

Outcome of Census 2027 will serve as new compass for development: Amit Shah 2



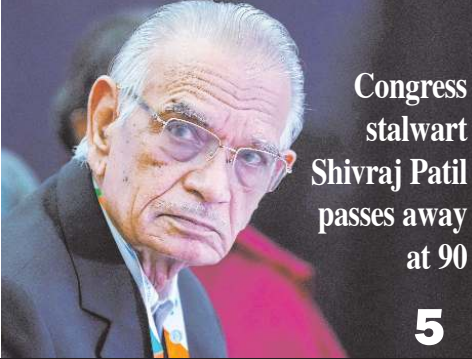
CM Revanth plays football with group of students 3



Indigo moves Delhi High Court for refund of ₹900 crore customs duty 4



Congress stalwart Shivraj Patil passes away at 90 5



India lose 1-2 to Spain in FIH Junior Women's World Cup 12



PIONEER IN SHORT

IRCTC STARTS MEAL TRIALS TO ELEVATE ON-BOARD DINING EXPERIENCE

In a significant move aimed at transforming the on-board dining experience for rail passengers, the Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation Ltd (IRCTC) has initiated Proof of Concept (PoC) meal trials across select Vande Bharat and Amrit Bharat trains. The initiative was announced on December 11, 2025, marking a decisive shift in the corporation's approach to catering, which is currently serving nearly 16.50 lakh...

FULL REPORT ON P2

CM PRAJAVANI: 266 APPLICATIONS RECEIVED

A total of 266 applications were received in the CM Prajavani programme organised by Mahatma Jyotiba Phule Praja Bhavan on Friday. In all, 80 applications were received for the Panchayat Raj and Rural Development, the Revenue Department, 98 for Indiramma India, 13 for the Municipal Department, and 01 for Pravasi Prajavani. Officials said that 57 applications were received for other departments. CM Prajavani In-charge and State Planning Commission...

FULL REPORT ON P3

SC SLAPS ₹1 LAKH COSTS ON NGO FOR FILING A WRIT PETITION AGAINST ITS VERDICT

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

FULL REPORT ON P4

MESSI'S GOAT INDIA TOUR SET TO DAZZLE

Argentine superstar Lionel Messi's long-awaited return to India, after a magical maiden visit back in 2011, will be high on glitz but low on actual football, promising a spectacle that may not recapture the raw sporting frenzy that once shook the Salt Lake Stadium here. His artistry in a competitive match will be missing this time. It would be quite unlike 2011 when more than 85,000 fans packed the stadium, some even perched on terrace edges, to watch Argentina edge...

FULL REPORT ON P12

QUOTE OF THE DAY



ALL ARRANGEMENTS HAVE BEEN COMPLETED TO TRANSFER THE AMOUNT DIRECTLY TO THE ACCOUNTS OF 55,904 FARMERS WHO SUPPLIED THEIR PRODUCE TO GOVERNMENT MAIZE PROCUREMENT CENTRES

— THUMMALA NAGESHWAR RAO, TG AGRICULTURE MINISTER

LONG-STANDING FRIENDSHIP WITH GERMANY

TG for collaboration in IT, defence, pharma sectors

Deputy CM Bhatti meets German Parliament team

PNS ■ Hyderabad

Deputy Chief Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka said that Germany and India have enjoyed a long-standing friendship, and expressed hope that this relationship will grow even stronger in the coming days. On Friday morning, he, along with Minister Sridhar Babu, met the German Parliament delegation at Praja Bhavan.

Addressing the delegation, the Deputy Chief Minister said that the Telangana government is ready to collaborate with Germany in the IT, defence and pharma sectors. He assured that Telangana would extend full support if Germany invests in these areas and proposed working together to promote mutual development.

He further stated that Telangana is keen to send skilled human resources to Germany and is interested in working jointly in Germany's renowned metallurgy and automobile manufacturing



sectors. He explained these opportunities in detail to

the German delegation. The Deputy CM added that

the Telangana government is proudly developing the

Bharat Future City, while also prioritising Musi River rejuvenation and agriculture-based sectors. Hyderabad continues to grow as an IT hub, and the government is ready to collaborate with Germany in these areas as well.

He also mentioned that a German Language Department could be set up at the Skill University being built in Bharat Future City, enabling Telangana students to learn the German language and pursue employment opportunities in Germany.

Cyber security a priority: Minister Sridhar Babu

IT and Industries Minister Duddilla Sridhar Babu informed the delegation that the Telangana government gives utmost importance to cyber security. He said a Cyber Centre of Excellence has been established with a long-term vision, and significant research is underway in

this domain. A cyber security cell has been set up under the leadership of a senior police officer, and two dedicated floors have been allocated for cyber security operations in the Integrated Command and Control Centre, he explained.

CONTINUED ON >> P2

German team praises TG's "Rising 2047 Vision Document"

The German Parliament delegation congratulated the Government of Telangana for unveiling the Telangana Rising 2047 Vision Document. They appreciated the clarity with which the document outlines goals across every sector and said it reflects the state's strong commitment to progress. They expressed interest in

cooperation with Telangana in cyber security and skilled labour development. The delegation noted that many German investors have already invested in India, and globally renowned companies such as BOSCH are operating here with significant workforce participation.

CONTINUED ON >> P2

HC hearing on Cabinet status to MLAs next week



PNS ■ Hyderabad

In response to BRS leader Erolia Srinivas filing a petition in the High Court challenging the government order giving Cabinet status to several Congress MLAs, the High Court took up the case on Friday and made key observations.

The PIL stated that giving Cabinet status to Congress leaders Kesava Rao, Pocharam Srinivas Reddy, Sudarshan Reddy, Premasagar, Chinna Reddy and nine others is illegal. The Chief Justice's Bench took up the hearing after the Registry objected. Arguments were made that only 15 per cent of the MLAs should be given Cabinet status.

CONTINUED ON >> P2

Kavitha vows to become CM, probe 'injustices' since 2014

PNS ■ Hyderabad

Accusing both the BRS and ruling Congress of "corruption and irregularities", suspended BRS MLK Kavitha on Friday said she would become the Chief Minister one day and conduct a probe into all the "injustices" committed since Telangana's formation in 2014.

She took strong exception to the allegations levelled against her husband by some BRS leaders and dismissed the "smear campaign" that she has struck an understanding with the



Congress.

"100 per cent, the industrial lands given on lease by government were selectively handed over to private persons in BRS government, by affixing signatures. Time has to decide who signed and who were behind it," she said.

CONTINUED ON >> P2

India and China hold talks on bilateral ties

PNS ■ Beijing

Senior officials from the foreign ministries of India and China have held a new round of consultations in Beijing, affirming positive progress in bilateral ties after a meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping in August.

Sujit Ghosh, Joint Secretary of the Ministry of External Affairs, and Liu Jinsong, Director-General of the Department of Asian Affairs of the Chinese Foreign Ministry, held consultations on Thursday, a press release by the Chinese Foreign Ministry here said.

The two sides affirmed

the recent positive progress in China-India relations and expressed their commitment to fully implementing the important common understandings reached between Modi and Xi during their meeting in Tianjin in August, it said.

Ghosh later called on Vice Foreign Minister Sun Weidong.

During their meeting, Sun said PM Modi and President Xi had a successful meeting in Tianjin on the sidelines of the SCO summit, providing guidance on elevating China-India relations to a new level.

He expressed hope that both sides will effectively deliver on the important common understandings

reached between their leaders, embrace a broader vision, build mutual trust, make solid efforts, work steadily to advance cooperation, respect each other, properly manage differences, and promote the continuous development of China-India relations, the release said.

CONTINUED ON >> P2

Cabinet approves scheme for conduct of Census 2027

PNS ■ New Delhi

The Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday, has approved the proposal for conducting Census of India 2027 at a cost of Rs 11,718.24 crore.

The Indian Census is the largest administrative and statistical exercise in the world. The Census of India would be conducted in two phases: (i) Houselisting and Housing Census - April to September, 2026 and (ii)



Population Enumeration (PE) - February 2027 (For the UT of Ladakh and snow bound non-synchronous areas of UT of Jammu & Kashmir and states of Himachal Pradesh

and Uttarakhand, PE shall be conducted in September, 2026). About 30 lakh field functionaries will complete this gigantic exercise of national importance. Use of

mobile app for data collection and the Central portal for monitoring purpose will ensure better quality data. Data dissemination will be much better and in a user friendly way so that all the queries on required parameters for policy making will be made available on the click of a button.

Census-as-a-service (Caas) will deliver data to ministries in a clean, machine-readable and actionable format.

CONTINUED ON >> P2

60 students fall sick in two State-run schools in TG

PNS ■ Hyderabad

Sixty students of two state-run schools suffered vomiting and other issues in separate incidents here on Friday. None of them is in a serious condition. Police said 44 students of a government school at Madhapur began vomiting after taking



mid-day meals.

They were rushed to a nearby government hospital and 38 of them needed only basic treatment to recover. However, six others, whose condition was a cause for concern, were admitted to a corporate super-specialty hospital. All six are expected to be discharged on December 13, police said.

As per preliminary findings, a sweet served in the lunch may have been contaminated.

CONTINUED ON >> P2

Outcome of Census 2027 will serve as new compass for development: Amit Shah

PNS ■ New Delhi

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Friday said the outcome of the Census 2027 will serve as the new compass for development, mirroring India's latest population data with more accuracy. Shah said the Union Cabinet approved the budget for Census 2027 by earmarking Rs 11,718.24 crore for the largest administrative and statistical exercise in the world. In a message posted on X, he said, "The precision in data will accelerate Modi Ji's vision of delivering the benefits of good governance

and development to citizens of every demographic denomination, making the slogan of 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas' a grand reality of New India in the Amrit Kaal." The Union Cabinet, at a meeting chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, approved the proposal to conduct the Census which will be the first digital exercise of its kind. The 16th edition of the Census since Independence will do a caste enumeration besides giving an option of self-enumeration to the citizens. The decadal exercise, which was scheduled



to take place in 2021, got postponed due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic across the country. The Census will be conducted in two phases -- house-listing and housing census from April to September, 2026; and population enumeration (PE) in

February 2027. For Ladakh and snow-bound non-synchronous areas of the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir and states of Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand, the PE exercise shall be conducted in September, 2026, the minister said. Around 30 lakh enumerators will visit each and every household and canvass a separate questionnaire for Houselisting & Housing Census and Population Enumeration. The Census 2027 will also capture caste data electronically in the PE phase.

IRCTC starts meal trials to elevate on-board dining experience

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

In a significant move aimed at transforming the on-board dining experience for rail passengers, the Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation Ltd (IRCTC) has initiated Proof of Concept (PoC) meal trials across select Vande Bharat and Amrit Bharat trains. The initiative was announced on December 11, 2025, marking a decisive shift in the corporation's approach to catering, which is currently serving nearly 16.50 lakh meals daily across the Indian Railways network, said a IRCTC Press release. Positioned as a "Paradigm Shift" in service quality, the PoC aims to bring evident improvements to the entire catering chain from kitchen infrastructure and meal production to transfer and on-board service. Notably, IRCTC is experi-



menting with de-linking meal production from meal service by onboarding reputed branded food and beverage operators, including industrial kitchens, restaurant chains and flight caterers. The effort seeks to provide passengers with fresher, more hygienic and restaurant-quality meals. The trials are being rolled out on several newly introduced trains, including Train Number: 20101/20102 - Nagpur-Secunderabad Vande Bharat Express by

M/s Haldiram's (Nagpur) and Elixir (Secunderabad), Train number: 14047/14048 Delhi-Sitamardi Amrit Bharat - M/s Touch Stone Foundation (Delhi). Passengers have already responded positively to the enhanced meal offerings, particularly the inclusion of diverse regional delicacies. IRCTC Stated that insights gathered from the ongoing trials will help shape future improvements and potential expansion of upgraded catering services for travellers nationwide.

Hyd tutor burns 7- yr-old with hot spoon for not studying

PNS ■ Hyderabad

A tuition teacher was booked for branding a 7-year-old boy in Hyderabad's Filmnagar police limits on Thursday. According to the Filmnagar police, the incident occurred on Thursday evening at OU Colony when the victim was attending tuition at the accused's house. The accused, identified as Sri Mansa, allegedly heated a metal spoon and pressed it against the child's hands, legs and face, claiming he was not concentrating on studies. After the boy, who is a Class I student, narrated his ordeal, his parents found at least eight burn marks on

the boy's body and rushed him to the Film Nagar. In their complaint, the parents said that the boy was unable to walk because of the burns. The Film Nagar Police shifted the child to Golkonda Area Hospital for medical tests and registered a case of assault and cruelty against the tutor. Based on a complaint, the police registered a case of assault and cruelty against the teacher and the investigation is underway. Police also said that the investigation is currently ongoing and appropriate legal action will follow based on the medical reports.

IRFC '2.0' era begins; targets Rs 60,000 cr sanctions

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Marking the beginning of what he termed the "IRFC 2.0 era," Indian Railway Finance Corporation's CMD Manoj Kumar Dubey on Friday outlined a long-term strategic vision for the Navratna CPSE at its 40th Foundation Day Celebration, declaring that IRFC is firmly positioned to cross ₹60,000 crore in sanctions by Q3. He said that this achievement signals the organisation's strong fundamentals, disciplined financial architecture and renewed strategic focus, setting the tone for the next phase of IRFC's growth story. Addressing the delegates

comprising serving and retired Indian Railway Accounts Service officers, Dubey said, "Forty years is not just a milestone for IRFC; it is a testament to the trust this institution has earned through discipline, stability and an unwavering commitment to national development. As we look ahead, our shared ambition is to elevate IRFC to even greater heights over the coming years, backed by sound fundamentals and a future-ready strategy." He further highlighted that the organisation is set to exceed its internal business targets for the year. "We are moving decisively towards crossing ₹60,000 crore in sanctions

by Q3. This reflects the confidence our partners place in us, the expanding role of IRFC in the national financing landscape and the growing capex appetite across the railway ecosystem," Dubey noted. The Foundation Day also featured a technical conclave attended by Aparna Garg, Member Finance, Railway Board, who acknowledged IRFC's critical role in empowering the financial strength of Indian Railways over the past four decades. Her presence underscored the deep institutional partnership between IRFC and the Railway Board in driving forward India's infrastructure priorities.

NDMC Vice-Chairman visits Virender Akhara to boost wrestling talent

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

In line with Prime Minister Modi's vision for sports, athlete empowerment, and strengthening India's global sporting excellence, NDMC Vice-Chairman Kuljeet Singh Chahal visited the renowned Virender Akhara in Chhara village, Jhajjar, Haryana. The akhara is one of India's leading wrestling training centres, where young athletes prepare for national and international championships. Head coach and Arjuna Awardee Virender Dahiya and Dushyant Lather were present during the visit, along with a large group of trainees. Wrestlers shared their experiences with Chahal, highlighting how training at Virender Akhara is giving them a strong foundation and international-level exposure. During the interaction, Kuljeet Singh Chahal said India continues to excel in sports because of its young population and the government's increased focus on developing sporting talent. He emphasised that sports build character, instil discipline and keep youth away from negative influences. Chahal personally met several young wrestlers, motivating them to stay focused,



work hard and remain dedicated to achieving success at the national and global levels. He also praised the coaches and the akhara's management team for nurturing talent and offering world-class training facilities. He informed the wrestlers about various government schemes supporting sports, including the Fit India Movement and Khelo India, which aim to identify young talent and provide improved infrastructure, coaching, and financial assistance. Chahal highlighted Haryana's rich wrestling tradition, which has consistently produced Olympic and international medal winners. He said akharas like Virender Akhara play a vital role in sustaining this legacy and inspiring more youngsters to pursue sports. He also encouraged the athletes to maintain a healthy balance between sports and education, urging them to stay away from drugs and harmful habits

and to focus instead on fitness and discipline. Chahal noted that the akhara has produced several international-level wrestlers who have earned India medals at the Asian Games, Commonwealth Games, and the Olympics. He stressed the importance of supporting such institutions to groom future champions. He further shared that both the Central and state governments are continuously upgrading sports infrastructure across rural and urban India through new stadiums, modern facilities, and advanced sports science systems, with special focus on youth, women, and athletes from disadvantaged backgrounds. Before concluding his visit, Kuljeet Singh Chahal thanked the coaches and management of Virender Akhara for their commitment to developing the next generation of wrestlers. He assured them that he would raise their concerns with the relevant authorities to secure better facilities and support. The young wrestlers expressed their excitement over Chahal's visit, saying his encouragement had boosted their motivation and strengthened their resolve to achieve big in the world of sports.

IFSEC India 2025 spotlights security and surveillance

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The 18th edition of IFSEC India 2025, organised by Informa Markets in India, opened today at Bharat Mandapam, presenting the country's rapidly advancing security and surveillance ecosystem. The event brings together senior Government officials, police and defence representatives, enterprise security leaders and top technology innovators to explore next-generation solutions across AI-driven surveillance, IoT-enabled infrastructure, fire safety and integrated command systems. This year's edition is the largest so far, featuring over 150 exhibitors, more than



350 brands and an expected 20,000 industry visitors. The theme, "Shaping Nations, Securing Futures," highlights India's evolving national security priorities amid digital transformation and urban expansion. Speaking at the inauguration, senior officials emphasised the need for

advanced cybersecurity frameworks. Alok Tiwari of NICSI said cyberattacks on Government networks have risen nearly sevenfold post Operation Sindoor, underscoring vulnerabilities in ministries and data centres. He also warned that quantum computing could render

existing algorithms obsolete by 2028, calling for quantum-resilient security systems. Smt Padma Jaiswal, Secretary of the UT of Puducherry, noted that cybercrime has grown into a trillion-dollar global threat, urging stronger public-private partnerships to safeguard India's expanding digital economy. Yogesh Mudras, Managing Director of Informa Markets in India, said the country's electronic security market has grown into a ₹1 lakh crore opportunity, driven by safe-city projects, metro networks, industrial automation and AI-led security infrastructure. Day 1 also featured panel discussions on corporate security, AI-enabled surveillance and deep-tech innovations, with participation from leading global and domestic firms. The event continues tomorrow with sessions on logistics security, drone-based surveillance and certification standards by MeitY, RBI and Meta.

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Cyber security...

He added that cyber security teams have also been formed in the districts. Economic offences are steadily declining, and the state is using top AI tools to prevent financial cyber fraud and phishing attacks, he said.

German team...

They also said many German engineers are working in India, particularly in Telangana. They mentioned that around 60,000 students from India are currently studying in Germany in various courses and added that India and Telangana in particular has no shortage of talented students and skilled labour. German Delegation Members The delegation was headed by: Josef Oster, Member of German Parliament, CDU/CSU; Daniel Kölbl, Member of German Parliament, CDU/CSU; Tijen Ataoğlu, Member of German Parliament, CDU/CSU; Dr Bernd Baumann, Member of German Parliament, Alternative for Germany; Prof. Lars Castellucci, Member of German Parliament, Social Democratic Party; Lamya Kaddor, Member of German Parliament, Alliance 90/The Greens; Clara Bonger,

Member of German Parliament, The Left; Dr Christina Ziegenhorn, Secretariat, Parliamentary Committee on Internal Affairs, German Bundestag;

KTR: Countdown...

KTR said that even if the Congress party is in power for the next three years, the villagers have come to a conclusion that no development work will be done in the villages. That is why the ruling party has faced such negative results in the Panchayat elections. He said that the Congress did not win even half the seats and emerged with a margin of 10 to 20 votes in many areas, it is clear that the countdown for the Congress has started from the villages. He said that even after two years, the people of the rural areas have not forgotten the deception done in the name of six guarantees, pension hike, Mahalaxmi and Tulam gold guarantee. He said that the Panchayat election results have made this clear. He said that these results have proven that the farmers have remembered the hardships faced by farmers who had to wait for months for urea bags, the bogus promises made in the name of

bonuses, and the inability to sell the harvested crop.

HC hearing on...

Erolla Srinivas explained that only the Chief Minister and ministers should have Cabinet status. The court has issued orders to reject the Registry's objections and allocate a number. The court recalled that the current Chief Minister Revanth Reddy had filed a PIL in 2017 challenging the granting of Cabinet status in the previous BRS government. The Telangana High Court has directed the Registry to place the PIL filed by CM Revanth Reddy and the BRS petitions together before it for hearing next week.

Kavitha vows to...

Claiming that Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy came to power by branding the BRS as corrupt but has not acted against such irregularities, she said the Congress government is silent because its leaders have ties with the private beneficiaries of the previous regime. "Revanth Reddy is silent as he feels that he became chief minister and not concerned about corruption, the state and the Congress promises.

They are silent as he is outrightly linked with the business transactions in BRS. Let time decide. We will see if anybody conducts inquiry and it comes out," she said. Kavitha, daughter of BRS president K Chandrasekhar Rao, reiterated that she would become the Chief Minister one day and probe all irregularities if no action is taken on them. "If nothing happens, I will get time. I will become CM one day with god's blessings. That day, I will inquire about all injustices till date since Telangana was formed in 2014," she said. Responding to allegations against her husband, she said they have done no wrong.

According to Kavitha, her husband's phone was tapped at the behest of BRS leaders. She said she would hand over details of certain alleged irregularities in land issues during the BRS regime to CBI, ED and vigilance. Kavitha said was not concerned with the 10 years of BRS rule, noting that she was confined to Nizamabad Lok Sabha which she had represented in Parliament. She said despite expressing her desire to contest the Lok Sabha polls she was fielded for an MLC seat when BRS was in power. Amid BRS' criticism of the

Congress government over its Hyderabad Industrial Lands Transformation Policy (HILTP), she asked, "Who 'sowed seeds for the policy?' "Distillery lands which were given on lease were sold off. Double bedroom houses should be constructed for poor in leased lands. Hospitals and schools should be built. How they were sold off to private persons? Was it not KTR (her brother and BRS leader K T Rama Rao) who signed on it?" she questioned. Kavitha also said she never received the party's full support since she had returned to India to enter public life. Both the BRS and Congress are yet to respond.

Former TG intel...

Those named as accused in the case along with others had allegedly developed profiles of several persons unauthorised 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. They were also accused of conspiring in destroying the records to cause disappearance of evidence of their crimes, police had earlier said.

Rao's surrender on Friday came on the direction of the SC. On Thursday, a bench comprising justices B V Nagarathna and R Mahadevan said the order was passed for the purpose of further investigation into the offences against Rao. According to the order, Rao may be declared a "proclaimed offender" if he does not appear before the court by June 20. If a person is declared a proclaimed offender, the court can order attachment of properties of the accused.

60 students fall...

In another incident, 16 students of a state-run minority residential welfare school complained of vomiting and loose motion. They were taken to a government hospital at King Koti where the doctors treated them for mild gastroenteritis and dehydration. No one is in danger. The cause of illness is under investigation, an official said.

India and China...

It quoted Ghosh as saying that India-China relations are very important. India is willing to work together with China, under

the strategic guidance of the leaders of both countries, to resume institutional dialogue, strengthen exchanges and cooperation, and consolidate the development momentum of India-China relations, he said, the release added.

Nine killed as bus...

The accident occurred near the China Wall, which was built to prevent vehicles from plunging off the road. "We don't think the death toll will rise, and the four critically injured persons are doing okay," said a police official. The SP said the bus was carrying people from Chittoor area, who had completed a visit to Araku and were proceeding to Sri Rama temple at Bhadrachalam in Telangana district. A case was registered under Section 106 (which deals with causing death by rash and negligent driving) of BNS. The Chief Minister spoke to officials to check on the treatment being provided to the injured, said an official release. Officials apprised Naidu that the injured persons were shifted to Chinturu hospital and other hospitals for better treatment. Roads and Buildings (R&B) M Ram Prasad Reddy

announced an ex-gratia of Rs 5 lakh each for the deceased persons and Rs 2 lakh each for the injured. He said the Centre provided an additional aid of Rs 2 lakh each to the deceased and Rs 50,000 each to the injured. State Home Minister Vangalapudi Anitha inspected the accident site and said rash driving contributed to the accident. Anitha said travel on ghat roads will be barred at night time to prevent such mishaps, the release added.

Cabinet approves...

Census of India 2027 will cover the entire population in the country. Implementation strategy and targets: The Census process involves visiting each and every household and canvassing separate questionnaire for Houselisting & Housing Census and Population enumeration. The enumerators, generally government teachers and appointed by the State governments, will be doing the field work of Census in addition to their regular duties. Other Census functionaries at Sub-district, District and State levels will also be appointed by the State/District Administration.



AHEAD OF FRIENDLY MATCH WITH MESSI

CM Revanth plays football with group of students

PNS ■ Hyderabad

Ahead of his friendly match with football legend Lionel Messi on December 13, Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy played the game with a group of students of Woxsen University here Thursday night.

The chief minister, wearing a jersey, played a practice match with the students at the university's football stadium, an official release said. Reddy would play the friendly match with Messi when the latter visits Hyderabad as part of his 'GOAT Tour to India 2025'. The RGI Cricket Stadium at Uppal here would be the venue for the event. "He (CM Revanth Reddy) plays a lot of football. You will definitely see him in action on the (December) 13th when he is going to play with one of my favourite players, Lionel Messi," former cricketer and state minister Mohammad Azharuddin said on December 8 during the Telangana Rising Global Summit organised by the state government.

Reddy, an avid football fan and player, had earlier played a practice match with a group of players at the MCRHRD Institute Ground here.

Telangana Director General of Police B Shivadhar Reddy on Thursday reviewed the security and other arrangements for Messi's event at the stadium.



He instructed that all departments should work in coordination and ensure tight security arrangements without causing any inconvenience to the spectators, the

Telangana Police said in a post on X. The officials informed the DGP that the 23-acre stadium, divided into four sectors, has a seating capacity of about 39,000. Meanwhile, BJP floor leader in the assembly, A Maheshwar Reddy, alleged that CM Revanth Reddy is misusing public money in the name of playing football.

In a statement, the BJP leader demanded that the CM should state what Telangana would get if he played football with Messi's team.

Maheshwar Reddy said he would undertake a protest on Friday against the alleged misuse of public money.

Tight security for Revanth, Messi football match today

PNS ■ Hyderabad

The field is ready for the CM Revanth Reddy and Messi football match. There is widespread interest in this match to be held at the Uppal Stadium on Saturday. Football match tickets have also been sold like hotcakes. In the wake of the Revanth, Messi match, Rachakonda CP Sudheer Babu has issued several key orders. Speaking to the media on Friday, he said that this is an event that will enhance the image of Hyderabad.

The match will be held on Saturday from 7 pm to 8 pm. Everyone is advised

to behave with discipline during the match. He said that passes will not be sold near the stadium. He said that passes have already been sold online. Those who do not have passes would not be allowed into the stadium. He revealed that Z category security has been arranged for Messi who will travel through the green channel.

The match will be telecast live. Those who do not have tickets are asked to stay at home and watch it on TV. Those who come to the match should reach the stadium three hours before.

Those who come late will not be allowed. Those who come for the match are advised to use public transport. He said that bringing personal vehicles will cause traffic problems.

He said that adequate arrangements have been made in 34 areas for parking vehicles. The CP said that everyone's cooperation is needed for the event to be successful. He warned that cases will be registered if anyone tries to meet Messi without permission. He said that 3,000 policemen will be on security duty for the match.

He said that the match

and security will be monitored through drones. He said that surveillance has been set up with 450 cameras. A control room will be set up and security will be monitored from time to time. He revealed that officers will also be present in the mufti and will keep an eye on the movements of the audience from time to time. Prohibited items should not be brought inside the stadium. Rachakonda CP Sudheer Babu said that SHE teams will also be available for the female spectators who come to watch the match.

ISSUING LAYOUT PERMISSIONS

Scope of GHMC and HMDA yet to be chalked out

PNS ■ Hyderabad

As the Greater Hyderabad Metropolitan City Corporation (GHMC) expands to the outer suburbs, there is no doubt about the authority to issue layouts and multi-storey construction permits in those areas. While HMDA is currently the only one issuing permits, there is interest in who will be given the responsibility of permits with the merger with the GHMC. The authority to issue permits in expanded areas is currently limited to the GHMC.

Since the GHMC and all the suburbs are under the jurisdiction of the Hyderabad Metropolitan City Development Authority (HMDA), the executive committee has to take a key decision on the transfer of powers. The scope of HMDA covers 11 districts including the GHMC and covers an area of 10,472 square kilometers. The HMDA is currently undertaking better urban planning activities as per the 2013 Master Plan-2030.

In this area, building construction and layout permissions were issued by GHMC, municipalities and corporations as per the HMDA master plan. The GHMC was also formed at the same time as the HMDA was formed in 2008. At that time, the HMDA transferred the



Since the GHMC and all the suburbs are under the jurisdiction of the Hyderabad Metropolitan City Development Authority (HMDA), the executive committee has to take a key decision on the transfer of powers

powers of issuing building construction, layout and gated community colony permissions. The HMDA is issuing them only in the suburban areas. The HMDA is currently issuing permissions in 27 municipalities and corporations in the suburbs. Recently, all those areas have been merged with the GHMC.

As soon as the State government issued the gazette merging the GHMC up to the outer limits, changes were made to BuildNow to that extent. Technical changes were made in BuildNow so that building construction permissions could be issued up to seven floors within just 1,000 square meters. Currently, building permits for buildings up to seven storeys in the 27 munici-

palities and corporations merged into the GHMC are being issued.

Layout, gated community colony permits and multi-storey building permits are being issued by the HMDA. In the merged areas, if anyone applies for the construction of multi-storeys and layouts, they go to the HMDA. Only those up to seven storeys in the 1,000 square meters go to the GHMC. In the old GHMC, permits were being issued for any number of multi-storey structures, layouts and gated community colonies. If the powers of granting all types of permits are to be transferred to the GHMC even in the expanded areas, the HMDA Executive Committee has to take a decision.

Rs 588 cr for maize procurement



PNS ■ Hyderabad

Agriculture Minister Thummala Nageshwar Rao has announced the disbursement of Rs 588 crore for the procurement of maize.

The Minister said that the amount will be deposited in the bank accounts of farmers Friday onwards. Rao added that all arrangements have been completed to transfer the amount directly to the accounts of 55,904 farmers who supplied their produce

to government procurement centres. Despite receiving no support from the Centre, Telangana has taken up maize procurement to ensure farmers do not incur losses, he said. So far, Telangana has procured 2.45 lakh metric tonnes of maize.

In a statement, Tummala said the government is committed to safeguarding farmers' interests and will continue to intervene whenever necessary to prevent distress.

Home loan publicity vans flagged off

PNS ■ Hyderabad

As part of 'SBI Home Loans Mega Property Expo' publicity campaign, S Radhakrishnan, Chief General Manager, Hyderabad Circle, Ravi Kumar Verma, General Manager (NW-1) and Satish Kumar, General Manager (NW-2) have flagged off publicity vans from local head office in Koti on Friday.

Speaking on the occasion, CGM Radhakrishnan said, "Till now Hyderabad Circle organised six such expos and tradition goes with 7th edition of SBI Home Loans Mega Property Expo scheduled from December 19th to 21st at Hall No.4, HITEC, Hyderabad.



Telangana is progressing steadily toward its aspirational 73 trillion economy by 2047, under the visionary ambitions of Telangana Rising 2047 and Viksit Bharat 2047. Radhakrishnan also shared that the SBI Hyderabad Circle is proud to be a strategic partner in this transformation and

recently crossed the monumental milestone of ₹ 4 Trillion business as on November 30.

SBI Hyderabad Circle REH business [Home & Home related] crossed ₹ 7750 Billion with 2.10 lakh home loan customers base in Telangana, and is marching confidently with a vision of ₹ 1 Trillion by June 2027.

Activist seeks defined maps, boundaries of new GHMC limits

PNS ■ Hyderabad

City-based researcher Srinivas Kodali on Friday, December 12, wrote to Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) commissioner RV Karnan seeking a map and defined boundaries of its new area. Last month the state government had approved the merger of 27 municipalities into the civic body, expanding its territory. Kodali also objected to the way the GHMC was expanded without any defined boundaries, stating that it goes against the principles of map making. "As per the notification, the GHMC area, including the recently merged 27 ULBs,

has been re-organised into 300 Election Wards under rule 8 of the Telangana Municipal Corporations (Delimitation of Wards) Rules 1996. It would take at least a month for anyone to look at 300 ward boundaries even when a map of any kind with real defined boundaries is shared," he said in his letter to the GHMC.

After the state government announced its decision and passed the order for GHMC's expansion, it gave a seven day period for anyone to bring forth objections and to give suggestions. Kodali also said that at least a month is needed for anyone to look at the new map.

"The boundaries have been announced in no regular format, neither are the revenue survey numbers mentioned nor is there a list of latitudes or longitudes of the boundary clearly defined," he said in his objection to the GHMC commissioner.

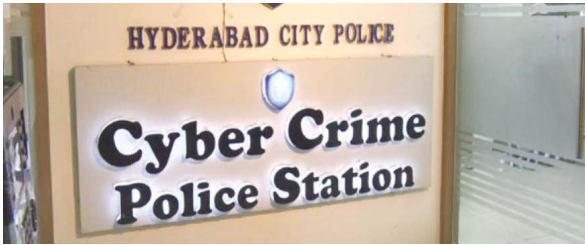
As of new the GHMC area has 150 wards. A delimitation exercise had also been carried out earlier to redistribute the population in the GHMC area to make seats even in terms of voter before the 2015 civic body elections. With the expansion, the Greater Hyderabad area will go up from about 650 square kilometers to over 2000 sq kms, nearly triple in size.

Money refunded to victims after reporting crime

PNS ■ Hyderabad

Cybercrime police helped two victims recover money lost to fraudsters consecutively after they reported the fraud during the peak golden hour. The first victim, a 26-year-old software engineer from Yousufguda, received a fake WhatsApp message on December 5, demanding a Rs 1,000 traffic fine. A link to download an APK file titled "M-Parivahan" was used to steal One Time Passwords (OTPs). The fraudsters used the OTP access and made transactions worth Rs 5,23,125.

The victim immediately called the cybercrime helpline 1930 and filed a complaint on the National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal,



after which notices were sent to ICICI Bank and Amazon Pay to halt or reverse transactions. Police recovered the entire amount of Rs 5.23 lakh and transferred it back to the victim.

A 53-year-old Amberpet resident similarly received an APK file on Wednesday, December 10, claiming to be an RBL Bank credit card update. Following the malware installation, he lost

Rs 1,25,822 in the fraud. According to the police, more fraudulent transactions were pending when the victim approached the cyber-crime police station. The police officials then traced the fraud to Flipkart and Mobikwik, a digital wallet that offers digital gift cards for shopping apps. The orders were subsequently cancelled, and Rs 1 lakh was refunded to the victim.

City records lowest temperature in 7 years

PNS ■ Hyderabad

Hyderabad woke up to a cold morning on Friday, as it recorded the lowest temperature in seven years.

According to Telangana weather enthusiast T Balaji, the University of Hyderabad (UoH) area recorded a temperature of 6.3 degrees Celsius. Moula Ali recorded the second lowest temperature at 7.3 degrees Celsius. Rajendra Nagar at 7.7 degree Celsius. The following areas in Hyderabad recorded single digit temperatures: Shivrampalli, 8.8 degrees Celsius, Alwal, 9.0 degrees Celsius, Gachibowli, 9.1 degrees Celsius, Bollaram, 9.3 degree Celsius, Maredpally, 10.1 degrees Celsius, Quthbullapur 10.2 degree Celsius and Jeedimetla, 11



According to the India Meteorological Department, Hyderabad, the city is likely to experience hazy conditions in the morning and clear blue skies in the evening

degree Celsius. According to the India Meteorological Department, Hyderabad, the city is likely to experience hazy conditions in the morning and clear blue skies in the evening. The temperature is likely to remain 3-4

degrees below normal on December 13 and 14.

Hyderabad's maximum and minimum temperature is likely to be 30 degrees and 12 degrees Celsius, respectively, over the next two days.

CM Prajavani: 266 applications received

PNS ■ Hyderabad

A total of 266 applications were received in the CM Prajavani programme organised by Mahatma Jyotiba Phule Praja Bhavan on Friday.

In all, 80 applications were received for the Panchayat Raj and Rural Development r the Revenue Department, 98 for Indiramma Indla, 13 for the Municipal Department, and 01 for Pravasi Prajavani. Officials said that 57 applications were received for other departments.

CM Prajavani In-charge and State Planning Commission Vice Chairman Dr G Chinna Reddy and State Nodal Officer Divya Devarajan received the applications, listened to the problems of the

people, spoke to the officials concerned over the phone and resolved many problems.

Meanwhile, the RTC employees, who were dismissed from their duties for various reasons, requested CM Prajavani In-charge Chinna Reddy to reinstate them. The employees submitted a petition to this effect. They brought to Chinna Reddy's attention the fact that they had lost their jobs due to minor reasons while working as drivers, conductors, security guards and mechanics. They honoured Chinna Reddy, demanding justice for them. Chinna Reddy assured that he would personally meet the RTC MD and ensure that justice is done.



Songs of saint-poet Venkata Dasu rendered at Chilkur Balaji temple

PNS ■ Hyderabad

A special spiritual and musical event was conducted on Friday at the Chilkur Balaji temple with profound devotion and cultural splendour. Eleven devotional compositions of the renowned Telugu saint-poet Rakamacharla Venkata Dasu were rendered for the first time ever, composed in traditional bhajan style by

Seshulatha Vishwanath. The renditions, steeped in Telangana's rich bhakti music heritage, moved the hearts of all devotees present.

Hereditary Archaka-cum-Trustees Dr MV Soundararajan and CS Gopalakrishna offered their blessings.

Chief Priest Rangarajan gave an insightful commentary on each composition, explaining the musical depth,



lyrical beauty, raga nuances, spiritual essence and the hallmark features of the Dasu tradition in a manner easily understood by the devotees.

Prominent Carnatic musicians including Raghavacharyulu, Seshulatha Vishwanath, Pratima Shashidhar and Vidya Bharati added melodic grace and devotional fervour to the event. Rakamacharla Venkata Dasu occupies a

distinguished place in the world of bhakti music. His works reflect profound devotion, poetic excellence, rich raga structure and spiritual depth comparable to the compositions of Bhadradi Ramadasu, Annamacharya, and Saint Tyagaraja. His keerthanas remain invaluable treasures that illuminate the glorious Telugu bhakti music tradition.



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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

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

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

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

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



Ex-judges slam impeachment move against Justice Swaminathan

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

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

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

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

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

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



Justice GR Swaminathan

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

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

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

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

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

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

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

"My faith was shaken," Mehta said.

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



CJ Surya Kant

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

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

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

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

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

Hegde offered to provide

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Noida

A fast-track court at Surajpur in Gautam Buddha Nagar has fixed December 18 for hearing the Uttar Pradesh Government's application to withdraw the 2015 mob lynching case of Mohammad Akhlaq in Dadri, officials and counsel for the victim's family said on Friday.

The State Government has sought withdrawal of charges against all the accused in the case, which pertains to the killing of Akhlaq in Bisahda village under Jarcha police station area over rumours that beef was stored in his home.

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

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

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

The plea cites restoration of social harmony as the reason for seeking withdrawal of the case.

The 52-year-old Akhlaq, a resident of Bisahda village in Dadri area of Gautam Buddha Nagar, was lynched to death on September 28, 2015 by a mob allegedly over suspicion that he had stored beef in his house.

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

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

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

States Focus



DISRUPT TERROR FINANCING IN J&K: LG TO POLICE

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



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

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

Jeevika Didis playing major role in overall Bihar development: CM

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Patna

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

Congress stalwart Shivraj Patil passes away at 90

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Mumbai

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

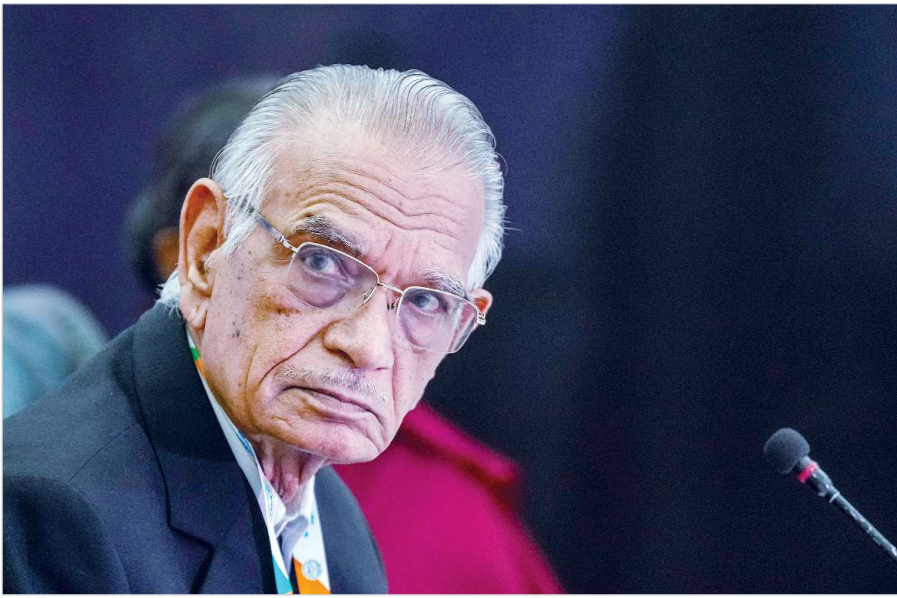
He is survived by his son Shailesh Patil, daughter-in-law Archana, who unsuccessfully contested the assembly polls last year on a BJP ticket against Congress' Amit Deshmukh from Latur city, and two granddaughters.

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

Fadnavis said his demise was deeply saddening.

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

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

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

Bengal SIR: 58 lakh names marked for deletion

SAUGAR SENGUPTA
■ Kolkata

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

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

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

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



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

number goes beyond 50 lakh more.

Incidentally, Bengal Opposition Leader Suwendu Adhikari had on several occasions said that there could be more than 1 to 1.5 crore fake voters in Bengal. "We are confident that there are more than 1 crore voters including Bangladeshi Muslims and

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

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

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

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Ahmedabad

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Zubeen death case: Promise made to people fulfilled with filing of chargesheet: Himanta

TONY DAS
■ Guwahati

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Friday asserted that the promise made to the people of the State in connection with singer Zubeen Garg's death has been fulfilled with the filing of the chargesheet by the Special Investigation Team (SIT) within the stipulated time frame.

"We had taken the responsibility of ensuring justice to Zubeen Garg and we fulfilled this with the SIT submitting the charge sheet within a record time in the court today," Sarma said on the sidelines of a programme in Kokrajhar.

Some of the accused have been charged with murder, and "now I am sure that the court will conduct the trial and give necessary punishment to the accused", he said. The SIT on Friday charged four of the seven accused with murder in its charge sheet filed in a Guwahati court.

The murder accused are the chief organiser of the North East India Festival, Shyamkanu Mahanta, Garg's secretary Siddhartha Sharma, and band members



Shekhar Jyoti Goswami and Amritprava Mahanta.

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

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

"We all know that the

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CM Mohan Yadav hails progress in jobs, education as MP Govt completes 2 years

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Bhopal

Chief Minister Mohan Yadav marked the completion of two years in office by presenting a detailed account of the Government's performance, outlining sector-wise achievements across welfare delivery, infrastructure expansion, law enforcement, youth support and economic growth.

Addressing mediapersons, on Friday, the Chief Minister said the administration has focused on decisive governance, accelerated development and reforms that directly impact citizens.

According to him, improving law and order has remained a central priority. Operations against land mafia, mining mafia and

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

alongside expansion of ambulance and emergency services.

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

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

Editor's

TAKE

SAARC: A regional dream needing renewal

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

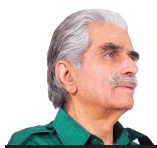
Forty years ago, South Asia envisioned a regional alliance that would serve the collective interests of a region home to one-fifth of humanity. Inspired by successful models like ASEAN, leaders believed that shared history and geography could form the foundation for meaningful cooperation. Yet the promise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

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

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

Agniveer and the broken Gorkha legacy

When India's Agniveer scheme brought the long-standing recruitment of Nepal Domiciled Gorkhas (NDGs) to a halt, three years on, the gap remains unaddressed, its strategic, political, and emotional repercussions deepening on both sides



ASHOK K MEHTA

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

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




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

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



AT THE
CHANAKYA
DIALOGUE IN
NOVEMBER 2025,
DEFENCE
SECRETARY
RAJESH SINGH
LAMENTED THAT
INDIA'S DEFENCE
SPENDING HAD
DIPPED BELOW 2
PER CENT OF
GDP

The writer, a retired Major General, served as Commander, IPKF (South), Sri Lanka, and was a founder member of the Defence Planning Staff, now the Integrated Defence Staff

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 The Pioneer

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

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

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

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

Among those advocating for a revival of recruitment is Subedar Khem Jung Gurung, a versatile ESM and member of the Janata Samajwadi Party. He told me in Pokhara that this is a "Gen Z ko sarkar," and that since youth want to join-even under Agniveer – the issue must be pursued. For Gorkhas, this is about preserving an identity forged in blood and history. Only Prime Minister Modi can amend Agniveer to carve out an exception for Nepal, but little attention has been paid to the scheme's impact on India-Nepal relations.

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

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

The Pioneer

SINCE 1865

The one true purpose of life: Taking shelter of God



AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

2ND OPINION
THE PIONEER

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

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

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

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

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

The Pioneer

SINCE 1865

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

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

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

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

The writer is a spiritual teacher

RAJINIKANTH AT SEVENTY-FIVE: A TIMELESS CINEMATIC PHENOMENON

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

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

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

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

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

CK SUBRAMANIAM | MUMBAI

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

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

End violence against children now

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

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

BLOOM

India's digital dilemma for children

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

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

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

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

K SAKUNTHALA | COIMBATORE

Australia's bold social media ban

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

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

DIMPLE WADHAWAN | KANPUR NAGAR

Goa nightclub inferno exposes India’s fire safety crisis

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

FIRST
Column



SATENDRA SINGH

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

Fire Safety Norms: Strong on Paper, Weak in Practice

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

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

A Growing Threat in a Rapidly Urbanising India

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

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

What India Can Learn from Global Disaster Frameworks

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

- Understanding Risks Before They Turn Deadly
- Authorities must identify vulnerable buildings, illegal constructions, and high-risk zones. AI-enabled monitoring systems, heat sensors, and real-time smoke detection tools can help pre-empt fires. Public awareness must grow: people should know where exits are, learn basic firefighting skills, and report unsafe establishments. Regular fire drills in schools, offices, and public buildings must become routine.
- Strengthening Governance and Accountability
- Fire departments require better staffing, equipment, and legal powers. Audits

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

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

Preparing for Emergencies and Rebuilding Better

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

A Call for Urgency, Accountability, and Change

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

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

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

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

The Pioneer
SINCE 1865

The collective ego: GDP over wisdom



ACHARYA PRASHANT

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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VAIDYA RAJESH KOTECHA

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

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

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

Rarely has a medicinal plant drawn such simultaneous attention from researchers, clinicians, regulators and global industry leaders.

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

Resurgence of Ashwagandha

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

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

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

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

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

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

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FROM THE WORLD

NEPAL
PM inducted 4 new ministers

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

PAKISTAN
5 cops injured in TTP attack

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

Thailand's Parliament dissolved amidst border clash

ASSOCIATED PRESS
■ Bangkok

Thailand's Parliament was dissolved Friday for new elections early next year as the country engaged in deadly fighting with Cambodia.

Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul dissolved the House of Representatives after getting approval from King Maha Vajiralongkorn, whose endorsement became effective Friday with its publication in the Royal Gazette.

Anutin had signalled the move with a Facebook post late Thursday saying: "I'd like to return power to the people." The election must be held 45 to 60 days after the royal endorsement, a period during which Anutin will head a caretaker Government with limited powers that cannot approve a new budget.

The move comes at a tricky political moment, as Thailand is engaged in large-scale combat with Cambodia over a longstanding border dispute.

Anutin has been prime minister for just three months, succeeding Paetongtarn Shinawatra, who served only a year in office before losing office over a scandal that erupted out of a



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

AP

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

constitution, imposed during a military Government, saying they want to make it more democratic.

The issue of constitutional change appeared to trigger the dissolution, after the People's Party prepared to call a no-confidence vote Thursday. That threat came after lawmakers from Anutin's Bhumjaithai Party voted in favour of a bill to amend the constitution that

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

erendum. Anutin served in Paetongtarn's former Government but resigned from his positions and withdrew his party from her coalition Government as she faced controversy over a phone call with Cambodia's Senate President Hun Sen in June. Paetongtarn, daughter of former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, was suspended from office ahead of the July fighting, after being found guilty of ethics violations over the politically compromising call.

With Thailand now again engaged in heavy combat against Cambodia, Anutin has embraced an aggressive military posture to appeal to nationalist public sentiment, and has said Thailand will keep fighting until its sovereignty and safety are guaranteed. After the five days of border fighting in July, US President Donald Trump pushed the two countries to agree on a ceasefire by threatening to withhold trade privileges from them.

Trump has vowed again to make peace between them after widespread fighting flared up again this week. If he employs the cudgel of high tariffs on Thai exports should Thailand fail to comply

with his peacemaking effort comply, it could cause serious damage to its already sluggish economy.

Trump said twice this week that he expects to speak by phone with the Thai and Cambodian leaders, expressing confidence that he would persuade them to stop the fighting. Anutin on Friday confirmed that he is scheduled to speak with Trump on Friday night, saying he would brief him on the latest situation along the border.

As of Thursday, about two dozen people had been reported killed in this week's fighting, while hundreds of thousands have been displaced on both sides. The Thai military estimates that 165 Cambodian soldiers have been killed, though no number has been officially announced by Phnom Penh.

"Anutin has capitalised on the renewed border tensions with Cambodia to portray himself as a leader willing to take a nationalist, hard-line stance in defending Thailand's sovereignty and territorial integrity," commented Napon Jatusripitak, director of the Centre for Politics and Geopolitics at Thailand Future, a Bangkok-based think tank.

Bilawal calls Imran Khan Pharaohs of their time

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Lahore

Pakistan People's Party chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari has called incarcerated former prime minister Imran Khan and ex-ISI chief Gen Faiz Hameed "pharaohs" of their time saying he welcomes his (Hameed) jail term.

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

even targeted women leaders like Faryal Talpur and Maryam Nawaz.

"Today both are reaping what they had sown," Bilawal said and added Gen Faiz, who was "so intoxicated" by power that he violated his oath and targeted politicians, media owners, businessmen and others.

The PPP chief advised Khan and Gen Faiz to seek forgiveness for their crimes from God. "Both should seek mercy from God. This should be a message that such mistakes must not be repeated by anyone," he said during an event at Chiniot district, about 200 kilometres from Lahore. Khan and his party, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), on the other hand have been accusing the incumbent military establishment of openly interfering in politics, stealing its mandate of last year's general elections and engineering court verdicts against its leaders.

Bulgarian Parliament approves PM Rosen resignation

ASSOCIATED PRESS
■ Sofia

Bulgarian Parliament on Friday approved the resignation of the coalition Government of Prime Minister Rosen Zhelyazkov amid nationwide anti-corruption protests, and weeks ahead of the country's scheduled euro zone entry.

Protesters, many of them young Bulgarians, have been protesting in the tens of thousands across the nation for weeks. The direct trigger was a proposed budget for next year that would have increased taxes and social security contributions to finance more state spending. The deeper cause, however, was rising anger over a perception of widespread corruption among the political elite, and a sense that a lack of justice prevails for regular citizens. The protests and the fall of the 9th Government in five years underlined the political instability in the country as it plans to join the common European currency. The 240-seat chamber



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

AP

voted 127-0 to accept the resignation. The Cabinet will continue performing its duties until a new Government is elected.

Zhelyazkov's minority Government survived six votes of no confidence since it was appointed in January, but this time the large turnout of protesters on the streets changed the game.

The prime minister announced his resignation on Thursday saying it was a

direct response to the growing public pressure and that the demand for the Government to step down had become impossible to ignore. "Vox populi, vox Dei," Zhelyazkov said, using a Latin expression meaning "the voice of the people is the voice of God."

In a next step, President Rumen Radev must now give the biggest group in parliament the chance to form a new Government. If that fails,

the second-largest grouping will get a chance before the president chooses a candidate. If all attempts fail -- which is likely -- Radev will appoint a caretaker Cabinet until a new election is held.

Political analysts expect that another election -- which would be the eighth since 2021 -- would likely produce another deeply fragmented parliament with difficulty forming a stable Government.

Indian High Commission in Singapore opens OSC to help women

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Singapore

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

THE CENTRE WILL OFFER INTEGRATED SUPPORT SERVICES INCLUDING LEGAL AID, MEDICAL ASSISTANCE, PSYCHOLOGICAL COUNSELLING

assistance would be extended to distressed Indian women to cover legal, medical and other expenses," he said. The centre will offer integrated support services including legal aid, medical assistance, psychological counselling, temporary shelter, and emergency response for women facing physical, sexual, emotional, psychological, or economic abuse. Located within the High Commission's

premises, the OSC aims to create a safe, accessible environment where women can seek help without stigma or delay.

The initiative is supported by India's Ministry of External Affairs and funded through the Indian Community Welfare Fund (ICWF). Similar centres have been launched in Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Toronto, Canada. By integrating emergency care, counselling, and legal guidance under one roof, the One Stop Centre aims to empower women, reaffirming India's commitment to protecting its citizens abroad and promoting gender equality through action and compassion, the High Commission said.

Washington floods sweep away homes, families stranded

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Mount Vernon

Days of torrential rain in Washington state has caused historic floods that have stranded families on rooftops, washed over bridges and ripped at least two homes from their foundations, and experts warned that even more flooding expected Friday could be catastrophic.

Washington is under a state of emergency and evacuation orders are in place for tens of thousands of residents. Gov Bob Ferguson on Thursday urged everyone to follow evacuation instructions as yet another river neared record levels.

"I understand that many in our state have experienced significant floods in the past," he said on the social platform X. "However, we're looking at a historic situation."

About 78,000 residents of a major agricultural region north of Seattle were ordered to evacuate the floodplain of the Skagit River, which was expected to crest Friday morning.

The floods were impacting large parts of the state, with several bridges



flooded and some major roads inundated or washed out. Some roads had no alternate routes and no estimated reopening time, including a large part of state Route 410.

A landslide blocked part of Interstate 90 east of Seattle, with photos showing vehicles trapped by tree trunks, branches, mud and standing water. In the north near the US-Canada border, the cities of

Sumas, Nooksack and Everson were evacuated after being inundated. The border crossing at Sumas was closed and Amtrak suspended trains between Seattle and Vancouver, BC.

Sumas Mayor Bruce Bosch said much of the city has been "devastated" by the high waters just four years after a similar flood.

The Snohomish River surged nearly

a foot (30 centimetres) higher than its record Thursday in the picturesque city that shares its name, while the Skagit River rose just above its record Thursday night in Mount Vernon, according to the National Water Prediction Service. Earlier Thursday, the Skagit just missed its previous record as flooding surged through the mountain town of Concrete.

The waters stopped just short of getting inside Mariah Brosa's raised riverfront home in Concrete, but the raging river still slapped debris against her home and totalled her fiancé's work car, she said.

"I didn't think it would come this high," she said. Flooding from the Skagit has long plagued Mount Vernon, the largest city in Skagit County with some 35,000 residents. Flooding in 2003 displaced hundreds of people.

A floodwall that protects downtown passed a major test in 2021, when the river crested near record levels. Water was at the foot of the floodwall as of late Thursday morning, Mayor Peter Donovan said.

Noem defends Trump's immigration policies

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Washington

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



Chileans are divided on presidential runoff

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Santiago

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

GREATER HYDERABAD MUNICIPAL CORPORATION
'E' PROCUREMENT NOTICE
NIT No. 39/EE/CIR-20/SLPZ/GHMC/1/2025-26, Date : 12.12.2025
Category of work : CC road work. Estimate Amount (Rs in Lakhs) : 31.00. Start Date/Last Date & Time for Receipt of Bids : 15.12.2025 @ 93.00 PM, 18.12.2025 @ 03.00 PM. Name & Address, Officer Cell No: EE, CIR-20, SLPZ, GHMC, 9000115410. Sd/-, Executive Engineer
DIPR.No. 11972-PP/CL/ADVT/1/2025-26, Dt: 12.12.2025 Circle-20, GHMC.

OFFICE OF THE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL : ANDOLE-JOGIPET, DISTRICT: SANGAREDDY
Email: mcandolejogipet@gmail.com
E-PROCUREMENT TENDER NOTICE
Tender Notice No. E1/MCA/JPT/42/Andole/2025-26 Date: 15.12.2025
Tenders are invited on e-procurement platform of "Various Developmental works sanctioned in Andole Jogipet Municipality Under Nagarabhirudhi Funds and 15th FC Fund Estimate cost Rs:406.50 Lakh, No of Works:04. Commencement Date for Downloading Tender Document: 15-12-2025. Last date and time of submission of Tender : 22-12-2025 up to 10.30 AM. Date & Time of Opening of Technical Bid : 22-12-2025 at 10.30 AM. Date & Time of opening Financial Bid : 22-12-2025 at 3.00 PM. Sd/-, Commissioner, Andole-Jogipet Municipality.
DIPR.NO. 11991-PP/CL/ADVT/1/2025-26, Dt: 12.12.2025

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

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Washington

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

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



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

spective on advancing India-US collaboration. "Had a productive meeting with @RepYvetteClarke, Chair of the House @TheBlackCaucus and a steadfast supporter of strong India-US relations.

Appreciated her perspective on advancing India-US collaboration in the AI space, including data privacy and data security," Kwatra

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

The Summit, announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the France AI Action Summit, will be the first-ever global AI summit hosted in the Global South.

Radical leader shot in Bangladesh

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Dhaka

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

The Inqilab Mancha was on the forefront of a campaign to disband deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina's Awami League.

Police said three assailants on a motorbike shot Hadi as he initiated his election campaign at central Dhaka's Bijoy Nagar area — from where he stood as an independent candidate — in the afternoon.

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

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

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

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

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

KHALEDA PLACED ON VENTILATOR SUPPORT

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

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

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

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

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

KPK CM alleges Imran Khan subjected to mistreatment in jail



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Peshawar

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

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

Japan lifts tsunami advisory after 6.7 magnitude quake



ASSOCIATED PRESS
■ Tokyo

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

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

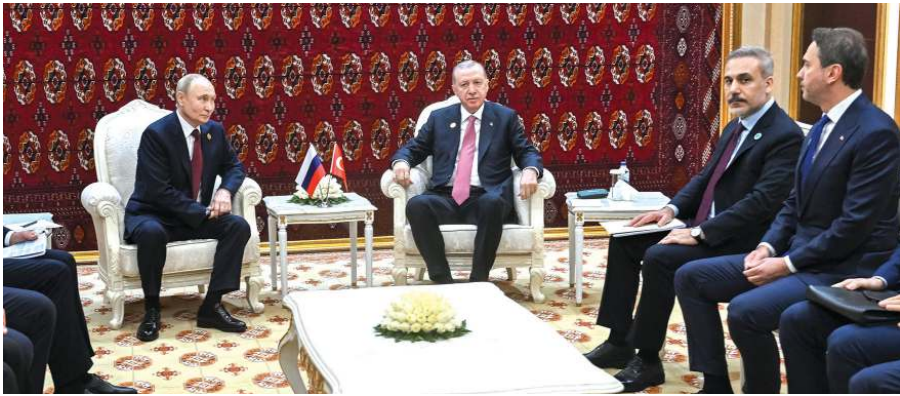
Russian police, National Guard to stay in Donbas: Kremlin

ASSOCIATED PRESS
■ Kyiv

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

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

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



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

order and organise life."

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

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

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

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

On Thursday, Trump compared the negotiations to a very complex real estate deal. He said that he wants to see more progress in talks before sending envoys to possible meetings with European leaders over the weekend. In October Trump said the Donbas region will have to be "cut up" to end the war. In recent months, Russia's army has made a determined push to gain control of all parts of Donetsk and neighbouring Luhansk, which together make up the valuable Donbas region.

Its slow slog across the Ukrainian countryside, using its significant advantage in troop numbers in a corrosive war of attrition, has been costly in terms of casualties and losses of armour. Although outnumbered, Ukrainian defenders have held firm in many areas and counterattacked in others.

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

ASSOCIATED PRESS
■ Minsk

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Danish intelligence report warns of US military threat

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Copenhagen

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



Germany summons Russian ambassador over cyberattacks

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Berlin

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



Jangaiah Polepogu



The Black Moon Art Exhibition inauguration by Srinath Kurra (MD – Alekhyia Homes), Prof. M. L. Anand Rao, Prof. Dr. Priti Samyukta, Aman Preet Kaur symbolizes the unseen dimensions of existence — mystery, introspection, and silence. Inspired by this cosmic event, the exhibition reflects a strong black and white visual language, blending imagination with scientific curiosity. This exhibition features 24 participating artists from various regions. Black Moon is a contemporary group art exhibition curated by Jangaiah Polepogu. The exhibition will be open to 10:00 AM and 6:00 PM. till to 14th December 2025 at Nehru Art Gallery, Masab Tank, Hyderabad.



Dr. Mahesh



Bosu



Ramu Maredu



Harith



Sweta



Vinila

Indian families seek phone free dinner tables - finds vivo switch Off study 2025

Vivo India released the seventh edition of its annual Switch Off Report understanding 'The Impact of Excessive Smartphone Usage on Parent-Child Relationships'. This year's edition reinforces the central purpose behind vivo's Switch Off initiative — encouraging people to foster better relationships with their smartphones and prioritize real life relationships. The report is the part of the larger Switch Off initiative which emphasizes spending more time with your loved ones. As digital connectivity becomes deeply woven into everyday life, the study explores how families are adapting to changing digital behaviour and uncovers two defining insights: families feeling dinner time as their most reliable moment of daily connection and children turning to AI as they feel their parents are too busy. The study highlights that 72% of children spend most time with their parents during dinner. With 91% of children saying conversations feel easier and more meaningful when phones are kept aside, dinner becomes a natural space where attention aligns and families reconnect. Underlining the focus behind the Switch Off campaign, Geetaj Channana, Head of Corporate Strategy, vivo India, The study was executed by CyberMedia Research (CMR), India's trusted market research and advisory firm.

LISTINGS

Discovery wraps up 2025 with brand new shows

Warner Bros. Discovery is closing out the year with a burst of new stories on Cartoon Network and POGO. As the festive mood settles in and kids and families gear up for Christmas time, the kids' channels are rolling out new shows along with fresh episodes of fan favourites on Discovery Kids that add cheer, colour and plenty of laughs to the holiday season. Adding to the Christmas cheer, Cartoon Network is set to kick off fun-tainment season for all fans with the launch of its new show, Om Nom Stories, premiering on December



15. The show will air Monday to Friday at 10:30 AM and on weekends from 8:30 AM onward. POGO brings even more year-end excitement with the launch of a new comedy show - Omi No. 1. Starting December 15, airing Monday to Friday at 11:30 AM and 7:00 PM, Omi No. 1 will be available for POGO viewers in Hindi, Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam and Kannada. Discovery Kids adds to the holiday cheer with its year-end stunt, Titoo: Shararat ka Grand Countdown, starting from December 25 to December 31, everyday 9:30 AM onwards. With the funniest pranks, storylines, rapid turns, and lighthearted escapades, Titoo is setting up a joyous holiday finale.

Aditya birla group's Aadyam handwoven announces Sobhita dhulipala as brand ambassador

Aadyam Handwoven, the corporate social enterprise by the Aditya Birla Group dedicated to preserving India's weaving legacies, today announced acclaimed actor and cultural tastemaker Sobhita Dhulipala as the official brand ambassador. The announcement was made at an exclusive press event held at La Panthera, BKC, Mumbai, marking a new chapter in Aadyam's evolving vision of Culture Beyond Textiles—an initiative that brings together the many facets of lived Indian traditions. For Aadyam Handwoven, textiles are vessels of memory, identity, and artistry. The partnership with Sobhita reflects a shared commitment to representing India's heritage with contemporary relevance. Recognised globally for her distinctive style, depth of performance, and respect for Indian craft traditions, Sobhita embodies the thoughtful modern Indian consumer Aadyam speaks to—one who values authenticity, artistry, and the stories behind what they choose to wear and live with. Speaking on this association, Manish Saxena, Business Lead at Aadyam Handwoven, said, "Aadyam has always stood for the people behind the loom, the cultures that shape our craft, and the traditions that continue to evolve. Sobhita is a woman of today who exemplifies this thinking with an innate sensitivity that is in tandem with our narrative. Her connect to handlooms is personal and intuitive, and her presence strengthens our endeavour to make Indian craftsmanship aspirational for a new generation."



Khandani Rajdhani, India's iconic destination for authentic Gujarati and Rajasthani thalis, proudly marks its return to Hyderabad with the launch of a brand-new outlet at Lakeshore Mall, Kukatpally. Opening on 12th December 2025, this new space brings back the beloved thali experience that Hyderabadi has long cherished — now in a refreshed, contemporary setting designed for today's diners. curated by Maharaj Bhawar Singh, featuring treasured recipes from Gujarat and Rajasthan. Aji Nair, CEO, Mirah Hospitality and Gourmet Solutions Pvt. Ltd. "This launch is our way of reconnecting with the city and offering a dining experience that brings together tradition, warmth, and the joy of sharing a meal with loved ones.



The Vishwa Manavadhikar Parishad (VMP) successfully organized the National Conference & Award Ceremony — 2025 on the occasion of the 77th Anniversary of International Human Rights Day, at Chhatrapati Sambhaji Nagar (Aurangabad), the prestigious VMP Bharat Gaurav Award was presented in the esteemed presence of Chief Guest Col. Nirdesh Shah, Lt. Col. Amit Prabhu, along with their Battalion CO 136 TA ECO BN MAHAR, and Dr. M. R. Ansari (Adv.), (National President, WHRC), Haji Sayed Layek, Adv. Jyoti Toshniwal-Malu. The award was conferred upon Dr. Vedala Srinivas (Hon) from Hyderabad in recognition of his commendable contributions and dedicated service in the field of social work.

Maruti Suzuki announces nationwide winter-special car care drive for customers

Maruti Suzuki India Limited, in collaboration with its dealer partners, has announced "Winter-Special Service Drive" for customers across the country. With every season bringing distinct car care needs, Maruti Suzuki organizes season specific car care drives to help customers keep their cars road-ready round the year. As the winter season sets in, the Company has started the winter-special car care drive, inviting customersto visit their nearest Maruti Suzuki authorized dealer service workshop for a comprehensive 27-point vehicle health inspection. This initiative aligns with the Company's commitment to providing complete peace of mind to its customers in the after-sales ownership experience. In addition, customers can also avail themselves of a complimentary car wash as part of the car care drive. The car care drive is active till 4th January 2026.

Lake Shore Expands Its National Retail Footprint with the Opening of Y-Junction Mall in Hyderabad

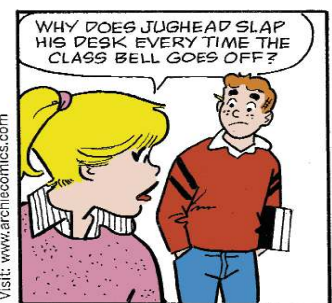
Lake Shore today announced the opening of Lake Shore Y-Junction, its newest retail destination in Hyderabad and the company's sixth operational asset nationwide. The launch strengthens Lake Shore's pan-India portfolio of community-centric retail destinations and marks its entry into the Hyderabad market. Y-Junction is a fully integrated retail development designed to serve one of Hyderabad's most densely populated, located at the confluence of Balanagar, Kukatpally and surrounding neighbourhoods — one of the city's most densely populated and fastest growing residential micro markets. With operational assets already in Delhi NCR (Gurgaon and Ghaziabad), the Mumbai Metropolitan Region (Thane and Vasa) and Koregaon Park in Pune, Y-Junction marks Lake Shore's

expansion into Hyderabad. Commenting on the opening, Ashwin Puri, Co-Founder and CEO of Lake Shore, said, "From the outset, our objective with Y-Junction was to create a destination that feels intuitive. This launch reinforces Lake Shore's position among India's top retail real-estate operators and further strengthens its standing within the country's organised Grade-A retail landscape. The company now boasts a portfolio of over 6.3 million square feet with more than 1000 stores and annual customer visits exceeding 25 million.

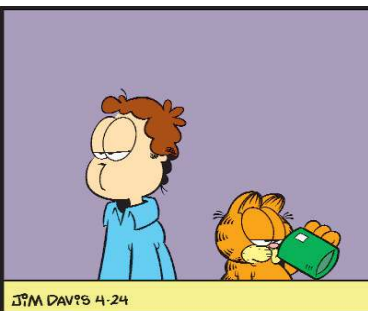


FUN

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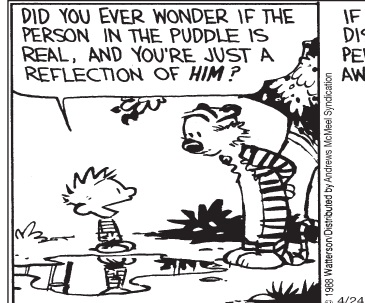
NANCY



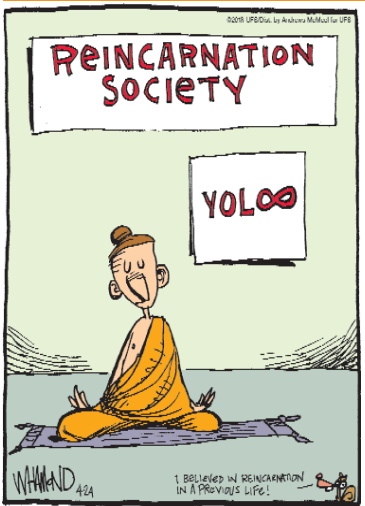
GINGER MEGGS



CALVIN AND HOBBS



REALITY CHECK



A soccer player in a pink jersey is captured in a moment of intense celebration, with his mouth wide open in a shout and his arms raised. He is wearing a pink jersey with black stripes on the sleeves and a black collar. The background shows a blurred crowd of spectators in a stadium, suggesting a high-stakes match.

A man and a woman are standing in a stall filled with soccer jerseys. The man, on the left, is wearing a white long-sleeved jersey with 'MESSI 10' and a photo of Messi on the back. The woman, on the right, is holding up a similar white jersey with 'MESSI 10' and a photo of Messi on the front. The stall is filled with various soccer jerseys, including Argentina's national team kit.

A group of four Indian hockey players in blue uniforms standing together on the field. The uniforms feature the 'oasis' and 'irish' logos. They are holding hockey sticks and looking towards the camera.

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