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

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PIONEER IN SHORT

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...

FULL REPORT ON P2

VISITORS THROG 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 development. The sweeping victory 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 THE CONG GOVT'

Though the Panchayat Elections are held on non party 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

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 the election process.

CONTINUED ON >> P2

BJP CLAIMS SIGNIFICANT VICTORY IN LOCAL POLLS

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!

PNS ■ Vemulawada

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.

KTR rejects proposed Seeds Bill Says it is against farmers' interests

PNS ■ Hyderabad

Slamming it as anti-farmer, 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

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 Centre.

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 issues.

EVICION 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 res-

pectively, meaning tenants who have occupied premises belonging to government corporations like the 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. A two-judge apex court bench had, on March 17,

2015, referred the matters for adjudication by a three-judge bench. The key issue was whether the provisions of the PP Act would prevail over the state rent control laws in relation to premises let out prior to the commencement

of the Act. The three-judge bench on Thursday described the 2014 Suhas Pophale judgment as "palpably incorrect", "unjustified" and "bad in law".

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

CONTINUED ON >> P2



Cong brass commends Revanth for investment push to TG

PNS ■ New Delhi

Congress president 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

Venkataswamy and MPs Suresh Shetkar, Mandadi Anil Kumar, Porika Balaram Naik, Dr Mallu Ravi, Kunduru Raghuvver 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.

'CM is misusing public funds for his football pleasure'

BJPLP leader terms it as a financial crime

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.



"The government 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 questioned 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 party MPs should work proactively to make it stronger. Asking them to be active in social media, Modi urged them to have active relations with people and fight for their cause.

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 journey. "The NDA family represents a shared commitment to good governance, national development and regional aspirations," the PM said in a post on X. "Together, we will continue 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 Lok Kalyan Marg. The PM's dinner comes after the NDA's landslide victory in the recently held Bihar polls, in which the coalition secured



202 seats in the 243-member state assembly. Among the alliance partners, BJP won 89 seats, JD(U) 85, IJP (Ram Vilas) 19, Hindustani Awam Morcha (Secular) five, and Rashtriya Lok Morcha four. On Monday, NDA leaders from Bihar felicitated the prime minister for the coalition's massive

victory in the state. Modi told them to work with more vigour for the welfare of the people and said, "With great victory comes great responsibility". At the NDA parliamentary party meeting on Tuesday, the prime minister said India was now in a full-fledged "reform express" phase, where reforms

are happening rapidly and with clear intent. 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 potential.

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

PNS ■ Hyderabad

Students of a BC gurukul in Shamirpet village of Medchal-Malkajgiri 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, students complained of 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



ruling Congress for abandoning 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 post stated.

'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 State Department warned that foreign parents who come to the States for the primary purpose of giving birth to obtain citizenship for the child would be barred 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

PNS ■ Kolkata

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.

"Why should they (husbands) be exempted?" he



said. If one doesn't respect 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 holding particular portfolios did not look into this

aspect," to prevent such 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 'A*te-A-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 not part of conjugal love, it is violence."

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

PNS ■ New Delhi

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 two-day 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 the US will continue to work



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 tariffs on Indian goods to a whopping 50 per cent in

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 developments, an Indian readout said.

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 Jnaneswari 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

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 development 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.

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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 BJP, 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 victory.

He added that the 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

direction in rural governance.

He remarked that social justice 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 party, and the government is committed to accelerating rural development.

He said the Congress government is moving ahead with a vision to strengthen the Panchayat Raj system and transform every village 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 BJP.

The BJP will contest even more strongly in the remaining Phase-2 and Phase-3 local body elections. He asked BJP 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 the accused.

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 elec-

tronic 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 non-bailable warrant was issued against her.

The court directed her appearance on February 5,

when the next hearing takes 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 industry.

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

declared by a larger bench.

"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 propriety," 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 two-judge 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.



TG must lead in numismatics and heritage studies: DCM

PNS ■ Hyderabad

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 Human Resource Development Institute on Thursday, he said he hopes that this seminar, which is being held over two days, will not remain just an academic event but will serve as a spark-an intellectual lighting 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-



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 has one of the richest

coinage traditions in the world. From the 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

reveals an entire miniature 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,'" he joked. In an age when India leads the world in digital payments and fintech innovation-when we see more QR codes than pause-these 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, but studying thought.

Vigilance secretary cautions public against digital arrest

PNS ■ Hyderabad

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 every 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 scammers 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 fraud-

sters, 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 should just disconnect.

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 Telangana: Cultural Heritage and Next-Gen Tourism". A large number 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, Birad Rajaram, P

Padmavathi, and Gopi Bailupalla spoke at the conference. Subsequently, prominent personalities met with students at the conference titled "Telangana Rising - Empowering All, Growing Together". 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 interest in the more than 27 stalls set up at the conference venue, showcasing aerospace, Musi River development, handicrafts, tourism, education, Karimnagar Ikat, filigree, Cherial 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 state- ment announced that the global conference can be visited on Friday from 10 am to 7 pm.

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

PNS ■ Hyderabad

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 GHMC Maintenance Department and 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

residents and public representatives 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'. 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, GHMC Maintenance Department Chief Engineer Ratnakar, and others participated in the meeting.

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 first-ever 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 states while panel discussions, 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 Film Development 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 innovation, talent, and culture," he said.

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.

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



K Ilambarthi



RV Karnan

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

November 24th, directing that the requested information be provided immediately. However, Shyam 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 department. 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.

The flight cadet from Flying branch standing first in the order of merit will be awarded the coveted 'President's Plaque' as well as the 'Navanagar 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

The Telangana High Court 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 July 2024.

A division bench of Chief Justice Aparesh Kumar Singh and Justice Ghouse Meera Mohiuddin was hearing a public interest litigation (PIL) filed by Gadeela Raghuvver 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 January 7.

Prez Murmu to begin winter sojourn in Hyd from Dec 17

PNS ■ Hyderabad

President Droupadi Murmu will visit Hyderabad for her winter sojourn at the Rashtrapati Nilayam here from December 17 to 21. Telangana government Chief Secretary K 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 honeybees on the premises, it said. DGP B Shivadhar Reddy

and several senior officials attended the meeting. The President of India visits the Rashtrapati Nilayam at

least once a year and conducts official business. Located at Bolarum in the 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.



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Order Order

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, Mohammad Saif, Javed, Soeb Khan, Nankau and Maroof Ali. It acquitting Khurshid, Shakeel and Afzal for lack of evidence and reserving the verdict on quantum of punishment.

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.

‘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 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 conviction and 10 year sentence in the case lodged under the provisions of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic

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 child.

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 to reduce the sentence below

the statutory minimum under section 20(b)(iii)(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 sentence along with fine.

ing Justice Joymalya Bagchi, said it was a difficult task to trace the elderly women, who had changed her residence in a far-flung village of Bihar and her last contact was lost as her local lawyer passed away, lauded the efforts of Railways and advocate Fauzia Shakil, who represented the widow pro bono (without any fees) to ensure she gets the financial relief.

"This young lawyer (Shakil), who represented

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

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

A smile on a poor person's face is what we want to earn nothing else," CJI Surya 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.

ECI can’t treat voters with doubt, SC told

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ 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 cast doubt on voters.

He said initiating an inquiry

based on a BLO's suspicion 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 import... It is their livelihood which drives them. We have a brain drain which is 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.

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 Punjab, 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

signal a conclusion. The 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 constitutional power.

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

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

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 Bhishnoi said it was not inclined to entertain the matter.

The top court was hearing an appeal filed by Bhatt seeking suspension of sentence in the case.

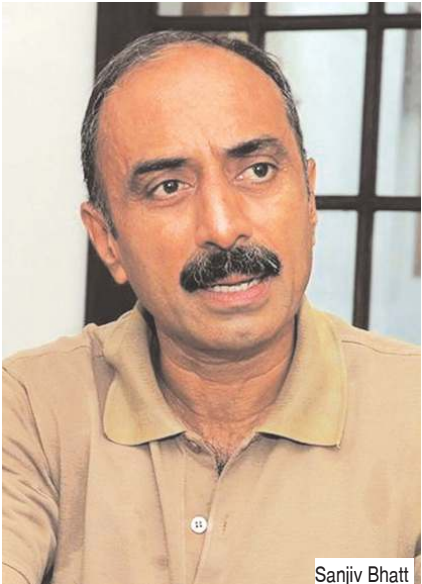
A sessions court in Palanpur town of Gujarat's Banaskantha district had sentenced Bhatt to 20 years in the case dating back to 1996.

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 Banaskantha district in 1996.

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 staying.

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 Gujarat High Court in 1999 demanding a thorough inquiry into the case. Bhatt



Sanjiv Bhatt

was arrested by the state CID in September 2018 in the drug case under the NDPS Act and is in Palanpur sub-jail since then.

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.


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

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

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 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.

"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 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 with them.



GOVERNMENT OF TELANGANA

OFFICE OF THE SPECIAL DEPUTY

COLLECTOR, LA, HAML, HYDERABAD

FORM-F

Notification by the Collector (LA), HAML

(See rule 7 (c))

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

Dated: 11-12-2025

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 Mandal of Hyderabad District for the Public purpose.

In response to the said Notifications the following affected persons (Property owners and others) have come forward to settle their claims through Negotiations. The details of the willing affected persons/Land Owners are as follows.

S.NO.	NOTIFICATION NO. & DATE	GAZETTE NO.&DATE
1	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	1. Manoj Jahagirdar 2. Makarand Jahagirdar Both sons of Late Shankar Rao Jahagirdar, R/o. 20-6-447, Shah Ali Banda, Charminar, Hyderabad-500065.	RHS-301	20-6-438 to 458	36.33
2	Smt. Santoshi W/o Raju Mahendrikar R/o. 20-6-472, Shah Ali 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.

Sd/-

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

DIPR No. 944/LA/PP/ADVT/AGENCY/2025-26

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 years ago.

“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.”

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

TONY DAS ■ Guwahati

Appealing to people to have faith in the judicial process, 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 on Friday.

“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

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

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ 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, officials 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 evacuation 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.

The Anjaw District 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.



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 family”.

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 (RAS).

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.

Earlier, on July 28, 2025, the



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 families from Jammu Division who were

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 2023.

He said in a written reply, GPS interference reporting started after the publication of Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) advisory circular 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 International Radio Frequency Interference and Wireless Monitoring Organisation is investigating the matter.

Mamata slams SIR, urges people to protest

SAUGAR SENGUPTA
■ Krishnagar

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 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 Krishnagar 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

mighty dharna (sit in demonstration) “if a single name is deleted from the voters’ lists and asked the people particularly women to get prepared for a sustained struggle on the streets.

Continuing her diatribe against the BJP Government, particularly Union Home Minister Amit Shah called him a dangerous person whose eyes emitted the “villainy” of Duryodhana and Duhshasana — the two anti-heroes 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 the BJP.

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 Israel.

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 Israel.

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 airline undertake the evaluation of the Goa–Tel Aviv



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 two-way 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 diverse tourism offerings and engaging key travel trade 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 most preferred Indian desti-

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 traveller interest.

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 opportunities and bolster travel flows between the two destinations.

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 Uttar Pradesh acknowledged infrastructure improvements 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, and Govardhan to ease 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, e-shuttle bus services, multi-level parking facilities, and a

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.

He said these highways serve as lifelines for Goa and Karnataka, but remain narrow, prone to landslides, and frequently blocked during monsoons.

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 Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Rural Livelihood Mission (DAY-NRLM).

It said the implementation of these schemes was being

hindered due to the non-release 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.

Editor's
TAKE

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 from screens.

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.

PIC TALK



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

DIGITAL EXPERIENCE

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AUSTRALIA'S SOCIAL MEDIA BAN SPARKS CALL FOR VIGILANCE

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 identities.

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 presence of grandparents, and 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 protects their curiosity from 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.

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

HASANI 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 Mohammad-laid 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 safeguard-an obligation, not a discretionary administrative decision. High Courts have echoed similar concerns.

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

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 The Pioneer

that failure to provide full CCTV coverage in any police station would be treated as contempt of court. This, however, has done little to change the ground reality. The disconnect 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 Paramvir Singh Saini (2021)-the Court expanded guidelines, with Justice Rohinton Nariman stressing that installing CCTV cameras was a constitutional necessity rooted in Articles 21 and 22. Yet, the implementation remains 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 Padmanabhiiah 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, includ-

ing 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. Jayaraj 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 Jayaraj'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 to change their uniforms twice 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 demands genuine accountability.

The Pioneer
SINCE 1865

Why educating girls is not enough: Bridge the skill gap

DEVENDRA KUMAR

2ND 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

structural issue: literacy and academic qualifications, although essential, do not automatically translate into employability. Many graduates lack the practical, digital, and workplace skills demanded by contemporary industries. Compounding this are entrenched social norms and cultural expectations that often overshadow the benefits of education. For many girls, familial restrictions, gender stereotypes, and ideas about "appropriate" work limit their ability to turn education into financial independence.

These social barriers shape everything-from whether 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 unsta-

ble jobs with little chance of mobility. Skill development can change this trajectory. Training in digital literacy helps women shift from low-productivity work to stable, better-paying opportunities. Today's industries-whether healthcare, manufacturing, hospitality, technology, or retail-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, 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

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 anew

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 diya 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 it-artisans 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

FIRST
Column



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 nuclear-age 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 high-stakes 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 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 United States feared that India’s policies towards its neighbours, coupled with its Soviet alignment, could destabilise South Asia while simultaneously granting Moscow a strategic 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

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 per cent secondary tariff imposed on

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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 2024-25, 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 nuclear-powered attack submarine, with delivery scheduled for 2028, signals an unprecedented deepening of underwater capabilities.

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 military-industrial 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.

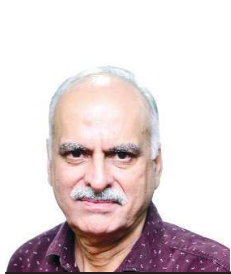
Sanctions, however, remain a persistent backdrop. The European Union, under Ursula von der Leyen, has attempted to

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 US-led 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 high-tech 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, high-technology 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
ANAND

A rather mysterious post appeared on the social-media 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 BJP-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 yet 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

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&K-centric 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 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 J&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-century-old tradition of ‘Durbars’ that entails shifting the capital to Jammu and Kashmir in winters and summers respectively. This was

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.

Durbars 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 Durbars 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 credibility left?

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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The Pioneer



NASIR
ALI

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 metropolitan areas.

The rapid development in remote regions underscores this change. When a multi-purpose indoor hall opens in Arunachal Pradesh’s Kamle district or when Himalayan states receive hundreds of crores for sports facilities, it reflects a deeper reorientation of development 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-performance 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 Gallant Sports

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nasirali-gallant

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

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

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

and 14 of Rakhine's 17 townships. 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 by 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 nor fair, and are mainly an effort to legitimise the army retaining power.

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 decision-making 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-in-law, Zubaeda 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 Security Council meeting on the Situation in Afghanistan on Wednesday, India's 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."

"We will continue our engagements with all stakeholders to augment our contribution to

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 India after the group seized power in Kabul in 2021. External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar held wide-ranging talks with Muttaqi, 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 re-established 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 Qaeda 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 thinly-veiled 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 Yunus-led National Consensus Commission. The announcement came a day after the CEC met President Mohammed Shahabuddin, who assured him "optimum support and cooperation" to conduct the general elections in a "free, fair and meaningful" manner. According to the election



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 withdrawal of candidature is January 20. The final list of candidates will be published on January 21. Election campaigns will begin

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 marred by controversy and boycott by major parties.

Six months after Hasina's victory in the 2024 election,

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.

The interim Government has disbanded Hasina's Awami League.

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

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Jerusalem

Rains drenched Gaza's tent camps and dropping temperatures 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 PTI

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 envi-

ronments 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

floor," she said. Ahmad Abu 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

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 number lower.



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.



Mamta Mohandas



The Democratic Sangha Annual Forum 2025, presented by 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, MPK.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 co-founded by actor Regena Cassandra, the organization is built on the belief that an informed and engaged citizenry is the foundation of a vibrant democratic society.



Mamta Mohandas and Kusboo



Hebah Patel



Dr. Preethi Reddy



Deeppreet Bindra and Jayesh Ranjan



Udaya Dasari



Miheeka, Deepthi and Sakshi

PARTY

Photos by- SV Chary



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 Jacharla facility is being built with an initial capacity of 1000+ buses per year

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 Top Companies. Students will be Felicitated for getting seats in top Institutes at Begumpet.



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, Abhishek 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 Intex 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



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.

Highlighting Telangana's innovation-focused agenda under Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy, IPEMA-Poultry India said the momentum generated by the ongoing Telangana Rising Global Summit is reshaping the future of the poultry sector. Speaking at the 40th Annual Conference and National Symposium of the Indian Poultry Science Association (IPSAACON 2025) at PITSAU, Hyderabad, IPEMA noted that the state's push for technology, entrepreneurship and

research-driven development is positioning Telangana as India's Poultry Production for Protein Security in Viksit Bharat." Senior dignitaries including KVAFSU Vice-Chancellor Dr. K.C. Veeranna and IAS officer Dr. K. Ilambarithi 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 youth skill programmes.

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

ICICI 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 quarter as well – in Q1-FY2026 it was 99.60%.

vivo X300 series and national geographic creative works unite to capture india's

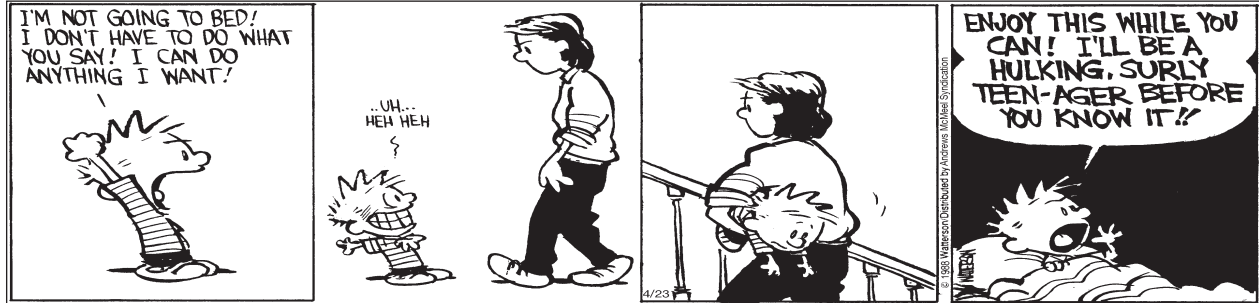
vivo, announced its collaboration with National Geographic Creative Works for 'Go Into The Wild', an immersive photography and storytelling initiative captured entirely on the all-new vivo X300 Series. Building on the success of past editions, this year's project takes a Nat Geo Explorer, and other creators 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 AI 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, Geelaj 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 AI and optical innovation to capture moments with striking clarity and emotion

FUN

ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



NANCY



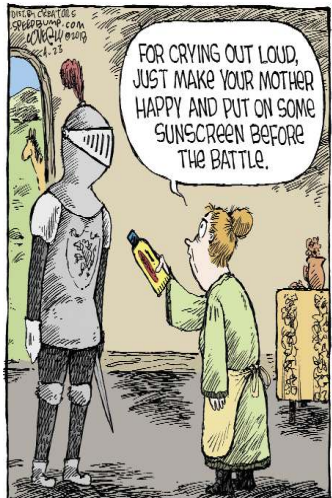
GINGER MEGGS



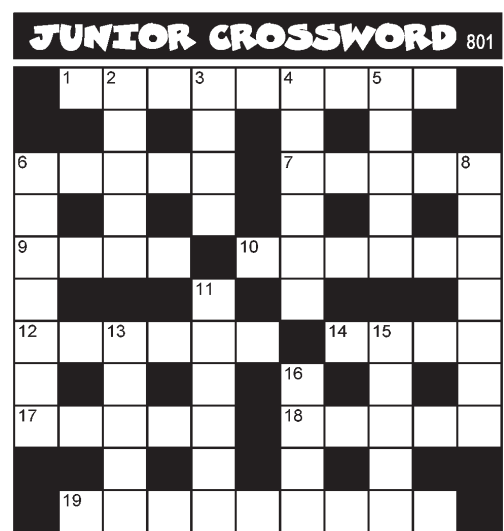
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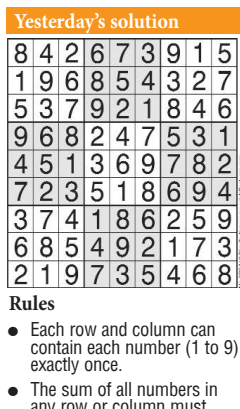
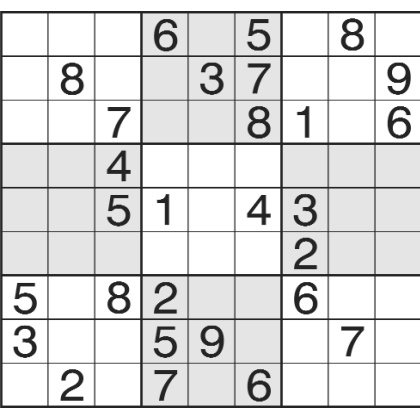
SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD



SUDOKU



Rules

- Each row and column can contain each number (1 to 9) exactly once.
- The sum of all numbers in any row or column must equal 45.

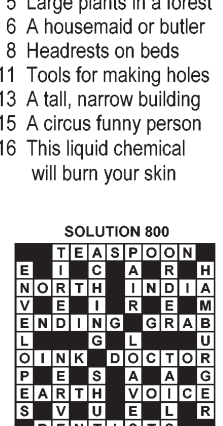
ACROSS

- The largest land animals
- A small rock
- Move slowly and quietly
- A flower with thorns on its stem
- An extinct animal or plant that has turned to rock
- Film stars
- A sound bouncing back to you
- A cloth for drying yourself
- People who make meals
- The leader of the USA

DOWN

- Large wild cats
- A writer of verse
- A ship's heavy metal hook

SOLUTION 800



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 Kalyani 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 by 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.

Salmon makes Arsenal debut in Champions League

ASSOCIATED PRESS
■ London

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 this season. 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 Champions League after 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 are there, they are ready to perform."

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 Lamine Yamal is the third youngest, having made his debut in the competition at the age of 16 years, 68 days in 2023. 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 before he's even played a senior domestic league or cup game for Arsenal.

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

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Jagdalpur (Chhattisgarh)

Chhattisgarh Chief Minister 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 Priyadarshini Stadium in Jagdalpur, the headquarters of Bastar district, he said the massive participation of youth, including the surrendered Naxalites and victims of Maoist violence, has made the event historic. Indian boxing legend MC Mary Kom was also present on the occasion. 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 provided advanced training and opportunities to compete at international levels, he said. The government will provide better opportunities and training to the youth of Bastar, preparing 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, respectively, 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 them. 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 participants. 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 said.

India names Sindhu, Lakshya for Asia Team Championships

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ New Delhi

Two-time Olympics medalist PV Sindhu, Lakshya 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 medalist, 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 Manneppalli. Satwik-Chirag will be lead the doubles unit along with Guwahati Masters runners-up Sai Pratheek K and Pruthvi Krishnamurthy Roy, as well as Hariharan Amsakarunan. In the women's category, Sindhu will be supported by world junior championships silver medalist Tanvi Sharma, Unnati Hooda, Rakshita Sree Santhosh Ramraj and Malvika Bansod in singles, Syed Modi International champions Gayatri Gopichand and Treasa Jolly will lead India's charge in the doubles while Priya Konjengbam, Shruti Mishra, and Tanisha Crasto complete the squad. 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 is capable of challenging for the crown in both categories."

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 seven-game 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 achieving in our process during each competition, our stronger mentality in everything," manager Unai Emery said ahead of the match at St. Jakob-Park in Basel. Emery has won the Europa League trophy four times during stints in charge of Sevilla and Villarreal. 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 will look to earn the first points against Braga. Teams placed ninth to 24th advance to the knock-out playoffs in February. In other games, Nottingham Forest is away at Utrecht, Malvika Bansod, Treasa Jolly, Gayatri Gopichand, Priya Konjengbam, Shruti, Tanisha.

Alonso feels Real Madrid will overcome rough patch

ASSOCIATED PRESS
■ 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 do it."

The result increased criticism 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 long way to go." Spanish media has been reporting there's a split between Alonso and part of the squad, but players were quick to come out supporting 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 to show that the players are together with the coach.

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 2023 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 leadership," 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 from March 1-21.

REAL MADRID TRIO BANNED FOR 2 MATCHES FOR REFEREE MISCONDUCT

ASSOCIATED PRESS
■ Madrid

Real Madrid players Dani Carvajal, Alvaro 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 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.