicit assumption that "marital rape" can be allowed within a conjugal marriage, he reiterated, "It is

## Modi, Trump hold phone talks amid signs of progress in trade ties

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and US President Donald Trump on Thursday discussed ways to sustain momentum in the bilateral economic partnership in a phone conversation amid signs of the two sides inching closer to firming up a much-awaited trade deal.

The phone call between the two leaders came on a day Indian and American negotiators concluded twoday talks on the proposed bilateral trade agreement that is expected to provide relief to India from the Trump administration's whopping 50 per cent tariffs on Indian goods.

In a social media post, Modi described the conversation as "warm and engaging".

'We reviewed the progress in our bilateral relations and discussed regional and international developments. India and tariffs on Indian goods to a the US will continue to work whopping 50 per cent in



together for global peace, stability and prosperity," Modi said without making any reference to trade ties.

US Trade Representative (USTR) Jamieson Greer on Tuesday said, without divulging details, that the US has received "best" ever offers from India on the proposed trade agreement.

Modi and Trump last spoke in October.

The relations between New Delhi and Washington witnessed a major downturn after Trump doubled August, including a 25 per cent additional duty for India's purchase of Russian crude oil. The strain in the relations

has been exacerbated by

constant criticism of New

Delhi by officials in Trump's administration. There have been efforts by both sides in the last few

weeks to repair the ties. Modi and Trump reviewed the steady progress in India-US bilateral relations and exchanged views on key regional and global develop-

ments, an Indian readout

#### RBI injects ₹50,000 crore liquidity through OMO purchase

PNS Mumbai

The Reserve Bank on Thursday injected Rs 50,000 crore liquidity through Open Market Operation (OMO) purchases of government securities.

Against the notified amount of Rs 50,000 crore, the total amount offered is Rs 1,11,615 crore, the RBI said in a statement.

Earlier this month, the Reserve Bank announced OMO purchases of government securities of Rs 1,00,000 crore in two tranches of Rs 50,000 crore each to be held on December 11, 2025, and December 18, 2025.

OMO purchases refer to the RBI buying government securities from banks or the market.

This is the first OMO purchase made during the month.

## Rights of individual always subservient to the nation's interest: SC

PNS New Delhi

Rights of an individual are always subservient to the nation's interest, the Supreme Court said on Thursday, emphasising that the rights guaranteed under Article 21 of the Constitution must always be protected, but in cases where the country's security or integrity is called into question, that cannot be the sole ground

for granting bail. A bench of Justices Sanjay Karol and Nongmeikapam Kotiswar Singh made the observations while hearing an appeal filed by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) against the bail granted to certain accused in connection with the 2010 derailment of the Inaneswari Express in West Bengal's West Midnapore district. The Mumbai-bound train had derailed



near Jhargram and was then hit by an oncoming goods train, leading to the deaths of 148 passengers. Authorities had

FROM PAGE - 1

said the derailment, which took place at around 1 am on May 28, 2010, was the result of alleged sabotage by Maoists. The incident took place soon after a four-day bandh called by the CPI (Maoist) had come into force.

The top court said interfering with the liberty of the accused at this stage, particularly when nothing else holds against them, would not be justified.

The court said the CBI could not bring to its notice any subsequent develop ment that would justify this interference as serving any fruitful purpose.

"There can be no manner of doubt on the proposition that the Article 21 rights are placed on a pedestal, and rightly so. At the same time, though, the individual cannot always be the centre of attention.

## Voters surge, 84%...

Following the recent bypoll to Jubilee Hills assembly constituency, which the ruling Congress won, the Gram Panchayat elections are seen as a test of the popularity of the Congress, BRS and BIP. though the polls are held on

a non-party basis. Owing to legal hurdles surrounding the Congress government's move to provide 42 per cent reservation to Backward Classes in local bodies, the Telangana government on November 17 decided to conduct elections only for gram panchayats, deferring polls for other rural local bodies, including Zilla Parishad Territorial Constituency (ZPTC) members.

#### 'A reflection of...

He said that continuous coordination with ministers, MPs, MLAs, and local leaders, along with strategic planning and execution at the village level, greatly contributed to this massive

Congress model of connecting directly with the people at the grassroots level significantly strengthened the party's presence in rural Telangana.

He said that under Chief Minister Revanth Reddy's leadership, two years of governance focused on welfare and development have brought the government closer to the people, which is clearly reflected in the Panchayat election results.

He further stated that the CM and ministers have been closely understanding and resolving village-level issues, which boosted people's trust in the Congress party.

"People have endorsed our slogan of welfare, social justice, and development. The sweeping victory of Congress candidates in the Sarpanch elections is proof of that," Mahesh Kumar Goud said.

He stated that minorities, Dalits, Adivasis, women, farmers, and youth across the state extended overwhelming support to Congress, marking a new

He added that the direction in rural governance. He remarked that social iustice was clearly visible in these Panchayat Elections.

He said that rural people

made their decisions based on development and welfare, showcasing a new political culture emerging in Telangana. Mahesh Kumar Goud added that this victory brings greater responsibility to the

committed to accelerating rural development. He said the Congress government is moving ahead with a vision to strengthen the Panchayati Raj system and transform every village

party, and the government is

into a hub of development. The TPCC Chief concluded that the results of the first phase of the Sarpanch elections reflect the positive environment created by the government's welfare initiatives, and this mandate will further strengthen the Congress party in Telangana.

#### BJP claims...

The Narendra Modi government is committed to the development of Gram Panchayats, and people's trust in this development is the reason for this victory for

The BJP will contest even more strongly in the remaining Phase-2 and Phase-3 local body elections. He asked BIP workers to go among the people and explain the development being undertaken by the Centre in the villages.

Rao appealed to the people to ensure the victory of the BJP in the highest number of seats in the remaining two phases of the Gram Panchayat elections for the development and future of the villages.

#### SC directs former...

If a person is declared a proclaimed offender, the court can order the attachment of the properties of A suspended DSP of SIB was

among four police officials who were arrested by Hyderabad Police since March 2024, for allegedly erasing the intelligence information from various electronic gadgets, as well as for alleged phone-tapping during the previous BRS regime. They were subsequently

granted bail. The accused are part of the alleged conspiracy in which they "misused" the resources of SIB for political purposes by putting citizens from different walks of life under surveillance, police had said.

Those named as accused in the case, along with others, had allegedly developed profiles of several persons unauthorisedly and were accused of monitoring them clandestinely and illegally in SIB and using them in a partisan manner to favour a political party at the behest of some persons and also conspiracy in destroying the records to cause the disappearance of evidence of their crimes, police earlier said.

#### Court issues...

However, a release issued by her staff denied that a nonbailable warrant was issued against her.

The court directed her appearance on February 5,

when the next hearing takes declared by a larger bench. place, it said.

The Minister had stirred up a controversy in October 2024 with her allegedly defamatory comments linking Rama Rao with the divorce of two Tollywood actors.

She withdrew her remarks that triggered strong reactions from political leaders and the Telugu cinema indus-

In the complaint, Rama Rao had submitted that Surekha made defamatory imputations against him only with an oblique motive to damage his reputation and to gain cheap publicity by creating a sensational news item to further her political agenda.

#### Central law...

The court used strong words regarding the violation of judicial discipline by the smaller bench in 2014.

It was observed that the doctrine of stare decisis (to stand by things decided) requires a bench of lesser strength to follow the law

"The underlying purpose for respecting and following the decisions of the bench consisting of a greater number of judges and even of the bench of co-equal strength is part of judicial discipline. It ensures certainty. predictability and dependability in the operation and

application of law," it said. 'The doctrine of stare decisis embodies the foundational principle that precedents must be observed with institutional fidelity, not merely by the high courts or subordinate courts, but by

this court as well. "It enjoins that a bench of lesser or co-equal strength must follow the law declared by a larger bench, in recognition of the binding authority of such pronouncements. This adherence to precedent is not a matter of mere formality, but of judicial discipline and constitutional pro-

priety," it added. The apex court held that in light of the law laid down by the Constitution bench in the Ashoka Marketing case and the three-judge bench

decision in the Jain Ink case, the view taken by the twojudge bench that state rent laws will prevail over central laws "cannot and does not hold the field"

This ruling clears the path for statutory corporations such as the LIC, general insurance companies and nationalised banks to evict longstanding tenants by invoking the summary procedure of the PP Act, bypassing the lengthy litigation processes of rent control courts.

The lead appeal was filed

by the LIC. The dispute involved premises in Mumbai where tenancy was created in 1957.

#### 'CM is misusing...

He urged the government to focus on welfare schemes instead of wasting public funds on entertainment.

The BJPLP leader said the party will protest against this misuse of public funds and demand cancellation of the match, adding that the BJP will hold a protest at Singareni headquarters in Hyderabad on Friday.

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## TG must lead in numismatics and heritage studies: DCM

Numismatic Society of India.

Telangana should emerge as a frontrunner in the fields of numismatics (the study of coins) and heritage studies, said Deputy Chief Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka. Speaking at the national seminar organised by the Numismatics Society on the theme "Coinage and Economy of Southern India" at the Marri Channa Reddy Resource Development Institute on Thursday, he said he hopes that this seminar, which is being held over two days,

a spark-an intellectual lightning bolt-igniting new ideas. Cooperation among various institutions must increase, young researchers should focus on interdisciplinary studies, he said. The Deputy Chief Minister stated

that the Telangana govern-

will not remain just an aca-

demic event but will serve as

ment is fully committed to heritage-based research. Under the leadership of Tourism and Excise Minister Jupally Krishna Rao, the State government is determined to develop Telangana into a central hub of scientific study, cultural preservation and knowledge production.

He noted that South India

coinage traditions in the From Satavahanas and Ikshvakus, who expanded their trade networks through their coinage, to the artistic splendour of the Kakatiyas and the grandeur of the Vijayanagara Empire, the coins of this region stand as symbols of innovation, craftsmanship and sophis-

ticated statecraft. "Coins speak to us-they often speak loudly-about the tax systems, minting technologies, commercial priorities and political visions of their time." he said.

Numismatics may appear to be the study of small metal pieces one can hold in the hand, but when one looks closely, each coin

world, he said. He often thinks of coins as ancient "compressed data." Within a few grams of metal lie the economic system of an era, the aspirations of a king, technological knowledge, trade routes, religious symbols and diplomatic ties. "If archaeologists had discovered ZIP files in ancient times, they would probably have named them 'coins',' In an age when India leads

the world in digital payments and fintech innovation-when we see more QR codes than paise-this moment reminds us how far our economic journey has travelled. Heritage, he said, is not merely about looking back but about understanding the vast web of ideas that continue to shape us today. Studying coins is not studying metal,

# Vigilance secretary cautions public against digital arrest

Telangana vigilance department secretary Shikha Goel on Thursday cautioned the public against digital arrest.

In a post on X, Goel said, "Don't fall for fear trap; Scammers use fear tactics to pressure and manipulate you into paying fake penalties. Stay calm, stay informed, and verify before you act." Addressing the public

via a video message, Goel said, "A large number of citizens fall prey to digital arrest very day." Explaining the digital arrest, Goel said it is when a fraudster calls you claiming that he is a police officer and says that the victim is involved in some illegal activity and scare the victim asking for account details for investigation.

The scamsters project themselves as genuine police officers and put the victim under digital arrest. They ask the victim to isolate



Goel said it is when a fraudster calls you claiming that he is a police officer and says that the victim is involved in some illegal activity and scare the victim asking for account details for investigation

themselves and not to inform anyone. "They ask the victims to transfer money to mule accounts to investigate whether the money is genuine and promise to return the money after verification," the secretary added.

Once the money is transferred to the cyber fraudsters, they disappear. "There is nothing like digital arrest. under no law, police or any other law enforcement agency can do any investigation online or ask for transfer of money," she added.

In case anyone calls and asks to come on a video call and transfer money. one

### **Visitors throng Global Summit** venue for the second day



**PNS** ■ Hyderabad

A large number of general public and students visited the various government and corporate company stalls set up at the Telangana Rising Global Summit organised by the State government on Thursday. From morning onwards, large crowds lined up to visit

these stalls. The second day's programmes of the Telangana Rising Global Summit began with a remarkable conference titled "Discover of students from various colleges participated in this conference and expressed their views. The speakers at the conference provided valuable analyses on various aspects of Telangana's history, museum culture, tourism development and food culture. They explained the opportunities to develop Telangana into a global cultural and tourism hub.

Dr Mamidi Hari Krishna, Rajaram,

Bailuppala spoke at the conference. Subsequently, prominent personalities met with students at the conference titled "Telangana Rising - Empowering All, Growing

The State government briefly explained the progress achieved over the past two years and highlighted Telangana's culture and traditions. Cultural programmes were organised on this occasion with artists from various regions. Visitors showed great inter-Telangana: Cultural est in the more than 27 stalls Heritage and Next-Gen set up at the conference space, Musi River development, handicrafts, tourism, education, Karimnagar Ikat, filigree, Cheriyal paintings and various modern equipment used in cybercrime investigation, including drones and robots.

They were particularly keen to learn about the modern equipment and aerospace exhibits. A statement announced that the global conference can be visited on Friday from 10 am

## Desilting of drains to be completed by April 2026, says HYDRAA chief

Unusual rainfall is occurring, with 10 to 20 centimeters of rainfall recorded in a single day. In such times, everyone has the responsibility to ensure that floodwaters flow smoothly. "A flood-free city should be everyone's goal, said HYDRAA Commissioner AV Ranganath. In view of the desilting

works to be started from

January under the GHMC Maintenance Department, a coordination meeting was held on Wednesday at the Hyderabad office with Maintenance Department Hyderabad Water Board officials. Ranganath said that although they faced

some difficulties at the



beginning of the monsoon season this year, they were successful in flood control later on.

He said that although the Hyderabad Water Board's job is to remove silt from catchpits and culverts, they also removed silt from the main drains. He stated that the desilting works will be completed by April, and the Hyderabad Water Board's cooperation will be available to all departments to ensure the smooth flow of floodwaters.

We are starting the desilting works in the drains from January," said the Commissioner and suggested to the officials that local

sentatives should also be involved in their supervision. He said that the Hyderabad Water Board will take steps to ensure the cooperation of local residents in the desilting works in the drains by undertaking a programme called 'Basti Bata'.

residents and public repre-

He made it clear that there should be no compromise in the desilting works in the drains and contractors cannot say that this is not within their scope or that they will not remove so much silt.

HYDRAA Additional Director Varla Papayya, Maintenance Department Chief Engineer Ratnakar, and others partic-

### **HYDRAA** accused of destroying Bum-Rukn-Ud-Dowla lake in city



**PNS** ■ Hyderabad

Activist Lubna Sarwath has written to Telangana chief minister Revanth Reddy alleging that Hyderabad Disaster Management and Asset Protection Agency (HYDRAA) is destroying the Bum-Rukn-Ud-Dowla Lake.

The accusation comes after HYDRAA's announcements that the restoration works are nearly completed and the lake will soon be

inaugurated for the public. Sarwat, in her letter, stated she found several violations during her lake survey on December 3. "The lake's old bund is destroyed and the road laid inside the FTL is filled with concrete. Moreover, due to the presence of man-

holes and pipes inside the FTL, sewage water is entering the lake," read her letter. It further mentions that despite repeated appeals, HYDRAA has consistently failed to provide the actual area of the lake or even present a Detailed Project Report (DPR). Sarwath has accused HYDRAA of misrepresenting facts, committing fraudulent acts, suppressing facts and rejecting RTI appeals.

"Hiring a private unknown agency and allowing it to demolish heritage bunds and landfilling the lake for a fanciful whimsical structure is not any mandate or objective given to the HYDRAA, to the best of our knowledge, read Sarwath's letter, urging the Chief Minister to stop the inauguration.

## Hyd Global Short Film Fest receives 704 entries

PNS Hyderabad

The Hyderabad International Short Film Festival (HISFF), taking place between December 19 and 21 has received a total of 704 entries, an impressive achievement for the firstever edition of the festival.

Special Chief Secretary Jayesh Ranjan, managing director of Telangana Film Development Corporation CH Priyanka, and managing director of Telangana Tourism Development Corporation will hoist the HISFF balloon at



Tourism Plaza.

The first day of the festival and will feature cultural programmes and the next two days will see competitive screening of films at screens 4 and 5 of the Prasads IMAX. An awards ceremony will take place on the last day. A North East Pavilion on Dec 20 will showcase a curated selection of short films from across the eight Northeastern sions, Q&A sessions, heritage screenings and student sections will be taken up during

the rest of the festival. Delegates to the programme will receive film magazines and notebooks. along with a day-long film appreciation session led by industry experts. The festival offers networking opportunities and a platform for emerging Telangana filmmakers while also positioning Hyderabad as a global film hub.

Chairman of Telangana Corporation, Dil Raju stated that HISFF not only nurtures creativity but also encourages dialogue between regional, national, and international storytellers. "It is an opportunity for young filmmakers to learn, collaborate, and gain visibility on a global stage, contributing to the growth of Telangana's cinematic ecosystem and positioning

Hyderabad as a hub of inno-

vation, talent, and culture,"

he said.

## HC notice to two IAS officers for not complying with court orders



**PNS** ■ Hyderabad

The Telangana High Court has issued notices to two IAS officers on a petition filed alleging failure to provide information under the RTI Act. The High Court issued notices to former GHMC Commissioner K Ilambarthi and current GHMC Commissioner RV Karnan for not providing information under the RTI Act despite court orders. Vaddam Shyam, a resident of Ramgopalpet in Secunderabad, had previously approached the High Court after the information he requested under the RTI Act was not provided.

After hearing the case, the court issued orders on

RV Karnan November 24th, directing that the requested information be provided immediately. However, Shvam approached the court again, alleging that

the officials had ignored the

High Court's orders.

During the hearing on Thursday, the Bench expressed its anger towards the IAS officers. It questioned why action should not be taken against the IAS officers for contempt of court. The court ordered them to file a counter-affidavit by January 26th, explaining why they failed to comply with the court's orders. Furthermore, the High Court Bench warned the two IAS officers that they would be fined if they did not comply with the court's orders.

#### Three cars, auto gutted in fierce fire mishap

PNS Hyderabad

A fire broke out on Thursday at the SPR Hills ground in Rahmathnagar. Three cars and an auto-rickshaw were gutted in the fire. The flames also spread to other vehicles parked nearby. The fire raged fiercely, causing panic among the locals. They immediately informed the police and the fire depart-

Upon receiving the information, fire personnel rushed to the scene and brought the fire under control. Meanwhile, the police launched rescue operations, moving locals away from the incident site. Police are examining nearby CCTV footage to determine the cause of the fire.

They suspect that a person under the influence of marijuana may have set fire to some garbage. Locals breathed a sigh of relief as there were no casualties in the incident. The police have registered a case and launched an investigation into the accident.

### CDS to review graduation parade at Air Force Academy



PNS Hyderabad

Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) General Anil Chauhan will review the Combined Graduation Parade (CGP) of 216 Course to be held at the Air Force Academy (AFA) here on December 13.

The event marks the successful completion of the pre-commissioning training of flight cadets across various branches of the Indian Air Force (IAF). During the ceremony, the CDS will confer the 'President's Commission' to the graduating trainees. The ceremony includes presentation of 'Wings' and 'Brevets' upon successful completion of training to the flight cadets of the IAF, officers of the Indian Navy, Indian Coast Guard and trainees from Vietnam, a defence release said on Thursday.

Flying branch standing first in the order of merit will be awarded the coveted 'President's Plaque' as well as the 'Nawanagar Sword of Honour' and will be commanding the parade, it said. General Chauhan will also

present the 'President's Plaque' to the flight cadets standing first in the overall order of merit in Navigation and Ground Duty branches.

The event will include a display by the Akash Ganga team and Air Warrior Drill Team (AWDT) to mark the beginning of the CGP, and interspersed fly-pasts by the Pilatus PC-7, Hawk, Kiran and Chetak aircraft.

Aerial displays by the Sarang helicopter display team and the Suryakiran Aerobatic Team (SKAT would be major attractions of the ceremony, it added.

## HC questions partiality to Mayor in land regularisation

**PNS** ■ Hyderabad

on Wednesday, December 10, questioned whether GOs issued by the previous Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) government allowing regularisation of encroachments on government land in Banjara Hills favoured GHMC Mayor Gadwal Vijayalaxmi and her brother K Venkateshwara Rao. The two are children of K Keshava Rao, who left BRS and joined the Congress in

The Telangana High Court

A division bench of Chief Justice Aparesh Kumar Singh and Justice Ghouse Meera Mohiuddin was hearing a public interest litigation (PIL) filed by

Gadeela Raghuveer Reddy. The petitioner's counsel argued that a government order issued in May 2023 violated the state's land regularisation policy, notified in GO 59 of 2014. It said that the 2023 order allowed regularisation of 1,161 square yards in favour of Rao at a rate of Rs 2,500 per sq yd and a parcel of 425 sq yd in favour

of the mayor at a rate of Rs 350 per sq yd.

The petitioner stated that this land fell in a notified slum area of NBT Nagar, Banjara Hills and has a market value of Rs 60,300 per sq yd; however, the land was given to the Rao and Gadwal at rates of 1998 and 1993, respectively.

The court expressed concern at the activity and stated that it might take up rectification of the regularisation orders if necessary and adjourned the matter to

### Prez Murmu to begin winter sojourn in Hyd from Dec 17 least once a year and con-

PNS Hyderabad

President Droupadi Murmu will visit Hyderabad for her winter sojourn at the Rashtrapati Nilayam here from December 17 to 21.

Telangana government Secretary Ramakrishna Rao, who reviewed the preparations with officials on Thursday, directed State government officers, Central government departments and the officials of Rashtrapati Nilayam to work in coordination to ensure smooth arrangements for her visit, an official release said. He issued instructions to

various departments on security, traffic, fire safety arrangements and uninterrupted power supply. He asked the health department to station a medical team at the Nilayam during the visit. Officials were asked to deploy snake catchers and special teams to tackle monkey menace on the premises of the Nilayam besides making



arrangements in to handle and several senior officials honeybees on the premises, it said. DGP B Shivadhar Reddy

attended the meeting. The President of India visits the Rashtrapati Nilayam at

city, Rashtrapati Nilayam building was taken over from the Nizam of Hyderabad after India attained independence and handed over to the President's Secretariat. Constructed during 1860, the building has a total land area of 90 acres. A single storied building, it contains in its premises 11 rooms. It also has a Dining Hall, Cinema Hall, Morning room,

Dining room and others.

ducts official business.

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#### Delhi court grants interim bail to Umar Khalid to attend sister's wedding



A Delhi court on Thursday granted interim bail from December 16 to 29 to former JNU student Umar Khalid to attend his sister's wedding. Additional Sessions Judge Sameer Bajpai granted interim relief to Khalid, who is an accused in the case regarding the larger conspiracy behind the 2020 Delhi riots. The judge directed the accused to furnish a personal bond of ₹20,000 and two sureties of like amount.

"During the interim bail period, the applicant (Khalid) shall not use the social media," the court said, directing him to "only meet his family members, relatives and friends". It said Khalid also had to "remain at his home or at the places where the ceremonies of marriage as mentioned by him will take place".

Other conditions included the accused not contacting any witness and providing his mobile phone number to the investigating officer. The court directed Khalid to surrender before the prison authorities on the evening of December 29. Last year, he was granted interim bail of seven days to attend another wedding.

#### Death to one, life term to nine in Maharajganj communal clash murder

A local court on Thursday awarded one death and life imprisonment to nine people for a murder during communal violence last year in Maharajganj town during a Durga idol immersion procession. Last year on October 13, Ramgopal Mishra, 21, was shot dead when a communal clash broke in the mixed-population Maharajganj. Additional Sessions Judge, First, Pawan Kumar Sharma had on December 9 convicted Sarfaraz. Abdul Hameed, Mohammad Talib, Faheem, Zeeshan, Ali. It acquitting Khurshid, Shakeel and Afzal for lack of evidence and reserving the verdict on quantum

On Thursday, the judge sentenced Sarfaraz – the man who fired the fatal shot - to death, and awarded life term to the remaining nine convicts. Three other accused were acquitted, Shukla said. On the night of the killing, 13 people were named as accused in an FIR – Two of them were killed in a police encounter while fleeing, while the rest were arrested over time. The killing triggered widespread tension in Mahsi, Maharajganj and parts of Bahraich city. Large-scale vandalism and arson were reported the following day as police strove to contain the situation from spiralling out.



## ECI can't treat voters with doubt, SC told

निर्वाचन एटन

MIRIACHAN SADAN

भारत निर्वाचन आयोग

ELECTION COMMISSION

■ New Delhi

The Election Commission cannot assume the role of a "suspicious neighbour" or a "policeman" treating voters with doubt, the Supreme Court was told on Thursday during the final hearings on a batch of pleas challenging the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in various states.

A bench of Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi heard detailed submissions from senior advocate Raju Ramachandran representing petitioners opposed to the SIR process being undertaken in several states.

Ramachandran assailed the conceptual foundation of the SIR and urged that the poll panel's constitutional mandate is to act as a facilitator and enabler of voting rights.

"The negative way of viewing one's own role is that of a disabler or that of a suspicious policeman,' Ramachandran said, adding that when there is an adequate statutory scheme regarding citizenship, the poll panel cannot become a "nosy parker" instructing booth level officers (BLOs) to

He said initiating an inquiry

effectively amounts to "suspending citizenship"

"Now, how does the EC view its role? Because depending on how it views its role will follow how it acts. Either it sees its role as a facilitator and enabler of the societal ideal of universal adult franchise, which would mean helping citizens to vote, proactively helping and enabling.

"The negative way of viewing one's own role is that of a disabler or that of a suspicious policeman or a suspicious neighbour. So depending on how you view your own role, your sense of fairness and how you go about a particular exercise will be apparent from that," he said.

He argued that while the right to vote may be statutory, it flows from constitutional rights including Article 19(1)(a) and Article 21.

"Removal from an electoral roll on suspicion amounts to giving a power to suspend citizenship," he said.

On the definition and implication of the term "migrant", he said that in the current socio-political discourse, the term is often loaded and used to imply "illegal migrant" or "exodus" rather than domestic movement.

Offering a broader view, Justice Bagchi said, "Migration does not have a domestic

also migration.' Justice Bagchi, who belongs to West Bengal, cited the example of IT professionals from his own city Kolkata taking flights to the southern States for opportunities.

import... It is their livelihood

which drives them. We

have a brain drain which is

The CJI added a stark reality check regarding labour migration and said, "In North India, trains are full of farm workers from Bihar... They are virtually auctioned and by the

time they come to Punjab, they are in tears.'

He noted that many such workers have settled in Puniab, their children have mixed with the culture, yet their roots remain in Bihar or West Bengal.

The CJI also cited a recent visit to Havelock Island, noting that out of a population of 25,000, approximately 22,000 were migrants.

While the petitioners argued against the arbitrary nature of the SIR exercise, the bench said, "The SIR cannot

be seen too much on

procedural aspects. Let us keep in mind that they are doing something after 20 years and the SIR cannot become an annual feature. That is why we cannot intervene too much on the technical

procedural aspects.' When the petitioners pressed on the "inquisitorial" nature of the process, Justice Bagchi clarified that the court's queries were "dialectical" in nature, intended to evoke responses rather than

senior lawyer questioned the rationale behind selecting nine states and three Union Territories, including Chhattisgarh, Kerala, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh, for this exercise.

He termed the assumption that rapid urbanisation and frequent migration are regular features in places like Lakshadweep or the Andaman and Nicobar Islands as "facile" and a "lazy assumption" indicating non-application of the mind.

He specifically flagged the timing in Chhattisgarh, where elections are not due, arguing that rushing through the SIR process in such a "vulnerable state" under a tight time-frame called for judicial review. At the outset of the hearing, CJI Kant directed the registry not to accept any further fresh pleas regarding the matter.

'Many are coming now just for publicity. No fresh matters are required any more," the CJI said.

The matter will continue on December 16.

Earlier, the bench asked whether the Election Commission is barred from conducting an inquiry in case of a doubtful citizen and if an inquisitorial process falls outside its

# SC refuses Prajwal Revanna plea for transfer of cases

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Thursday refused to entertain a plea of former Janata Dal (Secular) MP Prajwal Revanna to transfer the trial of two criminal cases before the special MP/MLA court in Bengaluru to another court in the city on the ground of bias. A bench of Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi told Revanna's counsel that observations of the judge cannot be a ground of bias as it dismissed his plea.

"The observations of the presiding officer of the court cannot be the ground of bias. We have no reason to doubt swayed by the fact that the petitioner was found guilty in the earlier case... And will confine his conclusions on the basis of evidence led in the pending trial," the bench observed.

Senior advocates Siddharth Luthra and Siddarth Dave, representing Revanna, said that the judge made some adverse comments against the lawyers too, which requires expunction.



Justice Bagchi said that lawyers cannot hold judicial officers to ransom and make any allegations against them.

were inspired by the high court order itself on the same lines. You cannot hold the judicial officers to ransom. This lawyer appears in collateral cases and withdraws the vakalatnama time and again,' Justice Bagchi said.

CJI Kant said that Revanna's counsel can furnish an apology before the high court as it is the most unethical because some observations

were made by the presiding officer. "This is absolutely the most unethical thing done. Let him furnish an apology before the high court and it will consider it.

"We don't want to send a message that I went to the Supreme Court and got this done. We have to take care of the morale of our district judiciary as well," CJI Kant said, while declining to interfere with the high court

He told the senior counsels that there are hypothetical situations in the court and the judge's observation should not lead to allegations against him. "There are hypothetical sit-

uations in court. We make someone who will take browbeating of judges or courts lightly... As soon as the judge makes an observation there are allegations made against him," the CJI said.

The bench, however, said judges and courts also make mistakes but they are being rectified.

"Sometimes, errors happen as we deal with such a thing to allege bias just large volume of cases and evidence," the CJI said.

## SC rejects Sanjiv Bhatt's plea seeking suspension of sentence in drug case

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

The Supreme Court on Thursday rejected a plea filed by former IPS officer Sanjiv Bhatt seeking seeking suspension of the 20-year jail sentence imposed on him in a 1996 drug seizure case. A bench of Justices JK Maheshwari and Vijay Bishnoi said it was not inclined to entertain the

The top court was hearing an appeal filed by Bhatt seeking suspension of sen-

A sessions court in Palanpur town of Gujarat's Banaskantha district had sentenced Bhatt to 20 years in the case dating back to 1996.

Bhatt was found guilty of falsely implicating a Rajasthan-based lawyer by claiming that in 1996, police had seized drugs from a hotel room in Palanpur where the lawyer was staying.

Bhatt, who was sacked from service in 2015, was a superintendent of police in

The district police under him had arrested Sumersingh Rajpurohit, a Rajasthan-based lawyer, in 1996 claiming they had seized drugs from a hotel room in Palanpur town where he was

However, the Rajasthan police later said Rajpurohit was falsely implicated by the Banaskantha police to compel him to transfer a disputed property located at Pali in Rajasthan. Former police inspector IB Vyas had moved the Guiarat High Court in 1999 demanding a thorough inquiry into the case. Bhatt



was arrested by the state CID in the NDPS Act and is in Palanpur sub-jail

Last year, the former IPS officer had approached the Supreme Court seeking transfer of the trial in the 28-year-old drug case to another sessions court alleging bias.

He had also sought directions for recording of the trial court proceedings. However, the Supreme Court had dismissed Bhatt's plea and imposed a cost of ₹3 lakh on him for alleging bias against a lower court judge conducting his trial in the drug planting case.

## 'Humanitarian grounds can't override punishment'

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE New Delhi

Humanitarian considerations cannot override the statutory minimum punishment mandated by the legislature, the Supreme Court said on Thursday while refusing to interfere with the sentence imposed on a woman in a nar-

cotic case. The apex court delivered its verdict on an appeal by the woman challenging a June 2024 order of the Madras High Court which upheld her conviction and 10 year sentence in the case lodged under the provisions of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic to reduce the sentence below

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

Substances (NDPS) Act, 1985. While dismissing her appeal, a bench of justices Sanjay Karol and Vipul M Pancholi noted that the appellant, who was 24-year-old at the time of the incident in 2019, has urged the court to consider her age, lack of prior criminal history and responsibility towards her minor

The bench said while it was not unmindful of the appellant's circumstances, the NDPS Act prescribes minimum mandatory sentence for possession of commercial quantity.

"The court has no discretion

ing Justice Joymalya Bagchi,

the statutory minimum under section 20(b)(ii)(C) of the NDPS Act. Humanitarian considerations, though relevant for executive remission, cannot override statutory minimum punishment mandated by the legislature," the bench said. It noted that according to the prosecution, the appellant and her husband were intercepted in September 2019 and after the police searched the vehicle, 23.5 kg of 'ganja' was seized. An FIR was registered and later, a trial court convicted them for the offences under the NDPS Act and imposed 10-year sen-

the approached the high court, which confirmed the conviction and sentence imposed by the trial court. The woman then approached the apex court challenging the high court verdict. Before the top court, her counsel argued that the prosecution's case suffers from multiple infirmities and though the seizure took place in a residential locality, yet no independent witness was secured. Arguing that the high court order was liable to be set side, her counsel in the alternative said the appellant was a first-time offender and was the sole caregiver of

Her counsel urged for remission or reduction of the sentence to the period already undergone, which was over nine months. Dealing with the submissions, the bench said the apex court has consistently held that non-examination of independent witnesses was not, by itself, fatal to the prosecution, particularly in prosecutions under the NDPS Act where operations often take place under challenging circumstances.

"In the present case, upon careful evaluation, the evidence of the official witnesses stands out as consistent and

#### **Doctors who died** on duty during **COVID-19** entitled to PMGKY cover

New Delhi

the "Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana". A bench of Justices PS Narasimha and R Mahadevan set aside a Bombay High Court judgment that had held that private doctors were not entitled to the coverage under the Government's insurance scheme.

and regulations was intended to leave no stone unturned in requisitioning the doctors and the insurance scheme was equally intended to assure doctors and health professionals in the frontline that the country is **GOVERNMENT OF TELANGANA OFFICE OF THE SPECIAL DEPUTY** COLLECTOR, LA, HAML, HYDERABAD FORM-F

Notification by the Collector (LA), HAML

(See rule 7 (c))

Whereas the following Notifications were issued and

published in the Gazettes for acquisition of the land under

Extension of Metro Rail Project, Hyderabad Airport Metro

Limited, Phase-II, from MGBS to Chandrayangutta, Corridor-VI

situated at Share-E- Hyderabad Village, Bahadurapura Manda

In response to the said Notifications the following affected

ersons (Property owners and others) have come forward

of Hyderabad District for the Public purpose.

Dated: 11-12-2025

File No.: C6/07/2025-RHS-36/1

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

The Supreme Court held on Thursday that the families of the doctors who died while doing their duties during the COVID-19 pandemic are entitled to an insurance coverage of ₹50 lakh under

"There is a requisition of the services of doctors and this is evident from the conjoint reading of the provisions of the Act, the Maharashtra Prevention and Containment of COVID-19 Regulations 2020, the Navi Mumbai Municipal Corporation Order dated March 31, 2020, the PMGKY-Package Scheme, the explanatory communication to the PMGKY policy and the FAQs released," the bench said.

It said the invocation of laws

to settle their claims through Negotiations. The details of the illing affected persons/Land Owners are as follows. S.NO. NOTIFICATION NO. | GAZETTE NO.&DATE

	I No C6/192 / 2024- RHS (301 to 325)		PN: HAML No.33, Dated: 28-11-2024 DD: HAML No. 91, Dated.27.06.2025						
S.NO.	Name and address		Sketch No.	Premises No.	Extent in Sq. yds				
1	2	3	4	5					
1	1. Manoj Jahagirdar 2. Makarand Jahagirda Both sons of Late Shankar Rao Jahagirda R/o. 20-6-447, Shah A Banda, Charminar, Hyderabad-500065.	ar,	RHS-301	20-6-438 to 458	36.33				
2	Smt. Santoshi W/o Raju Mahendrikar R/o. 20-6-472, Shah A Banda, Hyderabad- 500065.		RHS-304	20-6-472	49.75				

It is hereby notified calling for claims and objections if any, to be filed before the District Collector, Hyderabad District/Special Deputy Collector, LA, HAML, Rasoolpura, Hyderabad within the Seven days of publication of this Notification.

> Special Deputy Collector, LA, HAML Rasoolpura, Hyderabad.

Court's nudge The bench, also compris-

struck widow, who lost her

husband in a train accident

New Delhi said it was a difficult task to trace the elderly women, "A smile on a poor person's who had changed her face is what we want to residence in a far-flung earn, nothing else," Chief village of Bihar and her Justice of India Surya Kant last contact was lost as her local lawyer passed away, said on Thursday while lauded the efforts of noting that Railways finally managed to trace Railways and advocate and pay ₹8.92 lakh as Fauzia Shakil, who compensation to a tragedyrepresented the widow pro

ensure she gets the in 2002 after the Supreme financial relief. "This young lawyer (Shakil), who represented

bono (without any fees) to

her pro bono ensured that she gets the compensation after 23 years.

Widow gets railways compensation after 23 yrs

We had to trace her with the help of local police and administration and finally railways managed to

A smile on a poor person's face is what we want to earn nothing else," CII Surva Kant said. The railways in its affidavit said that in compliance with the October 6 order, it managed to trace the woman

Sanyokta Devi with the help

of local administration and the police. In October, the top court walked an extra mile to ensure that the widow is duly compensated by the Railways after years of struggle.

Devi's husband Vijay Singh had a valid railway ticket from Bakhtiyarpur station to go to Patna by the Bhagalpur-Danapur Inter-city Express on March 21, 2002, but he accidentally fell down from the running train at the originating station itself,

due to heavy rush inside the compartment and died instantly. What followed was a

legal battle for next two decades, as Devi's claim for compensation was turned down by the Railway Claims Tribunal and the Patna High Court on the ground that the deceased was of unsound mind.

Aggrieved by the high court's order denying her claim, she, through her lawyer Shakil, approached the apex court.

## **States Focus**



#### **GOVT HIRE 5,215 TEACHERS** IN FIVE YEARS: TRIPURA CM

Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha on Thursday said the State has recruited 5,215 teachers over the past five years to ensure quality education in schools. Addressing an education department programme at Rabindra Bhavan here, he said the shortage of teachers was primarily due to the termination of a large number of teachers several

"People know for whom so many teachers lost their jobs in 2017, and now they have joined hands. This is political talk and I don't want to dwell much on it," he said, indirectly referring to the CPI(M) and Congress alliance. Following a petition filed by a group of job aspirants, the Tripura High Court had dismissed the services of 10,323 teachers, a decision later upheld by a Supreme Court division bench. As a result, 10,323 teachers lost their jobs in 2017, a year ahead of the 2018 Assembly elections.



#### GOVT GAVE 37,916 JOBS IN 18 MONTHS: ODISHA CM

Odisha Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi on Thursday said his Government has appointed 37,916 people during its 18 months in office and is committed to fulfilling its promise of filling 65,000 Government posts within the first two years.

Majhi made the remarks while handing over appointment letters to 591 newly recruited officers and employees in three departments - Water Resources (252), Housing and Urban Development (142) and Works (197).

Majhi said, "Our Government has promised to fill all the 1.5 lakh vacant posts in five years and to fill 65,000 Government posts in two years."

## Arunachal: 18 dead, 3 missing as truck falls in gorge

■ Tinsukia/Dibrugarh (Assam)

At least 18 people from Assam's Tinsukia district were killed and three others are missing as the truck they were travelling in fell into a remote gorge in neighbouring Arunachal Pradesh, offi-

cials said on Thursday. The accident took place on Hayuliang-Chaglagam Road in Anjaw district in the eastern part of the hill State on December 8 when a truck was carrying 22 labourers from Tinsukia district, Defence PRO Lt Col Mahender Rawat said, citing the lone survivor's version.

The site, approximately 12 km from Chaglagam, lies in difficult terrain with limited connectivity and the accident had not been reported by any local agency, contractor or civil representative until the survivor's arrival, Rawat said in a statement.

"Eighteen bodies have been sighted and are being retrieved using belay ropes. ADC of Hayuliang has informed SP of Anjaw, who has reached the site, while the District Medical Officer is moving to facilitate evacua-

tion of casualties and mortal remains," he said.

Rawat said that preliminary inputs from the survivor, who managed to reach Chipra General Reserve Engineer Force (GREF) camp, indicate that a truck carrying 22 workers from Tinsukia fell off a cliff on the night of December 8.

"The Indian Army has launched a major search and rescue operation in the Chaglagam region of Arunachal Pradesh. The operations were initiated based on information received late on December 10 regarding a vehicle accident along the Hayuliang-Chaglagam road near KM 40," he added.

The Defence PRO said that the Army's Spear Corps on the early morning of Thursday mobilised multiple search and rescue columns, medical teams, GREF representatives, local police, NDRF personnel and the ADC of Hayuliang.

"At 1155 hours, after four hours of intensive search and rope descent, the truck was spotted around 200 metres below the road near KM 40 in a re-entrant, inaccessible and not visible from helicopters or the road due to dense tree

cover and thick foliage," he added.

Anjaw District The Administration has requisitioned the SDRF, which is en route at present.

"ADC Hayuliang is also questioning the sub-contractor of the Zila Parishad Member, Chaglagam, to verify the antecedents and exact strength of the workers hired," Rawat said.

"Despite harsh terrain and poor visibility, the Indian Army, in coordination with civil administration and other agencies, is making all possible efforts to trace the remaining individuals and provide immediate assistance," he added.

Earlier during the day, Assam's Tinsukia District Commissioner Swapneel Paul said that at around 11 am, they received information about a vehicle falling into a gorge in Arunachal Pradesh's Anjaw district.

"Accordingly, we contacted the DCs of Anjaw and Teju for confirmation. Both the DCs said that rescue teams have so far recovered several bodies and found one person alive. Some more persons are still missing," he added.

SQUARE

Firefighters dousing a fire that broke out at Swagata Square Complex on Wednesday in Guwahati

#### **GUWAHATI FIRE RAGES FOR OVER 38 HOURS; MULTIPLE AGENCIES CALLED**

Guwahati: A massive fire that broke out at a commercial complex in Guwahati remained untamed for over 38 hours even as more than two dozen fire tenders have been struggling to douse the blaze, officials said on Thursday,

The fire broke out at Swagata Square Complex in ABC Point around 12.30 am on Wednesday. The multi-storey building houses SBI's zonal office, commercial branch and the

premium banking branch, and a shopping mall, 'Sohum Emporia'. More than 25 fire tenders have been struggling for over 38 hours. Water tenders from the Indian Air Force, Indian Army and Guwahati Refinery also joined the efforts to douse the

blaze, while NDRF was called in to assist with their high-tech smoke reduction machine. Apart from Guwahati, fire tenders came from Morigaon, Kamrup and Nalbari districts, as well. "There is fire on the sixth floor. We are trying to douse it," a senior official of the Fire & Emergency Services (F&ES) said. Smoke is also billowing from the second floor, where the

fire originated at the godown of the shopping mall, he added, "There is fire at the backside of the building. However, due to non-adherence to safety norms while construction, fire tenders are unable to reach the rear," another official said.

## J&K LG Manoj Sinha gives jobs to NoKs of Jammu terror victims

**MOHIT KANDHARI** ■ Jammu

After a wait of over 20 long years justice was delivered to the next of kin of Dharam Singh, brutally killed by terrorists along with four other villagers from Kotranka area of frontier Rajouri district on June 28, 2005.

During this time, Naseeb Singh, son of Dharam Singh, lived in misery, constant fear and insecurity.

"Akhtar Hussain, a resident of Reasi, was shot dead by terrorists on July 13, 2005. His wife and children endured immense hardship for two decades. It had left a deep scar on the

On November 15, 2004, SPO Sanjeet Kumar was murdered along with his friend by two terrorists in Balan Tundwa, Kishtwar, while they were preparing for a neighbour's wedding.

On Thursday, Next of Kins (NoKs) of

all these victims of terrorism of Jammu Division received an appointment letter from Lieutenant Governor

Manoj Sinha at a simple ceremony. Appointment letters were also handed over to 22 beneficiaries in Age relaxation cases and 19 wards of J&K Police martyrs under Compassionate Appointment Rules SRO-43 and Rehabilitation Assistance Scheme

On the occasion Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha said, "the dark days in their lives have ended. It is a new dawn of hope and dreams for these families".

With the government job appointment letters to 41 terror victim families, 22 age relaxation cases and 19 wards of J&K Police martyrs, we have fulfilled our commitment," the Lieutenant Governor said.



Lieutenant Governor had handed over the appointment letters to 94 Next of Kins (NoKs) of terror victims from Jammu division. The move brings relief to 135 terror victim fam-Earlier, on July 28,2025, the ilies from Jammu Division who were their local sympathizers.

denied justice for decades. The families of terror victims spoke out fearlessly, recounted decades of terror and hardship and exposed the Pakistan-sponsored terrorists and

mighty dharna (sit in demon-

stration) "if a single name is

deleted from the voters' lists

and asked the people partic-

ularly women to get pre-

Continuing her diatribe

against the BJP Government,

particularly Union Home

Minister Amit Shah called

him a dangerous person

whose eyes emitted the "vil-

lainy" of Duryodhana and

gle on the streets.

#### **Govt flags nearly** 2.000 aircraft **GPS** spoofing incidents

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE New Delhi

With nearly 2,000 cases of cyber-attacks or spoofing of aircraft's GPS coming to light, the Government has acknowledged the seriousness of the issue regarding threat posed to safe flying.

In recent times, there have been instances of GPS spoofing and interference incidents at Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Amritsar, Hyderabad, Bangalore and Chennai airports. Giving details of these incidents on Thursday in the Lok Sabha, Minister of State for Civil Aviation Murlidhar Mohol said a total of 1,951 issues of interference with aircraft's GPS system have been reported during the two years since November

He said in a written reply, GPS interference reporting started after the publication Aviation (DGCA) advisory cir cular on November 24, 2023 regarding GNSS interference

in airspace. **Global Positioning System** (GPS)/ Global Navigation Satellite System (GNSS) spoofing and jamming refers to attempts to manipulate a user's navigation system by giving false signals.

According to Mohol, International Civil Aviation Organisation identifies GNSS spoofing as a form of Frequency Interference and Monitoring Organisation is investigating

#### Justice will be delivered: Himanta ahead of charge sheet filing in Zubeen's death case

TONY DAS Guwahati

Appealing to people to have Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Thursday said he believes justice will be delivered in the death case of singer Zubeen Garg.

Sarma made the statement as the police are scheduled to file the charge sheet in the sensational case

"The SIT will submit its chargesheet, and the court will examine it. The culprit will be punished by the court," the CM said.

"From tomorrow, the police job will be over, and the court's role will start. I believe that the court will



definitely deliver justice," he said, exuding confidence in the entire process.

The celebrated singer died under mysterious circumstances in Singapore on September 19 while swimming in the sea. He had gone to that country to attend the 4th edition of the

North East India Festival (NEIF).

A Special Investigation Team (SIT) under the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) of the Assam Police is probing Garg's death case after more than 60 FIRs were lodged across the State.

## Mamata slams SIR, urges people to protest

**SAUGAR SENGUPTA** Krishnagar

Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee continued chievous implementation" of special intensive revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in Bengal "with a one-point agenda to help the BIP, asking the people to descend on the streets with kitchen tools and resist the "nefarious designs of the BJP Government" if a single name was deleted from the

"They will take away the rights of mothers and sisters in the name of SIR and then they will bring police from Delhi during the election and intimidate the people of Bengal mothers and sisters, if your names are struck off, you



West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee addressing a public meeting, in Krishnanagar in West Bengal on Thursday

have the kitchen tools in your hands your names are deleted. The women will fight in the front, and the men will be behind them," Banerjee on Thursday thundered from an anti-SIR rally at Krishnagar in Nadia district.

"The people of Bihar could not understand the trick so they could not retaliate but we will not spare you here, remember an injured tiger is more dangerous than a general one," Banerjee said.

She warned of staging a the BJP.

Duhshasana — the two antiheroes of epic Mahabharata. Launching a scathing attack against Shah she said "he is a dangerous person you can see it all in his watch them one is that of Duryodhana and the other is that of Duhshasana," alleging that the SIR was being conducted to politically help

### International Wireless the matter.

#### Goa, Israel boost tourism ties as Khaunte meets IMOT team

ASHOKE RAJ ■ New Delhi

In a significant step toward deepening tourism cooperation, the Israel Ministry of Tourism (IMOT) held a constructive meeting with Minister for Tourism, Rohan A Khaunte, in Panaji. The discussions underscored shared interest in strengthening bilateral engagement and enhancing direct connectivity between Goa and

The IMOT delegation comprising Galit Hoffman, Consul — Tourism Affairs for India, and Amruta Bangera, Director of Marketing, IMOT India highlighted Israel's interest in exploring a direct air link between Goa and Tel Aviv. The proposed route, they noted, could greatly improve accessibility and support the rising travel demand between India and

Rohan A. Khaunte reaffirmed Goa's strong position in India's tourism landscape and expressed the State's commitment to expanding its global connections. He also assured the delegation of Goa's support should an

route, including assistance with operational requirements.

"Goa welcomes every opportunity to strengthen its global tourism partnerships. A direct connection with Tel Aviv holds strong potential to enhance twoway travel, and we are committed to extending all possible support to airlines evaluating the Goa-Tel Aviv route," said the Minister for Tourism.

The meeting also saw discussions on hosting a tourism roadshow in Goa. aimed at spotlighting Israel's airline undertake the evalu- diverse tourism offerings and ation of the Goa-Tel Aviv engaging key travel trade most preferred Indian desti-

stakeholders across the State. Expressing appreciation for the positive dialogue,

Galit Hoffman, Consul -Tourism Affairs for India, IMOT, said, "Goa has long held a special place for Israeli travellers, and strengthening connectivity will only deepen this relationship. We are optimistic about the potential of a direct Goa-Tel Aviv flight and look forward to continued collaboration with the Government of Goa. We truly appreciate the support extended by Minister for Tourism, Rohan A.

Khaunte.' Goa remains one of the

nations for Israeli visitors, known for its beaches, culture, and warm hospitality. Each year, around 50,000 Israelis visit India, with a significant share opting for Goa - reflecting a deep cultural affinity and strong trav-

On the outbound front, Israel continues to draw increasing numbers of Indian travellers, offering a blend of spirituality, history, natural landscapes, adventure activities, and culinary richness. Between January and November 2025, Israel recorded 1.18 million international tourist arrivals, with projections to close the year at approximately 1.3 million. India remains Israel's leading Asian source market and one of its top ten inbound markets globally.

Both sides concluded the meeting on a positive note, aligned on continuing discussions to enhance direct air connectivity and strengthen tourism ties.

The proposed Goa-Tel Aviv route is seen as a promising avenue to unlock new oppor tunities and bolster travel flows between the two

## BJP MPs flag Yamuna River pollution, highway woes

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE New Delhi

Two BJP members on Thursday raised concerns in the Rajya Sabha regarding the pollution in the Yamuna river, which affects the Mathura-Vrindavan pilgrimage circuit, and the deteriorating condition of the Goa-Belgaum National Highway.

Speaking during Zero Hour, Tejveer Singh from

in Mathura and Vrindavan, but highlighted challenges, particularly Yamuna river pollution, faced by pilgrims and locals.

He also called for enhancing sewage treatment plant capacity, strict monitoring of pollution sources, and enhanced safety measures along the riverbanks.

Singh proposed a metro rail service connecting Mathura, Vrindavan, Barsana, Uttar Pradesh acknowledged and Govardhan to ease infrastructure improvements traffic congestion during

major festivals like Navratri, Janmashtami, and Barsana celebrations, when devotee footfalls increase manifold.

'This will not only make the journey of crores of devotees comfortable but will also reduce traffic in the entire Vrindavan area, help in environmental protection and provide global recognition to pilgrims," he said.

He also suggested smart traffic management systems, level parking facilities, and a during monsoons.

special package for local youth in tourism-related

activities.

Sadanand Shet Tanavde from Goa drew attention to the deplorable condition of the Goa-Belgaum National Highway, particularly the Anmod and Chorla Ghat sections.

and Karnataka, but remain narrow, prone to landslides, e-shuttle bus services, multi- and frequently blocked

He said these highways

serve as lifelines for Goa

## Bihar urges Centre to release ₹7,748 crore for PMAY-G, MGNREGA

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE Patna

The Bihar Government on Thursday urged the Centre to immediately ₹7,748.49 crore pending under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yoiana-Gramin (PMAY-G) and the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA). Bihar Rural Development

Minister Sharwan Kumar met

Chouhan in New Delhi and requested the release of the second part of the first instalment and the entire second instalment of PMAY-G funds amounting to ₹4,491 crore for the completion of the puccahouses for poor in the rural areas. He also sought the immediate release of ₹3,257.49 crore for the payment of labourers

Minister Shivraj Singh

Union Rural Development engaged under MGNREGA. According to a statement issued by the State Rural Development Department, the ministers discussed several central schemes being implemented in Bihar, including PMAY-G, MGNREGA and the Deendaval Antyodaya Yojana–National Rural Livelihood Mission

(DAY-NRLM). It said the implementation of these schemes was being

hindered due to the nonrelease of funds as per the ministry's procedures. The progress of each

scheme and the status of pending dues were reviewed during the meeting. Regarding PMAY-G, the

statement said in the financial year 2025-26, only the first part of the first instalment amounting to ₹1,497 crore had been

released so far.









### Should India ban social media for kids?

Tech addiction demands layered responses — digital literacy, parental involvement, psychological support, and educational redesign

Once it was alcohol, then it was drugs; now addiction has a new name-social media. Its addicts are everywhere-across age groups, classes, and cities. It is an epidemic that spread before anyone even realised it. India, like other nations, is hooked 24x7 to social media, and this is more prominent amongst young children who are now exposed to all the good and bad the digital world has to offer. In this scenario, Australia's decision to ban social media access for children under 16 has reignited a global debate on how societies should confront the escalating crisis of tech addiction and its psychological repercussions.

The Australian government's move is undeniably sweeping and disruptive in its implications, even though its intent is clear: to protect young users from the toxic digital environment and online harm that has come to be accepted as digital normal. The factors that pushed Australia to ban social media for children may be just as relevant for India. While there is little disagreement on the need to limit children's access to social media, enforcing a blanket ban could be excessively harsh and may be counterproductive. That said, the case for intervention is undeniably strong and is the need of the hour. Psychologists worldwide have been sounding the alarm for years. Clinics now report children as young as eight showing symptoms of mental illness: hyperactivity, violent behaviour, throwing tantrums when devices are taken away, and an inability to disengage

Regular access to social media is changing cognitive and emotional development amongst children in a big way. Declining attention spans, inability to form coherent sentences, and eroded real-world communication skills are becoming disturbingly common. The picture becomes even murkier when you include incidents like the Blue Whale challenge or misogynistic school group chats-proof of how an immature mind can be drawn into, or even trigger, serious harm. Australia's ban may not be a panacea, as even the strictest age ban can be circumvented, and children adept at navigating technology may find proxy routes sooner rather than later. Indeed, no law can compensate for what is lacking at home, in classrooms, or in broader digital culture, but government intervention paves the way for incremental reforms in schools, colleges, and even at home.

India's challenge is more complex: its vast population, socio-economic diversity, and uneven digital literacy make a ban impractical and insufficient, though action is essential. Some progress is emerging through bottom-up efforts, with over 5,000 parents joining support groups to build healthier digital habits, reinforcing families as the first line of defence. Tech addiction needs layered solutions-digital literacy, parental involvement, psychological support, and educational redesign-because while a ban may raise awareness, it cannot replace the long-term task of building resilience and autonomy in young users. India must craft its own path.

## The SC's push for CCTV accountability

Triggered by alarming reports of custodial deaths and the routine absence of surveillance footage, the Court's intervention underscores a stark reality: despite years of judicial directives, transparency inside police stations remains largely a myth



**HASAN** KHURSHID

The Supreme Court of India's recent intervention into the disturbing pattern of custodial deaths has revived a long-standing and uncomfortable debate: Why does custodial violence persist despite decades of judicial directions, committees, and constitutional safeguards? On September 4, 2025, a Bench comprising Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta registered a suo motu Public Interest Litigation (PIL) after taking cognisance of a Dainik Bhaskar report revealing that 11 people had died in police custody in Rajasthan in just the first eight months of 2025. The trigger was not only the shocking number but also the wider pattern of deliberate non-compliance with directives mandating CCTV surveillance in police stations across India. For years, courts have emphasised that CCTV cameras are not optional but essential tools for ensuring transparency, curbing torture, and upholding constitutional rights. Yet, police stations across states continue to function without operational cameras or worse, with cameras that are conveniently "faulty" or whose footage is "unavailable. According to media reports, police routinely withhold CCTV footage in custodial death cases, citing technical glitches, storage issues, ongoing investigations, or legal barriers. These excuses have created fertile ground for impunity, where the monitor of oversight-the CCTV camera-is neutralised precisely when accountability is most needed.

This is not the first time the Supreme Court has intervened. Earlier rulings - DK Basu, Paramvir Singh Saini, and Shafhi Mohammadlaid down clear and mandatory directions for installing functional video and audio surveillance in police stations. In 2020, the Court issued detailed guidelines requiring uniform installation across all states and Union Territories. It even made Station House Officers personally responsible for maintaining CCTV systems, preserving recordings, and ensuring timely repairs. Yet, five years later, the Court has been forced to confront the same systemic neglect. During the hearing on November 25, 2025, the Supreme Court minced no words: "Custodial violence and deaths are a blot on the system. This country will not tolerate this practice. You cannot have deaths in custody." The Court demanded compliance affidavits from all states and Union Territories, posting the matter for further hearing on December 16, 2025. Its concern stems from the constitutional premise that surveillance in police stations is a fundamental safeguardan obligation, not a discretionary administrative decision. High Courts have echoed similar

In Akhilesh Pandey v. State of Madhya Pradesh (2018), the Madhya Pradesh High Court warned



THE REAL TEST NOW IS WHETHER STATES WILL FINALLY ACT — OR WHETHER **CUSTODIAL** 

**DEATHS WILL** CONTINUE TO BE TREATED AS TRAGIC BUT **INEVITABLE** STATISTICS

> The writer is a legal expert and autho

dailypioneer

The Pioneer

between judicial directives and executive action has allowed custodial violence to fester. India's struggle with custodial brutality is not new. In 1997, the Supreme Court in D.K. Basu recognised custodial torture as an assault on the rule of law. In later cases-Shafhi Mohammad (2018) and

police station would be treated as contempt

of court. This, however, has done little to change the ground reality. The disconnect

Paramvir Singh Saini (2021)-the Court expanded guidelines, with Justice Rohinton

Nariman stressing that installing CCTV cameras was a constitutional The Pioneer Nariman stressing that installing necessity rooted in Articles 21 and 22. Yet, the implementation remains **SINCE 1865** to change their uniforms twice half-hearted, largely because custodial violence thrives in opacity, and the state

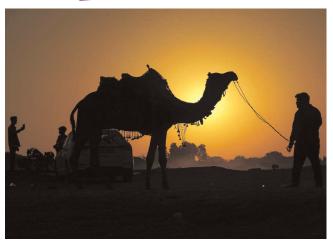
machinery shows little urgency to disrupt this culture. The judiciary's frustration draws from a long history of ignored reform efforts. From the National Police Commission reports (1977-81) to the Ribeiro and Padmanabhiah Committees, from the Malimath Committee to the landmark Prakash Singh judgment of 2006, India has been inundated with recommendations for transforming the police from a "force" to a "service.'

Despite this, real change has remained elusive. Justice AN Mulla's searing 1961 remark that no group in India matches the police force's record of lawlessness-though later expunged-continues to resonate with uncomfortable accuracy. Recent events have only reinforced these concerns. During the COVID-19 lockdowns, countless videos surfaced showing policemen mercilessly beating civilians, including pregnant women and elderly citizens. Such images laid bare the deep-seated culture of unrestrained power. One of the most horrifying examples remains the 2020 Sathankulam case in Tamil Nadu, where the CBI charge sheet revealed the savage torture of 59-year-old P. Jeyaraj and his 31-year-old son, J. Bennicks. Over seven hours, police personnel stripped, beat, and humiliated the father-son duo, forcing them to clean their own blood from the floor. Despite Jeyaraj's pleas, citing diabetes and high blood pressure, the brutality continued until

both men succumbed to their injuries. Their clothes were drenched in blood to such an extent that police officers had before presenting them in

court. The investigation also exposed medical negligence-Dr Vinila, who examined them, failed to document their injuries or provide medical support that might have saved their lives. This case stands as a grim reminder that custodial torture is not an aberration but a structural crisis embedded in policing culture. CCTV cameras alone cannot eradicate it, but they can act as a crucial deterrent-if the system allows them to function. The Supreme Court's recent intervention is not merely a legal exercise; it is a moral reckoning. India cannot claim to be a constitutional democracy while allowing citizens to be brutalised behind closed doors. The real test now is whether states will finally act-or whether custodial deaths will continue to be treated as tragic but inevitable statistics. The nation's conscience demands more than compliance affidavits; it

## DIG TALK



A camel stands in the glow of the sunset light, in Pushkar, Rajasthan.

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DIGITAL EXPERIENCE

#### structural issue: literacy and academic qualifications, ble jobs with little chance of mobility. Skill development although essential, do not automatically translate into employability. Many graduates lack the practical, digital,



**DEVENDRA KUMAR** 

ND OPINION THE PIONEER

India has spent decades strengthening girls' access to education. Through scholarships, awareness drives, and community-level campaigns, the country has succeeded in bringing more girls into classrooms than ever before. Enrolment rates for girls have risen at primary, secondary, and even higher education levels. Yet a stubborn gap remains: while more young women finish school and college, far fewer make it into the workforce. This disconnect reveals a hard truth-education alone cannot guarantee employment. For Indian girls, skill development is the missing link between learning and livelihood.

Across the country, thousands of young women hold degrees but remain unemployed. This reflects a deeper

and workplace skills demanded by contemporary industries. Compounding this are entrenched social

Why educating girls is not enough: Bridge the skill gap

norms and cultural expectations that often overshadow the benefits of education. For many girls, familial restrictions, gender stereotypes and ideas about "appropriate" stereotypes, and ideas about "appropriate" work limit their ability to turn education **SINCE 1865** into financial independence.

a woman is allowed to work to what kind of job she can accept. Families frequently avoid roles that involve travel, physical tasks, or late hours, forcing even educated women into narrow, low-growth career paths. Confidence-building and communication abilities-skills critical in today's work culture-are rarely nurtured in traditional classrooms, making skill development programmes essential.

The reality becomes even harsher in India's vast informal sector, where more than 90 percent of working women remain concentrated. Most are unskilled and engaged in low-paid, insecure jobs-domestic work, agriculture, tailoring, construction, home-based production, or micro-enterprises. In rural areas especially, women face severe skill deprivation and remain trapped in unstacan change this trajectory. Training in digital literacy helps women shift from low-productivity work to stable, betterpaying opportunities. Today's industries-whether healthcare, manufacturing, hospitality, technology, or retail-

demands genuine accountability.

demand a blend of theoretical knowledge and practical ability, and skill training provides this bridge.

When women acquire skills, the impact extends far beyond employment. Skilled women strengthen economic productivity.

These social barriers shape everything-from whether innovation, and inclusive growth. Within families, a working daughter or mother enhances financial security and decision-making power. Moreover, skilled workers are better positioned to negotiate fair wages,

> resist exploitation, and move into formal employment. The next step for India must be to integrate skill development into every stage of education. Rural training centres must be expanded, especially for girls with restricted mobility. Partnerships with industry can ensure training aligns with real job market needs. Crucially, communities and families must be sensitised to value skill training as essential-not secondary-to education. For India's girls, skill is the pathway to independence, confidence, and security.

> > The writer is the founder of the Ladli Foundation

#### **AUSTRALIA'S SOCIAL MEDIA BAN SPARKS CALL FOR VIGILANCE**

instagram.com/dailypioneer in linkedin.com/in/The Pioneer

The Prime Minister of Australia has openly appealed to young people to refrain from using social media, and teenagers are now prohibited from accessing these platforms. Yet, there remains a possibility that some adolescents may still bypass restrictions by manipulating age settings or posing as older users with fake

The risks facing teenagers online are well documented, and in countries like India the lack of transparency and effective oversight only heightens these concerns. With parents increasingly occupied by demanding professional lives, attentive supervision has reduced significantly. Many single children grow up without the stabilising even when grandparents are present, their guidance is often overlooked in an over-indulgent

culture. Consequently, teenagers turn to unsolicited advice from social media posts, videos, or equally uninformed peers, creating a cycle of immature and sometimes harmful influence

Decades ago, society provided an additional layer of support through close relatives and elderly neighbours, whose guidance parents accepted with respect. Over time, however, such involvement has come to be seen as interference, leading to the loss of a valuable safeguard.

Parents in Australia have welcomed the government's decision. A similar measure is urgently needed in India, where constant guidance for teenagers should be seen not as dictatorship but as essential support that harmful and inappropriate content SUNIL OKHADE | INDORE

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

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

#### Urban India needs coordinated reform

One of the most pressing issues in India today is the widening disconnect between rapid urban expansion and the slow pace of essential infrastructure development.

Cities continue to grow outward at extraordinary speed, yet public transport, waste management systems, and affordable housing consistently fail to keep pace, leaving both residents and municipal authorities under severe strain. The challenge is not purely financial; it also lies in weak institutional coordination, outdated planning frameworks, and a persistent tendency to prioritise high-visibility projects over everyday necessities. Consequently, even well-designed reforms often lose momentum and struggle to deliver meaningful improvements.

A more realistic solution begins with strengthening municipal governance. Cities must be granted the autonomy and technical expertise required to plan for the coming decade rather than the next election cycle. Transparent budgeting, reliable service delivery, and people-centred urban design should guide all development. If governments adopt such an approach, India's cities can evolve in a manner that is efficient, liveable, and environmentally sustainable.

A. MYILSAMI | TAMIL NADU

#### Diwali's heritage glows anewx

India's Diwali, newly inscribed on UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, arrives as a moment of cultural pride and personal joy. This recognition feels profoundly affirming. Diwali has never been merely a spectacle; it embodies India's civilisational spirit, carried in the quiet radiance of a single diva and the belief that renewal is always within reach.

Across centuries, the festival has gathered many layers of meaning: Rama's triumphant return to Ayodhya, Mahavira's nirvana, Guru Hargobind's liberation, and the mercantile traditions that once illuminated ancient trade routes.

Yet Diwali's deepest strength lies in its ability to anchor ordinary lives, reminding families and communities that clarity, compassion, and moral courage endure even amid turmoil.

UNESCO's recognition honours not only Diwali's history but also the people who have safeguarded itartisans shaping earthen lamps, storytellers preserving memory, and generations who kept the flame alive in difficult times. In an increasingly anxious world, may this acknowledgement serve as a gentle reminder that harmony is a practice renewed each year.

VIJAY SINGH ADHIKARI | UTTARAKHAND

#### Reimagining a song for India

Reimagining Vande Mataram requires sensitivity to history, culture, and contemporary identity. Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay's iconic song portrayed the motherland as nurturing, protective, and divine, and the phrase "I bow to thee, Mother" captured the emotional and spiritual bond felt during the freedom struggle. In an independent and secular India, however, there is space to consider a modern interpretation that reflects today's pluralistic values.

Vande Bharatam — meaning "I bow to thee, India" is more direct and less symbolic, potentially making the song more inclusive for those uncomfortable with religious imagery. The name Bharat resonates across languages and regions, offering a shared identity that avoids specific cultural or devotional associations. Such universality may encourage collective participation without hesitation. Culturally, this shift signals modernisation. While the maternal depiction remains integral to the independence movement's memory, adapting the song acknowledges India's multi-faith, diverse society. Yet any alteration must be approached with care, as Vande Mataram is inseparable from the freedom struggle and continues to evoke the sacrifices of earlier generations.

O PRASADA RAO | HYDERABAD



## India redraws its strategic lines with Putin's Delhi visit

When Prime Minister Narendra Modi greeted Vladimir Putin with a bear hug and handed him a Russian translation of the Bhagavad Gita, it was more than ceremonial warmth — it was a calculated message. The gesture signalled that India will chart its own course regardless of Western discomfort





**NILANTHA ILANGAMUWA** 

That was no ordinary greeting; on the frosty evening of last Thursday, Indian Prime Minister Modi embraced Russian President Vladimir Putin in a bear hug at Delhi airport and, within moments, presented him with a copy of the Bhagavad Gita in Russian. The choice of gift was laden with symbolism-echoes of Robert Oppenheimer. who drew profound philosophical reckoning from the same text, declaring, "Now I am become Death, the destroyer of worlds,' after witnessing the first atomic explosion. Was Modi signalling the weight of nuclearage responsibility to Putin, or was this a deliberate affirmation of India's comfort in maintaining ties with a pariah state under global sanctions?

The streets of Delhi, festooned with Russian and Indian flags and dominated by colossal billboards of Modi and Putin, suggested more than ceremonial protocol-it was pageantry of influence, an audacious statement of India's strategic independence. In that gesture, New Delhi appeared to assert that moral judgement from the West would no longer dictate its choices, and that the Indo-Russian relationship, forged during the Cold War and hardened by decades of defence dependence, remains a pivot capable of unsettling the established order in South Asia and beyond.

Putin's first visit to India in four years, coinciding with talks in Washington over a possible Ukraine peace framework, came at a time when New Delhi is walking an increasingly delicate tightrope between Moscow and Washington. The optics of the visit-from ceremonial receptions at Rashtrapati Bhavan to summit talks at Hyderabad House-reflected not merely diplomacy but an overt projection of influence. Modi's presentation of the Bhagavad Gita in Russian was emblematic: a centuries-old text of dharma and duty, layered with the moral weight of choice, now inserted into the theatre of highstakes realpolitik.

Putin himself, in an interview with India Today, described India as a "major global player, not a British colony," praising Modi as a "reliable person" who does not succumb to pressure. These words, spoken against the



PUTIN'S FIRST VISIT TO INDIA IN FOUR YEARS, COINCIDING WITH TALKS IN WASHINGTON OVER A POSSIBLE

**UKRAINE PEACE** FRAMEWORK, CAME AT A TIME WHEN **NEW DELHI WAS** WALKING AN **INCREASINGLY** DELICATE **TIGHTROPE** BETWEEN MOSCOW

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AND WASHINGTON

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backdrop of US sanctions, EU manoeuvres to leverage frozen Russian assets for Ukraine, and growing Chinese assertiveness, highlight India's determination to claim agency in a multipolar world where Washington and Brussels no longer set the rules unilaterally.

Historically, the Indo-Russian relationship has oscillated between strategic necessity and opportunism. Declassified CIA documents from the 1980s reveal the delicate dance India played with the USSR during the Cold War. Indira Gandhi's approach, as the CIA observed, was staunchly nationalist and fiercely protective of India's regional supremacy. The per cent secondary tariff imposed on United States feared that

India's policies towards its neighbours, coupled with its Soviet alignment, could destabilise South Asia while simul-

foothold. Today, the echoes of that era reverberate: New Delhi remains Moscow's top arms buyer, leases nuclear-powered submarines, and maintains energy ties that have drawn ire from Washington, while ensuring that its engagement with Russia does not fully alienate the United States or Western partners.

What is important to note here are the economic metrics. India-Russia trade in FY

SINCE 1865

2024-25 amounted to approximately USD 68.7 billion, heavily skewed in Moscow's favour due to energy imports, with a trade deficit of around USD 59 billion. Both Russia and India aim to expand bilateral trade to a target of USD 100 billion by 2030, a goal that falls just two years after the next general elections, when Prime Minister Modi is widely expected to contest again despite the symbolic 75-year age limit for party leadership-a restriction largely treated as political theatre and quickly forgotten. Meanwhile, India continues to negotiate with the United States to mitigate punitive tariffs, including a 25

India's purchases of Russian oil. It is also worth noting that India recorded a goods trade surplus of about USD 41.18 billion with the US in FY 2024-

taneously granting Moscow a strategic 25, with exports of USD 86.51 billion and imports of USD 45.33 billion, reflecting strong bilateral trade despite earlier concerns over tariffs. Remittances provide a partial counterweight: total remittances to India reached roughly USD 135.46 billion, including USD 25-30 billion from the US, while Russian remittances are negligible in comparison. This indicates that while India faces challenges in trade metrics, its diaspora injects substantial

financial resilience into the economy. The summit also highlighted defence

collaboration in stark terms. India's USD 2 billion lease of a Russian nuclearpowered attack submarine, with delivery scheduled for 2028, signals an unprecedented deepening of underwater

The vessel, unable to enter combat under lease terms, is intended to train crews and refine India's nuclear submarine operations — a critical step for strategic deterrence in the Indian Ocean amid rising Chinese and US naval competition. Russia, despite sanctions and Western pressure, continues to sustain a militaryindustrial complex capable of producing tanks, missiles, and drones at accelerating rates. As reports from Ukraine's Centre for Analytical Studies and Countering Hybrid Threats indicate, nearly half of Russian defence enterprises remain unsanctioned, exposing the limitations of Western punitive measures. In this context, India's engagement with Russian defence capabilities is both a practical necessity and a symbolic assertion that strategic imperatives can outweigh Western orthodoxy.

Sanctions, however, remain a persistent backdrop. The European Union, under Ursula von der Leyen, has attempted to

deploy emergency measures to convert frozen Russian assets into loans for Ukraine, challenging EU treaties and raising the prospect of legal confrontations with countries such as Hungary and Belgium. The United States, meanwhile, has explored using the same assets in USled investment frameworks to facilitate reconstruction or political leverage. India, observing these efforts, has maintained a stance of strategic neutrality-resisting calls to condemn Russia while advocating for diplomacy, and emphasising that selective sanctioning by Western powers is inconsistent and self-serving. Putin, speaking to India Today, noted that Washington and Moscow presented papers in parallel but reached no compromises, and highlighted that over 90 per cent of Russia-India transactions are conducted in national currencies-a subtle yet potent challenge to dollar dominance.

The optics extend into nuclear and hightech collaboration. India is developing nuclear-capable submarine-launched ballistic missiles, advancing its underwater fleet, and exploring high-tech partnerships with Russia, recalibrating the strategic environment in South Asia. Putin's rhetoric that "Kiev is the mother of all Russian cities" and his framing of Russia's role in eastern Ukraine resonate with historical narratives of great power assertion, yet they also serve as a conscious projection of strength aimed at partners like India. Modi's reception was far from ceremonial; it underlined a shared understanding that global power is increasingly multipolar and that alliances must be flexible, resilient, and insulated from Western censure.

Even in the economic sphere, India challenges conventional assumptions. While the trade deficit with Russia persists due to energy imports, India's broader engagement with global markets-including remittances from its diaspora and ongoing negotiations with the US-allows New Delhi to balance sovereignty with strategic interest. Putin's discussions emphasising bilateral trade growth, hightechnology collaboration, and future energy projects further solidify this interdependence. The bottom line is clear: the India-Russia partnership, far from being a relic of Cold War calculations, has evolved into a sophisticated framework for navigating sanctions, economic competition, and regional security challenges, and it may yet redefine the balance of power in South Asia.

## Is Delhi crafting a new role for Ghulam Nabi Azad in Jammu and Kashmir?



**ANIL** 

A rather mysterious post appeared on the socialmedia platforms recently focused on former Congress veteran and head of the now defunct Democratic Progressive Azad Party (DPAP) Mr Ghulam Nabi Azad. It neither quoted anyone nor was attributed to any source but suggested that Prime Minister Mr Narendra Modi is mulling over assigning a key role to Mr Azad, most probably in the demoted and dissected Union Territory (UT) of Jammu and Kashmir.

"Prime Minister Narendra Modi has dropped a significant hint about a major role for veteran leader Mr Ghulam Nabi Azad. Sources indicate that Azad may be assigned an important position in Jammu & Kashmir, signalling a possible political shift in the Union Territory," read the social media posts.

What makes it more interesting is that neither the Prime Minister's Office-BJP nor Mr Azad have either confirmed or rejected these posts. It will be interesting to know how and from where these posts originated.

What role? Will a leader of national stature such as him be appointed as the Lt Governor of Jammu and Kashmir? An erstwhile state of which he was not only the chief minister but also lorded over and influenced governmental and political decisions from New Delhi.

Or, if the post has any credibility, is he being considered to helm yet another political experiment cooking in the annals of Delhi's power corridors? Hinting at a possible chief ministerial role for him in the BIP-included future government in the UT? Or was it a mere kite-flying exercise as the post evoked no further response, particularly from the ruling dispensation-BJP and the Narendra Modi government?

What makes the post related to Mr Azad's future curious was that it almost coincided with vet another exodus from the DPAP and leading towards the Congress-the party which he served for decades and, in turn, took the boy from the remote area of erstwhile Doda district to towering national heights. It is another matter that after his unceremonious exit from Congress he refuses to give any credit to the party for his stature as a towering national leader. And quite unconvincingly!

With his closest aides and former Minister Mr GM Saroori, credited with having backed Mr Azad to walk out of Congress and float a new winters and summers respectively. This was

political outfit, having already joined the Congress, the new setback for him came when his two more trusted aides Mr Jugal Sharma and Mr Abdul Majid Wani, both former ministers, announced their plans to rejoin Congress. Suddenly, the mysterious posts appeared on social media about the possibility of a fresh J&Kcentric assignment for Mr Azad.

Not that these developments, of Azad aides' "ghar wapsi", had happened suddenly. More than half-a-dozen DPAP leaders, including them, had made efforts to join Congress before the assembly elections but their attempts were foiled by a group of leaders dominating the J&K Congress and thwarting all efforts at its revival or growth. Most of these DPAP leaders later contested elections as independents to avoid any linkage with Mr Azad, whom people perceived to be soft towards the BJP, and lost narrowly.

Adding a few more seats-as these leaders would have won as Congress nominees-to the Congress kitty would have made the party a formidable partner in the ruling alliance. It would also have broken the hegemony of a set of people controlling Congress in the UT. No probe was ever held and no heads rolled even one year after the assembly The Pioneer elections.

The discontent in the DPAP had started simmering a few months after the party came into being.

Most of these leaders, dyed-in-the-wool secular Congressmen, had pinned their hopes on Mr Azad to provide a secular option to Congress in Jammu and Kashmir as the party had not only lost its moorings but had failed to meet the Narendra Modi-anchored BJP's challenge. Ostensibly, they were dismayed at Mr Azad not taking a clear political stance in the politically charged Muslim-majority UT with a considerable presence of Hindus, thereby giving an impression of soft-peddling towards the saffron party.

Ever since the dilution of Article 370 on August 5, 2019, and the corresponding Constitutional changes resulting in the UTs of J&K and Ladakh, BJP's moves at installing its government have failed. Although the Centre is adamant in ignoring the demand for restoration of statehood in I&K, and a similar demand has gained foothold in Ladakh along with bringing the tribal-dominated UT under the 6th Schedule of the Constitution of India, and their reiteration that it will be done at an appropriate time, the political winds have started blowing in different directions.

A big self-inflicted setback for the Centre and the RSS-BJP combine was the Modi government's decision to restore the over-a-centuryold tradition of 'Durbar move' that entails shifting the capital to Jammu and Kashmir in done, despite their earlier jubilation on discontinuing the process, under pressure particularly from people in BJP's stronghold of Jammu which has been under economic stress due to wrong and anti-Jammu policies of the Centre

and the UT governments. Durbar move entailed Kashmiris moving to Jammu in winters. This was a major source of contribution to Jammu's economy which has been in dire straits after the opening of the Jammu-Srinagar railway link via the holy town of Katra (Vaishno Devi) and later stoppage of Durbar move. In the absence of any alternate and viable plan to sustain Jammu's economy, despite the region having voted for BJP in the last eight elections-from Lok Sabha down to Panchayat via UT Assembly-and religion-related and communal issues showing signs of weakening as a counter to divert people's feelings connected with their economic survival, the Central dispensation could be toying with an idea of yet another Azad-centric political move

after the failure of his DPAP experiment. Given the none-too-pleasant political scenario in Jammu and Kashmir and with the DPAP fiasco behind his back, the question arises: Will Mr

Azad bite the bullet in the twilight of his political career?

To be fair to Mr Azad, all through his political association with Congress-during which he was always, within the government and

the Congress, at the decision-making levels-he had safely avoided getting involved in murky political experimentation as part of the statecraft. He definitely had his hands soiled in the Congress's internal power dynamics which led to many stalwarts quitting or retiring from the scene, and no one even from the younger lot who held any promise was allowed to come up. The ruptures in the Congress's organisational set-up were clearly visible once Mr Azad quit the party, with none other of any consequential stature available to take charge.

How could he be relevant in Jammu and Kashmir's political scenario under these circumstances, despite the fact that he still has some

In any new experiment, even if he accepts Mr Modi's offer-which could range from becoming Lt Governor, simultaneously of the two UTs, or functioning in an interlocutory capacity focused on the problems of J&K and Ladakh, and not a direct political role-he would only be seen as a representative of the Modi government, with BJP being the political arm of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh.

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## A sustainable sporting future for new India



**NASIR** 

SINCE 1865

India's sporting rise is no longer measured only in medals or Olympic success; it is unfolding quietly in school grounds, small towns, and remote districts where a new era of sports infrastructure is taking shape. For the first time in decades, government ambition for a fitter and more inclusive nation is aligning seamlessly with private sector innovation. Together, they are creating an ecosystem defined by accessibility, sustainability, and world-class standards, marking a transformative chapter in India's sporting journey. Government investment through programmes like Khelo India has played a central role in this shift. What started as a mission to identify talent and nurture young athletes has evolved into a nationwide movement to strengthen grassroots infrastructure. With more than a thousand Khelo India Centres sanctioned across the country, access to sporting facilities is no longer a privilege restricted to metropol-

The rapid development in remote regions underscores this change. When a multi-purpose indoor hall opens in Arunachal The Pioneer

Pradesh's Kamle district or when Himalavan states receive hundreds of crores for sports facilities, it reflects a deeper reorientation of develop-

ment priorities. Sports infrastructure is now seen as integral to inclusive growth, not an optional extra.A child in Ladakh, Nagaland, or Meghalaya should have the same chance to train, play, and dream as a child in Delhi or Mumbai, and India is beginning to make that aspiration real. By taking modern facilities to remote, tribal, and hilly regions, the country is not merely constructing fields and courts — it is building a future pipeline of talent that previously remained invisible due to lack of access. But infrastructure alone cannot drive change. The private sector has stepped forward to bridge the gap between policy and execution. India's sporting future must evolve without compromising the planet's well-being. For example, Gallant's partnership with Nike Grind, Nike's global sustainability initiative, is a testament to this commitment. Providing world-class sports gear is of utmost importance for the country's sporting excellence - rubber infill, delivering football turfs, multi-sport courts, and athletic tracks that meet global standards while remaining suited to India's climate and usage patterns. These surfaces are durable, safe, weather-resis-

tant, and engineered to ensure sustainability never comes at the cost of performance.India's varied geography and climatic extremes make it essential to pair global technology with local delivery. Many companies, including Gallant, work on the model that integrates international expertise with strong on-ground execution, ensuring that facilities in rural districts rise to the same benchmarks as those in major cities. Today, world-class facilities are emerging in district schools, universities, sports academies, and community grounds, creating a more level field for talent across regions. This is also an era where public vision and private execution are reinforcing each other. Government funding through Khelo India and Special Area Games schemes is

reaching even difficult terrains. Private innovators are ensuring these facilities are built using sustainable materials that reduce long-term costs and environmental impact. CSR support from corporates is further enhancing the reach and quality of sports infrastructure across communities. Together, these collaborations are building a model that is scalable, eco-conscious, and socially impactful. The future demands more than just building more fields; it demands facilities that are greener, smarter, and longer-lasting. With rising environmental concerns, the sports sector too must move towards responsible innovation. Materials like Nike Grind contribute to a circular economy by reducing waste and repurposing discarded material into high-perfor-

mance surfaces. Gallant Bounce installations reflect this mindset, prioritising accessibility, safety, and longevity. These facilities become inspirational spaces where

children discover confidence, athletes sharpen their skills, and communities gather with pride.India's next sporting leap will likely emerge from its remotest corners. A new turf in a tribal school or a synthetic track in a hilly region reinforces that talent is not determined by geography. As India prepares for global competitions and future Olympics, the foundations being laid today will determine the champions of tomorrow. The road ahead is filled with promise. India's sporting aspirations now reflect a larger cultural commitment to fitness, resilience. and collective growth.

With government vision and industry innovation working in tandem, the nation is steadily moving towards a future where world-class, sustainable sports infrastructure becomes the norm. The fields being built today will shape not only athletes but the spirit of a confident and progressive India.

The writer is the founder of





## FROM THE

## Migrant boat

capsizes, 3 dead A boat carrying migrants overturned early on Thursday on the Sava river in eastern Croatia, killing at least three people and injuring eight, officials said. The accident happened in the eastern town of Slavonski Brod, by the border with Bosnia. Migrants were apparently trying to cross the Sava River in dense fog when their boat capsized, rescuers told

HRT State television.

Firefighter Ivan Vuleta said emergency services received a call around 5.30 am. That people were in the river and they rushed to the scene in rescue boats. Police said a man from Bosnia is suspected of people smuggling. He has been hospitalized. The migrants' nationalities have not been specified. People fleeing violence or poverty in the Middle East, Asia or Africa often face perils as they try to reach Western Europe.

#### **PAKISTAN**

#### Two children killed in blast

Two children were killed and 16 others injured when a mortar shell exploded inside a seminary in Pakistan's northwestern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province, local police said on Thursday. The incident occurred in the Esuri area of Mirali tehsil, North Waziristan district bordering Afghanistan, on Wednesday. Some students brought an abandoned mortar shell they had found outside the seminary, Madrassah Shams-ul-Quran, in Sher Mohammad Kot village, which later exploded. According to initial reports, the children mistook the device for a toy and were playing with it when it went off. The explosion left two young children dead on the spot, while 16 others sustained injuries. The wounded were shifted to and nearby areas for treatment. Authorities are investigating how the unexploded ordinance ended up near the seminary. Dozens of children, mostly in northwest Pakistan, have lost their lives in the past when playing with things that turned out to be

#### Tokyo

US strategic bombers joined a fleet of Japanese fighter jets in a joint military exercise meant to demonstrate their military cooperation around Japan's airspace, defence officials said Thursday, as tensions with

China escalate. The exercise showcasing joint Japanese-US air power came a day after Chinese and Russian bombers flew together around western Japan, prompting Tokyo to scramble fighter jets, though there was no airspace violation. It also follows China's military aircraft locking radar on Japanese jets Saturday, another incident that has caused Tokyo-Beijing relations to further deteriorate.

Japan's Air Self Defence-Force and the US military conducted the joint exercise Wednesday as "the security environment surrounding our country is becoming even severer," the Japanese Joint Staff said.

It said the allies "reaffirmed the strong resolve to prevent unilateral attempts to change the status quo by force and the readiness between the SDF and the US

bombers and three Japanese F-35 stealth fighter jets and three F-15 jets conducted their joint flight drills

near Japan's western airspace, the waters between the country and South Korea, officials said.

Exercises held as the security environment grows more tense. The Joint Staff denied that the exercise was conducted in response to a specific incident, but acknowledged Chinese military aircraft's recent radarlocking on Japanese jets and the China-Russia joint bomber exercises Tuesday as examples of a worsening security environment around Japan. Relations between Japan and China have deteriorated after Japan's Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi said in early November that Japan's military could get involved if China were to take action against Taiwan, the self-governing island that

Beijing claims as its own. The row escalated over the weekend when separate Chinese drills involving a carrier near southern Japan prompted Tokyo to scramble jets and to protest that Japanese aircraft were target-



Japan Air Self-Defense Force's F-15 fighters holding a joint military drill with the US B-52 bomber in the vicinity of Japanese airspace

#### ed by repeated radar-locking a move considered as possible preparation for firing.

Tokyo protested to Beijing, asking for an explanation and preventive measures. China denied the allegation and accused Japanese jets of interfering and endangering the Chinese exercise.

Washington stressed its "unwavering" alliance with Japan, saying the incident was not "conducive to regional peace and stability."

The exercise came one day after Chinese and Russian strategic bombers conducted joint long-distance flight from the waters between Japan and South Korea down to the Pacific, the Joint Staff said.

Two Russian strategic bombers Tu-95 that flew down from the airspace east of the Korean Peninsula joined a pair of Chinese H-6 bombers over the East China Sea for a joint flight down to the Pacific off the southern coast of Japan's Shikoku island. The four bombers were also joined by four Chinese J-16 fighters as they flew back and forth between two Japanese southwestern islands Okinawa and Miyako, the area where China is expanding its military presence.

## Former Pakistan spy chief sentenced for 14 years by military court

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA Islamabad

A military court on Thursday sentenced Pakistan's former spy chief Faiz Hameed to 14 years in jail after his conviction on multiple charges, including violating the Official Secrets Act and engaging in political activities. According to a statement by the army, the process of Field General Court Martial (FGCM) against Hameed was initiated on August 12, 2024, under provisions of the Pakistan Army Act, and continued for 15 months. He was tried on four

charges related to engaging in political activities, violation of the Official Secrets Act in a manner "detrimental to the safety and interests of the State", misuse of authority & Government resources, and causing wrongful loss to individuals. "After lengthy and laborious legal proceedings, guilty on all charges and sentenced to 14 years rigorous imprisonment by the court," the army said. It is for the first time that a former chief of the powerful Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) has been convicted and sentenced. He served as the Director General of the ISI from 2019 to 2021.

He last served as Commander of the XXXI lieutenant general, was



Corps before taking premature retirement in December 2022 after Asim Munir took over as the army chief. Hameed was considered close to the then Army chief General Qamar Bajwa.

The army said that the Court-Martial complied with all legal provisions and that the accused was "afforded with all legal rights, including team of his choice." It said that the convict has the right of appeal at a relevant forum after conviction.

"Involvement of the convict in fomenting vested political agitation and instability in cohorts with political elements and in certain other matters is separately being dealt with," the army said. Hameed, a former

arrested in connection with a petition filed by Top City housing society's chief executive officer in the Supreme Court last year, wherein he was accused of land grabbing and stealing valuables from the owner of a private housing society during a raid. However, the Supreme Court asked the Pakistan Army to investigate com-City case. The army began the court-martial process against the former spy chief

based on these complaints. Speaking to Geo News, Information Minister Atta Tarar described the verdict as a "historic", saying the decision strengthens the rule of law and accountability mechanisms in Pakistan.

He said that red lines had been crossed and political

interference had taken place. He said the former ISI chief had acted as a political adviser to PTI and provided Khan's party with "full political support." The information minister said that the decision would reinforce the rule of law and the country's accountability mechanisms.

US, Japan hold joint flight drills amid Chinese military activity

He added that the trial was fair, saying Hameed was given a full opportunity to defend himself, including the chance to present evidence and witnesses in his favour. Tarar said that investigations into Hameed's alleged involvement in political matters were still ongoing and would continue. Defence Minister Khawaja Asif was more cautious in his reaction. He said the nation will face the consequences of decisions made under Gen (retd) Bajwa and the ex-spymaster.

"The country will keep reaping the harvest of seeds the deal was inked "via Major sown by Faiz Hameed and General Faiz Hameed," who years," he wrote on X. "May God forgive us. May those in power recognise that authority is a divine trust and use it for the welfare of His (God's) creation (people)! May the

Senator Faisal Vawda, considered to be close to the army, told Geo News that the conviction marks "just the accused of cobbling up the beginning," adding that the PTI Government and using May 9-related cases are his authority to allegedly

fear of God guide the rulers!"

expected move forward next. Vawda said that if a former senior army officer can be tried in the May 9 cases, "you can imagine the fate of the real perpetrators" involved in the violence.

He said that a foundation has now been laid for a system of accountability and justice in the country and stressed that "no one is bigger than Pakistan."

The senator said that Hameed had caused harm to the country, its institutions, politics, and judiciary through misuse of authority.

Hameed made headlines for the first time after he played a vital role in an agreement signed between the Government and the radical Islamist party Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) to end the 21-day sit-in at Faizabad in November 2017.

At the end of the agree ment, it was written that rank of Lieutenant General. After the 2018 general

elections, Pakistan Tehreeke-Insaf emerged as the single largest party and formed the Government. In 2019, then Prime Minister Imran Khan appointed Hameed as head of ISI.

He was later

deal with the political opponents of Khan.

Three-time former prime minister Nawaz Sharif openly blamed Hameed for his ouster and victimisation of Khan's political rivals.

The then Islamabad High Court (IHC) judge Shaukat Aziz Siddiqui accused Hameed in 2017 of influencing the court proceedings and forming benches of his choice to prolong the detention of Nawaz and his daughter Marvam.

The former spy master also came under criticism after his picture having tea at a hotel in Kabul, just three weeks after the Taliban regained power in the country, went viral on social media in August 2021, when he had visited Kabul to meet the Afghan Taliban representatives.

When he was removed as ISI chief in 2021, Khan opposed the move and apparently developed difwhich deepened and ultimately resulted in his removal from office in 2022.

The post of ISI chief is considered one of the most important in the Pakistan Army, which has ruled the country for more than half of its 76-plus years of existence and has hitherto wielded considerable power in matters of security and

#### UN TO MOBILISE \$35 MILLION **GRANT FOR** CYCLONE-HIT **SRI LANKA**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA Colombo

The United Nations is set to mobilise \$35 million grant for cyclone-hit Sri Lanka in the next four years as the island nation is unable to afford debts after the economic crisis and the debt default, a UN official said on Thursday. The UN and humanitarian partners launched post Ditwah Humanitarian Priorities Plan (HPP) for Sri Lanka, which covers immediate life-saving assistance in education, food security, agriculture and nutrition, health, protection, shelter, non-food items, camp coordination, water, sanitation and hygiene and early recovery, Marc-Andre Franche, the UN Resident Coordinator, told reporters. At least 638 people have died, and 193 are missing catastrophic floods and landslides caused by extreme weather conditions since November 16.

"Cyclone Ditwah has hit the poorest and the most vulnerable the hardest". Franche said. "The disaster has confounded the impact after Sri Lanka's economic crisis, where 25 per cent of the population is living in poverty", he

Dated. -11-2025

## Choi Sang-mok faces charges over Yoon's martial law declaration

explosive devices.

South Korea's former acting leader Choi Sang-mok was indictedon Thursday on charges related to the brief imposition of martial law in December 2024 by then-President Yoon Suk Yeol, becoming the latest highprofile figure embroiled in legal troubles over the case.

Choi is one of three top Yoon administration officials who served as caretaker presidents after Yoon was impeached and removed from office over the martial law declaration that plunged South Korea into massive



political turmoil. Yoon is now in jail while facing a high-stakes criminal trial on rebellion charges. Dozens of high-level officials and military commanders of the Yoon administration have also been arrested, indicted

investigated over their roles in Yoon's martial law debacle and other allegations.

On Thursday, an investigation team led by independent counsel Cho Eun-suk charged Choi with dereliction of duty for not fully restoring the three vacant seats at the nine-member Constitutional Court, which was deliberating whether to unseat Yoon. Reinstating the court to full strength was seen as a move that could increase prospects for Yoon's ouster because a court ruling to dismiss him needed support from at least six court justices.

Choi, who was Yoon's prime minister and finance minister, appointed two new justices but left a ninth justice seat vacant, citing a lack of bipartisan agreement when he became interim president.

## Indian envoy meets Canadian Speaker

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA Toronto

Indian High Commissioner to Canada has met Canadian Speaker of the House of Commons and discussed advancing parliamentary ties between both the countries along with productive exchange on shared democratic values and future collaboration. In January, India will be welcoming a delegation led by the Speaker Francis Scarpaleggia at the 28th Conference of Speakers and Presiding Officers of Parliaments of Commonwealth

Countries (CSPOC). "High Commissioner @DineshKPatnaik met with the Speaker of the House of Commons @HoCSpeaker Honourable Scarpaleggia Francis @ScarpaleggiaLSL today to discuss advancing India-Canada parliamentary ties. Productive exchange on shared democratic values and future collaboration.

India looks forward to welcoming a delegation led by the Speaker at the 28th CSPOC next month," the Indian High Commission in Ottawa posted on X on Thursday.

#### /illage: Pendlipakala SI. Sy. Type Type Area No No. of of under Title Land Acqui Name & Address of particu lars Person 152 Patta Dry 0.15 Gundala Canal Vill 258 153 Buchamma W/o

Collector/Special Deputy Collector (LA)

PUBLICATION OF DECLARATION

(See Sub-rule(1) of rule-25

Whereas it appears to the Government of Telangana,

Collector that a total of Ac.0.15 gts., land is required in the

Village Pendlipakala Mandal Kondamallepally District

Nalgonda for public purpose namely Pendlipakala Balancing

Therefore declaration is made that a piece of land measur

ing, Ac. 0.15 gts., of standard measurement under acquisition

for the above said project in the village Pendlipakala Mandal

Kondamallepally District Nalgonda whose detailed descrip

Lr.No. B/317/2024

Reservoir of AMRP

This declaration is made as no objections received as provided U / s .15 of the Act (Central Act No.30/2013). The num ber of families likely to be resettled due to land Acquisition is ni and no adverse affect on livelihood

Total : Ac.0.15 Gts.,

Mines of coal, iron-stone, slate or other minerals lying unde the said land or any particular portion of the said land, except such parts of the mines and minerals which may be required to be dug or removed or used during the construction phase of the project for the purpose of which the land is being acquired

A plan of the land may be inspected in the office of the Land Acquisition Officer & AMR Project, Unit-I, Nalgonda on any working day

Sd/- Special Deputy Collector, (LA) Collector, Nalgonda. Sd/- District Collector, Nalgonda.

DIPR RO.NO: 940/LA/PP/Advt/Pub/2025-26

#### Maduro Govt did not know where she was hiding: María **ASSOCIATED PRESS** ■ Oslo

Opposition leader María Corina Machado said on Thursday that she doesn't believe the Venezuelan Government knew where she was hiding for most of this year, as she met Norway's leader a day after her daughter received the Nobel Peace Prize on her behalf. Machado arrived in Oslo hours after Wednesday's prize ceremony and made her first public appearance in 11 months in the early hours of Thursday, emerging from a hotel balcony and waving to an emotional crowd of supporters. She had been in hiding since January 9, when she was briefly detained after joining supporters in a protest in Caracas. Machado was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in October after mounting the most serious peaceful challenge in years to the authoritarian Government of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro.



#### **ICIMOD** transfers **HUC** to **Kathmandu University**

**ASSOCIATED PRESS** ■ Kathmandu

The ICIMOD has signed a deal to formally transfer the Himalayan University Consortium (HUC) to Kathmandu University, launching its next phase as an "independent and regionally rooted" consortium. The ICIMOD (International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development) signed a Memorandum of Understanding on Wednesday at a ceremony in its headquarters in Kathmandu. IĆIMOD is a regional intergovernmental organisation that represents all eight Himalayan nations. "This MoU reflects our shared commitment to strengthening regional leadership and research for sustainable mountain development. Kathmandu University is exceptionally well placed to guide HUC into its next phase as an independent and regionally rooted

## Airstrike on hospital leaves 34 dead in Myanmar

**ASSOCIATED PRESS** ■ Bangkok

An airstrike by Myanmar's military destroyed a hospital in an area controlled by a leading rebel armed force, killing 34 patients and medical staff, according to a local rescue worker and independent media reports on Thursday.

About 80 other people were injured in the attack Wednesday night on the general hospital in Mrauk-U township, an area controlled by the ethnic Arakan Army in the western state of Rakhine.

The ruling military has not announced news of any attack in the area. Wai Hun Aung, a senior official for rescue services in Rakhine, told The Associated Press that a jet fighter dropped two bombs at 9.13 pm with one hitting the hospital's recovery ward and the other landing near the hospital's main building.He said he arrived at the hospital early Thursday to provide assistance and recorded the deaths of 17 women and 17 men. He said that most of the hospital building was destroyed by the bombs, and taxis and motorbikes near the hospital were also damaged.

Rakhine-based online media posted photos and videos showing damaged buildings and debris, including medical equipment. The hospital has been the main source of health care for people in Rakhine, where most hospitals have closed because of



Damaged building is seen at the hospital that was allegedly hit by a military air strike in Mrauk-U township in Rakhine state, Myanmar AP

Myanmar's ongoing civil war, said Wai Hun Aung. It was reopened after doctors gathered in Mrauk-U to provide much-needed medical services. Mrauk-U, located 530 kilometres northwest of Rakhine ethnic minority move-

Yangon, the country's largest city, was captured by the Arakan Army in February last year. The Arakan Army is the well-trained and wellarmed military wing of the

ment, which seeks autonomy from Mvanmar's central Government. It began its offensive in Rakhine in November 2023 and has seized a strategically important regional army headquarters

Rakhine, formerly known as Arakan, was the site of a brutal army counterinsurgency operation in 2017 that drove about 7,40,000 minority Rohingya Muslims to seek safety across the border in Bangladesh.

There is still ethnic tension

between the Buddhist Rakhine and the Rohingya.

Myanmar's shadow National Unity Government, established elected lawmakers who were barred from taking their seats in 2021, condemned the airstrike.

The organisation urged the international community to pressure the military to end its actions, take action against perpetrators and provide humanitarian assistance as soon as possible.

Myanmar has been in turmoil since the army took power in 2021, triggering widespread popular opposition. Many opponents of military rule have since taken up arms, and large parts of the country are now embroiled in conflict. The military Government has stepped up airstrikes ahead of planned December 28 elections against the armed pro-democracy People's Defence Force, which is closely associated with the National Unity Government. Opponents of military rule charge that the polls will be neither free not fair, and are mainly an effort to legitimise the

## **Ex-PM Khaleda is responding** to treatment: Doctor



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA Dhaka

Bangladesh's critically ill former prime minister Khaleda Zia is "responding" to treatment, but no decision has yet been taken on whether she will be flown abroad for further medical care, her personal doctor said on Wednesday. The 80-year-old Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) chairperson has been undergoing treatment at Dhaka's Evercare Hospital since November 23 for multiple health complications."She is being provided treatments which are needed for a critically ill patient," Zia's personal physician and BNP's decisionmaking standing committee member, AZM Zahid Hossain, told reporters outside the private hospital."In medical terms, she is responding to the

treatment as she did in the past," he added, noting that foreign doctors are involved and medical-board decisions are being taken in nighttime meetings. Hossain said the three-time prime minister is receiving care in the hospital's intensive care unit (ICU). He said while a transfer abroad remains a possibility, no date has been fixed, urging people not to give in to speculation. "The time has not yet come to give a definite date," the doctor said. A medical board led by cardiologist Shahabuddin and including specialists from Bangladesh, the UK, the US, and China, is supervising Zia's treatment. Her daughter-inlaw, Zubaida Rahman, a doctor by profession, has been attending the medical board's meetings in person since returning to Dhaka from London on December 5.

### Pragmatic engagement with Taliban: India at UN



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA United Nation

India told the UN Security Council that it calls for a "pragmatic engagement" with the Taliban as New Delhi underlined that a focus on only punitive measures will ensure a 'business

as usual' approach. Addressing the UN on the Situation in Afghanistan on Wednesday, Permanent Representative to the UN Ambassador Parvathaneni Harish said India calls on the United Nations and the international community to adopt nuanced policy instruments that help bring sustainable benefits for the people of Afghanistan.

"India calls for a pragmatic engagement with the Taliban. A coherent policy of engagement should incentivise positive actions. A focus on only punitive measures will only ensure that a 'business as usual' approach continues as we have been seeing now for the last four and a half years," Harish said.

He reiterated India's commitment to meeting the development needs of the people of Afghanistan.

Harish said the recent decision by the Indian Government to restore the status of Delhi's Technical Mission in Kabul to that of an Embassy "underscores this resolve.

engagements with all stakeholders to augment our contribution

"We will continue our

Afghanistan's comprehensive development, humanitarian assistance, and capacity-building initiatives, in keeping with the priorities and aspirations of

Afghan society," he said. Afghan Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi was in New Delhi on a six-day trip in October, the first senior Taliban minister to visit power in Kabul in 2021. External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar held wideranging talks with Muttagi, announcing the upgrading of Delhi's technical mission in Kabul to the status of an embassy and pledging to renew its development works in Afghanistan.

India had withdrawn its officials from its embassy in Kabul after the Taliban seized power in August 2021.

In June 2022, India reestablished its diplomatic presence in the Afghan capital by deploying a "technical team". India continues to closely monitor the security situation in Afghanistan, Harish said.

He emphasised that the

international community must coordinate efforts towards ensuring that entities and individuals designated by the UN Security Council - the ISIL and Al Qaida and their affiliates, including the Lashkar e Tayyiba and Jaish-e-Mohammed and proxies of LeT such as the Resistance Front, along with those who facilitate their operations no longer indulge in cross border terrorism, a thinlyveiled reference to Pakistan.

## Bangladesh to hold elections on February 12

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA Dhaka

Bangladesh will hold the general elections on February 12, its first since the ouster of the Sheikh Hasina-led Awami League Government in a violent student-led protest in August 2024.

Voting will take place on February 12, 2026, from 7.30 am to 4.30 pm," Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) AMM Nasir Uddin said in an address to the nation on Thursday.

A referendum will simultaneously be held on the voting day, February 12, to elicit public opinion on a series of reform proposals of the Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunusled National Consensus Commission. The announcement came a day after the CEC met President Mohammed Shahabuddin, who assured him "optimum support and According to the election Election campaigns will begin victory in the 2024 election, Awami League.



schedule, the last date for submission of nomination papers is December 29, and scrutiny of nominations will be held from December 30 to January 4. The last date for withdrawgeneral elections in a "free, The final list of candidates will fair and meaningful" manner. be published on January 21.

on January 22 and continue until 7.30 am on February 10,

Nasir said. The last general elections were held in January 2024. Hasina won the elections boycott by major parties.

Six months after Hasina's has disbanded Hasina's

protests erupted against her Government. The violent street protests forced Hasina to leave for India on August 5, 2024. Three days later, Yunus took over as chief adviser of

The interim Government

#### Justice department can unseal **Epstein records: US Court**



ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ New York

Secret grand jury transcripts from Jeffrey Epstein's 2019 sex trafficking case can be made public, a judge ruled Wednesday, joining two other judges in granting the Justice Department's requests to unseal material from investigations into the late financier's sexual abuse.

US District Judge Richard M Berman reversed his earlier decision to keep the material that requires the Government to open its files on Epstein and his longtime confidant

Ghislaine Maxwell. The judge previously cautioned that the 70 or so pages of grand jury materials slated for release are hardly revelatory. On Tuesday, a different federal judge ordered the release of records from Maxwell's sex trafficking case. Last week, a judge in Florida approved the unsealing of transcripts from an abandoned Epstein federal grand jury investigation in the 2000s. The Justice Department asked the judges to lift secrecy orders after the passed by Congress and signed into law by President Donald Trump last month.

## Winter storm rips through Gaza, exposing failure to deliver enough aid

Jerusalem

Rains drenched Gaza's tent camps and dropping temper-atures chilled Palestinians huddling inside them Thursday as storm Byron descended on the war-battered territory, showing how two months of a ceasefire have failed to sufficiently address the spiralling humanitarian crisis there.

Children's sandaled feet disappeared under opaque brown water that flooded the camps. Trucks moved slowly to avoid sending waves of mud toward the tents.

Piles of garbage and sewage turned to waterfalls. "We have been drowned. I don't have clothes to wear and we have no mattresses left," said Um Salman Abu Qenas, a mother displaced from east of Khan Younis to a tent camp in Deir al-Balah. She said her family could not sleep the night before because of the water in the tent. Aid groups say not enough



Palestinians crossing a flooded street following heavy rain in Khan Younis, southern Gaza Strip

shelter aid is getting into Gaza during the truce. Figures recently released by Israel's military suggest it has not met the ceasefire stipulation of allowing 600 trucks of aid into Gaza a day, though Israel disputes that finding. "Cold, overcrowded, and unsanitary environments heighten the risk of illness and infection," said the UN agency for Palestinian refugees, UNRWA, in a terse statement posted on X.

"This suffering could be prevented by unhindered humanitarian aid, including medical support and proper shelter."

Sabreen Qudeeh, also in the Deir al-Balah camp, said her family woke up to rain leaking from their tent's ceiling and water from the street soaking their mattresses.

"My little daughters were screaming and got shocked when they saw water on the

Taha, a Palestinian man in the camp, said there was not a tent that escaped the flooding. 'Conditions are very bad, we have old people, displaced, and sick people inside this camp," he said.

In Israel, heavy rains fell and flood warnings were in effect in several parts of the country but no major weather-related emergencies were reported as

of midday. The contrasting scenes with Gaza made clear how profoundly the Israel-Hamas war had damaged the territory, destroying the majority of homes. Gaza's population of around 2 million is almost entirely displaced and most people live in vast tent camps stretching for miles along the beach, exposed to the elements, without adequate flooding infrastructure and with cesspits dug near tents as toilets. The Palestinian Civil Defence, part of the Hamas-run Government, said that since the

floor," she said. Ahmad Abu storm began they have received more than 2,500 distress calls from citizens whose tents and shelters were damaged in all parts of the Gaza Strip. Aid groups say that Israel is not allowing enough aid into Gaza to begin rebuilding the territory after years of war. Under the agreement, Israel agreed to comply with aid stipulations from an earlier January 2025 truce, which specified that it allow 600 trucks of aid each day into Gaza and an agreed-upon number of temporary homes and tents. It maintains it is doing so, though Associated Press has found that some of its own figures call that into question. COGAT said December 9, without providing evidence, that it had "lately" let 260,000 tents and tarpaulins into Gaza and over 1,500 trucks of blankets and warm clothing.

The Shelter Cluster, an international coalition of aid providers led by the Norwegian Refugee Council, sets the



#### **Bulgaria's Govt resigns** amid public protests

ASSOCIATED PRESS Sofia

Bulgaria's Government resigned on Thursday as mass protests gripped the country just weeks before it's due to join the eurozone. The resignation of the minority coalition, led by the centre-right GERB party, was announced minutes before parliament was scheduled to vote on a no-confidence motion tabled by the opposition over economic mismanagement and supported by growing public anger with widespread corruption. "Ahead of today's vote of no confidence, the Government is resigning," Prime Minister Rosen Zhelyazkov told reporters in parliament. "The decisions of the National Assembly are meaningful when they reflect the will of the people. We want to be where society expects us to be," Zhelyazkov said, referring to the anti-Government protests.



#### **Washington State under** emergency due to heavy rain

**ASSOCIATED PRESS** ■ Mount Vernon

Washington state was under a State of emergency Thursday from a barrage of torrential rain that has sent rivers flowing over their banks, caused a mudslide to crash down on a highway and trapped people in floodwaters. Tens of thousands of residents could face evacuation orders. Heavy rain continued to fall over parts of the state Thursday morning, prompting road closures, water rescues and suspension of Amtrak trains between Seattle and Vancouver. Rainfall intensity increased in several counties in Washington's Cascade Mountains, which had seen up to 6 inches of rain in a 24-hour period. One area, Snoqualmie Pass, picked up an additional 1.7 inches of rain in six hours, the National Weather Service said.

Keto Motors Private Limited, a leading Telangana-headquartered electric vehicle manufacturer, announced a major expansion milestone at the Telangana Rising Global Summit 2025 by signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Government of Telangana. The MoU was signed in the august presence of the Hon'ble Minister for Industries & Commerce, Sri D. Sridhar Babu, further reinforcing Telangana's emergence as a national hub for advanced electric mobility and EV manufacturing. Venkatesh Challa, Director, Keto Motors, "The industry is facing a major supply shortage of electric buses, with several fleet operators unable to procure vehicles on time. To address this bottleneck, our Jadcherla facility is being built with an initial capacity of 1000+ buses per year





Hyderabad
FRIDAY | DECEMBER 12, 2025

Race2Win Foundation and co-hosted by The Westin Hyderabad Mindspace, concluded in Hyderabad after a day of high-level dialogue, critical reflection, and meaningful exchange among distinguished policymakers, civic leaders, scholars, and public servants. A key highlight of the event was the panel discussion titled "Policy Beyond Politics: A Vision for Informed Change." The panel featured, Palanivel Thiaga Rajan, Minister Government of Tamil Nadu, G. Renuka Chowdhury, MP,K.R.Suresh Reddy, MP Lavu Sri Krishna Devarayalu, M P, The forum also featured the presentation of the Annual Changemaker Awards, where Guest of honor Shilpa Reddy felicitated exemplary individuals and organizations. Founded by Chaitanya MRSK and cofounded by actor Regena Cassandrra, the organization is built on the belief that an informed and engaged citizenry is the foundation of a vibrant democratic society.









Javed Hood from HIE, Hidayatullah Dean HIE along

with A.K Khan, IPS Former DGP, Govt. of Telangana

& Others releasing the Brochure HIESET -2026, A

Press Meet to Announce the Dates of HIESET -An

Entrance Exam for Students from POOR

UNDERPRIVILEGED BACKGROUNDS. OVER 2000 STUDENTS from Underprivileged Background Have

Benefited from the Scholarships by HIE & Many Have Become Top Doctors, Engineers, Architects, from Top

Institutes Like IIT, NIT, AIIMS, ETC & many Placed in





The country's first dedicated Sodium-ion Energy company, announced a major step toward strengthening India's energy ecosystem with the introduction of its Sodium-ion-based Energy Storage systems.chief guest G. Satheesh Reddy, Former Chairman, Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), and Scientific Adviser to the Defence Minister, on the company's broader mission, Abishek Reddy, CEO, Naxion Energy India, said, "Our goal is much larger than introducing a new battery. We are building the backbone for India's future energy systems.



Indian Machine Tool Manufacturers' Association (IMTMA) will organise Imtex Forming 2026 from 21 to 25 January 2026 at Bangalore International Exhibition Centre (BIEC), will feature the following concurrent events: Press Conference & Networking Launch by Mohini Kelkar, President, IMTMA. M Lokeshwara Rao, Ex. President, IMTMA & MD, Lokesh Machines Ltd, T. K. Ramesh, MD, ACE Designers Ltd, Guru Prasath KR, Executive Director- Trade Fairs, IMTMA at Hotel Taj Deccan, Hyderabad

#### **ICICI** prudential Life leads with claim settlement ratio of 99.33% in h1-FY2026

CICI Prudential Life Insurance has posted an industry leading claim settlement ratio of 99.33% for H1-FY2026, the highest amongst top life insurance companies in the country. Importantly, the average claim settlement turnaround time was just 1.1 days for non-investigated claims. Also, during this period, the total value of death claims settled by the Company was at Rs. 893.38 crore. Amish Banker, Chief Operations Officer, ICICI Prudential Life Insurance said, "Our claim settlement process is designed to deliver enhanced customer experience and we handle every claim with utmost sensitivity. In H1-FY2026, we had a claim settlement ratio of 99.33% and our average claim settlement turnaround time for non-investigated claims was just 1.1 days. Besides, we settled death claims totalling over Rs. 893.38 crore in the same period. Notably, under our "Claim for Sure" initiative that promises to settle eligible claims in one-day after all documents are submitted, we have settled death claims amounting to Rs. 157.25 crore in H1-FY2026. We had an industry leading claim settlement ratio in the last guarter as well – in Q1-FY2026 it was 99.60%

#### vivo X300 series and national geographic creative works unite to capture india's ivo, announced its collaboration with National Geographic Creative Works for 'Go Into The

Wild', an immersive photography and storytelling initiative captured entirely on the all-new vivo X300 Series. Building on the success of past editions, this year's project takes a Nat Geo Explorer, and other creators photographers across India's wild terrains to document untouched landscapes, wildlife encounters, and natural spectacles with cinematic detail. Recently launched, the vivo X300 Series—comprising the X300 and X300 Pro—brings together professional-grade ZEISS optics, the new OriginOS 6, enhanced AI capabilities, and flagship performance powered by the MediaTek Dimensity 9500. vivo X300 features a compact flagship design with a 200MP ZEISS Main Camera, vivo Portrait Engine, and Al Landscape Master for ultra-clear portraits and cinematic landscapes. vivo X300 Pro offers a 200MP ZEISS APO Telephoto Camera with India's first Telephoto Bird Shots feature and the ZEISS 2.35x Telephoto Extender Kit, enabling up to 8.5x optical zoom with exceptional clarity. Speaking about the collaboration, Geetaj Channana, Head of Corporate Strategy, vivo India, said: "At vivo, we aim to build technology that inspires people to create, explore, and connect more deeply with the world around them. The X300 Series carries this mission forward, blending our imaging expertise with advanced Al and optical innovation to capture moments with striking clarity and emotion



Hyderabad Pickleball League (HPL) is gearing up for a blockbuster finale on 12th December—an evening that will bring together high-octane sport and soulful music, with the legendary Lucky Ali set to perform live during the championship night. The excitement follows an electrifying Playoff battle on 10th December at The League, Financial District, where four franchises fought through intense Eliminator and Qualifier matches. All Stars and Credicon Mavericks emerged as the top contenders, securing their place in the much-awaited title clash

ighlighting Telangana's innovationfocused agenda under Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy, IPEMA—Poultry India said the momentum generated by the ongoing Telangana Rising Global Summit of the poultry sector. Speaking at the 40th Annual Conference and National Symposium of the Indian Poultry Science Association (IPSACON 2025) at PITSALL Hydrarbad IPEMA PJTSAU, Hyderabad, IPEMA noted that the state's push for

technology, entrepreneurship and

Protein Security in Viksit Bharat." Senior dignitaries including KVAFSÜ Vice-Chancellor Dr. K.C. Veeranna and IAS officer Dr K llamharithi commended Telangana's rapid growth in poultry production and its contribution to national protein security. The success of the 17th Poultry India Expo 2025. IPEMA's continuous knowledge-driven initiatives, including technical seminars, Vice-Chancellors' Meets and

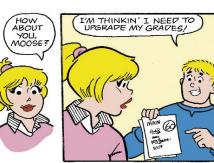
research-driven development is positioning

Telangana as India's , Poultry Production for

#### **ARCHIE**









#### CALVIN AND HOBBES









youth skill programmes.

#### **GARFIELD**

NANCY

I HATE WAITING FOR THESE AZALEAS TO GROW

**GINGER MEGGS** 



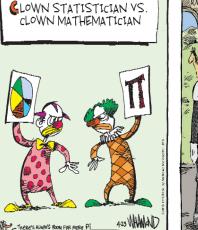


HMM MAYBE THIS IS THE ANSWER





#### REALITY CHECK







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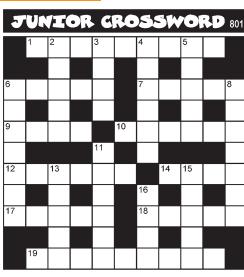
DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★公公公

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#### **CROSSWORD**



#### **ACROSS**

- 1 The largest land animals
- 6 A small rock 7 Move slowly and quietly 9 A flower with thorns on
- its stem
- 10 An extinct animal or plant
- that has turned to rock 12 Film stars
- 14 A sound bouncing back
- to you
- 17 A cloth for drying yourself 18 People who make meals
- 19 The leader of the USA **DOWN**

4 A ship's heavy metal hook

2 Large wild cats

3 A writer of verse



5 Large plants in a forest

6 A housemaid or butler

11 Tools for making holes

13 A tall, narrow building

15 A circus funny person

will burn your skin

16 This liquid chemical

8 Headrests on beds



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#### **BLASÉ CAPITAL** TRADE LOCKED

**OUR TAKE** 

Sutanu Guru

Author, Journalist

and Academician



Yet another deadline seems to have gone. According to India's chief economic advisor, V Anantha Nageswaran, the India-US trade deal will most possibly be sealed by March 2026. During the summers, there was the anticipation that the agreement would be finalised by September. It did not, and the next target was the festive month of November. Several ministers and trade negotiators backtracked and voiced a belief that Christmas-New Year, or December, will mark the end of the ongoing bilateral talks. Now comes a new deadline, which is three months later, and creates new apprehensions, worries, and disruptions. It implies that Indian exports, which witnessed a slowdown due to the US tariffs, will suffer for another few months. The trade deficit for 2025-26 may increase, and if the dollar outflows do not stem, this will create a further downward pressure on the rupee. However, Nageswaran is confident that the economic and growth outlook for 2026-27 remains strong, and the current devaluation of the currency is because it is "undervalued relative to fundamentals." In effect, the tide will change soon.

Speaking to a TV channel, the economic advisor agreed that the November-December target turned out to be "elusive," but added that he would be surprised if the March deadline was not met. In the recent past, the American side has become more optimistic about the bilateral deal. The US trade representative, Jamieson Greer recently told a Senate subcommittee that the latest trade proposals from India were among the "best" that the US had received. "They (Indians) have been a very difficult nut to crack... but they have been quite forward leaning... the type of offers that they have been talking to us about have been the best we have ever received as a country," Greer said. It indicates that India has agreed to proposals that other nations did not, or that New Delhi has softened its believe that the US, which wanted a lot more, has decided to be content with a little less.

Farm imports from the US still seem to be the most sensitive issue on the trade agenda. Greer admitted that there were disagreements especially on American crops and meat, which include the imports of corn, soybean, wheat, and cotton. Throughout the year, the Indian side, including the prime minister and ministers have maintained that they will not allow any compromises with the interests of the local farmers. However, in the recent past, India has made a few concessions, albeit cloaked in national necessities. For example, cotton imports were eased, and allowed at zero import duties to help the textile sector, which faced shortages. The Government aimed to convince the farmers that the imports will be used by the industry, and not enter the open marketplace. Farm unions were unhappy, and voiced their concerns over low domestic prices. Similarly, there is talk to use American corn for making ethanol to blend with petrol. A 20 per cent blend is mandatory, and this time too the reason will be that the corn will be used by the refiners, and not enter the market.

Since any bilateral trade deal will logically include the import of American goods, apart from farm produce, Piyush Goyal, the industry and commerce minister, has urged the Indian business community not to be perturbed about such free trade agreements. In a public meeting, he said that Indians oppose the bilateral or regional trade deals even if they adversely impact 5-10 per cent of the market share in specific segments. He urged the industry to be strong, and resilient, and not be affected by such small changes. In effect, the policy-makers wish to prepare the business community for the concessions that India will need to give to the US as part of the trade deal. This is akin to the way the former are preparing the farmers to face the implications of higher imports from America. This explains why India is on a signing spree to ink bilateral deals so that the India-US one, when it happens, seems logical and inevitable.

Finally, Nageswaran made a telling comment in the interview with the TV channel. He maintained that the India-US trade deal was not just about economics and business, or agriculture. It was about geopolitical considerations. The trade agreement was linked to other areas such as national security, diplomacy, new world order, and regional and subcontinent security. A recent report by the White House connected economic relations with Indo-Pacific security. The study wanted closer India-US trade relations, which would logically enhance closer ties in the Indian Ocean to counter China. While India has moved towards China because of the retaliation by the US, New Delhi perceives Beijing as a long-term security threat. Hence, India wants to have a larger relation with America, even as it stays close to Russia, and inches towards a few agreements with China. But New Delhi has realised that in terms of geopolitics, and long-term view, it cannot completely isolate itself from the US. Some analysts argue that Russia is India's past, which will continue in the future. The US is India's future. The India-China

# The Dioneer Properties of the Hyderabad | Friday | December 12, 2025

## India's MAGA vs Trump's MAGA

### The future lies in wooing Microsoft, Amazon, Google, Apple

sive manner, and without the theatrics and circus of the US president, India has its own businesseconomic weapon, which is also MAGA. In the long run, the Indian weapon of mass market will prove to be more durable and consequential than Trump's trade-tariff-investment warhead. The US republicans wish to 'Make America Great Again.' The Indian Government believes in 'Microsoft, Amazon, Google, and Apple.' Ironically, both nations' futures depend on the tech giants.

But before we go down that road, a trip down the nostalgia lane first. Scrolling down the India-US news on diverse digital platforms, I had a flashback from the past, some three decades ago. I recalled a similar political schizophrenia coupled with business mania, a kind of parallel track in the relations between India and the US. Back then, Robin Raphael, the US assistant state secretary in the Department of State, caused diplomatic tremors and waves in India.

Raphael, a South Asia expert who was subsequently investigated by the FBI on charges of being an ISI mole with leanings towards Pakistan, claimed that a genuine dispute existed between Pakistan and India, and Kashmir was not an inalienable part of India. This caused considerable agitation among the Indian leaders. Yet, while Raphael hectored India, the American softdrinks icon, Coke, made grand announcements about coming back to India with a bang. Other well-known American brands were also enthusiastic about the vast, untapped, and growing Indian consumer market.

Fast forward a few years, and the US did what even India had never anticipated. The former that diplomatic hostilities with the US were on the rise, McDonald's announced that it would open thousands of fast-food stores across India. Mac-D realised the potential of the Indian

A similar kind of schizophrenia-excitement is visible today. After imposing a 50 per cent tariff on Indian exports, hankering about H-1B visa regime, and targeting pharma shipments, Trump recently instructed his aides that there were complaints about India dumping rice in

the US. He hinted at new tariffs on rice imports. His tariff war against

The Dioneer India seemed unabated. Do remember that after new sanctions were **SINCE 1865** imposed by the European Union,

and others against two Russian crude oil exporters, Indian importers stopped, or curtailed purchases from Russia. Or at least publicly announced it.

However, the likes of Microsoft, Amazon, Google, and Apple, the Indian MAGA, announced major investment plans for their Indian operations. This was despite Trump's threats to reduce their exposures to the subcontinent, and invest more in the US. The tech giants did both. Satya Nadella, the CEO of Microsoft, said that he had a wonderful meeting with the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and that his firm will commit \$17 billion to promote, develop, and encourage AI (Artificial Intelligence) in India.

Nadella added that this was the largest investment by Microsoft in Asia. Not to be outdone, within no time, Amazon, which is the largest ecommerce platform in India, claimed that it would invest a much-higher \$30 billion until 2030

Like Donald Trump's MAGA, but in an unobtru- without Russian help. But around the same time Some weeks ago, if you recall, Sundar Pichai of Google said that the firm would invest \$17 billion in Andhra Pradesh to set up a massive data centre, the largest of its kind in Asia, and develop AI capabilities in India.

Now, we come to Apple. Until November 2025, iPhone exports and shipments from India to the US broke previous records, despite the US' tariffs, and Trump's antics. Total iPhone exports may cross the \$25 billion in 2025 (calendar year), or surely in 2025-26 (fiscal year). Apple is com-

mitted to manufacturing 25 per cent of iPhones meant for global sales within India, and the process is under way. This completes the quartet of India's MAGA, which will counter Trump's MAGA, and maybe come out

What India needs to do is something quite simple. It needs to ride out the Trump threats, and the hostility of the US administration. This is not something new. We have done it before, after the two nuclear tests, and during the 1980s. India has experienced hostile US administrations for the last six decades, but since the 1980s the negatives were accompanied by businessinvestment positives. Remember, it is not charity, sympathy, or altruism that is forcing India's MAGA weapon to pay attention to India.

We have a population of 1.6 billion, who are

trumping America.

the future and potential testing guinea pigs for the AI geeks, who work for the global tech giants to tweak their algorithms. Where else in the world can they find such a large captive consumer base? This is precisely the business key to unlock the diplomatic shackles. Back in the 1990s, China used the power of its consumers, selectively dangled access to the US firms, and extracted huge concessions. India may not be as ruthless, but can use MAGA wisely, patiently, and strategically.

However, we need to be careful so that we are not carried away by rhetoric, and posturing. For example, when Pepsi entered India in the 1980s, it spoke eloquently about how it could instantly transform Indian farming through the exports of processed food (read potato wafers). The change happened but over a longer period. The US and European pharma giants were cagey to transfer research knowhow. The same slowness, laziness, or apprehensions can propel the MAGA tech giants to promise much more than they wish to chew.

Let me give you a recent example. While Amazon promised to pump in \$30 billion, it claimed that it had already invested \$40 billion in India. A closer look revealed that the latter figure included salaries paid to the Indian employees for decades. Recurring expenses, which are funded by local and export revenues cannot be deemed as investment. Only capital expenditure on infrastructure, and other heads can. More importantly, for an outsider, foreign investment inflow is crucial. If Amazon reinvests the profits and cash flows it earns from the Indian operations, it is capex but not FDI.

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



A Contrarian Investor

## Personal is the new credit norm

Going crazy on credit cards, loans to buy cars and appliances

lenders' confidence. According to Experian's latest report, 'Credit Insights: Unsecured Loans (September 2025),' the country is seeing sustained momentum across personal loans, credit cards, and loans for cars and consumer durables. The report notes that "fresh sourcing of loans in Q2-FY26 remained strong," due to larger ticket sizes, expanding participation from non-banking finance companies (NBFCs), and better repayments. This marks a maturing credit environment nationally, which is shaped by the rise of digital lending platforms. The study underscores a shift in consumer behaviour, and lender strategy as credit flows go beyond the metros to smaller cities, and semi-urban markets. Manish Jain, Country Managing Director of Experian India, says, "Demand continues to rise, consumers are

India's unsecured credit landscape is going

through a structural transformation, which is driven by stronger borrowers' discipline,

broader credit penetration, and renewed

indicating positive trends." He adds that the analytics-driven approach enables lenders to expand responsibly. Personal loans continue to anchor the unsecured credit segment. Assets under management reached nearly Rs 16 lakh crore, or a 13 per cent year-on-year increase. Major lender categories such as private banks, public sector banks, and NBFCs reported higher fresh sourcing. NBFCs strengthened their grip in the sub-₹1 lakh ticket-size category, which indicated their expanding reach in the smaller markets. A notable shift is the rise in average ticket sizes, which hints at higher consumer confidence. Early-stage delinquencies

moving towards higher ticket sizes, and

repayment behaviour is steadily improving.

The improvement in early delinquencies...

shows that both consumers and lenders are making more responsible, informed choices,

In November 2025, CRIF High Mark, a part of the global network, published its quarterly edition of the report, 'How India Lends.' It too showed that the personal loan portfolio grew 12 per cent year-on-year, and 2.9 per cent quarter-on-quarter. It was supported by a sharp rebound in fresh originations, which surged to nearly ₹3 lakh crore, a 32 per cent quarter-on-quarter rise. Loans above ₹10 lakh account for 37.4 per cent of total value. This segment was dominated by the PSU banks, even as the NBFCs captured the smallticket segment, accounting for nearly 90 per cent of the overall volumes.

improved, signalling healthier repayment

The credit card segment recorded ₹3.4 lakh crore in assets under management, up nine



per cent year-on-year. Fresh sanctioned limits rose 13 per cent quarter-on-quarter, after three quarters of decline, which subdued the annual growth. The market remains concentrated, and the top four issuers raised their collective share from 70 per cent to 72 per cent. Average credit limits increased, and the portfolio health strengthened, which was backed by an improvement in delinquency from two per cent to 1.8 per cent.

Two-wheeler financing registered robust growth, with the assets under management touching ₹1.8 lakh crore, or 18 per cent yearon-year rise. New loan sanctions grew nine per cent year-on-year in Q2-FY26. The NBFC

dominance continued, aided by higher sourcing from the firsttime borrowers. Higher-ticket The Pioneer loans in the Rs 1-2 lakh bracket gained traction, reflecting a shift

SINCE 1865 towards premium vehicle purchases. The ually reduce the interest rates on personal delinquency rate reduced from 6.2 per cent to 5.4 per cent, although the longer-duration stress remained elevated.

Consumer durable loans posted the fastest growth among the unsecured products, with

the assets under management rising 16 per cent year-on-year to ₹1 lakh crore. New sourcing expanded 22 per cent year-on-year, supported by aggressive NBFC participation, and strong retail penetration. Loans under ₹20,000 accounted for nearly 65 per cent of the volumes, which aligned with the country's

expanding small-ticket digital EMI ecosystem. As India's credit ecosystem evolves with stronger underwriting, digital enablement, and rising consumer confidence, unsecured lending appears well-positioned for sustained, responsible expansion. The Reserve Bank of India recently cut the reporate by 25

basis points to 5.25 per cent, which will offer relief to several sections of the borrowers, especially those considering personal loans. As the overall cost of borrowing drops, banks and NBFCs are expected to grad-

loans. The impact may not be visible immediately, but may see marginally lower rates in the coming weeks. The lenders will slowly realign pricing to reflect the revised reporate. This bodes well for the unsecured lending

Recently, at a press briefing, the central bank's deputy governor, Swaminathan J, said that it remains confident about the sustainability of the credit growth, supported by stable asset quality, and a measured rise in unsecured lending, which so far shows no signs of stress. He noted that apart from monitoring year-on-year credit expansion, the regulator evaluates how each loan segment is growing relative to the others, along with slippage trends across the portfolios. The earlier regulatory measures on unsecured credit, he explained, were introduced when such loans

were expanding at nearly twice the pace of

the rest of the loan book. At present, the overall credit growth stands at about 10-11 per cent. Lending to the large industries is growing at 10 per cent, home loans are expanding at 11 per cent, and personal loans are rising at 14 per cent. "The growth has been seen more in secured segments like gold loans or home loans, and unsecured loans have significantly moderated. So, there are no indicators at this point in time which are creating a concern for us," Swaminathan said. Unsecured lending at this stage forms less than 25 per cent of the retail book, and accounts for only 7-8 per cent of the total banking system credit.

However, experts contend that there are several pitfalls in unsecured credit. Although the current delinquency rates indicate borrowers' discipline, and ability to pay the loans, the situation can quickly go out of control. In the past, the robust trends in unsecured loans led to over-borrowing, largely driven by over-spending, and an inability among the borrowers to pay the EMIs, or settle the credit card bills. This is especially relevant as the central bank warns borrowers of cybercrime, and online loan frauds. In the recent past, aggressive loan pitches by Chinese apps created havoc in the credit system.

Debt traps, when overextended loan payments constitute 30-40 per cent of monthly incomes, can lead to spiralling debt, impact savings especially for emergencies and crucial expenses, and lead to bankruptcy-like situations. Hence, individuals need to be careful, and calculate their loan payment outgoes, before opting for fresh loans. Never forget that unsecured credit is more expensive.



### **▼ BRIEFLY**

#### WOMEN'S FOOTBALL LEAGUE TO START ON DECEMBER 20



The Indian Women's League 2025-26 will kick off on December 20 at the National Centre of Excellence (NCoE) in Kolkata, with Sethu FC taking on Kickstart FC in the

opening match. The IWL will be played in two phases, with the first one stretching from December 20 to January 9, 2026, during which the eight teams will play 28 matches, the All India Football Federation (AIFF) said on Thursday.

The NCoE in Kolkata and the Kalyani Municipal Stadium in Kalvani are the two venues for the league, which is being held in two centralised venues this season.

The second phase of the IWL is set to be held from April 20 to May 10, 2026, thus allowing player availability for the senior and U20 women's national teams, which will participate in their respective AFC Women's Asian Cups categories next year.

#### CHANDIGARH STADIUM HONOURS YUVRAJ, HARMANPREET



World Cup winners Yuvraj Singh and Harmanpreet Kaur were on Thursday immortalized at the New Chandigarh Stadium with stands named in their honour. Yuvraj, player of the tournament for the 2011 ODI World Cup, and Harmanpreet, who recently captained India to their first ever Women's World Cup trophy, were surrounded friends, family and Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann on the occasion. Yuvraj was also seen giving a pep talk to the Indian team in a huddle before the second T20 International against South Africa. His longtime teammate Harbhajan Singh has a pavilion named after him at the stadium and Harmanpreet joined him on the other side of the sightscreen on Thursday.

## India names Sindhu, Lakshya for Asia Team Championships

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

Two-time Olympics medallist PV Sindhu, Lakshva Sen and the star pair of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy-Chirag Shetty will form the core of Indian squad to take part in the Badminton Asia Team Championships to be played in Qingdao, China from February 3-8.

India are defending champions in the women's category of the competition, whereas the men's team had won two bronze medals in the past.

"Selected on the basis of ranking, performance, and experience, the women's team will once again be led by former world champion and two-time Olympics medallist, PV Sindhu," the Badminton Association of India said in a release.

The world No 13 Sen will be the top ranked men's singles player in the squad which also features Kidambi Srikanth, HS Prannoy, US Open winner Ayush Shetty, and Tharun Mannepalli.

Satwik-Chirag will be lead the doubles unit along with Guwahati Masters runners-

up Sai Pratheek K and the doubles while Priya Pruthvi Krishnamurthy Roy, Konjengbam, Shruti Mishra, as well as Hariharan and Tanisha Crasto com-Amsakarunan. In the plete the squad. women's category, Sindhu

BAI secretary Sanjay Mishra said, "Over the last few years, Indian teams have consistently been medal contenders at the Asian and World level and this squad has the right mix of form and experience and Gayatri is capable of challenging for the crown in both catewill lead India's charge in gories."

#### Team:

Men's: Lakshya Sen, Ayush

ngbam, Shruti, Tanisha.

Shetty, Kidambi, Prannoy HS, Tharun Mannepalli, Satwiksairaj Rankireddy, Chirag Shetty, Pruthvi Krishnamurthy, Sai Pratheek K, Hariharan Amsakarunan

Women's: PV Sindhu, Unnati Hooda, Tanvi, Rakshitha Sree Santhosh Ramraj, Malvika Bansod, Treesa Jolly, Gayatri Gopichand, Priya Konje-

## Aston Villa faces Basel in Europa League

**ASSOCIATED PRESS** Basel

Boosted by a victory over the Premier League leader, in form Aston Villa meets Basel in the Europa League on Thursday.

After a slow start to the season, Villa bounced back to be currently on a sevengame winning streak in all competitions, including a 2-1 victory over Arsenal on Saturday.

Beside a top-three place in the English top flight, the Villans are tied with Lyon and Midtjylland atop the standings of the second-tier European competition on 12 points with four wins from five games.

'The most important thing is how we are building the team, how we are Emery said ahead of the in charge of Sevilla Dynamo Kyiv.



during each competition, our stronger mentality in everything," manager Unai

will be supported by world

junior championships silver

medalist Tanvi Sharma,

Unnati Hooda, Rakshita Sree

Santhosh Ramraj and

Malvika Bansod in singles,

Gopichand and Treesa Jolly

champions

Syed Modi International

achieving in our process match at St. Jakob-Park in Basel. Emery has won the Europa League trophy four times during stints

Lyon hosts Dutch newcomer Go Ahead Eagles while Midtjylland faces Genk at home.

The top eight teams after eight games go directly to the round of 16 in March. At the other end of the 36 team table, struggling Nice

points against Braga. Teams placed ninth to 24th advance to the knock-

will look to earn the first

out playoffs in February. In other games, Nottingham Forest is away at Utrecht, Celtic and Roma meet in Glasgow and Maccabi Tel Aviv travels to Stuttgart.

In the Conference League, Crystal Palace plays Shelbourne in **Dublin and Fiorentina hosts** 

### Bembem, Ashalata named in AFC All-Time Dream XI

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi

Indian football legends Bembem Devi and Ashalata Devi have been nominated for the AFC Women's Asian Cup All-Time Dream XI football team in recognition of their stellar performances in the continental showpiece.

Former captain Bembem, the only Indian woman footballer to have been conferred the Padma Shri, is one of the 12 midfielders nominated for the Dream XI team.

Both Bembem and Ashalata belong to Manipur, the women's football powerhouse in the country.

"During an international career spanning over two decades, Bembem Devi was the true leader of a generation of Indian women's footballers," the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) said.

"She was the captain of the Blue Tigresses during their AFC Women's Asian Cup appearance in 2003 and has been adjudged the AIFF Women's Player of the Year twice. India's third most capped player has won several domestic and international honours laying the foundation for the rise of women's football in the South Asian nation."

India could not get past the group stage in the 2033 Women's Cup, after winning against Uzbekistan (6-0) but losing to

eventual runners-up China (0-12) and Vietnam (1-2).

Ashalata captained the India in the 2022 edition of the Women's Asian Cup

hosted by the country. In a fateful tournament, several Indian players contracted COVID-19 despite being inside the bio-bubble. Hosts India played out a 0-0 draw against Iran in their first group match and then could not assemble team for the match against Chinese Taipei.

"Ashalata Devi is one of the Indian women's national team's most accomplished defenders. A commanding centre-back, she made her AFC Women's Asian Cup debut in 2022. In 2019, she was named the AIFF Women's Player of the Year in recognition of her consistency and leader-ship," the AFC said.

"Known for her strength, aerial ability, and calmness under pressure, Ashalata has been instrumental in guiding and inspiring a new generation of Indian footballers.

Ashalata is one of the 12 defenders nominated for the Dream XI.

Five goalkeepers and 12 forwards were also nominated for the Dream XI, for which voting opened on November 21 and will continue till January 10, 2026.

The 2026 edition of the Women's Asian Cup will be held in Australia





### Salmon makes Arsenal debut in Champions League

Marli Salmon became the sixth youngest player to feature in the Champions League when brought on as a late substitute in Arsenal's 3-0 win at Club Brugge.

Salmon is 16 years, 103 days and came on for Ben White at Jan Breydelstadion on Wednesday, with manager Mikel Arteta saying: "We knew that at some point we had to use him.'

"He's so young, 16 still, and he's playing in the Champions League," Arteta said.

But Salmon is not even the youngest player that Arsenal has fielded That distinction goes to

Max Dowman, who was 15 years, 308 days when he entered as a second-half substitute against Slavia

Prague last month. According to UEFA, Salmon is the third player 16 or younger that Arsenal has fielded in the are there, they are ready to Champions League after perform."



Dowman and former midfielder Jack Wilshere.

"That's why we put so much work and everybody in the academy puts (in) so much enthusiasm and work," said Arteta. "And for a long time, you have to prepare those talents. So, thanks to them, because when we need them, they

Dowman is the youngest player ever to play in

European club soccer's top competition — taking that record from Youssoufa Moukoko, who was 16 years, 18 days when he appeared for Borussia Dortmund in 2020.

Barcelona superstar

the age of 16 years, 68 days

Wearing No. 89, Salmon is described by Arsenal as a gifted, ball-playing center back. He first joined the club's academy playing for the Under-11 team.

His first Champions League appearance came Lamine Yamal is the third before he's even played a youngest, having made his senior domestic league or debut in the competition at cup game for Arsenal.

## Alonso feels Real Madrid will overcome rough patch

Madrid

Xabi Alonso thanked his players for their attitude after another defeat and said he was positive Real Madrid would overcome its

slump soon. Madrid lost 2-1 to Manchester City in the Champions League on Wednesday, remaining with only two wins in its last eight matches in all competitions.

"The players gave it everything they had, and I have nothing to criticize today. I really value their attitude. We have to keep going," Alonso said. "Right now the results aren't as good as we'd like.

"We're critical, we demand a lot of ourselves, and we understand the fans. We have to keep working hard. We believe we'll get through this because everything passes, and I'm convinced we can



icism against Alonso and prompted some jeers by the crowd at the Santiago Bernabeu stadium.

"We can understand why they whistle, and we have to accept it as normal because the demands here are so high," Alonso said. "We want to turn things around, improve our mental and physical condition, and get the injured players back. There's still a to show that the players are long way to go." Spanish together with the coach.

The result increased crit- media has been reporting there's a split between Alonso and part of the squad, but players were quick to come out support-

ing him after the defeat. Goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois and defender Raúl Asencio were among those saying the team was united and everyone was behind Alonso. Rodrygo hugged Alonso by the sideline after scoring and admitted it was

#### REAL MADRID TRIO BANNED FOR 2 MATCHES FOR REFEREE MISCONDUCT

**ASSOCIATED PRESS** Madrid

Real Madrid players Dani Carvajal, Álvaro Carreras and Endrick were suspended for two games for their behavior toward the refereeing crew in a Spanish league match last weekend.

Defender Carreras was sent off in stoppage time in Madrid's 2-0 home loss against Celta Vigo, a match in which the hosts finished with nine men as Fran García had already been shown a red card. Forward Endrick, an unused substitute, was sent off for complaining from the bench. Carvajal, who was on the bench but was not dressed for the game because  $% \left\{ 1,2,\ldots ,n\right\} =0$ of an injury, was accused of disrespecting the referees in the tunnel after the game at the Santiago Bernabeu stadium. García, sent off with two yellow cards, was handed a one-game suspension.

#### Bastar Olympic opens with 3,500 participants; new team comprises surrendered Naxalites

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jagdalpur (Chhattisgarh)

Chhattisgarh Chief Minister on the occasion. Vishnu Deo Sai on Thursday asserted that his government is committed to taking development to every village in the Bastar division, which he said is steadily moving towards peace, harmony and prosperity.

Addressing the 'Bastar Olympic 2025' at Indira Jagdalpur, the headquarters of Bastar district, he said the massive participation of youth, including the surrendered Naxalites and victims of Maoist vio-

Indian boxing legend MC Mary Kom was also present

Sai said the government is determined to connect the youth from tribal-dominated Bastar with the mainstream and ensure their active contribution to the region's development.

Winners of the Bastar Olympic would become role models and would be pro-Priyadarshini Stadium in vided advanced training and opportunities to compete at international levels, he said.

The government will ties and training to the



provide better opportuni- Chhattisgarh CM Vishnu Deo Sai, back right, Deputy CM Arun Sao, center, Olympic medalist and Padma Vibhushan awardee boxer Mary Kom, back second left, Mayor Sanjay Pandey, left, and others holding the torch during the Ience, has made the youth of Bastar, preparing opening ceremony of Bastar Olympics at Jagdalpur in Bastar district Chhattisgarh

them for global competitions, said Sai.

Those winning gold, silver, and bronze medals in the international Olympic Games will be awarded honorariums of ₹3 crore, ₹2 crore, and ₹1 crore, respec-

tively, he said. Deputy CM Vijay Sharma, who also holds the Home portfolio, called the Bastar Olympic an important initiative to integrate youth from interior regions into the mainstream.

The government has been encouraging the youth from the remote areas of Bastar by providing them with more opportunities, and this initiative will continue

in an even more robust form in the future, he added.

Mary Kom met the participants and encouraged

State's Sports and Youth Welfare Director Tanuja Salam said around 3,500 athletes from all seven districts of Bastar division and 761 participants from the 'Nua Bat' team are competing in the division-level events (finals) in Bastar Olympic this year.

The Nua Bat (a term in local Halbi dialect which means a 'new path') team comprises surrendered Naxalites and victims of Maoist violence as partici- said.

Last year, the event saw 1.65 lakh participants in division, district and block levels. The number has surged to over 3.92 lakh, including more than 2.27 lakh women, this year, she said.

The final stage of the Bastar Olympic, featuring 11 sporting disciplines, including athletics, archery, badminton, football, karate, kabaddi, kho-kho, volleyball and tug of war, will be held from December 11 to 13.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah will attend the closing ceremony on December 13, officials