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PIIONEER IN SHORT

REFORM EXPRESS TO EASE LIFE: PM

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday urged lawmakers to ensure that laws and regulations are designed for citizens' convenience, not as a burden. Addressing an NDA parliamentary party meeting, he highlighted the Government's "Reform Express" initiative, emphasising that reforms should be citizen-centric, removing everyday hurdles and improving life. Modi encouraged MPs to share real problems faced by people to ensure reforms reach every household, calling for the elimination of unnecessary paperwork, repeated data submissions, and lengthy forms. He also praised the success of self-certification measures over the past decade, underscoring ease of life and ease of doing business as top priorities. Modi stressed that central, state, and local Governments, including municipalities and panchayats, must coordinate to implement reforms effectively. The meeting began with Modi being felicitated for NDA's landslide victory in the Bihar Assembly elections, where the alliance won 202 of 243 seats. Union ministers including Rajnath Singh, Amit Shah, and BJP president JP Nadda attended the meeting.

The Bystander

China positive on Putin's India visit.



LOCKHEED MARTIN PLANS INDIA FORAY

Lockheed Martin plans to establish a co-production facility for the C-130J Super Hercules military transport aircraft in India, marking the first such global hub outside the US. The move aligns with the Indian Air Force's (IAF) Medium Transport Aircraft (MTA) programme, which seeks to procure up to 80 tactical lift aircraft to replace aging AN-32 and IL-76 planes. Lockheed Martin, in partnership with Tata Advanced Systems, is bidding for the contract, highlighting the C-130J's reliability in India and 20 other countries. The IAF currently operates 12 C-130Js, with over 560 units delivered globally, accumulating more than three million flight hours. Tata Advanced Systems has also begun building a defence maintenance, repair, and overhaul (MRO) facility in Bengaluru, slated for completion by 2026, to support the aircraft.

DMK LEADS PUSH AGAINST JUDGE

Several opposition MPs, led by the DMK, have submitted a notice to Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla to move a motion seeking the removal of Madras High Court judge GR Swaminathan. The move comes after his order directing the Arulmighu Subramania Swamy temple authorities to ensure lighting of a traditional lamp at the deepathoon on Thiruparankundram hillock sparked controversy. Justice Swaminathan's December 1 order stated that lighting the lamp would not infringe on the rights of the adjacent dargah or the Muslim community. When the directive was not implemented, the judge allowed devotees to light the lamp under CISF protection. The DMK-led Tamil Nadu Government subsequently approached the Supreme Court, which has agreed to consider the case. Over 100 MPs, including Kanimozhi, TR Baalu, Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, and Akhilesh Yadav, signed the notice.

Modi-Nadella meet sparks Asia's biggest technology investment wave

RAJESH KUMAR ■ New Delhi

Microsoft will invest \$17.5 billion (₹1.58 lakh crore) in India between 2026 and 2029 to develop its cloud and Artificial Intelligence (AI) capacities. The announcement was made by the company CEO in a social media post after meeting Prime Minister Narendra Modi on December 9, Tuesday.

"Thank you, PM @narendramodi ji, for an inspiring conversation on India's AI opportunity. To support the country's ambitions, Microsoft is committing \$17.5B — our largest invest-

ment ever in Asia — to help build the infrastructure, skills, and sovereign capabilities needed for India's AI-first future. @PMOIndia," Satya Nadella posted on X.

In a press statement released shortly after the two leaders met, Microsoft said the announcement follows an earlier investment of \$3 billion — towards establishing cloud and AI infrastructure in Bengaluru over the next two years. "This will be our largest hyperscale region in India, comprising three availability zones — roughly equivalent in size to two Eden Gardens stadiums combined," a company



PM Narendra Modi meeting Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella in New Delhi PTI

statement read. "When it comes to AI, the world is optimistic about India! Had a very productive discussion with Mr. Satya Nadella. Happy to see India being the place where Microsoft will make its largest-ever investment in Asia. The youth of India will harness this opportunity to innovate and leverage the power of AI for a better planet," PM Modi posted on X. Microsoft's funding commitment is the third major AI-driven investment announced in the country in the past two months. The company has doubled its

commitment on developing AI skilled talent in India to 20 million by 2030 from 10 million it planned earlier. On October 14, Google announced plans to invest \$15 billion over the next five years to set up an AI hub in India, which will include the country's largest data centre in partnership with Adani Group. It was followed by a \$11 billion investment plan announced by Digital Connexion — a joint venture between Brookfield, Reliance Industries and US-based Digital Realty. In May 2023, Amazon announced plans to invest \$12.7 billion in India by 2030

into its local cloud and AI infrastructure across Telangana and Maharashtra. The company has already invested \$3.7 billion between 2016 and 2022 in India. Microsoft said that its India South Central cloud region, based in Hyderabad, is set to go live in mid-2026. "Microsoft's landmark investment signals India's rise as a reliable technology partner for the world. This partnership will set new benchmarks and drive the country's leap from digital public infrastructure to AI public infrastructure," Union Electronics and IT Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said.

ANIL AMBANI'S SON UNDER CBI LENS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

The CBI registered two FIRs against Anil Dhirubhai Ambani (ADA) group companies — Reliance Home Finance Ltd. (RHFL) and Reliance Commercial Finance Ltd — in separate bank fraud cases, naming Jai Anmol Anil Ambani in one of them and bringing alleged loan defaults worth ₹14,852 crore under scanner, officials said Tuesday.

Following the registration of the FIR against Jai Anmol Anil Ambani, the son of industrialist Anil Ambani, the CBI teams carried out a search at his residence on the seventh floor of the Sea Wind building, Anil Ambani's home in Cuffe Parade, Mumbai.

The CBI has named Jai Anmol Ambani, the then Director of Reliance Home Finance Ltd. (RHFL), along with ex-CEO Ravindra Sharad Sudhakar in connection with the case of allegedly cheating the Union Bank of India of ₹228 crore.

In a separate case, the CBI has booked Reliance Commercial Finance Ltd (RCFL) and its former directors in a case of allegedly cheating Bank of Maharashtra to the tune of ₹57 crore. Jai Anmol has not been named in this case.

The CBI also conducted searches in Bank of Maharashtra case at the premises of the RCFL and residence of its former director Devang Mody in Pune on Tuesday.

Govt hits IndiGo with 10% cut

RAJESH KUMAR ■ New Delhi

The Union aviation minister on Tuesday announced that IndiGo has been directed to trim its flight schedule by 10 per cent. The announcement comes a day after the aviation regulator had ordered carrier to cut down its flights by five per cent.

"The Ministry considers it necessary to curtail the overall IndiGo routes, which will help in stabilising the airline's operations and lead to reduced cancellations. A curtailment of 10 per cent has been ordered. While abiding by it, IndiGo will continue to cover all its destinations as before," the minister said.

Posting a picture of IndiGo CEO Pieter Elbers, sitting with folded hands in front of him,



Aviation minister Ram Mohan Naidu in the Lok Sabha on Tuesday PTI

Minister Ram Mohan Naidu, in a post on X, said that the airline management was summoned to the ministry to provide an update.

In its flight curtailment order, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) said, compared to its summer schedule, IndiGo was allowed an enhance-

ment of the schedule by 6 per cent with 403 aircraft as against 351. However, the airline could operate only 339 aircraft in October and 344 in November.

"The airline has not demonstrated an ability to operate these schedules efficiently. Therefore, it is directed to reduce the schedule by

10 per cent across sectors, especially on high-demand, high-frequency flights, and to avoid single-flight operations on a sector by IndiGo," the regulator said. It has asked the airline to submit a revised schedule by Wednesday.

IndiGo is India's largest airline with a domestic market share of nearly 65 per cent with operations across 950 routes. Notably, nearly 600 — or 63 per cent — of these are monopoly routes, and about 200 (21 per cent) are duopoly routes where IndiGo has just one competitor.

Shares of InterGlobe Aviation Ltd, IndiGo's parent company, were down 2 per cent on Tuesday. The shares have lost over 17 per cent of their value this month.

SC flags threats to BLOs

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Tuesday expressed concern over BLOs and other officials engaged in SIR 2.0 being "threatened" in West Bengal and other states, and asked the Election Commission to deal with the situation or "it will cause anarchy".

A bench of Chief Justice of India (CJI) Surya Kant and Joymalya Bagchi also voiced concern over the alleged lack of cooperation by State Governments in the Special Intensive Revision of electoral rolls and said, "What we want to ensure is that the SIR is done on the ground without any glitches."

A BENCH ALSO VOICED CONCERN OVER THE ALLEGED LACK OF COOPERATION BY STATE GOVTS

"Bring to our notice instances of lack of cooperation, hindrances to work of BLOs and we will pass appropriate orders," the bench told senior advocate Rakesh Dwivedi, appearing for the Election Commission (EC).

Justice Bagchi said the poll panel cannot take the police under its jurisdiction until the commencement of the election process.

CONTINUED ON >> P4

Rahul accuses BJP-ECI of vote theft in LS speech

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Rahul Gandhi on Monday accused the BJP of committing anti-national act by colluding with the Election Commission of India (ECI) to indulge in vote theft and destroying the idea of India. The Leader of the Opposition (LoP) was speaking in the Lok Sabha on a discussion on electoral reforms.

"The biggest anti-national act you can do is vote chori because when you destroy the vote, you destroy the fabric of this country, you destroy modern India, you destroy the idea of India. Those across the aisle are doing an anti-national act," Rahul said in the lower house of the Parliament.

Despite crores spent, garbage still dumped by Ganga

ARUN KASHYAP ■ Haridwar

With concerns being raised about the ground reality of some Namami Gange works, another example has emerged from Haridwar. Out of the 19 villages selected as Ganga Grams in the district, the solid waste management works in seven Gram Panchayats are not being undertaken as mandated. Due to this, the villagers are dumping garbage in areas near the Ganga with heaps of biodegradable and non-biodegradable garbage accumulating in such areas.

According to sources, seven Gram Panchayats near Haridwar city were selected as Ganga Grams. These include Aijtpur, Nurpur Panjnehedi, Katarpur Alipur, Bishanpur Kundi, Kangdi, Shyampur and Bhogpur. Despite a sum of about ₹2.5 crore being spent for solid waste management alone, the garbage from many of these villages is being dumped along the Ganga. The components of the Ganga



An abandoned garbage collection center in a village along the Ganga

PIONEER PHOTO

The Pioneer Campaign

sentatives regarding alleged irregularities and improper usage of funds, many of the waste disposal centres for these villages have remained closed.

The local villagers state that the disposal centres have been out of operation since their

construction. The funds provided for purchase of tractor trolleys to transport garbage too could not be used for the intended purpose.

The situation is such that the tractor trolleys carry garbage from the villages and dump it along the Ganga. As a result, large heaps of garbage have accumulated at some places along the holy river.

CONTINUED ON >> P4

Engineer was killed by partner, daughters

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Lucknow

Thirty-three-year-old engineer Surya Pratap Singh was killed by his live-in partner, Ratna Devi, as he had an evil design on her elder daughter, the police said on Tuesday.

The police said Ratna committed the crime in connivance with her minor daughter.

After the revelation that Ratna's daughters also had

complicity in the crime, the police detained them on Tuesday.

In her confession, Ratna said she had a heated argument with Surya Pratap over his alleged amorous advances towards her elder daughter on the night of Sunday and in a fit of rage she decided to kill him and her daughters helped her in pinning him down.

During interrogation, 46-year-old Ratna told the police

that the engineer had inappropriately touched her elder daughter and upon seeing this she became enraged.

As per the disclosure made by Ratna, on the night of December 7, Surya Pratap saw a picture of a youth on her elder daughter's mobile phone and he dragged her into a room and locked the door. Hearing her elder daughter's screams, she rushed to the scene with her younger daughter. Surya

Pratap opened the door as she screamed at him. She, along with her younger daughter, freed her elder daughter from Surya Pratap's clutches and then she ran to the kitchen and picked up a knife. Both daughters grabbed Surya Pratap and threw him to the floor. She then stabbed him repeatedly in the neck, killing him and then slit his throat.

Ratna told police that leaving the body in the room,

she and her two daughters went to another room where they remained huddled round the night and informed the police the next day.

As per Ratna's confession, Surya Pratap was very imposing and he did not allow her daughters to use social media and prevented them from watching reels.

Contrary to Ratna's claim, Surya Pratap's father alleged that his son was murdered by Ratna to grab the house.

Charges against KGBV warden found true

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Lucknow

Allegations of harassment against Sudha Yadav, the suspended warden of the Kasturba Gandhi Residential Girls' School in Khujhauri of Mohanlalganj, have been confirmed in a police investigation.

Following detailed inquiries, including statements from students and their parents as well as CCTV footage, Station House Officer Sanjay Verma, filed a chargesheet against the accused warden.

Police officials stated that while the harassment charges were established, allegations regarding the frequent entry of outsiders into the residential school were found to be baseless.

Assistant Commissioner of Police Vikas Kumar Pandey, confirmed that the chargesheet against Sudha Yadav has been forwarded to higher authorities for further action.

The matter came to light on October 4, 2025, when several students approached District Magistrate Vishakh G. during a public grievance hearing and accused the warden of harassment.

Acting on the DM's orders, a three-member committee led by ADM (Civil Supply) Jyoti Gautam, conducted a thorough probe and submitted its findings.

Preparing ‘surgical strike’ to identify infiltrators: UP govt

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Lucknow

The Yogi Adityanath government has prepared a comprehensive blueprint to carry out a “surgical strike” against infiltrators, aimed at strengthening the state's internal security.

According to an official statement issued here on Tuesday, under its zero-tolerance policy, the government has launched a campaign to identify and act against infiltrators.

“This decisive step will not only enhance security but also ensure that government schemes reach eligible beneficiaries in a transparent manner,” the statement said, emphasising that the focus of the blueprint is to carry out a “surgical strike” against infiltrators.

The government plans to identify infiltrators and shift them to detention centres with impenetrable security, making breaches impossible, it said.

This strict action is expected

to improve the overall security environment, reduce crime, and increase public trust in governance, the statement read, adding that law and order will be further strengthened, giving citizens a greater sense of safety.

“With Adityanath's firm stance, the crime rate in the state is projected to decline, while police and security agencies will be better equipped to curb illegal activities, especially in border districts,” the statement said.

Noting that infiltrators have long exploited government schemes, depriving rightful beneficiaries, the statement said that their identification will ensure that benefits reach those who truly deserve them, preventing misuse of funds and curbing corruption.

“This move will also open new avenues of employment for local youth and workers, creating fairer competition and a more secure environment for job seekers,” it noted.

Beyond security and employment, this initiative will improve citizen services. Processes such as passport issuance, verification, and licensing will become faster and more efficient.

According to the statement, cases of fake IDs, fraud, and related crimes will decrease, further strengthening law and order.

“As a result, residents' trust in the government's functioning will grow, reinforcing Uttar Pradesh's progress under Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's leadership,” it added.

The Uttar Pradesh government recently launched an intensive verification drive to identify and send back illegal immigrants, including Rohingyas and Bangladeshis, living in the state.

The government stressed that the “infiltrators” are using the resources of the state while they belong to the citizens who have a right to them.

Police arrest three notorious criminals

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Lucknow

The Sushant Golf City police arrested three notorious criminals, including a woman, for carrying out a robbery following a deliberate car accident.

The police recovered Rs 25,000 in cash, an Apple laptop and the four-wheeler used in the crime.

The accused were arrested from Sector 10 near the Gol Chowraha in the area.

Those arrested were identified as Vivek Kumar Yadav and Kishan Kumar Yadav of Kannauj and a 25-year-old

woman from Mathura.

The police recovered Rs 25,000 in cash, an Apple laptop and the Swift Dzire car used in crime.

It may be recalled here that the police on December 6 evening received information that a few car occupants had fled after robbing a person of his car and valuables near Shaheed Path, under the Sushant Golf City police station area.

The looted car was immediately recovered by the police team from the PGI police station area.

The complainant, Akhand Pratap Singh, had alleged

that he was returning from his office when his car suddenly collided with another vehicle that abruptly came in front of him.

Following the collision, the occupants of the other car allegedly assaulted him, hurled abuses and threatened to kill him before fleeing with his car, an Apple laptop, and Rs 1.5 lakh in cash kept in it.

Based on the written complaint, an FIR was registered. Police teams were constituted, and using CCTV footage, manual intelligence and technical evidence, the three accused were arrested. A

search for another accomplice is currently underway.

During interrogation, the arrested persons revealed that they, along with their fourth accomplice, Saurabh Rajput (wanted), committed the crime around 3 pm on December 6.

After staging the car collision, they assaulted the victim and fled with his vehicle, in which the laptop and Rs 1.5 lakh in cash were kept.

To avoid being caught, they parked the looted car in the PGI area and divided the cash and laptop among themselves before fleeing.

1,123 tipplers challaned

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Lucknow

As many as 1,123 tipplers were challaned for consuming liquor at public places in Lucknow police commissionerate during a drive against them and against those who create ruckus at roads, misbehave with commuters and women, on Monday night.

Giving details, a police spokesman said a special campaign had been started by the Lucknow police commissionerate from December 8, 2025 against those who consume alcohol at public places, create ruckus, cause inconvenience to passers-by, women and general public and obstruct traffic.

He said during the drive, which was carried out on Monday night, the police of all zones of Lucknow police commissionerate, checked 3,073 persons, out of which 1,123 persons were challaned for consuming liquor at public places in the night.

He said the highest 330 persons were challaned under East Zone of Lucknow police, followed by 236 in Central Zone, 223 in South Zone, 219 in West Zone and 115 in North Zone.

“The Lucknow police are conducting the drive to check hooliganism in public places. A continuous checking campaigns by teams of ACPs and station in-charges under the leadership of deputy commissioners of police of all zones, would be conducted in the time to come,” the spokesman said.

He said the people challaned had been sternly warned not to indulge in such activity in future.

The checking was conducted at public places like roads, parks, market areas, bus stands, intersections and other crowded places.

The Pioneer CLASSIFIEDS

NOTICE

Be it known to all that earlier my name was AMEED ANSARI which is now changed to AMAAD ANSARI. In future I shall be known as AMAAD ANSARI S/o- Eqbal Ahmad Ansari 223D/4 Mahevapurab Patti Naini, Prayagraj, UP

NOTICE

I Ram Sahai S/o Ram Dayal, resident of 1443, Sanjay Gandhi Nagar, Naubasta, Kanpur Nagar, Uttar Pradesh- 208021, have changed my name to RAM SAHAI PUSHKAR for all future purposes.

NOTICE

It is hereby informed that I have changed my name from MOHAMMAD Yaqoob Ansari to MOHD Yaqoob Ansari S/o Manzoor Hasan R/o 131/3-B-2 Begum Purwa Nai Basti Kanpur Nagar for future purposes.

NOTICE

I, Priya Pal, D/o Shivalp, state that my name is correctly recorded as Priya Pal, S/o Shivalp, D.O.B. 01-06-2008, in all my educational certificates. However, due to an error, my Aadhaar Card No. 524107315408 mentions my name as Riya, D/o Shivalp, D.O.B. 04-06-2006, which is incorrect. My correct particulars are: Priya Pal, D/o Shivalp, R/o Village Bedipur, Post Bilhaur, Tehsil Bilhaur, District Kanpur Nagar.

NOTICE

I, Prem Nath Sah, Ex-servicemen No.JC 673400M, Naib subedar, resident of 670C-10(1), Shiv Shankar puram Ahirwan, Kanpur Nagar, State that in my Army record and PPO, my son's name has been incorrectly mentioned as AVINASH KUMAR. Whereas my son's correct full name is AVINASH KUMAR SAH, which is recorded in his Birth Certificate, Aadhaar card, and PAN Card. Therefore, in future, he shall be known and identified by his correct name AVINASH KUMAR SAH.

NOTICE

It is hereby informed that I have changed my name from Mohammad Afsar to Mohd Afsar S/o Mohd Idrish R/o 132/325, Babu Purwa Kanpur Nagar for future purposes.

NOTICE

Be it known to all that earlier my name was HAMJA NAIM which Is now changed to HAMZA NAIM. In future I shall be known as HAMZA NAIM S/o- Mohammad Naim, K.M. 12 JK Ashiyana GTB Nagar, Prayagraj, UP.

NOTICE

My son Harikesh Singh is serving in Indian army whose service number is 1522 1562F. My date of birth in service records of my son is 07/06/1970 which is wrong and my correct date of birth is 21/04/1960. Rajkumari W/o Shiv Bhan Singh R/o Gram Kakrahi Post Chilaula Tehsil Lalganj District Raebareli.

NOTICE

Be it known to all that by mistake my father's name is wrongly written as Mohammad Mukhtar Alias Munna. My father's correct name is Mukhtar Ahmad. In future he will be known as Mukhtar Ahmad. Mohammad Meraj Ahmad S/o Mukhtar Ahmad 229, Harsh Vihar, Takrohi Indira Nagar, Lucknow.

NOTICE

This is to inform the general public that my daughter, Diksha Yadav's high school marksheet, passed in 2023, ROLL NO. 23114534, mother's name was mistakenly listed as Malati Devi, whereas the correct name is listed as Malti Devi in all other documents also. Therefore, I request you to identify the correct name of her mother. Malti Devi W/o Kamlesh yadav Village- Umri Ganeshpur, Post Bhopalpur, Ahirauli, Tehsil Lalganj, District Azamgarh.

THE PIONEER CLASSIFIEDS

CHANGE OF NAME

I, hitherto known as Amita Goel W/o Prashant Goyal R/o Moh-Garhi, Dhanaura, Amroha, Uttar Pradesh-244231 have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as Amita Agarwal.

PD(36211)C

NOTICE

It is hereby informed that I have changed my name from Sanjay Kumar Gupta to Sanjay Gupta S/o Virendra Kumar Gupta R/o 4/16, Ward No.30, Bajariya Jafar Khan, Kaimganj, Farrukhabad for future purposes.

NOTICE

I have changed my name from Dharmendra Kumar Jaiswal to DHARMENDRA JAISWAL S/o Laxmi Narain Jaiswal R/o 111/353, Shri Laxmi Karipa, Ashok Nagar Kanpur for all future purposes.

NOTICE

I, Naseeb Ahmad S/o Nazeer Ahmad R/o 467/142 K Gendkhana, Husainabad, Lko, I have Change My Daughter Name from Sarah Fatima to Sarah Fatima Ahmad for all future purposes. Both names are same person

NOTICE

I, Kailash Yadav, son of Shri Tilku Kailash Yadav, Address: 14 A, Darul Shafa, Lucknow. My Hire purchase agreement, registered in Volume No. 17663, Serial No. S 16865, dated 08/08/2014, was lost somewhere on the way while leaving the office on 31/05/2025. An FIR has been registered with L.A.R No. 20250000375203. If anyone finds This Hire purchase agreement, please inform me. Contact: 9682250132

The Pioneer CLASSIFIEDS

NOTICE

NOTICE

NOTICE

Notice is hereby given to the General Public that the KASHYAPA INTERNATIONAL COSMETICS AND FRAGRANCES PRIVATE LIMITED (CIN:U20237UP2023PTC194636) proposes to make application to the Central Government under section 13 of the Companies Act, 2013 seeking confirmation of alteration of the Memorandum of Association of the Company in connection with change of place of the registered office from "State of Uttar Pradesh" to "State of Tamilnadu" as resolved by the Extra Ordinary General Meeting held on 07-12-2025. To enable the company to change its Registered Office from "503 GLOBAL HEIGHT APARTMEASHRAAF VIHAR COLONY, Mahaur, Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh, India, 226028" to "A, 204, Sunshine Apartment, AMD Naghar, Ratnagiri Road, Vilankunchi P.O, Coimbatore, 641035". Any person whose interest is likely to be affected by the proposed change of the registered office of the company may either enter on the MCA-21 portal (www.mca.gov.in) by filing investor complaint form or cause his/her objection to be delivered or sent by registered post of his/her objection supported by an affidavit stating the nature of his/her interest and grounds of opposition to the Regional Director, the address of B-2/Wing, 2nd floor, Pt. Deendayal Artyodaya Bhawan, CGO Complex, New Delhi – 110003 within fourteen days of the date of publication of this notice with a copy to the applicant company at its registered office: 503 GLOBAL HEIGHT APARTMEASHRAAF VIHAR COLONY, Mahaur, Lucknow- 226028, Uttar Pradesh. **Gopakumar M.R.** (Managing Director).

Woman injured in van-bull collision

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Lucknow

An Omni van traveling towards Lucknow near Gaura Tirahe in Mohanlalganj, on Tuesday afternoon, suddenly collided with a bull that came in its path.

In the accident, Sandhya, a resident of Parsadepur in Raebareli, who was in the van, was injured.

Police admitted her to the community health center for treatment. Meanwhile, a team of veterinarians was called to treat the injured bull.

PRV negligence alleged in woman's death

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Lucknow

A 100-year-old woman who sold herbal medicines near the Mohanlalganj railway crossing collapsed suddenly on Tuesday morning, leading to outrage among locals after a Police Response Vehicle team allegedly failed to take timely action.

Eyewitnesses said the elderly woman fainted and fell to the ground, after which a PRV team arrived upon receiving information. However, instead of rushing her to the hospital, the team contacted the local police station and reportedly stood by without providing assistance.

A short while later, officers from the Mohanlalganj police station reached the spot and took the woman to the community health centre, where doctors declared her dead. Station House Officer Brijesh Kumar Tripathi, identified the deceased as Dhankunwara, a resident of Senghata in Gosainganj. Her body was handed over to her grandson.

Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti Language University, Lucknow

Advertisement No.SFS/01/25

Date: 05.12.2025

Recruitment Notice-Teaching Posts (Contractual)

Online application from Indian Citizens are invited for contractual appointments to the post of Assistant Professor and Associate Professor for various Self-Financed Programs run under different Departments of the university. Applicants are advised to visit CAREERS menu of the official website www.kmclu.ac.in for detailed advertisement. Application form will be available on the website from dated 05.12.2025. Last date for submission of online application form is 26.12.2025. Last date of submission of hardcopy of the application form is 26.12.2025 till 05:00 P.M. Candidates who have already applied for the posts under Advertisement No. SFS/03/2024 must reapply as per the present notification.

UP=242128 Date 9.12.25 विज्ञापन वेबसाइट- www.upgovt.nic.in पर उपलब्ध है।

Registrar

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF CONSTRUCTION ENGINEER
RURAL WORKS CIRCLE, SUNABEDA
e-mail - serwsbd2003@yahoo.com

Letter No. 6541

Date: 08.12.2025

1st Corrigendum

In continuation to this office Bid Identification No. CCERWCSBD-Online-25/2025-26 invited vide this office Notice No.5935 Dtd.15.11.2025, partial modification of NCB has been made as follows:-

Sl No	Item	Time Schedule as per original NCB	Time Schedule as per 1st Corrigendum notice
1	Availability of Tender online for bidding	25.11.2025 at 11.00 AM to 09.12.2025 up to 5.00 Pm	Extended up to 23.12.2025 5.00 Pm
2	Date and Time of seeking tender clarification if any	08.12.2025 up to 2.00 PM	22.12.2025 up to 2.00 PM
3	Date & Time of opening of tender(Technical Bid)	10.12.2025 at 11.00 AM	24.12.2025 at 11.00 AM
4	Date & Time of opening of tender(Price Bid)	Will be intimated later on to the successful bidders	Will be intimated later on to the successful bidders

All other terms and conditions will remain unaltered.

Chief Construction Engineer, Rural Works Circle, Sunabeda

OIPR-25182/11/0109/2526

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF CONSTRUCTION ENGINEER
RURAL WORKS CIRCLE, BALASORE
"e" Procurement Notice for Road Work
Identification No:- Online Tender- Road N.C.B. No. 54 for2025-26

Letter No. 4580

Date. 04.12.2025

1. Name of the work:- (MMSY-Improvement to existing RD road)

2. Total No. of work. :- 1 No of work.

3. Estimated Cost :-As per annexure

4. Eligible Class of Contractor. :- As per annexure.

5. Period of Completion :- As per annexure.

6. Other details:-

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	Availability of tender On-line for bidding		Last Date & Time of seeking Tender Clarification.	Date & Time of Opening of Tender in O/S.E.R.W. Circle, Balasore	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Chief Construction Engineer, Rural Works Circle,Balasore	NCB No.- 62of 2025-26	11.12.2025 at 11.00 A.M	23.12.2025 Up to 5.00 P.M.	22.12.2025 Up to 5.00 P.M.	24.12.2025at 11.00 A.M.	Will be intimated later

Further details can be seen from the website: www.tendersodisha.gov.in

Chief Construction Engineer R.W.Circle, Balasore

OIPR-25105/11/0097/2526

Get rid of slavery mindset: Yogi ‘India must take pride in its own heroes, legacy’

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Gorakhpur

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, on Tuesday, said those who glorify foreign invaders suffer from a “mindset of slavery”, asserting that India must take pride in its own heroes and civilisational legacy.

The chief minister was speaking after inaugurating an auditorium named after India’s first Chief of Defence Staff (CDS), General Bipin Rawat, on his fourth death anniversary at the Sainik School in Gorakhpur.

Marking the occasion, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath also unveiled a statue of Gen Rawat and paid floral tributes to him.

General Rawat, his wife Madhulika Rawat and 11 others were killed in a helicopter crash near Coonoor in Tamil Nadu on December 8, 2021.



Addressing the gathering, the chief minister said that General Rawat embodied national pride, duty and courage, and the new auditorium and statue would inspire future generations.

He recalled Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s call to every Indian, given during his Independence Day speech in 2022, to adopt the ‘Panch Pran’ (five resolutions) for national resurgence.

“Is there any true Indian who would want a weak or poor India? Every true Indian wants a secure, developed and self-reliant nation. If we want to build such a Bharat, the five resolutions must become part of our lives,” he said.

Speaking on the first resolution – ‘striving to make India a developed nation in the next 25 years’ – Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said Indians must take pride in their heritage and honour

national icons.

“We take pride in the legacy of Lord Ram, Lord Krishna, Maharana Pratap, Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, Guru Gobind Singh Ji, and Rani Lakshmbai. A society that ignores its heroes can never progress. These great personalities are our inheritance,” he said.

The second resolution was to completely shed the mentality of colonial subservience, he said.

“Some people believe that whatever is foreign is superior and whatever is Indian is inferior. This is the mentality of slavery. Uttar Pradesh and India are moving ahead because we have started trusting our own strength and abilities,” he said.

Asking why Indians should glorify foreign aggressors, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said, “Why should we call Alexander great? Why not Maharana Pratap,

Chhatrapati Shivaji, Guru Gobind Singh Ji, Prithviraj Chauhan or General Bipin Rawat?”

“Our heroes are our brave soldiers and Param Vir Chakra awardees. Foreign invaders can never be our heroes. We must get rid of the mindset of slavery and rise above those who distorted history to portray them as great,” the chief minister said.

He added that glorifying foreign ideas at the cost of Indian achievements was also a form of “colonial mentality”, which must be discarded.

The chief minister said the third resolution was to respect the nation’s security forces.

“Our soldiers guard our borders while we sleep in peace. Police and paramilitary personnel work tirelessly,” he said.

The fourth resolution, he said, was social unity, warning against attempts to divide society on caste, regional or linguistic lines.

Attacking the opposition without taking names, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said, “Some people divide society for their own political gains. When in power, they think only of their families, build hotels and purchase islands abroad. They take our money abroad and make the country poor.” “Those who divide society commit a sin like Mir Jafar and Jaichand. The society and the nation cannot progress with short-term lollipops of caste, region or other such identities. The country will truly prosper only when there is no discrimination and when unity prevails above all,” he said.

Khanna inaugurates new parking facility

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Lucknow

In view of the increasing traffic issues in the Aminabad area, a new parking facility developed by the Lucknow Municipal Corporation was inaugurated on Tuesday.

The parking was inaugurated by the chief guest, Uttar Pradesh Finance and Parliamentary Affairs Minister and in-charge Minister of Lucknow district, Suresh Khanna.

Mayor Sushma Kharakwal, was also present as a distinguished guest.

Notably, Minister Suresh Khanna had inspected the Ghanatgar Park premises located in Aminabad last month. During the inspection, he instructed officials to remove encroachments and garbage from the park, beautify the area, and develop an organised parking facility there. Acting on the minister’s directions, the Municipal Corporation administration completed the parking project within



the stipulated time.

The newly-developed parking facility has a capacity of 235 vehicles, including 200 two-wheelers and 35 four-wheelers.

A large number of public representatives and residents were present at the

inauguration.

Municipal Commissioner Gaurav Kumar, Additional Municipal Commissioner Lalit Kumar and others were also present.

The traders and residents appreciated the construction of the parking facility.

Traders’ associations expressed gratitude to the Municipal Corporation, Mayor Sushma Kharakwal, and Minister Suresh Khanna, stating that this initiative is an important step towards making Aminabad better.

Mayor takes CM’s message to Janpath traders

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Lucknow

Mayor Sushma Kharakwal, on Tuesday, informed shopkeepers, traders and the people present in Janpath market about the recently issued letter by Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath.

The mayor explained that this letter conveys an extremely important message regarding the state’s security, social harmony and citizens’

responsibility.

In the letter addressed to the public, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath mentions the decisive legal action underway against infiltrators residing illegally in the state.

He has urged citizens to verify the identity of any person before employing them for domestic or commercial work.

This step, he stated, is essential not only for personal safety but also for the overall safety of society and the state.

Mayor Sushma Kharkwal pointed out that public awareness plays a vital role in strengthening law and order and maintaining social harmony. She emphasised that citizens’ vigilance is the greatest foundation of security.

She also said that it was our collective responsibility to ensure that the chief minister’s message reached each and every person, and that the administration was taking this matter very seriously.

During the programme, the attending shopkeepers and traders also sought information from the mayor about various security measures. She assured them that the

Lucknow Municipal Corporation and the administration are committed to taking every necessary step for public safety.

Concluding the event, the mayor said that the security and prosperity of Uttar Pradesh were possible only when citizens and the administration worked together responsibly.

Meanwhile, in the Janata Darbar held on Monday at the municipal corporation headquarters, the mayor listened to citizens’ issues and directed the officials concerned to resolve them promptly.

People from various wards arrived early in the morning

with their complaints, which mainly included issues related to sanitation, drainage, road repair, street lights, tax matters, and other civic amenities.

During the Janata Darbar, the mayor instructed officials clearly that no unnecessary delay should occur in resolving any problem and that progress reports of each case should be submitted regularly.

She said that the aim of the municipal corporation was to provide citizens with timely and transparent services, for which all departments must remain alert and responsible.

Time limit for adding names to voter list too short: Mayawati

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Lucknow

Amid the ongoing debate on electoral reforms in the Lok Sabha, Bahujan Samaj Party chief Mayawati, on Tuesday, urged the Centre and the Election Commission of India to implement three key reforms to ensure transparency and protect voters’ rights.

She said that her party was not against the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral lists, but the time limit set for the process of adding names to the voter list was far too short, and sought its extension.

The BSP supremo said the current timeframe for the Special Intensive Revision of electoral rolls was too short.

It overburdens booth level officers (BLOs) and increases the likelihood of genuine voters – especially the poor, migrant workers, and daily-wage earners – being left out of voter lists, she added.

Mayawati, in a long post on X, said that completing SIR “in



undue haste” was inappropriate in a state like Uttar Pradesh, which had over 15.40 crore voters with no immediate election.

She warned that the rushed exercise could deprive many eligible citizens of their constitutional right to vote, a right guaranteed by Dr BR Ambedkar. She called for the SIR timeline to be extended immediately.

Mayawati also raised concerns over the Supreme Court-mandated disclosure of criminal cases by candi-

dates. Under current Election Commission rules, candidates must publish details of their criminal history in affidavits and local newspapers, while political parties are required to publish the same information nationally.

She argued that candidates sometimes hide criminal charges from their parties, which are then caught unawares during scrutiny. This, she said, unfairly shifts liability onto political parties.

“All formalities regarding criminal cases should be the

sole responsibility of the candidate,” she said, and added: “If a candidate hides information about pending cases, all legal accountability should rest with them – not with the party.”

The BSP president also reiterated her concerns over electronic voting machines (EVMs). To restore public trust in elections, she said the country should revert to ballot paper-based voting.

“If this is not immediately feasible, then at the very least, 100 per cent of VVPAT (voter verifiable paper audit trail) slips at every polling booth must be counted and matched with EVM data,” she said.

Rejecting the Election Commission’s argument that this would take a long time to publish the results, Mayawati said that when elections already stretch over months, spending a few extra hours on counting should not be an issue. “This will strengthen public faith in the electoral system and eliminate doubts about the process. It is in the national interest,” she added.

Lucknow Metro to the rescue of 13-yr-old boy

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Lucknow

The Lucknow Metro team ensured the safety of a 13-year-old boy travelling with an unknown individual on Tuesday.

Officials said that on December 9, a lost and wandering 13-year-old boy from Siwan district, Bihar, was found at Durgapuri Metro Station.

“The child had reportedly left home after a disagreement with parents and arrived in Lucknow with an unknown individual, who later abandoned him near the Metro station lift,” said the official.

The alert Lucknow Metro station staff promptly informed the Station Controller and initiated the standard safety protocol. During the preliminary inquiry, a diary and contact details were found in the child’s bag, enabling the authorities to contact his parents.

CSR roundtable on skilling held

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Lucknow

The Department of Vocational Education, Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, organised the ‘Uttar Pradesh CSR Roundtable 2025 on Skilling and Employability’ here on Tuesday. More than 30 major companies, foundations and institutions from across the country participated in this consultation session and held detailed discussions on strengthening the state’s skill and employment ecosystem.

Vocational Education and Skill Development Department Principal Secretary Dr Hari Om stated that strengthening vocational education, improving training quality, expanding access to emerging skill sectors and promoting industry-integrated training models are among the top priorities of the department.

Efforts are being made to connect youth with industry-oriented skills and expand high-quality employment opportunities.

He stated that the state government is undertaking extensive structural reforms to develop a skilled workforce.

Mission Director, UP Skill Development Mission, Pulkit Khare, stated that CSR-based collaboration will significantly improve the expansion of skill training programmes aligned with industry requirements. He stated that UPSDM is prioritising digital skills, green skills, advanced manufacturing technologies, service-sector-based employment and women-centric livelihood programmes.

Companies such as HCL, Axis Bank, Hyundai, Siemens, Tata Trusts, Reliance Foundation and Shiv Nadar Foundation participated in the roundtable.

E-challans being integrated to promote road safety

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Lucknow

The e-challan process is being integrated in the state with the aim of promoting road safety and reducing road accidents.

In this regard, significant steps are being taken through the joint efforts of the traffic police and the Transport Department, including the expansion of the e-challan portal, accident data analysis and insurance integration.

As part of the process, an online dashboard is being created for the integration of the e-challan system with the Vahan and Sarathi apps, as well as for accident data collection. Efforts are also being made to link vehicle insurance with the e-challan system. These efforts will lead to a significant reduction in the number of road

accidents and related fatalities.

These steps taken by the state government will provide a new direction to road safety in the state.

“A detailed action plan is being implemented to promote road safety and reduce the number of fatalities in road accidents in the state. After receiving approval in a meeting chaired by the chief secretary, the UP Transport Department and the Traffic Directorate, in collaboration with the traffic police, have started the integration of the e-challan process across the state at a rapid pace,” said a government spokesperson.

In this process, the challans of the traffic police and the Transport Department are being integrated into the e-challan portal. In the first phase, the process has

been started in 17 districts of the state through NIC and will be started in the remaining districts soon. This will not only make tracking of challans easier but will also enable swift action against default vehicle owners.

The UP Transport Department has completed the integration of all challans (traffic fines) linked to driving licences through the Sarathi portal. An AI-based platform is also being developed to integrate the Vahan and Sarathi apps, e-DAR, IRAD app, and e-Challan portals.

“An online dashboard is also being developed for accident data collection and analysis. The Transport Department has started integrated data on road accidents and challans in all districts through the e-DAR and IRAD apps, and corrective measures are being taken based on the analysis,” the official added.

12-year-old comes in contact with high tension line, suffers severe burns

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Lucknow

A 12-year-old boy sustained severe burn injuries after coming into contact with a high-tension power line in Shivanagar area of Faizullaganj ward-1 on Sunday evening.

The victim, identified as Aryan, was admitted to SPM Hospital (Civil Hospital). Doctors treating the child said that he suffered 40 to 50 per cent burns.

Aryan was reportedly playing on the rooftop of the house when he accidentally touched the overhead high-tension line around 4 pm on Sunday.

The neighbours rushed to the scene after hearing the child's screams. A local resident acted quickly and extinguished the flames with a blanket and rescued the boy. Aryan, who lives with his parents, Sarita Sharma and Neeraj Sharma, in Mutakkipur, Bhitauli, had come to the home of a relative, Reena Tiwari, when the accident took place.

The 33,000 volt high tension line runs directly over the roof of Tiwari's house. Family members and locals claimed that two other accidents, including one fatal, have occurred due to the same line in the past three years.

COPS ON TRAIL OF YOUTH FLAUNTING WEAPONS

A video showing a youth brazenly displaying weapons on a social media reel had the Lucknow Police in a tizzy

finding the origin of the video and the veracity of its content.

The accused youth shared a video featuring four pistols and one rifle, captioning the post simply with the word 'System'. The viral video and accompanying photos clearly show the youth posing with the weapons.

Sources said the video seemed to be of Para locality and the individual displaying the arsenal was originally a resident of Talkatora. His videos are rapidly gaining traction on social media, prompting varied reactions from viewers. Given the perceived rise in lawlessness, local residents are urgently appealing to the administration to take the strictest possible action without delay.

DUPED

An elderly man of Alambagh was duped of Rs 8.14 lakh in an online fraud in which his UPI account was hacked and the money was withdrawn. The victim Prem Narayan Pandey of Anand Nagar said he came to know of the fraud when he reached the bank to get his passbook updated. "The miscreants withdrew the money during mid-October," he said. He said he had given a complaint to the Cyber Cell of Lucknow police. He added that he did not get any call, did not receive any link which he clicked and still the money was withdrawn from his UPI account.

ARRESTED

A 22 year old auto lifter was arrested on charges of stealing a power bike (motorcycle) by the Jankipuram police on Monday night.

The accused identified as Vivek of Gudamba was roaming on the stolen motorcycle when the cops spotted him. "The accused works as a labourer and his dress was akin to a person of moderate income group. But he was riding a costly motorcycle and this made us doubt him. He was stopped and was quizzed. He gave in and confessed to his crime," the police said.

The police said the vehicle belonged to one Suraj Verma of Jankipuram and he had lodged a case of auto theft with the police earlier.

THEFT

Thieves made off with Rs 12,000 in cash and ornaments worth several lakhs from a house which was lying closed after the inmates left for their native home in Budheshwar locality in Para.

The incident came to light on Tuesday after the house owner Ratan Kumar Cahudhary returned and found the house burgled. He said he along with his family had gone to his native home out of Lucknow to attend last rites of a family member and the house was lying closed. He has given a complaint to the police.

UP poised to become global hub for skilled human resources: Adityanath

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

■ Lucknow

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Tuesday said that Uttar Pradesh is the youngest state in the country, with exceptionally talented youth whose skills are in demand both nationwide and globally. He said this while addressing the gathering after inaugurating the newly constructed Government ITI in Narkattha, Piprauli block of Gorakhpur, according to an official statement.

"By expanding access to high-quality training, the state is moving toward becoming a leading hub of skilled human resources for India and the world," Adityanath said.

Built with Rs 18 crore from the CSR funds of Power Grid Corporation of India, the institute will be run by the state government. The chief minister noted that Uttar Pradesh, the country's most populous state, has 55-60 per cent of its population in the working-age group.

"This demographic strength," he said, "is a major

asset that must be converted into skilled capacity." The chief minister added, "The government is focusing on imparting training in trades aligned with industrial needs. Advanced training is already being provided through the NIELIT centre in GIDA, enabling youth to secure placements in local industries through campus recruitment." He said ITIs established by Power Grid will also offer training in demand-driven trades.

Highlighting the collaboration with Tata Technologies, the chief minister said, "The government is upgrading more than 150 ITIs with state-of-the-art technology. Youth are being trained through both long-term and short-term programs. Under long-term courses, training is being offered in electric vehicles, advanced CNC machines, the Industrial Internet of Things, industrial robotics, digital manufacturing, and 3D printing."

He further said that short-term courses include training in electric vehicle maintenance, water distribution, automatic welding

machines and automated manufacturing.

He emphasised that while unskilled youth often receive low wages, skilled youth earn significantly better remuneration.

Adityanath noted that youth from Uttar Pradesh are increasingly in demand overseas, particularly in countries like Germany and Japan. Providing them with technical and language training, he said, will not only benefit the youth but also strengthen India's position as a global supplier of skilled manpower, according to the statement. The chief minister mentioned that the GIDA region needs more ITIs, as trained youth will find ample employment opportunities in the growing industries being set up there.

Ensuring employment for every youth, he said, is a firm commitment of the double-engine government, an effort further supported by the power grid through its investment in ITIs.

He added that rapid industrial development is now taking place not only in GIDA but also in Dhuriyapur.

Referring to his recent visit, he said that facilities such as marriage halls, once seen only in cities, are now coming up in villages across Dakshinanchal. This, he said, shows that development is reaching the grassroots.

Citing Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya, he reminded the audience that economic progress, in its true sense, is measured not by grand buildings, but by the extent to which development reaches the last person.

The chief minister highlighted that in the last eight years, GIDA alone has attracted investments worth Rs 12,000-15,000 crore, directly employing nearly 50,000 youth. "Earlier, crop residue was often considered waste and burned after harvesting, which reduced soil fertility and polluted the environment. Today, crop residue has become a source of income. Indian Oil has set up a compressed biogas plant in Dhuriyapur, where farmers will be paid for providing crop residue and the environment is also protected, a true win-win situation," he said.

Lko div team showcases talent, wins awards

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

■ Lucknow

An Inter-Divisional Cultural Competition (music) was organised at Jagadhri workshop of Northern Railway on December 5.

Cultural teams from Charbagh Loco and Alambagh Carriage and wagon-shop besides various units of Delhi division, Headquarters, Firozpur, Jagadhri workshop, Ambala, Amritsar workshop and Moradabad participated enthusiastically.

Senior Division Commercial Manager, Kuldeep Tiwari said the competition included performances in the categories of

classical singing, classical instrumental music, light singing, light instrumental music and folk singing.

"The Lucknow Division team, with its outstanding performance, won several important awards. The winners were honoured by General Manager, Northern Railway, Ashok Kumar Verma," Tiwari said.

He said among the winners from Lucknow Division, Anurag Mishra (Office Superintendent/Personnel Branch) received the first prize in classical instrumental music, Atharva Mishra received the first prize in classical singing, and Raghavendra (TTI/Lucknow) received the

third prize in light instrumental music.

"The entire Lucknow Division team participated under the guidance of Senior Divisional Personnel Officer/Cultural Officer, NR, Lucknow, Arima Bhatnagar, and showcase the division's cultural talent in an excellent manner," the Sr DCM said.

Divisional Railway Manager, Lucknow, while extending hearty congratulations and best wishes to the winners, said that such events not only provide a platform to the talent of the employees, but also strengthen team spirit and organisational coordination.

Kaushambi 'aarti' spot nearing completion

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

■ Lucknow

The Uttar Pradesh Tourism Department is in the final stages of developing the 'aarti' spot at Kubri Ghat in Kadha Dham, Kaushambi.

The project, being constructed at a cost of Rs 2.41 crore, is expected to be completed soon. This upcoming facility aims to provide improved comfort and convenience to the steadily rising number of devotees who visit this spiritually significant site throughout the year.

Kubri Ghat holds an important place in traditional narratives, as it is believed to be associated with Krishna, Balaram and Sudama during the time they received guidance from Sage Sandipani. Once completed, the aarti spot will offer visitors a more organised, accessible and welcoming environment during prayers, festivals and routine activities at the ghat.

Kadha Dham, located in the Sirathu tehsil of Kaushambi, is a deeply respected revered site dedicated to Sheelta Mata. It is

also regarded as one of the 51 Shakti Peeths, which adds to its spiritual importance and draws devotees from many regions throughout the year. The area was earlier known as the Karakotam jungle and references to this place are found in the Skanda Purana. Many people believe it is one of the Shakti Peethas where a part of hand (kar) of Goddess Sati is said to have fallen, which is why the place came to be known as Kadha Dham. Devotees have strong faith that worshipping here fulfils their wishes, especially for the well-being of children.

Sharing his vision for Uttar Pradesh's tourism growth, Tourism and Culture Minister Jaiveer Singh says, "Kadha Dham holds great importance for devotees who come here with deep faith, and the growing footfall clearly shows this. In the first half of 2025 alone, nearly 15 lakh tourists came to Kaushambi, many of whom came to seek blessings at Kadha Dham, especially during the holy fair. Our focus is to create facilities that bring comfort to visitors and support this rising

number. We will continue working to make sites like Kadha Dham more welcoming and accessible for everyone."

According to local lore, during the exile of the Pandavas, Yudhishtira worshipped at this spot and established a shrine of Sheelta Mata along with a Mahakaleshwar Shivling on the riverbank." Kara is also known as the birthplace of Saint Malookdas, a worshipper of Maa Sheelta, who lived from 1631 to 1739. His ashram and samadhi are located here. Many stories mention that Sikh Guru Teg Bahadur visited Kara to hold discussions with Saint Malookdas. There is also a story that Emperor Aurangzeb sent his soldier, Fateh Khan, to bring Malookdas to his palace. Instead, Fateh Khan stayed with the saint, started his spiritual practice under him, and became known as Mir Madhav. A shrine in his name still stands at the site," said a tourism official.

A special donkey fair is held every year in the premises of the Sheelta Mata Temple.

Kanpur pays tribute to Yadupati Singhania

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

■ Kanpur

Kanpur paid heartfelt tribute to its illustrious son Yadupati Singhania at the Second Edition of the Yadupati Singhania Memorial Lecture held on Tuesday at the Merchant's Chamber auditorium. The event commenced with traditional lighting of lamp in the presence of Abhishek Singhania, Chairman, GHS-IMR and President, Merchants' Chamber of Uttar Pradesh; Mayank Khanna, Vice-President, Merchants' Chamber of Uttar Pradesh; Dr S Somanath, chief guest and chief orator of the event, Vikram Sarabhai Distinguished Professor, ISRO; Advisor, Space Department, Government of Andhra Pradesh and former Chairman, Space Commission and ISRO and Partho P Kar, Joint MD, JayKay Enterprises Ltd.

In his welcome address, Abhishek Singhania fondly remembered Yadupati Singhania as a visionary leader whose legacy continues to inspire the Indian

industry and the city of Kanpur. He reiterated his commitment, made during last year's lecture to continue this annual intellectual platform. He emphasised that the YPS Memorial Lecture aims to build a knowledge-driven ecosystem in Kanpur, a city that was exceptionally close to Yadupati Singhania. He expressed satisfaction that the lecture series is steadily emerging as a stage for renowned experts from the fields of science and technology to share transformative ideas and insights.

A cinematic tribute to Yadupati Singhania was screened during the event in the presence of the dignitaries. The documentary traced the extraordinary life, achievements and values of Yadupati Singhania -- high-lighting not only his pioneering industrial leadership but also his philanthropy, compassion and commitment to societal advancement. Reflecting on the film, Partho P Kar noted, "The documentary captures the relentless pursuit of excellence that defined Yadupati Singhania's life and serves as an enduring



Former ISRO Chairman Dr S Somanath (middle) taking part in Yadupati Singhania Memorial Lecture

inspiration for young entrepreneurs, industry professionals and students."

The chief guest, Dr Sreedhara Panicker Somanath, who played a pivotal role in the successful launch of Chandrayaan-3, delivered a compelling keynote address on the theme, "Space Technology, Applications and Business Opportunities."

He provided an engaging overview of ISRO's technological evolution ranging from innovations that shape every-

SGHSCAL achieves milestone in scientific excellence

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

■ Kanpur

The Shri Govind Hari Singhania Centre For Advanced Learning marked a significant milestone in its pursuit of scientific excellence with the grand inauguration of its cutting-edge astronomy laboratory on Tuesday.

The ceremony was graced by Professor S Somanath, former Chairman of ISRO and Advisor (Space), Government of Andhra Pradesh, who attended as the chief guest and Professor Amitesh Omar, Department of Space, Planetary and Astronomical Sciences and Engineering, IIT-Kanpur as the guest of honour.

The inauguration ceremony was attended by Manorama Govind Hari

Singhania, Chairperson; Abhishek Singhania, Vice-Chairman; Varsha Singhania, Vice-Chairperson; Partho P Kar, Vice-Chairman and Director of the school, and Bhawna Gupta, Principal, who expressed immense pride in the institution's expanding academic infrastructure.

One of the highlights of the event was insightful interactive session conducted by Professor Somanath with students and parents.

Known for his vast experience and contributions to India's space missions, Professor Somanath spoke warmly about the importance of early scientific engagement and the nation's growing leadership in space technology. Students eagerly posed questions on space exploration, satellite mis-

sions, rocket engineering, life beyond Earth, and India's future ambitions in deep space. With remarkable clarity and enthusiasm, Professor Somanath answered each query, offering valuable perspectives and motivating students to be fearless in their pursuit of knowledge. Parents deeply appreciated the opportunity to engage with a renowned scientist who has shaped India's space narrative.

As part of the event, Professor Somanath also planted a sapling and this gesture symbolised sustainability, growth and the shared responsibility of nurturing both the environment and young minds. The act served as a reminder that scientific progress and ecological consciousness must go hand in hand.

Second NUPPL unit commissioned

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

■ Kanpur

The second unit of Neyveli Uttar Pradesh Power Private Limited (NUPPL), a joint venture between NLC India Limited and Uttar Pradesh Rajya Vidyut Utpadan Nigam Limited, in Ghatampur, was commissioned on Monday. The third and final unit is now pending commissioning. Commercial production of 1,320 MW has commenced from both units. This was announced in the presence of NLC India Limited Joint Managing Director Prasanna Kumar Motupalli.

On this occasion, the JMD stated this achievement by NUPPL is rare in the industry. The dedication and hard work demonstrated by every officer, engineer, supervisor, and employee, working day

and night, is the result of this. The work done by the team is qualitative, commendable, and exemplary on every front. He expressed his gratitude to the district administration and all residents of the area.

Their unconditional support to the project and full faith in NUPPL is a major reason for this success. Wishing all the best for the remaining work of Unit 3, he said that he has full faith in the NUPPL and NLCIL team. This team can accept any challenge and give best result.

Director M Venkatachalam in his addressed said that with the commissioning of the second unit, the total capacity of 1320 MW (Unit-1 and Unit-2) of the thermal power project has come into commercial operation.

India taps on Lithuania for Aadhaar 2.0

Aadhaar 2.0 , as envisioned, aims to achieve near-zero duplication of digital identities, faster and more accurate biometric verification, advanced retina and fingerprint matching, and significantly strengthened cybersecurity safeguards. The Ambassador emphasised that international firms would only work on specific backend functions and would not gain access to the full Aadhaar system or any citizen data.

"India cannot hand over a nationally sensitive system to any single foreign entity. But for highly specialised functions like eliminating duplicate identities, it chooses the best in the world. Lithuania happens to be one of them," the envoy said.

The Government of India has not officially

announced the Aadhaar 2.0 project or disclosed details of any tendering process. However, the Ambassador's remarks highlight deepening technological cooperation between India and Lithuania in the sensitive domain of digital identity infrastructure.

Despite crores spent, garbage still dumped by Ganga

Plastic waste, used polythene, rotten vegetables and other waste are not only polluting the Ganga but also increasing the chances of diseases and stench in the nearby villages.

The Katarpur Alipur Gram Panchayat representative Sachin Kumar claimed that the village had not been provided any funds under the Namami

Gange programme so far. The waste disposal arrangement is fully dependent on the village's own resources. Twice a week, the Gram Panchayat uses a tractor trolley to dump the garbage at a spot called Begum, about one kilometre from the Ganga's banks. There is no other arrangement for waste disposal, he said.

Observers opine that dumping garbage even at spots at some distance from the river, part of the waste and toxics from it may end up in the river due to the action of wind and rain, among other factors.

SC flags threats to BLOs

Dwivedi submitted, "The State Governments are supposed to cooperate with us and give us protection. If the State Government refuses to do so, then we have no option other than taking the local police under deputation. If the situa-

tion still does not improve, then we will have to call central forces."

Dwivedi said the EC has all constitutional powers to deal with instances of BLOs and other officials engaged in SIR work being threatened.

"Deal with the situation or it will cause anarchy," CJI Kant told Dwivedi, terming the situation "very serious".

Senior advocate V Giri, appearing for petitioner Sanatani Sangsad and others, pointed out that the petitioners have alleged violence and threats against BLOs and other officials engaged in SIR work and sought directions to the EC to protect them.

The top court sought responses from the EC, the Centre and the West Bengal Government on the plea of Sanatani Sangsad for directions to deploy the State police officers under the EC's deputation till the final publication of electoral rolls in the State after SIR.

Three-member SIT formed in UP

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

■ Lucknow

The Uttar Pradesh government has constituted a special investigation team (SIT) to probe the illegal sale, storage and trafficking of codeine-based cough syrups following the registration of FIRs across multiple districts of the state, an official statement said Tuesday.

According to the communication, the SIT has been formed in view of the inter-district and inter-departmental nature of the offences, which involve organised gangs allegedly engaged in illegal trade of codeine syrup for monetary and material gains.

Enhanced education funding shows results: Meghalaya CM



Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K Sangma said on Tuesday that the State education department's annual budget has been increased from ₹2,000 crore to ₹3,500 crore in recent years, the highest so far, and the impact of this investment is "becoming visible".

Navy Chief begins four-day visit to Brazil

Navy Chief Admiral Dinesh K Tripathi on Tuesday began a four-day visit to Brazil to consolidate the bilateral maritime security cooperation. Admiral Tripathi will hold discussions with Brazilian Defence Minister Jose Mucio, Chief of the Joint Staff of the Brazilian Armed Forces Admiral Renato Rodrigues de Aguiar Freire and Commander of the Brazilian Navy Admiral Marcos Sampaio Olsen.



JP Nadda to lay foundation of BJP State office in Shimla



The BJP national president and Union Health and Family Welfare minister Jagat Prakash Nadda would lay the foundation stone and perform Bhoomi Pujan of the proposed BJP State-level party office in Shimla on Saturday, a statement here said on Tuesday.

Karnataka lost ₹5,474 crore to cyber frauds in three years

Karnataka Home Minister G Parameshwara on Tuesday said that over the last three years, people in the State have lost ₹5,474 crore to cyber frauds, of which the police have managed to recover ₹627 crore so far. The minister was responding to a question from Sakleshpur BJP MLA Cement Manju in the Legislative Assembly.



Left-wing extremism districts drop from 126 to 11: Centre

RAJESH KUMAR ■ New Delhi

The Centre on Tuesday said the number of districts affected by left-wing extremism has decreased from 126 in April 2018 to 90 in July 2021, 70 in April 2024, 38 in April 2025, and further to 11 in October 2025, with only three districts now considered to be the "most affected" by left-wing extremism. The Pioneer carried a report on December 8, 2025 that only three districts are now most affected by Naxalism in Chhattisgarh.

Responding to a supplementary during the Question Hour in Lok Sabha, Minister of State for Home Nityanand Rai said the number of affected States have gone down from 10 in 2014 to five in 2025 (till October) showing a reduction of 50 per cent while the number of districts affected by Left Wing Extremism (LWE) has witnessed a sharp decline of 91 per cent from 126 to 11 during the period.

"However, to prevent the

Only three districts now most-affected by Naxalism in Chhattisgarh

RAJESH KUMAR ■ New Delhi

The number of Naxalism-affected districts in India have reduced to 38 from 46 across nine States, according to a recent Government review. An updated review by the Government now narrows down the most affected districts to three and districts of concern to four. All three most affected districts — Bijapur, Narayanpur and Sukma — remain in Chhattisgarh, the State historically at the heart of Naxal activity.

The four districts of concern are Kanker in Chhattisgarh, West Singhbhum in Jharkhand, Balaghat in Madhya Pradesh, and Gadchiroli in Maharashtra, where Naxal influence is waning but targeted development is still required. Districts under the concern category are those where Naxal activity has sharply declined but continued development efforts are needed to consolidate peace and stability.

The review was undertaken as part of the National



Representative photo of a tribal village →

Policy and Action Plan to Address Left Wing Extremism (LWE), 2015, under which the Union and State Governments work together. Officials said the subcategory of most affected districts was created in 2015 with 35 districts to ensure focused deployment of resources. Following periodic reviews, the number was reduced to six in April 2025. Districts under the Security Related Expenditure (SRE) scheme — one of the key financial support programmes for combating

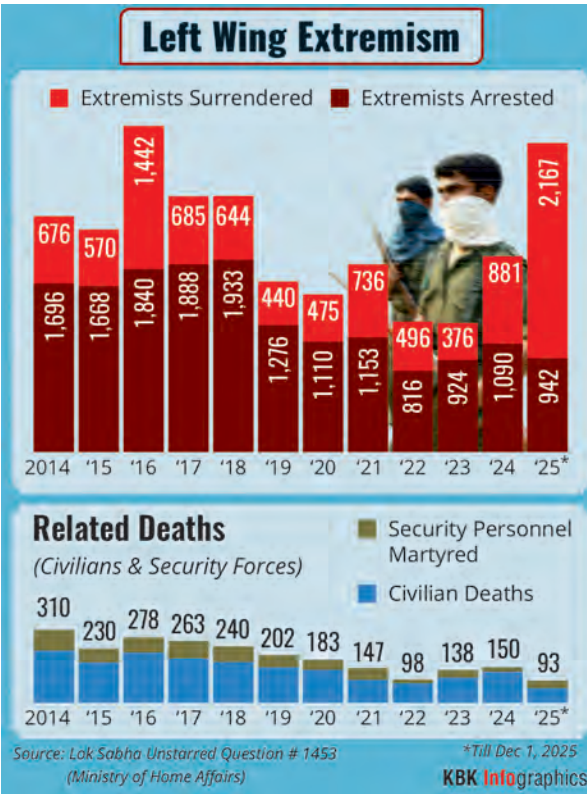
Naxal influence — are classified as either LWE-affected or Legacy and Thrust (L&T) districts.

The latest review places 27 districts under the L&T category. These include eight districts from Odisha, six from Chhattisgarh, four from Bihar, three each from Jharkhand and Telangana, and one each from Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and West Bengal.

These districts have largely witnessed the end of Naxalism but remain

prospective sites for its expansion. Hence, continued government support is required for capacity building, according to official records.

The districts covered under the SRE scheme were last revised on April 1, 2025. After the review, 46 districts were listed as SRE districts — six categorised as "most affected," six as "districts of concern" (DOC), and six as "other LWE-affected." In the subset category of Legacy & Thrust districts, 28 were included.



No law should burden citizens, reforms to ease life: PM Modi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday said no law should be a burden on any citizen, and rules and regulations should always be for people's convenience. Addressing an NDA parliamentary party meeting, Modi also said the country is now in a full-fledged "Reform Express" phase, where reforms are happening rapidly and with clear intent.

The Government's reforms are completely citizen-centric and not just economic or revenue-focused. The goal is to remove everyday hurdles of people so that they can grow to their full potential, the prime minister emphasised. Briefing reporters after the meeting, which was attended by all NDA MPs, Union Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju said Prime Minister Modi gave very good guidelines for the lawmakers and conveyed that the most significant issue in the third term of his Government is the "Reform Express".

"I want to stress that the Narendra Modi Government's 'Reform Express' has started to move. It will not stop. This reform is to change the life of every citizen. When we talk about reform, some people will think of it as economic reform, some people will think of it as political reform,



PM Narendra Modi being felicitated by MPs for the alliance' victory in Bihar Assembly elections during the NDA Parliamentary Party meeting at Parliament premises in New Delhi on Tuesday. Union Ministers Amit Shah, Rajnath Singh, JP Nadda and others also seen

administrative reform or cultural reform. Reform means improvement in the life of every citizen.

"The prime minister has stressed that whatever law is framed, it should have no provision which is harmful or causes inconvenience to any citizen. The rules and laws should not become a burden on the life of a common citizen. Everyone must ensure

that rules and regulations are for the convenience of the common people and improve their lives," Rijiju said.

Quoting Modi, Rijiju said rules and regulations must be for improving the system, not to harass people, and there should be no law which harasses people without any reason. "Now we will work in this direction. The central Government, the State

Governments and the local self-governing bodies like the municipalities and panchayats, all should work in (this) direction," he said.

Sources said Modi urged the MPs to actively share real problems faced by ordinary people, so that the "Reform Express" can reach every household and remove day-to-day hardships. Modi also said he wants to end the

culture of 30-40 page forms and unnecessary paperwork, stressing that there is a need to provide services at citizens' doorsteps and eliminate repeated data submissions, the sources said.

The prime minister recalled that the Government trusted citizens by allowing self-certification, and this has worked successfully for 10 years without misuse.

Modi stressed that both ease of life and ease of doing business are the top priorities of his Government, the sources said.

At the outset of the meeting, Modi was felicitated for the NDA's massive victory in the recent Bihar elections.

Union ministers Rajnath Singh, Amit Shah and JP Nadda, who is also the BJP president, were among those present at the meeting held at the Parliament House complex. Modi was garlanded by JD(U) leader Sanjay Jha and Rashtriya Lok Morcha chief Upendra Kushwaha — both Rajya Sabha members.

In the 243-member Bihar Assembly, which went to polls last month, the NDA secured 202 seats, paving the way for JD(U) supremo Nitish Kumar to return as chief minister for the 10th time. Among the alliance partners, BJP won 89 seats, JD(U) 85, LJP (Ram Vilas) 19, Hindustani Awam Morcha (Secular) five, and Rashtriya Lok Morcha four.

Allahabad HC directs UP DGP on prevention of corruption cases

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Prayagraj

Observing that matters relating to the Prevention of Corruption Act are being conducted most casually, the Allahabad High Court has directed the principal secretary (home) and the DGP of Uttar Pradesh to look into them and issue necessary directions.

The above direction was passed by Justice Samir Jain allowing a bail application of one Suresh Prakash Gautam, against whom an FIR was lodged under the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 in Saharanpur district. After going through the record, the court found that according to the allegations, Gautam was posted as a labour enforcement officer. He demanded a bribe from the complainant to settle his claim. Gautam was apprehended

red-handed by the trap team and the bribe money was recovered from his possession. About ₹21.50 lakh were also recovered from his house.

The court said, "But it reflects that neither the hands of the applicant nor of the complainant were washed at the spot where the trap was made," adding that the alleged recovered bribe money was not sealed at the spot.

The court said the record also suggests that the recovery memo of the alleged bribe has also not been prepared on the spot and it appears that all these proceedings have been conducted at the police station. "Considering these facts, the argument advanced by the counsel for the applicant that the trap proceeding appears to be doubtful cannot be completely brushed aside at this stage," the court added.

Amit Shah slams Opposition over Vande Mataram debate

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Home Minister Amit Shah on Tuesday alleged that opposing 'Vande Mataram' is in the blood of the Congress and said had Jawaharlal Nehru not divided the song in two parts to begin appeasement, the partition of the country would not have taken place.

Initiating the debate in the Rajya Sabha to mark the 150th anniversary of Vande Mataram, he slammed the Opposition for linking the debate on the national song with the upcoming West Bengal elections.

He said Vande Mataram was the "mantra" that awakened India's cultural nationalism, and remains as relevant today as it was during the freedom struggle. He stressed that the song will remain relevant in the coming days as well, in taking the country towards Viksit Bharat.

Shah also attacked Congress for questioning the need for a debate on Vande Mataram, and accused first prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru of "dividing" the poem and limiting it to merely two stanzas.

"When Vande Mataram completed 50 years in 1937, Jawaharlal Nehru ji divided it into two parts, and limited it to two stanzas," Shah said,



Home Minister Amit Shah speaking during a debate on Vande Mataram in the Rajya Sabha at the Parliament in New Delhi on Tuesday

triggering uproars from Opposition benches. He said many like him believe that the nation would not have been partitioned if the hymn 'Vande Mataram' was not "divided into two", alleging that appeasement politics began ever since.

"That is where appeasement politics started and that appeasement resulted in partition of the country. Many like me believe, if Vande Mataram was not divided into two due to appeasement politics, this nation would not have been partitioned," Shah said.

Targeting the Opposition, he said many members of the Congress were considering the discussion on Vande Mataram as a political manoeuvre or a weapon to divert attention from issues. "We do not fear discussing

issues. We do not boycott Parliament. If Parliament is not boycotted and allowed to function, then discussion on all issues will take place. We do not fear, nor do we have anything to hide. We are ready to discuss, be it any issue," he said.

He further added that when the song completed 100 years, the country was under Emergency when opposition leaders were jailed.

Shah also accused several Opposition leaders of not according respect to Vande Mataram when sung in Parliament and alleged that "the disrespect and insult toward Vande Mataram have run in the veins of leadership of the principal Opposition party ever since the freedom struggle and continues even today".

Delhi car blast: NIA arrests one more doctor who harboured Dr Umar

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The National Investigation Agency (NIA), probing the "white-collar" terror module linked to the Delhi car blast, arrested one more doctor for allegedly harbouring Dr Umar-un-Nabi, the suicide bomber, and destroying evidence in the conspiracy hatched by banned Jaish-e-Mohammed group, officials said on Tuesday.

According to a statement issued by the federal agency, Dr Bilal Naseer Malla, hailing from Baramulla in north Kashmir, has been arrested. He is the eighth person to be arrested in the case.

The NIA has alleged that Bilal was involved in the "conspiracy behind the terrorist attack" that killed 15 people and injured several others in the Red Fort area on November 10. According to NIA investi-

gations, Bilal had knowingly harboured Dr Umar-un-Nabi, the man who was driving the explosive-laden car that blasted outside the Red Fort area. He is also alleged to have provided him logistical support besides being involved in destruction of evidence related to the terror attack. Bilal was produced before a designated court of Principal District and Sessions Judge Anju Bajaj Chandra here who remanded him to NIA custody for seven days.

The court also extended the NIA custody of Amir Rashid Ali, another accused in the Red Fort blast case, who was produced alongside Bilal, by seven days.

The NIA said in its statement on Tuesday that its investigation into the conspiracy behind the deadly terror act continues with the help of various central and State

agencies to unravel all the threads of the conspiracy. After taking over the investigation, the NIA took the custody of seven people, including three doctors Dr Muzzamil Ganaie, Dr Adeel Rather, and Dr Shaheena Sayeed and a religious preacher Maulvi Irfan.

The NIA had arrested two people Amir Rashid Ali and Jasir Bilal Wani alias Danish. Ali is the one in whose name suicide bomber Umar had purchased the car that was loaded with explosives including ammonium nitrate. The same car exploded outside the Red Fort.

The "white collar" terror module was busted by the Jammu and Kashmir Police along with their counterparts in Uttar Pradesh and Haryana and it led the investigators to Faridabad's Al Falah University where 2,900 kg of explosives was recovered.

■ States Focus ■



RAJASTHAN CM PUSHES FOR ACTION ON ILLEGAL MINING

Rajasthan Chief Minister Bhajanlal Sharma on Tuesday directed officials to strengthen monitoring of the state's mineral resources, ensure time-bound revenue collection, and take strict action against illegal mining activities. Sharma instructed officials to identify new mineral blocks using modern technology and artificial intelligence (AI). He also asked them to study best practices adopted by mineral-rich states to strengthen innovation and boost revenue. Chairing a review meeting of the mines and petroleum department at the chief minister's office, Sharma said Rajasthan's abundant mineral reserves are crucial to its economic growth, local employment and regional development.



5 FILMS FROM LATIN AMERICA TO BE SCREENED AT 30TH IFFK

A package of five Latin American films with intense themes will be screened at the 30th International Film Festival of Kerala (IFFK), starting on December 12. The curated lineup includes Laura Casabe's 'The Virgin of the Quarry Lake', Cecilia Kang's 'Elder Son', Luciana Piantanida's 'All the Strength', Verónica Perrotta's 'Quemadura China', and Francisco J Lombardi's 'Inside the Wolf', according to a release from the Kerala State Chalachitra Academy, the festival organisers, on Tuesday. Casabe's 'The Virgin of the Quarry Lake' is a Spanish coming-of-age horror film based on two stories by Mariana Enriquez, exploring the pleasures, anxieties and frenzy of teenage life.

Chandrayaan-3 reveals high electrical activity near Moon surface

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Bengaluru

The electrical environment near the Moon's surface in the south polar region is far more active than previously understood, ISRO said on Tuesday, based on an analysis of Chandrayaan-3 lander data.

The Chandrayaan-3 data, obtained between August 23 and September 3, 2023, provided critical ground truth on the Moon's plasma environment. In a statement, ISRO said, "Analysis of the Chandrayaan-3 lander data has yielded significant and first-of-its-kind results on the plasma environment near the Moon's surface at southern higher latitudes, revealing that the electrical environment near the Moon's surface in the south polar region is far more active than previously understood."

In physics, plasma is often called the fourth state of matter, consisting of a mixture of charged particles, including ions and free

electrons. Despite being electrically neutral overall, plasma is highly conductive and responds strongly to electromagnetic fields.

"The Moon's thin plasma environment, or lunar ionosphere, is governed by several major processes. Solar wind, a continuous stream of charged particles (primarily electrons and hydrogen and helium ions) ejected from the Sun's upper atmosphere, constantly impinges on the Moon's surface," ISRO said.

This, along with the photoelectric effect where high-energy photons from the Sun knock out outer-shell, electrons from atoms on the surface and in the sparse atmosphere, causing ionisation is the primary mechanism for generating plasma.

The lunar plasma is further influenced by the deposition of charged particles originating from the Earth's magnetosphere (specifically the magnetotail) when the Moon passes through that region, typically for 3 to 5 days during 28

Impeachment bid is political intimidation: Andhra Dy CM

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Amaravati

Andhra Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan on Tuesday dubbed the INDIA bloc constituents' impeachment move against a Madras High Court Judge as "political intimidation".

The Janasena Party founder charged that it was an attempt at "silencing" the judiciary.

Several opposition MPs, led by the DMK, on Tuesday submitted a notice to Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla to move a motion for the removal of Madras High Court judge GR Swaminathan, whose order directing Subramaniya Swamy temple authorities in Madurai's Thirupparankundram to ensure that a lamp is lit at the deepathoon (pillar) sparked a row.

"Over 120 MPs from the INDIA Bloc, led by the DMK, have weaponised the Constitution to call for the impeachment of a Judge. This is not judicial accountability; this is blatant political intimidation," Kalyan



said in a post on 'X'.

Why were certain political parties going to such extreme lengths to impeach a judge for a judgement that simply upholds the right to practice the Hindu faith, he asked.

"Is this not a cynical attempt to strong-arm and silence the broader judiciary," the actor-politician said. Was this motion not a signal to all judges that they must be "careful" when ruling in cases

about Hindu traditional practices and faith, he added.

"The selective outrage and weaponisation of the impeachment process in this case expose a disturbing bias. This incident only solidifies the urgent need for a unified institutional voice," Kalyan added.

Calling for the establishment of a 'Sanatana Dharma Rakshana Board' as the need of the hour, Kalyan asserted that devotees can actively

manage their temples and religious affairs without the fear of alleged political interference or judicial overreach spurred by "political vendetta" under such as set up.

According to the deputy CM, when a constitutional bench of the Supreme Court had delivered the Sabarimala judgment overturning a "centuries-old, deeply cherished custom" regarding entry into one of the most sacred Hindu sites, no judge was impeached.

Their ruling, which fundamentally altered a core religious practice, was met only with legal review petitions, not political motions for removal, he said.

However, he alleged that the political establishment has set a dramatically different standard now and a High Court Judge is being 'targeted' just because he delivered a judgement upholding the right of believers to light a lamp and practice a long-standing ritual on property legally recognised as belonging to a religious institution.

It will be disaster if BJP comes to power in Bengal: Mamata

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ Kolkata

In what the State saffron leadership called a sign of "pre-Parivartan" (change) trepidation, Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Tuesday warned the people of Bengal against any possible takeover of power by the BJP saying, "there will be disaster if BJP comes to power in Bengal" vowing to prevent its surge at any cost.

The Chief Minister while addressing a rally at Cooch Behar in North Bengal alleged that special intensive revision (SIR) of electoral rolls would bring national cit-

izenship register (NRC) and detention camps in the State vowing to prevent it at any cost. She asked the people to remain alert about their rights and "ensure that your names do not get deleted from the voters' lists."

On why she was "forced to comply to the orders of the Election Commission of India implementing the SIR regime in Bengal she said, "it was due to the threat of President's Rule that we had to do it or else they would have allowed the time to lapse and implemented President's Rule which would be a de facto BJP rule in Bengal and then they



would have conducted and manipulated the elections."

"SIR is not a single scheme, it will bring in its trail NRC and detention camps this is all being done by the BJP to usurp power in our State and remem-

ber if Bengal goes into the hands of the BJP then there will be disaster, there will be no self-respect, no peace, no security for the people there will be only jealousy and hatred and the whole State will become a

Kerala local body polls cross 50% turnout in first 7 districts

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Thiruvananthapuram

Polling in seven districts of Kerala in the first phase of the crucial local body elections on Tuesday, viewed by many as a key indicator ahead of next year's State legislative Assembly contest, crossed the 50 per cent mark seven hours after voting commenced.

Voting began at 7 am for the local bodies in seven districts — Thiruvananthapuram, Kollam, Pathanamthitta, Alappuzha, Kottayam, Idukki and Ernakulam and by 2 pm, the polling percentage crossed 50 per cent, according to the State Election Commission (SEC) figures.

Voters of all ages and professions, including actors like Asif Ali and Renji Panicker, were seen standing in queues since early morning to exercise their franchise.

Kerala Governor Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar also cast his vote in the local body polls in the state capital.

Leader of Opposition in Assembly VD Satheesan, UDF convener Adoor Prakash and senior Congress



leader Ramesh Chennithala expressed confidence of a "historic win" for the UDF, claiming there was an "anti-incumbency" feeling among the people and the Sabarimala gold issue has been a setback for the ruling LDF in the state.

Party stalwart AK Antony was also confident of a huge UDF victory, saying that people were ready for a change as they were tired of the present Government. He said that the BJP was too weak and therefore, the UDF was the only front that could bring a change in the state as desired by the people.

Antony refused to comment on the Sabarimala gold loss or Rahul Mamkootathil issues, saying that hike in water and electricity charges and price rise have thrown the normal day-to-day life of the people out of gear and those are the main problems.

Congress MP from Thiruvananthapuram, Shashi Tharoor, too said that it was time for a change as the corporation in the state capital was under LDF rule for 45 years.

He said people were looking for a change due to issues like drainage and san-

MP Cabinet clears cheetah project at Nauradehi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Bhopal

The Madhya Pradesh Cabinet meeting in Khajuraho on Tuesday approved major industrial, road, health, irrigation and fire service decisions, with a strong focus on accelerating development in Bundelkhand and creating the state's third cheetah habitat at Nauradehi. The Cabinet cleared a special incentive package for the Maswasi Grant industrial area in Sagor to draw investment and generate jobs in Bundelkhand.

Land allotment and annual lease have been fixed at ₹1 per sq metre, while development charges can be paid in 20 annual instalments. Maintenance is set at ₹8 per sq metre per year to reduce the burden on early-stage units.

The package includes full reimbursement of stamp duty and registration fees and a five-year exemption from electricity duty from the start of commercial production. The state expects ₹24,240 crore in new invest-

ment and more than 29,000 direct jobs. Large units will fall under the Industrial Promotion Policy 2025, while MSMEs will be covered under the MSME Development Policy 2025. Cement plants will not be eligible for the incentives, which will remain in force for five years.

For road infrastructure, the Cabinet approved an administrative sanction of ₹2,059 crore to widen the 76.680-km Sagar-Damoh stretch into a four-lane corridor under the Hybrid Annuity Model. The state will also spend ₹323.41 crore on land acquisition. The project includes 13 underpasses, three major bridges, nine medium bridges, one ROB, 13 major junctions and 42 medium junctions. The Government approved 990 regular and 615 outsourced posts to operate the new medical colleges at Damoh, Chhatarpur and Budhni.

It also cleared the upgradation of 12 health facilities in 11 districts, creating 345 regular posts and three contractual roles, and permitting 136 outsourced appointments to support expanded capacity.

detention camp," Banerjee said adding "we will not allow the State to turn into a detention camp, we will protect it at any cost we will not allow NRC in Bengal there will be no detention camp in our State I will prevent this at any cost."

The Chief Minister who rolled out a list old deprivation of the State at the hands of the Centre all in terms of clearance of central funds from MNREGA, rural housing and rural road construction schemes said how the Centre had the gall to find out ways to preempt the orders of the Court to prevent MNREGA dues to come to her State.

She said, that her Government received a letter from Delhi wherein a quarterly labour budget was demanded from the State Government. "Even after the Courts have ordered them to clear the funds they have imposed a restrictive condition but where is the time to show it? This is December, and the election is due early next year then they are also talking about providing training, my question is when will you train and when will you give the jobs? I say this piece of paper is valueless." Bengal did not want mercy it asked for its rights, she said.

Culture Ministry to document, conserve rare Arunachal manuscripts

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Itanagar

Union Ministry of Culture will send an expert team to Arunachal Pradesh to undertake scientific documentation, digitisation and conservation of rare manuscripts of Buddhist and indigenous faiths in five districts, an official statement said on Tuesday.

An official delegation led by state Art and Culture Secretary Mamta Riba attended a workshop chaired by the ministry's Secretary Vivek Aggarwal recently, where the Arunachal Pradesh Government flagged the need for immediate support to preserve its rich manuscript heritage under the Gyan Bharatam Mission, it said.

The three-member state delegation underlined the significance of the Lik-Thai manuscripts of Namsai,



ancient Buddhist Kangyur scriptures, and other rare indigenous collections, and sought assistance for scientific conservation, systematic documentation and modern archival infrastructure.

A detailed presentation on the Gyan Bharatam Mission showcased extensive field documentation carried out in Tawang, West Kameng, Shi-Yomi, Upper Siang and Namsai districts.

The survey reported the discovery of rare manuscripts

and traditional scripts, including texts containing episodes from the Mahabharata and the Ramayana, indicating deep historical and literary linkages among the communities of Arunachal Pradesh.

The presentation also warned that age, climatic conditions and inadequate archival facilities pose serious threats to these materials and proposed a structured roadmap for preservation, digitisation, capacity-building and cultural continuity.

BJP accuses CPI(M) of fake votes via transgender voters in Kerala

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Thiruvananthapuram

The BJP on Tuesday accused the CPI(M) of carrying out fake voting here during the first phase of local body polls through transgenders, leading to a tense atmosphere at a ward for some time.

Local BJP leaders claimed that there were no transgender voters in the electoral roll of Vanchiyoar ward, but transgender persons were seen casting their votes in the booths of the ward.

However, CPI(M) denied the claim that there were no transgender voters in the electoral roll.

Some transgender persons clashed with the cadres of the saffron party after it made the allegation, according to visuals on TV channels.

BJP cadres showed on TV

the electoral rolls of both booths in Vanchiyoar in support of their claim that there were no transgender voters in the lists.

Some of them even sat down on the road in protest as their leaders argued with the police.

Later, the CPI(M) contended that the draft electoral rolls were published four times in the area before the final list was published and despite that, such allegations were being made.

The local leaders of the Left party alleged that the BJP was trying to create a situation like that in UP and Bihar and they will not allow it to happen.

They rejected the BJP's claim that there were no transgender voters in the ward and said the electoral rolls were easily accessible and could be examined.

Modi-led committee likely to meet for CIC appointments

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

A three-member committee headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and also including Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi is likely to meet on Wednesday to decide the next Chief Information Commissioner and Information Commissioners for eight vacant positions at the Central Information Commission (CIC).

The Government had informed the Supreme Court on December 1 that the Prime Minister Modi-led panel is likely to meet on December 10 to select and recommend names for these posts. Under Section 12 (3) of the Right to Information Act, the prime minister is the chairperson of the committee, which also comprises

the leader of opposition and a Union minister nominated by the prime minister, that selects and recommends the names for appointment as Chief Information Commissioner and Information Commissioners.

According to the Act, the CIC has a Chief Information Commissioner and 10 Information Commissioners who adjudicate complaints and appeals filed by the applicants against the unsatisfactory orders of Government officials on their applications.

The CIC, which is staring at 30,838 pending cases, according to its website, is left with just two information commissioners Anandi Ramalingam and Vinod Kumar Tiwari with eight vacancies.

The highest appellate authority to adjudicate-related complaints and

appeals had gone headless for the seventh time since 2014 after incumbent Chief Information Commissioner Heeralal Samariya demitted office on September 13. The Commission had become headless for the first time after then CIC Rajiv Mathur demitted office in August 2014.

Samariya, who had become the Chief Information Commissioner on November 6, 2023, demitted office on attaining the age of 65 years, according to an office order issued by the Commission.

In an response to activist Commodore Lokesh Batra (retired), the Department of Personnel and Training had said that 83 applications were received for the post of Chief Information Commissioner in response to its advertisement issued on May 21.

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Order Order

CBI arrests senior passport superintendent for influencing witnesses



The CBI has arrested a senior passport superintendent posted in Mumbai in a disproportionate assets case against him for allegedly trying to influence witnesses and mislead the investigation, officials said Tuesday.

The accused officer, Deepak Chandra, was booked in March this year for allegedly amassing illicit assets worth ₹85 lakh during his tenure at the regional passport office, Ghaziabad, from July 30, 2018, to September 30, 2024.

"During the course of investigation, a search was conducted at the residential premises of the accused, which led to the recovery of huge unaccounted cash of around ₹60.00 lakh, details of investments in immovable properties as well as details of various expenses of high magnitude," a CBI spokesperson said.

The CBI arrested Chandra on Tuesday night from Mumbai, where he is currently posted, when the agency found that he was allegedly influencing witnesses and deliberately, with malafide intention, tried to mislead the investigation, she said. He was produced before a special court in Ghaziabad, which sent him to CBI custody till December 12. "On the application of CBI, Special Judge, Anti-Corruption, CBI Court, Ghaziabad vide its order dated 17.09.2025 had also issued an ad-interim attachment order for attachment of his properties, including one residential flat and one commercial shop," she said.

Shoegate fame lawyer thrashed in Karkardooma court



A lawyer who almost hurled a shoe at former Chief Justice of India BR Gavai was allegedly attacked inside Karkardooma district court premises on Tuesday. The video showed a group attacking 71-year-old Rakesh Kishore with a slipper, while the lawyer defended himself. The clip also showed the lawyer asking the attacker why he was beating him and then shouting several times, "Sanatan Dharm ki jai ho."

"There was a huge ruckus. We rushed to the spot on hearing the commotion," said advocates. On October 6, Rakesh Kishore approached the dais when a bench led by the ex-CJI was hearing the mentioning of cases by lawyers, removed his shoe, and tried to throw it at the judge. Later, the SC refused to initiate contempt action against him, though the Bar Council of India suspended him from practice.

Thirupparankundram lamp lighting row: HC asks Chief Secretary, ADGP to appear on Dec 17

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Madurai

The Madurai Bench of the Madras High Court on Tuesday directed Tamil Nadu Chief Secretary and ADGP (L&O) to appear before the court through video conference on December 17 in the Thirupparankundram lamp lighting row case.

The Union Home Secretary has been included as a party to the proceedings.

During the hearing of a contempt plea, Additional Advocate General Veera Kathiravan, appearing for the State, informed that a special leave petition filed by the Tamil Nadu authorities challenging the single judge order on lighting the lamp atop the Thirupparankundram hill was pending before the Supreme Court.

Justice G R Swaminathan, hearing the contempt petition filed by Rama Ravikumar, directed the Chief Secretary and Additional Director General of Police (Law and



Justice GR Swaminathan

Order) to appear via video conference on December 17. Ravikumar, represented by Advocate MR Venakatesh had moved the court seeking proceedings against the Madurai District Collector,



OTS with bank no ground to quash criminal cases: SC

J GOPIKRISHNAN
■ New Delhi

In a diverse judgment within weeks, the Supreme Court's another bench on Tuesday held that One Time Settlement (OTS) with banks is not ground for quashing criminal cases. Holding that economic offences undermine public interest far beyond the immediate financial loss to a bank, the apex court has restored criminal proceedings against M/s Sarvodaya Highways Ltd and its directors in a loan fraud case involving approximately ₹52.5 crore. A Bench of Justice Vikram Nath and Justice Sandeep Mehta ruled that a one-time settlement (OTS) with the bank cannot justify quashing a prosecution where forged documents were allegedly used and a clear loss to the public exchequer is evident.

Meanwhile, in a curious development, another Bench comprising Justices JK Maheshwari and Vijay Bishnoi on November 19 allowed the fugitive Chetan-Nitish Sandesara brothers' firms to deposit ₹5,100 crore as OTS in the Registry by December 17 to avoid all cases, including criminal cases registered by various probe agencies. The apex court was agreeing to the Central Government which submitted the OTS scheme including withdrawing all cases in a sealed cover on November 18. With this order Supreme Court has allowed fugitive Sandesara brothers and their Sterling Group to go scot-free from all criminal cases filed by CBI, ED and Income Tax related to bank loan frauds by paying ₹5,100 crore, which is only 1/3 of the dues.

On Tuesday, in a diverse order, a



Justice Sandeep Mehta

Justice Vikram Nath

Bench of Justice Vikram Nath and Justice Sandeep Mehta set aside a 2022 judgment of the Punjab and Haryana High Court, which had quashed the CBI case after the company paid ₹41 crore under an OTS with the State Bank of Bikaner and Jaipur (now SBI). Allowing the CBI's appeal, the Court noted that the settlement amount was significantly lower than the actual liability and was accepted by the bank under compelling circumstances typical of recovery processes in NPA cases.

The case involved offences under Section 120B (criminal conspiracy) read with Sections 406 (criminal

breach of trust), 420 (cheating), 467, 468, 471 (forgery, fabrication etc) of the Indian Penal Code, 1860 and Section 13(2) read with 13(1)(d) of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988. Corruption case can't be quashed on settlement Referring to established precedents, the Bench observed that economic offences are not private disputes capable of compromise.

"There are plethora of judgments of this Court, some of which we have referred to above, which categorically hold that in cases involving economic offences, it is not merely the Bank that stands defrauded, but the society at large

is also impacted." The Court stressed that one-time settlements, by their very nature, do not represent full recovery. In this case, while the bank recovered around ₹41 crore, the outstanding liability was approximately ₹52 crore.

"One-time settlements are, as a rule, effected under circumstances where the Bank under duress is compelled to accept lesser amount in order to secure the maximum possible recovery against the defaulting account. In this background, we feel that the High Court committed error apparent in the eyes of law by quashing the proceedings." The Court also noted that

Retired judges object to 'motivated campaign' against CJI Surya Kant

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Several retired judges of the Supreme Court and High Courts issued a statement on Tuesday expressing "strong objection to the motivated campaign targeting Chief Justice of India Surya Kant in the wake of his remarks in proceedings concerning Rohingya migrants".

The statement noted that an open letter was issued on December 5 by some former judges, lawyers and the Campaign for Judicial Accountability and Reforms (CJAR), raising "deep concern at certain unconscionable remarks made about Rohingya refugees on December 2" by a top court bench that was hearing a plea alleging custodial disappearance of Rohingya refugees in India. Underlining that "disparagement of the Supreme Court is unacceptable", the statement said judicial proceedings should only be subject to fair and reasoned criticism.

"What we are witnessing, however, is not principled disagreement but an attempt to delegitimise the judiciary by mischaracterising a routine courtroom proceeding as an act of prejudice. "The Chief Justice is being attacked for asking the most basic legal question: who, in law, has granted the status that is being claimed before the court? No adjudication on rights or entitlements can proceed unless this threshold



Chief Justice of India Surya Kant

is first addressed," the statement said.

It said the campaign against the CJI omitted the bench's clear affirmation during the proceedings that no human being on Indian soil, citizen or foreigner, can be subjected to torture, disappearance or inhuman treatment, and that every person's dignity must be respected.

"To suppress this and then accuse the court of 'dehumanisation' is a serious distortion of what was actually said," the statement signed by more than 40 judges said.

"It said if every "searching judicial question" on nationality, migration, documentation or border security is accused of hate or prejudice, judicial independence itself would be at risk.

"We therefore affirm our full confidence in the Supreme Court and in the CJI, condemn motivated attempts to distort the court's remarks and personalise disagreement into attacks on individual judges; and support consideration of a court-monitored SIT into the illegal procurement of Indian identity and welfare documents by foreign nationals who have entered Bharat in violation of law," said the statement signed by 44 retired judges.

It said the country's constitutional order require both humanity and vigilance.

"In upholding human dignity while safeguarding national integrity, the judiciary has acted in accordance with its oath. It merits principled support, not vilification," the statement said.

Curtail litigation, not generate it, SC on revenue map case

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Tuesday stressed that any unnecessary remand of a matter for fresh consideration by a higher court should be avoided as it generates fresh round of litigation. The idea is to curtail the litigation and not generate it, a bench of Justices Rajesh Bindal and Manmohan said, as it set aside an order of the Allahabad High Court, which had remanded back a matter — related to authorities rejecting a man's application for correction of a revenue map — for fresh consideration after hearing all parties concerned.

While dealing with the appeal, the top court noted that court had taken the wrong premise and interpretation of Section 30 of the Uttar Pradesh Revenue Code, 2006, which deals with maintenance of map and the field book. The bench said this could have generated unnecessary further litigation.

"We may also add that earlier view by this court was that in case there were violations of principles of natural justice, the matter was to be remanded for affording opportunity of hearing to the party concerned. However, with the passage of time, the view changed," the bench said. It further said, "The idea is to curtail the litigation and not generate it. Any unnecessary remand by a higher court generates fresh round of litigation, which should be avoided."

Initially, the application filed before the collector seeking correction of

precedents such as Gian Singh "expressly prohibits quashing of proceedings of a criminal case on strength of a compromise where loss to public exchequer is evident and the offences under the PC Act, 1988 are applied.

"Fabricated Documents, Collusion Found in Probe the CBI had registered an FIR in 2015 based on a complaint alleging that the company obtained credit facilities by submitting fabricated work orders, manipulated revenue records, and false stock statements. An internal bank inquiry had declared the account an NPA and estimated a fraud of ₹52.5 crore. After investigation, the agency filed a chargesheet against the company, its directors and the then branch manager for offences under IPC provisions related to cheating, forgery and criminal conspiracy, and under Section 13(1)(d) read with 13(2) of the Prevention of Corruption Act.

Prosecution sanction had been granted against the bank manager. The High Court had quashed the FIR and chargesheet under Section 482 CrPc on the ground of settlement, noting that the bank had received payment and closed recovery proceedings. The Supreme Court held this approach to be legally unsustainable. It noted that the High Court failed to consider vital aspects, including the alleged fabrication of documents, the involvement of a bank official, the application of the PC Act, and the deficit of over 75 crore even after settlement. Restoring the chargesheet, the Court directed the trial court to proceed on merits and clarified that none of its observations should prejudice the accused.

map for a plot was dismissed. Later, the Additional Commissioner also dismissed the appeal against the collector's order. After around 17 years, again an application was filed seeking correction of revenue map but the same was rejected by the concerned authority.

The matter had then reached the High Court which remanded the issue for fresh consideration after affording due opportunity of hearing to all concerned.

Referring to Section 30 of the Code, the apex court bench noted the collector is duty-bound to maintain, in the manner prescribed, a map and a field book for each village and any changes made in it have to be recorded annually or after such longer intervals as may be prescribed. "If the facts of this case are examined, the issue regarding the correction of map stood settled between the parties when the appeal filed by the private respondents against the order passed by the Collector was dismissed on September 4, 2001. The maps were already final," the bench said.

It said after the purchase of the land, an effort made by the private respondents to get the revenue map corrected had failed and they could not be permitted to raise the same issue after a gap of over 17 years. The bench said it was not a case where any error was found in the revenue record which deserved correction under Section 30 of the Code. While allowing the appeal, the bench set aside the order passed by the High Court.

SC examines grant of 'personal hearing' to those with bank accounts declared fraud

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Tuesday wondered what purpose the grant of "personal hearing" would serve to the bank account holders whose accounts were declared as fraud after following due diligence prescribed by the Reserve Bank of India in 2017.

A bench of Justices JB Pardiwala and KV Viswanathan was hearing a plea of the State Bank of India challenging a decision of the Calcutta High Court which directed giving personal hearing by following the principle of natural justice to such bank account holders.

"How do you justify the grant of personal hearing to you when the banks what they are actually doing as per the RBI circular is due diligence at the back end and providing you an opportunity to put your point forward in writing after issuance of a show cause notice," the

bench told senior advocate K Parameshwar, appearing for private firm Amit Iron Pvt Ltd.

At the outset, Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the country's largest bank SBI, said that insisting on a personal hearing causes concrete prejudice to the banks and to the integrity of the regulatory regime, while the borrower suffers no real prejudice so long as it has had a full and effective opportunity to place its case in writing and have that case duly considered.

He said the circular (Master Directions on Fraud, 2017) relating to declaration of fraud was required for two essential purposes — the sheer magnitude of the number of banking frauds in the country has shown a demonstrable rise, requiring the RBI to step in and provide a mechanism to be followed by the entire banking sector. Also, any impact on any bank or banking sector has a direct effect on the nation-

al economy; therefore, the financial strength of the banking sector is always a prime consideration.

Giving figures for banking frauds and the amounts involved from 2022 to 2025, according to the RBI's latest Annual report for 2024-2025, Mehta said the number of frauds for 2022-23 was 13,494 involving ₹18,981 crore, in 2023-24 there were 36,060 bank frauds involving amount 12,230 crore and in 2024-25 there were 23,953 bank fraud cases involving 36,014 crore.

He submitted that these increased incidences of banking fraud and malpractices led the RBI to constitute multiple committees and working groups, including the Amitava Ghosh Committee in 1991, and the NL Mitra Committee in August 2003. "Based on the recommendations of these committees and working groups, the RBI issued circulars/directions from time to time advising banks on major fraud-prone areas,

new modus operandi detected earlier, and necessary safeguards to be adopted for the prevention of fraud.

"However, despite this, there were problems, including delays in the detection of fraud, inadequate reporting to the RBI, and delays in reporting and alerting other banks on fraud by borrowers," Mehta submitted.

He said that the experience of RBI and deliberation before the expert committees revealed why such frauds take place and are perpetrated and one of the most important problems was the inevitable lack of coordination between various banks.

"This resulted in a borrower committing fraud with one bank, and they would approach another bank and avail huge finances, due to the delay in detection and fraud reporting. This would result in a chain reaction and, therefore, the RBI Directions, inter alia, elaborated on the said issues," the SBI said.

Editor's

TAKE

The politics of heritage and beyond

As parties clash over the meaning of Vande Mataram in Parliament, a deeper question emerges: should a symbol of unity be pulled into the realm of partisan politics?

Vande Mataram. Sujalam suphalam malayaja-sitalam, sasya-syamalam mataram! The first stanza of the national song translates to: "I bow to thee, Mother-rich with waters, rich with fruits, cool with the southern breeze, verdant with crops and fields-Mother!" This heartfelt ode to Mother India by the great poet Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyaya is once again at the centre of a political storm. The political class across the country agrees with and bows to its sentiment, yet it is being fiercely debated in Parliament. The debate over *Vande Mataram* in Parliament on December 8 was more than an exchange of rhetoric; it revealed the complicated intersections of heritage, nationalism, and electoral politics in contemporary India.

When Prime Minister Narendra Modi invoked Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyaya's iconic hymn, it carried enormous symbolism-drawing upon a century of collective memory, pride, and sacrifice. Yet it also raised an uncomfortable question: should such a sacred piece of India's freedom struggle become the subject of partisan debate? Should not our freedom struggle and its symbols remain sacrosanct? *Vande Mataram* occupies a sacred space in India's national imagination. Born out of Bankim's *Anandamath*, it emerged as the rallying cry of the freedom struggle, uniting Indians across communities during the anti-colonial movement. Tagore's voice at the 1896 Congress session, Bhikaji Cama's flag in Stuttgart bearing its words, and the chants during the 1905 anti-Partition protests all cemented its status as a symbol of resistance and aspiration. It was never merely a poem; it was an emotional force field. This is why its invocation in Parliament is both powerful and fraught with the danger of the song itself being drawn into political crossfire.

Prime Minister Modi's speech wove together strands of spirituality, nationalism, and cultural pride. He recalled Gandhi's admiration for *Vande Mataram* and used it to position his government as the custodian of a nationalist legacy. But, coming ahead of the 2026 Bengal elections, it can also be construed as an electoral plank. As observers noted, cultural symbolism served not just as homage but as political strategy. Bengal's pride in Bankim, Tagore, and its reformist icons makes any such invocation deeply consequential in the state's political arena. India's cultural symbols belong to the nation, not to any party-neither the Congress nor the BJP. When political actors selectively elevate one icon while denigrating others-such as the recent remarks against Raja Ram Mohan Roy-they risk distorting the pluralistic, composite spirit that animated the Bengali renaissance and the freedom movement.

Bankim, Tagore, Roy, Vivekananda, and many others did not belong to a party; they belonged to the nation at large. They represented an expanding universe of ideas that shaped modern India. Appropriating or diminishing them harms the national cause-the nation loses more than it gains. When symbols like *Vande Mataram* become contested rather than cherished, their universal appeal-and their power to unite-dissipates. That is a loss not just for politics, but for the nation.

From grid burden to green power: Goa's solar-powered water supply

The future of India's renewable strategy will depend on striking the right balance between utility-scale projects and widespread community-level solarisation



SHRIPAD
YESSO NAIK

India stands at a defining juncture in its clean-energy transformation. Guided by the Panchamrit commitments announced by Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi ji at COP26, the country has set for itself some of the world's most ambitious climate goals: 500 GW of non-fossil fuel capacity by 2030, meeting half of its energy requirements from renewables by the same year, reducing projected carbon emissions by one billion tonnes, cutting carbon intensity by 45 per cent, and ultimately achieving Net Zero by 2070. These targets are not distant aspirations; they form the backbone of a nationwide movement that is steadily gathering momentum.

India's progress in renewable energy over the past few years has been nothing short of remarkable. The country has already crossed the milestone of achieving 50 per cent of its total installed power capacity from renewable sources, with the renewable energy portfolio now reaching an impressive 259 GW. Solar and wind continue to drive this growth with record annual capacity additions. The rise of ultra-mega solar parks, hybrid renewable corridors, offshore wind zones and floating solar plants reflects a sector in rapid evolution. Yet, complementing these large-scale investments is an equally important push for distributed solar, one that brings clean energy directly to households, farmers and communities.

Two flagship programmes of the Government of India underscore this vision. The PM Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana, launched by the Hon'ble Prime Minister, is propelling rooftop solar to an unprecedented scale. With a target of one crore household installations and subsidies streamlined through a single national portal, residential solar has moved from novelty to mainstream, easing electricity bills and empowering families to become producers of clean energy.

Similarly, the PM-KUSUM scheme has emerged as a transformative initiative for India's farmers. By solarising agricultural pumps, both standalone and grid-connected, and enabling decentralised renewable plants in rural areas, the scheme reduces diesel dependence, stabilises farm incomes and supports climate-resilient agriculture. Thousands of farmers across the country have already benefited, turning agricultural fields into clean-energy hubs.

However, as India accelerates renewable capacity growth, the challenges associated with bulk RE-intermittency, long-distance transmission requirements, land availability and rising grid congestion-highlight the need for innovative, decentralised energy models.



INDIA'S PROGRESS IN RENEWABLE ENERGY OVER THE PAST FEW YEARS HAS BEEN NOTHING SHORT OF REMARKABLE. THE COUNTRY HAS ALREADY CROSSED THE MILESTONE OF ACHIEVING 50 PER CENT OF ITS TOTAL INSTALLED POWER CAPACITY FROM RENEWABLE SOURCES, WITH THE RENEWABLE ENERGY PORTFOLIO NOW REACHING AN IMPRESSIVE 259 GW

The writer is the Union Minister of State for Power and New and Renewable Energy, Government of India

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 The Pioneer

Distributed generation, especially rooftop and community-level solar, is proving to be a powerful solution. By producing electricity where it is consumed, it reduces network stress, improves voltage stability, cuts transmission losses and significantly lowers infrastructure costs for power utilities. The future of India's renewable strategy will depend on striking the right balance between utility-scale projects and widespread community-level solarisation.

This becomes particularly relevant for missions such as the Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM), which aims to ensure clean tap water for every rural household. Water supply systems depend heavily on energy-intensive pumping infrastructure. Solarising these assets offers dual benefits: substantial cost savings for departments and uninterrupted service delivery for communities. It is against this backdrop that a noteworthy clean-energy initiative has emerged from Old Goa, showcasing how renewable power can strengthen essential public utilities.

At the pumping station near Podar School in Old Goa, a pioneering solar project has been implemented under the CSR support of IREDA, a PSU under the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy. The facility, which operates 60 HP pumps to lift water from a ground-level sump to an overhead tank, generally functions between 9 am and 1 pm, coinciding perfectly with peak solar generation hours. By integrating a 45 kW solar plant with net-metering capability, the station not only meets its daytime energy needs but also exports surplus clean power to the grid.

The impact has been significant. The Drinking Water Department now saves nearly ₹4.0 lakh annually in electricity expenditure, while revenue from surplus energy generation further strengthens its operational budget. Environmentally, the system offsets close to 45 tonnes of CO₂ every year, equivalent to the

carbon absorption of more than 2,050 mature trees. Nearly 650 residents now rely on a water supply system powered substantially by renewable energy. With a project cost of ₹28 lakh, a payback period of seven years and a system life of around 25 years, the initiative will continue delivering free, clean electricity for nearly two decades after cost recovery — an exemplary model of sustainable public infrastructure.

The success of this project reflects the foresight and commitment that guide my efforts to strengthen essential public services through clean and sustainable energy solutions. These efforts are deeply inspired by the broader national vision shaped by Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi ji, under whose guidance India has emerged as a global frontrunner in renewable energy adoption. At a time when cities across the world struggle with deteriorating air quality, such grassroots initiatives demonstrate how local innovation can drive both environmental protection and community development.

The solarisation of the Old Goa pumping station is more than a technical upgrade; it is a blueprint for India's sustainable future. As the nation marches towards its Net Zero commitment, the next phase of growth must lie in harnessing renewable energy for unconventional, often overlooked applications such as water supply systems, government buildings, rural institutions, agricultural infrastructure and community assets. Each such project not only reduces the burden on the grid but also brings clean energy closer to the people it serves. India's clean-energy journey is ultimately a collective one. With the right blend of visionary leadership, technological innovation and community participation, projects like the one in Old Goa will become the cornerstone of a greener, more resilient and more inclusive future.

The Pioneer

SINCE 1865

A spiritual path to ending gender inequality



RAJYOGI BRAHMA
KUMAR NIKUNJ JI

2ND OPINION

THE PIONEER

The Constitution of India not only guarantees equality for women but also empowers the State to adopt measures of positive discrimination to offset the cumulative social, economic, educational and political disadvantages they have historically faced. Yet, despite such strong constitutional safeguards, women continue to struggle for dignity, independence and equal opportunity. This compels us to ask why gender inequality remains so deeply embedded in our society.

Although India has made significant progress over decades of reform and development, our core mindset regarding gender has remained largely unchanged. For centuries, society has believed that the roles, characteristics and status of men and women are determined solely by

biological sex-natural, fixed and therefore unquestionable. Gender thus became tied to predetermined behaviours and expectations assigned to boys and girls.

From the moment a child is born, society begins the subtle but powerful process of gendering. The birth of a son is often celebrated, while the birth of a daughter is still viewed with hesitation or sorrow in many households. As children grow, boys are encouraged to be assertive, bold and independent, while girls are conditioned to be quiet, obedient and confined to domestic spaces. These distinctions are not inherent differences; they are social constructs created and perpetuated by all of us. Within this rigid framework, we overlook a fundamental truth: men and women are not meant to be adversaries. Instead, they are meant to play complementary roles that create harmony and balance in society. At the spiritual level, the human soul-regardless of whether it resides in a male or female body-possesses both sets of qualities. Courage, determination and resilience coexist naturally with compassion, nurturing and gentleness. What we often label as "male" or "female" qualities are, in reality, learned traits rather than innate ones.

True empowerment therefore requires a shift in consciousness. It calls for moving beyond body consciousness to soul consciousness, where we recognise that our identity is not confined to gendered expectations. By connecting

the self with the supreme source-the highest and purest form of energy-we awaken the inherent balance within us.

This spiritual connection restores self-respect, self-confidence and self-reliance. It nurtures holistic growth, enabling individuals to embody both strength and empathy, both willpower and compassion. Our scriptures remind us that the Almighty embodies the complete spectrum of these qualities. When we anchor ourselves to this supreme source, we too receive this wholeness.

When we identify solely with the physical body and its gendered limitations, we develop only partially. Spirituality thus becomes not an escape from reality but a prerequisite for social harmony. It dissolves hostility and division, replacing conflict with integration, equality and unity. It opens the "third eye" of wisdom, allowing us to access an inner reservoir of strength and purity. The real solution to gender inequality does not lie in replacing male dominance with female dominance. It lies in freeing both men and women from the chains of gender bias rooted in body consciousness. When individuals rise to higher awareness, society becomes more just, balanced and compassionate. Let us therefore empower ourselves spiritually and work together to ensure that every individual, regardless of gender, can live with dignity, equality and purpose.

The writer is a spiritual educator & popular columnist

The Pioneer

SINCE 1865

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Passengers deserve fair compensation

This refers to recent news concerning IndiGo's fiasco, which is presently under the scrutiny of the Prime Minister's Office. The airline's conduct appears to have violated regulations framed in accordance with international aviation standards. Large-scale flight cancellations caused severe inconvenience to passengers, while other airlines took advantage of the situation by sharply increasing airfares. Many travellers, compelled by urgency, were forced to make expensive last-minute bookings to reach their destinations.

Compensation for the loss of valuable time, financial resources, and mental peace resulting from such lapses is a legal imperative. The Directorate General of Civil Aviation has failed to discharge its responsibilities effectively, leading to reputational damage. Operating aircraft beyond stipulated terms and conditions results in physical and psychological fatigue among pilots, thereby increasing safety risks.

The Consumer Protection Act, 2019, allows for class-action proceedings against companies providing deficient or misleading services. Although the Ministry of Civil Aviation issued fare-cap orders and regulatory directions, the evident negligence of both IndiGo and the DGCA warrants strict penalties.

YUGAL KISHORE SHARMA | HARYANA

Reactive regulation threatens aviation trust

The recent IndiGo airline imbroglio exposes how reactive regulatory oversight, combined with a market duopoly, leaves passengers vulnerable and weakens confidence in the aviation sector's long-term prospects. The spillover effects of mismanagement have also cast a shadow over airline privatisation plans in the post-pandemic era. India's domestic aviation market is dominated by IndiGo and Air India, making it particularly sensitive to disruptions. Soft regulation and delayed intervention undermine operational credibility and investor confidence alike. In contrast, mature aviation markets such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia enforce strict consumer protection laws. Airlines in these countries are mandated to compensate passengers for cancellations and delays.

The 2022 Southwest Airlines crisis led to legal action, government investigation, and substantial reimbursements, reinforcing accountability and consumer trust. Indian aviation, however, continues to rely on ad hoc measures during crises rather than preventive oversight.

The IndiGo episode highlights how market concentration amplifies systemic risk. India must shift from reaction to anticipation by enforcing accountability and safeguarding passenger trust.

VIJAY SINGH ADHIKARI | UTTARAKHAND

Switch off stress, switch on life

With the rapid expansion of the digital revolution worldwide-through information technology, the internet, and smartphones-the practice of employers contacting employees beyond official working hours has increased sharply. Emails, phone calls, and instant messages now intrude into personal time, blurring the boundary between work and rest. This constant connectivity has resulted in rising levels of mental and physical stress among employees. To address this growing concern, the concept of the "Right to Disconnect" was first discussed in Europe and has since gained global attention. Even after completing their daily tasks, many employees feel compelled to respond to work-related communications, often out of fear of professional repercussions.

To provide legal protection and work-life balance, discussions on this right have been underway for several years. In a Bill presented in Parliament, MP Supriya Sule proposed the establishment of an Employee Welfare Authority. The Bill grants employees the right not to respond to work-related emails or calls beyond official working hours. Its objective is to reduce stress in both personal and professional life. As work increasingly shifts online, such legislation is timely and necessary to protect employee well-being.

DATTAPRASAD SHIRODKAR | MUMBAI

WORLD HUMAN RIGHTS DAY AND ITS GROWING GLOBAL RELEVANCE

Since 1948, the United Nations has observed 10 December each year as World Human Rights Day. The primary objective of this observance is to promote and protect the fundamental human rights of people across all nations. The theme for Human Rights Day 2025, "Human Rights, Our Everyday Essentials," highlights how basic rights such as clean air, food, shelter, dignity, and personal safety are inseparable from everyday life.

At present, the world is witnessing widespread geopolitical turbulence. Prolonged conflicts such as the Israel-Palestine crisis and the Russia-Ukraine war continue to destabilise regions, displace populations, and deprive millions of their basic rights. Tensions and internal unrest in several other parts of the world

further deepen humanitarian suffering. It increasingly appears that global peace has become fragile and uncertain.

Despite the devastation caused by two world wars, humanity continues to resort to armed conflict rather than dialogue, cooperation, and mutual respect. The consequences are borne not by leaders but by ordinary citizens, who lose their rights to life, security, health, and freedom.

All religions advocate peace, compassion, and coexistence. Yet these principles are often ignored in practice. Upholding human rights is essential for lasting peace.

Without their protection, societies may increasingly descend into conflict in pursuit of dignity and justice.

JITESH MORI | GUJARAT

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

PIC TALK



Employees wearing Santa Claus costumes perform during a parade celebrating Christmas at Lotte World Adventure in Seoul, South Korea.

PHOTO: PTI

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Water warriors lead the water revolution in countryside

As the world is literally sitting on a hot spot, notwithstanding these CoPs, which are hilariously optimistic without any substance of change, we in India need to take drastic action at the level of civil society as well as within the government, with a bottom-up innovative approach right from village level to national level



VK BAHUGUNA

Amidst when the world climate change negotiators are busy pulling wires in Brazil at the UNFCCC CoP 30 summit, the world, especially those suffering most from climatic vagaries, is watching to see if there is a thaw between the divergent positions of developed and developing countries, especially in truly adhering to the cardinal principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. But this is a matter to be dealt with separately.

As this writer has been repeatedly warning government negotiators and policy makers about charting out South-South climate-resilient developmental planning to ward off the deleterious effects of climate change on the environment, especially on food, nutrition and water security of billions of people, Brazil's Tropical Forest Forever Facility (TFFF) climate change fund of \$125 billion to support tropical forests through government and private contributions, spending \$4 per hectare on improving forests, is a welcome move. Brazil herself has committed \$1 billion to this fund. India has supported it in principle. The fund may help in water and biodiversity conservation.

However, India should take the lead in focusing on creating a fund in collaboration with China and the Group of 77 to conserve and manage water for better climate management, as the temperature has already crossed the 1.5 degree Celsius threshold this year, as reported by Carlo Buontempo, the Director of the European Climate Agency Copernicus, and this is going to severely impact world hydrology. If India can take a lead as it did in creating the 'Solar Alliance' by creating a water conservation fund, forests will automatically be taken care of.

As the world is literally sitting on a hot spot, notwithstanding these CoPs, which are hilariously optimistic without any substance of change, we in India need to take drastic action at the level of civil society as well as in government, with a bottom-up innovative approach from the village level to the national level.

Already, the Water for Every Household scheme launched in 2019 by the Prime Minister is a resounding success with community participation and has provided



THE NATIONAL WATER AWARDS, RECOGNISING INNOVATIONS, HAVE GALVANISED ACTION, PROVING THAT LOCAL INGENUITY CAN RECHARGE ECOSYSTEMS AND EMPOWER MARGINALISED SECTIONS FACING ACUTE WATER STRESS

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almost 78.58 per cent (15.56 crore out of 18 crore) households access to tap water connections, compared to around 7 crore earlier, before 2019. Let us substantiate water conservation from the examples created by our civil society.

The water availability study done by the Central Water Commission using space inputs (2019) assessed the average annual per capita water availability for the years 2021 and 2031 as 1,486 cubic metres and 1,367 cubic metres respectively. Annual per capita water availability of less than 1,700 cubic metres is considered a water-stressed condition, whereas annual per capita water availability below 1,000 cubic metres is considered a water-scarcity condition. The country's rivers run dry, aquifers deplete, and millions face seasonal scarcity, underscoring the urgency of sustainable practices.

So, we need to look into our countryside to search for water warriors beyond government programmes. The country has shown time and again that our society produces leaders from the grassroots level, from the freedom struggle to tree conservation through the world-famous Chipko Movement, to now "sow seed to get water" (pani bao pani pao) launched successfully in Uttarakhand by Mr Mohan Kandpal and others elsewhere in the country. This has become amply clear in the 2025 Water Awards announced by the

Ministry of Jal Shakti, Government of India. These water warriors brought to fame this year have shown how a public movement can change the countryside scenario drastically.

This writer, while in the Planning Commission, had in 2010 assessed the great work done by Popat Pawar in the Hiware Bazar village in Ahmednagar district of Maharashtra, turning a ghost village into one bubbling with prosperity solely due to water harvesting in adjoining forests under the Joint Forest Management programme, resulting in huge agricultural and milk production.

In this context, water conservation awards serve as beacons of hope, spotlighting grassroots innovators, communities and institutions that transform despair into resilience. These examples celebrate individual and collective triumphs but also produce scalable models, fostering a culture of stewardship. The National Water Awards, recognising innovations, have galvanised action, proving that local ingenuity can recharge ecosystems and empower marginalised sections who have been facing acute water stress.

This year's awards were announced and conferred by President Droupadi Murmu on November 18, 2025 at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi, and honoured 46 winners — a 30 per cent increase from prior years. These honours were backed by field

verifications from the Central Water Commission and the Central Ground Water Board.

At the heart of this narrative stands Mohan Chandra Kandpal, a 59-year-old chemistry teacher from Kande village in Uttarakhand's Almora district, whose lifelong crusade earned him the Best Individual (North Zone) award. For 36 years, Kandpal has traversed the fragile Himalayan foothills, where deforestation and erratic monsoons have rendered ancient springs and traditional stone reservoirs dry. Fate struck him in 1990 when he observed the Riskan River's tributaries dwindling amid drought coupled with soil erosion. He resolved to act and launched "Pani Bao-Pani Uggao" (Sow Water-Grow Water), a masterstroke that charged women and youth into action, blending this rhetoric with indigenous community wisdom and mobilisation.

Kandpal's strategy hinges on khals and chaals-shallow percolation pits that capture runoff, allowing rainwater to recharge aquifers. Between 1990 and 2012, he spearheaded the digging of thousands, coupled with afforestation drives planting over 100,000 saplings of native species like oak and rhododendron. People changed ploughing techniques in agricul-

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tural fields to till perpendicular to slopes, creating furrows that channel water deeper into the earth rather than letting it run off. This low-cost tweak, disseminated through farmer workshops, amplified recharge efficiency. By 2025, over 5,000 such structures dotted 40 villages, reviving 27 depleted sources in hamlets like Valna, Bitholi, Kande and Ganoli. Complementing this is the "Woh Pani Hoga" (That Water Will Be There) initiative, which has bolstered the Riskan River's flow, turning seasonal streams perennial. It was purely a public programme, though MGNREGA funds might have been dovetailed.

Another well-known example is Dr Rajendra Singh, the original "Waterman of India", whose 50-year odyssey in Rajasthan's arid heartland earned the 2001 Ramon Magsaysay Award and the 2015 Stockholm Water Prize-the "Nobel of Water". Singh revived over 1,000 villages by resurrecting more than 8,600 johads (earthen check dams) and bamboo drip systems in the Aravalli hills, and by targeting the parched Alwar district he started "Pani Panchayats" — village water parliaments-thus democratising resource governance. The results are visible: five rivers now flow perennially across 6,500 sq km, enabling afforestation of 1.5 million trees and the repopulation of ghost villages.

Yet another example is from Bihar's flood-prone plains, where Kishore Jaiswal, a Munger-based activist, bagged the Best Individual (Eastern Zone) award for desilting the Ganga's tributaries. He, with the NGO Jalsrot Vikas Sansthan, mobilised 20,000 volunteers to remove five lakh cubic metres of silt from the Chandan River, restoring flow to 100 villages.

In another example of social institutions, the Art of Living Social Projects received two awards for reviving more than 50 lakes in Karnataka and Tamil Nadu through yoga-integrated clean-ups, impacting one million lives. The Barmer district administration also bagged the rainwater harvesting award, which was received by the District Collector, Tina Dabi. If each block of the country does this, prosperity and progress with climatic adaptation will be at our doors and happiness on the faces of millions of rural masses. These people have shown, in a much better manner, how to tackle climate change in tandem with communities than the big CoPs of the UNFCCC.

The end does not justify the means



BALRAJ MEHTA

"Though no one can go back and make a brand new start, anyone can start and make a brand new ending". Carl Bard

A few days ago, I came across a news item about a young married woman from a prominent business family being found hanging in her room. This was utterly shocking because such an incident is least expected to occur in well-established, educated, and successful business families. I have no access to intimate details about the personalities involved or the circumstances, other than the published news reports. We will have to await the completion of investigations to know why such a drastic step was taken by this lady.

My mind went back to 1985 when, unfortunately, a young mother in our family circle died of 90 per cent burns suffered while cooking on a kerosene stove. It was a suicide-plain and simple — but this angle was deliberately not pursued by the family because she had two small children who were to be brought up by her husband. It was no small matter that a few months earlier she had expressed a strong desire to permanently return to her maternal home. Her father had not accepted this and forced her to go back and "adjust" in her marital home. She obviously could not, and found no other way out of her unhappy life.

Later, in 2004, I witnessed another tragedy unfold in our residential colony in Delhi Cantt when a schoolboy from Class 12 consumed poison and his body was found behind the complex near the railway tracks. We came to know that the boy had been forced by his father to take up the PCM stream, while his own interests lay in the arts. He was regularly shamed and harshly treated at home due to his inattention to studies and poor grades, which led to the extinguishing of a promising young life.

Globally, over 7,27,000 people die by suicide every year, as per the WHO report of March 2025. In India, the National Crime Records Bureau pegged suicides at 1,53,052 in 2020, 1,64,033 in 2021, 1,70,924 in 2022, and 1,71,418 in 2023. Some key trends and demographics are listed below:

- Gender disparity: Males account for 72-73 per cent of suicides.
- Age groups: Young adults aged 18-30 years and people aged 30-45 years account for the largest share-about two-thirds.
- Major causes: Family problems, illnesses, mental health issues, bankruptcy or indebted-

ness, and other work-related problems.

- Professional groups: Daily wagers constitute the largest group, followed by housewives and the self-employed.
- Academics: Students facing academic pressure and family expectations are the most vulnerable strata.
- Risk factors: Access to firearms, sleeping pills, pesticides, drug addiction, and/or previous suicide attempts.

It has been established by various studies that a large percentage of people with mental disorders do not receive proper treatment due to lack of awareness, attached social stigma, and an acute shortage of professionals. The WHO has assessed an ideal requirement of three psychiatrists per one lakh population, whereas availability worldwide is 1.7 and, in India, only 0.75 per one lakh.

Admittedly, the social stigma attached to mental ill health is very strong, leading to facts being hidden from society, friends, and even family members. The indicators may be visible much before full-blown symptoms appear, but are not understood, acknowledged, or accepted. In my experience, about half of us have one or another quirk or kink in our personality that needs sorting out, but we cannot see our blind spots, and even if we do, we do not accept them comfortably. Parents are often unaware of the warning signs in their children and do not realise the grave consequences of ignoring these red flags until it is too late.

If proper preventive and curative measures are taken for emerging symptoms at an initial stage, much damage can be prevented. Warning signs of an upcoming mental storm could include one or more of the following:

- Sleep or appetite changes
- Decline in personal care and hygiene
- Mood changes
- Social withdrawal and absenteeism
- Difficulty in managing bodily pain
- Unusual drop in academic or professional performance
- Unexplained problems in coherent thinking or speech
- Increased sensitivity to sound, light, touch, or smells
- Apathy towards surroundings
- Fear or nervousness
- Any other unusual behaviour

As brought out earlier, a suicidal impulse can be triggered by mental illness, physical disease, relationship stress, heartbreak, loss of loved ones, or major financial, professional, or personal setbacks. Any person behaving abnormally will usually give sufficient indications that can be picked up by a concerned friend or family member.

The American Society for the Prevention of Suicide lists the following warning signs:

1. Talk: If a person talks about
 - Killing themselves
 - Feeling helpless

- Having no reason to live
- Being a burden to others
- Unbearable pain

2. Behaviour: Indicated by

- Increased use of alcohol or drugs
- Online searches for ways to end their life
- Withdrawal from activities
- Isolation from family and friends
- Sleeping too much or too little
- Visiting or calling people to say goodbye
- Giving away prized possessions
- Unnatural aggression
- Constant fatigue

3. Mood:

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Loss of interest
- Irritability
- Humiliation or shame
- Agitation or anger
- Sudden relief or improvement

Admittedly, significant efforts are being made by governments and social organisations to spread awareness, but incidents do not seem to be declining. Regular sensitisation of teachers, parents, and business managers must be ensured by the concerned authorities. Dignity of labour and respect for the workforce need to be inculcated from school onwards. The newly instituted labour laws should help address issues faced by the salaried class in the private sector, but effective monitoring of remuneration for domestic staff and gig workers is essential. A grievance redressal mechanism must be established at various levels. Creating awareness about cybercrimes and the harmful effects of digital addiction also needs focused attention.

Ultimately, as a society, we must reorient our sensitivities away from material pursuits and refocus on respect for life and care for fellow human beings-especially the disadvantaged. Family units must remain cohesive while respecting individual choices. Parents must realise that a present artist son is far better than a forever-lost engineer son, and that a divorced daughter is far better than a dead daughter.

We need to talk more openly about mental health and remove the shame associated with it. When we are physically unwell, we go to a hospital for treatment, and once better, we exercise to remain fit. Similarly, to deal with day-to-day stress, we should not hesitate to seek counselling or therapy when required, treating it as joining a "mental gym". It is not a shame, but simply a set of exercises to become mentally stronger.

As someone said, "It is not weak to ask for help. It is like using a flashlight when you are lost in the dark."

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REPM: Boosting electronics



T SENTHIL SIVA SUBRAMANIAN



N MANIKANDAN

The 21st century is a promising era for India, which has achieved global recognition in attaining a meaningful economy. In fact, this year, 2025, India has touched 8.2 per cent GDP growth during the period from July to September, which demonstrates the capability of several factors, including consumer demand and the supply chain. The present need of the hour is rare earth permanent magnets. The Government of India has strongly emphasised their significant role, which has led to the launch of the Rare Earth Permanent Magnets (REPM) scheme. The scheme would revolutionise India's advanced manufacturing ecosystem. This scheme envisions the creation of a rare earth valley and manufacturing zones in India, thereby boosting the electronic economy. This initiative would bring together several stakeholders-government, industry, start-ups and academia, especially Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs) to collaborate with localised manufacturing industries and the Government of India, thereby transforming products from lab to market. REPM would encourage HEIs to partner with UGC and AICTE to develop a model curriculum on rare earth permanent magnets, minor degree programmes, electives, minor capstone projects and internships on rare earth permanent magnets. The REPM scheme would facilitate HEIs to develop MOOC courses in collaboration with industries on rare earth permanent magnets. There is ample opportunity for HEIs to partner with Sector Skill Councils under the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, Government of India, to develop skill enhancement courses on rare earth permanent magnets, which could be aligned with NEP 2020 and the National Credit Framework (NcrF) across different job roles from Level 4 to Level 8, fulfilling skill mission objectives.

REPM would allow and provide opportunities, especially for women students, to collaborate with the National Institute for Entrepreneurship and Small Business Development (NIESBUD) and the Entrepreneurship Development Institute of India (EDI), Gujarat, under the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship and the Ministry of Science and Technology, Government of India, respectively, to explore and start their own ventures under the Swavalambini Programme scheme in the field of rare earth permanent magnets. The REPM scheme would drive HEIs to interface with localised manufacturing industries, with a special focus on SMEs working on rare earth magnets. This activity

would enhance community-based learning under the Government set-up known as MY Bharat.

HEIs can selectively work on different manufacturing problem ideas and concepts of local industries and thereby ideally develop:

1. Idea-to-business models
2. Proofs of concept (PoCs) for rare earth permanent magnets

The collaboration would provide a significant opportunity for HEIs to design and develop Minimum Viable Products (MVPs), which would lead to Swadeshi designs on rare earth permanent magnet products. This, in turn, would further enhance India's autonomy and self-reliance and thereby meet the objectives of "Viksit Bharat" / "Amrit Kaal". HEIs would get a platform to develop design simulation tools and technology frameworks for rare earth permanent magnet products.

Research explorations on REPM would receive a significant boost at the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), and Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC). The scheme is expected to bring tangible and intangible investments to the nation. It would also promote HEIs to create design-thinking-based products and process solutions, simulation software tools and techniques. Additionally, REPM would add value to responsible research innovation, leading to intellectual property rights such as trademarks and copyrights in rare earth permanent magnets. These innovations would give a major push to Higher Educational Institutions to reinvent technologies using rare earth permanent magnets that could be applied across different sectors, especially the Electronic Manufacturing Services (EMS) and Electronics System Design and Manufacturing (ESDM) sector — an industry initiative under the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), Government of India.

This will be a boon for boosting the electronic economy, leading to the development of Vocal for Local products, processes and solutions.

The products developed in laboratories will reach the market through a lab-to-market approach, achieving Technology Readiness Levels (TRL), Manufacturing Readiness Levels (MRL), Consumer Readiness Levels (CRL) and Investment Readiness Levels (IRL). Best practices in rare earth permanent magnets would strengthen partnerships with the Global South in knowledge transfer, capacity building and R&D, while enabling inclusive growth through links with rural development and women entrepreneurship.

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IndiGo messed up, but so did the IBC

The spectacular failure of airline bankruptcy proceedings in India has perversely crippled the start-up airline market in India



IndiGo's spectacular meltdown in the first week of December left people stranded across the country. I was attending the media drive of the Tata Sierra in Chandigarh last weekend and many of my friends had severely delayed flights or cancelled flights. And stories of weddings and holidays being ruined filled social media.

But airlines can have meltdowns, earlier this year when operations were severely restricted at Delhi Airport due to fog, planes and passengers found themselves all over the country. And this is not just an Indian thing, across the world, every so often an airline has a massive flight meltdown. Sometimes triggered by weather, sometimes by strikes or sometimes by software.

It is possibly true that IndiGo's poor planning of the Flight Duty Time Limitations (FDTL) issue was a major factor in the meltdown. But it is also true that the meltdown impacted an abnormal number of people simply because of IndiGo's massive network and the fact that they have nearly two-thirds of the Indian aviation market.

I am a well-wisher of the airline, not only because I take 15-20 flights with the airline every year, I am a shareholder in the airline and have been one ever since the Initial Public Offering. I also believe that IndiGo is an important instrument for the Indian Government because I feel that it is India's interest as a major global economy to have an airline, actually multiple airlines with global reach. We surrendered our aviation industry to middle-eastern carriers such as Emirates in particular, whose global dominance was achieved with Indian rupees.

But it will take a few years for Tata Sons to stabilise things at Air India and IndiGo's growth over the past few years, particularly in the short and medium haul international sectors, has been stunning. Just look at connectivity to countries like Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam and now China.

Early next year when IndiGo gets their first Airbus A321neo XLR aircraft with a much longer range, they will start flights between Delhi/Mumbai and Athens in Greece. India has



become extremely close to Greece over the past few years, especially if you look at projects like the Indian Middle-East Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) where Greece plays a pivotal role. Whether you like it or not, IndiGo plays a role in India's diplomacy.

There is also the fact that IndiGo has been adversely impacted by the high rate of failure of the American Pratt and Whitney 1100G Geared Turbofan engine and over 40 IndiGo aircraft are still grounded for no fault of the airline. The failure of the American company to make 'dependable engines' as they promise on their logo was a major reason for the collapse of Go First.

This neatly brings me to the fact that the bankruptcy proceedings of Go First airlines. This was a completely and totally botched process. The airlines promoters and then administrators abused the process to not return the leased aircraft operated by the airline. While the Resolution

Professional of Go First tried to argue that without planes the airline is worthless, it was nothing short of stealing assets.

The leasing companies stopped supporting the aircraft, many of which couldn't fly anyway thanks to Pratt and Whitney. It is true that Go First had severe financial issues before the engine failures, but that was truly the straw that broke the camels back. And even when some engines were repaired, the aircraft lessors refused, rightly, to give them to Go First.

But here is where the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) did not deregister the aircraft and did not allow leasing companies to take back their assets. A similar situation also occurred with SpiceJet which has been taken to court in India and the United Kingdom for not returning or paying leasing firms.

While SpiceJet still survives today, many of their aircraft are still grounded and they are mainly operating wet-leased aircraft. This is not

the only story, the botched bankruptcy process of Jet Airways is well known. Many planes owned by the Naresh Goyal promoted airline are still gathering dust on the tarmacs of Delhi and Mumbai airport, assets that at one point of time worth almost two billion dollars and withering away.

A similar story played out with Kingfisher airlines, although all Airbus aircraft owned by the airline managed to be ferried out before the gory end and one plane, VT-VJM, Vijay Mallya's personal private jet is believed to have been taken over by the Indian Air Force. That said, many ATR turboprops rotted away at Chennai airport and when the airport flooded they were not airworthy anymore.

The reason I am mentioning botched airline bankruptcies and the legal issues faced by SpiceJet here is that India's reputation among global leasing companies is pathetic. Only IndiGo backed by its vast scale and Air India

backed by the financial muscle of Tata Sons and Singapore Airlines can lease aircraft at globally competitive rates. Other airlines can only grow slowly, Akasa for example has been holding off on taking deliveries of ready aircraft allegedly because they are still negotiating leasing deals at globally competitive rates.

The other airlines in the Indian market such as Star Air and Fly91 are small and other start-up airlines are finding it impossible to lease new planes unless they either pay usurious monthly rentals or have massive deposits. Starting up with older, less economical planes is the only option some have but even then, the amount that they pay is higher than start-up airlines in most parts of the world. This will not allow them to be economically competitive with the likes of IndiGo.

Let us face the facts, while business passengers prioritise timings and frequency over fares, tourists prefer cheaper flights. And on both these sides, no start-up can compete with IndiGo and Air India to an extent, unless they are willing to burn money for half a decade.

And if a well-capitalised conglomerate and promoter like Bombay Dyeing and the Wadia family can't keep an airline going, what hope do startup airlines have? Even if the Government gave startup airlines breaks on landing and navigation fees, if they cannot get planes at competitive rates, or at all for that matter, how will they fly and compete.

The only solution is if Indian financial institutions get into the business of aircraft leasing. Given Indian aviation's massive growth and continued prospects, this actually makes sense, if the Finance Ministry gave some incentives to Indian leasing companies, some breaks are being provided through GIFT City in Gujarat. Indian financial institutions might be better placed to deal with the Indian legal and bureaucratic system, especially the IBC.

To blame IndiGo for 'becoming' a monopoly is unfair, it was enabled to become a quasi-monopoly. And likely due to no intention of theirs but thanks to the circumstances listed above. India needs globally-competitive airlines and IndiGo is important towards that end, but India also needs a few more large airlines because we cannot be so reliant on one airline alone. How and when that will happen, remains to be seen.

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China's surplus surpasses \$1 trillion

ASSOCIATED PRESS
■ Bangkok

Higher tariffs have dealt a "severe blow" to the world economy, China's premier said on Tuesday, even as China's own trade surplus has surged past \$1 trillion. Premier Li Qiang made the remarks at a forum of top international organisations held in Beijing while top Chinese leaders are attending an annual economic planning meeting.

"Starting from the beginning of this year, we've seen the stick of tariffs being wielded around the world with growing restrictive measures on the economy and trade, which have dealt a severe blow to the global economy," Li said, without mentioning US President Donald Trump and his tariff hikes specifically.

"As the situation has unfolded, the damaging consequences of tariffs hurting both others and oneself have become increasingly evident, and calls from all sides to uphold free trade have grown ever stronger," Li told the gathering of top representatives from the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the World Trade Organisation. Trump's sharply higher tariffs on imports from China and other countries have dented Chinese exports



to the US, but that has been offset by higher shipments to other global markets. Chinese customs figures reported Monday showed exports to the United States plunged 29 per cent in November from a year earlier in the eighth straight month of declines.

Meanwhile, China's trade surplus in dollar terms for 2025 had already exceeded \$1 trillion as of November, while exports rose 5.9 per cent from a year earlier.

Trade friction between Beijing and Washington has eased somewhat after Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping met in late October during a regional economic summit in South Korea. The two sides agreed to dial back earlier steps and extend a truce in retaliatory measures for a year. With investments in technology rising, outpacing

overall investments, Li called for "collaborative innovation," saying "we need to embrace an open mind and work hand in hand to pursue openness and cooperation." The Central Economic Work Conference, the annual planning meeting held this week, follows a top-level meeting in October to draft China's plan for 2026-2030.

It focused on China's aim to remain a global manufacturing power and build a stronger domestic economy that is more reliant on consumer spending and technological advances. China's economy grew at a 4.8 per cent annual pace in the last quarter, the slowest pace in a year. However, economists expect growth to hit the official 2025 target of about 5 per cent, thanks partly to strong exports.

Stock markets fall for 2nd day on profit booking

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Mumbai

Stock markets closed lower for the second straight day on Tuesday, with benchmark BSE Sensex declining by 436 points as investors booked profit ahead of the US Federal Reserve's policy decision.

The 30-share BSE Sensex dropped 436.41 points, or 0.51 per cent, to close at a nearly two-week low of 84,666.28. During the day, the barometer plunged by 719.73 points, or 0.84 per cent, to hit an intraday low of 84,382.96 as blue-chip private banks, oil and IT shares retreated.

The 50-share NSE Nifty dropped by 120.90 points, or 0.47 per cent, to settle at 25,839.65. In the intraday session, it depreciated by 232.55 points, or 0.89 per cent, to hit a low of 25,728. Analysts said persistent foreign fund outflows and weak global cues weighed on the investor sentiment.

Among the Sensex constituents, Asian Paints, Tech Mahindra, HCL Technologies, Tata Steel, Maruti Suzuki India, Sun Pharmaceuticals, Tata Consultancy Services, ICICI Bank, Bajaj Finance, UltraTech Cement, Mahindra & Mahindra and Tata Motors Passenger Vehicles were the laggards.

However, Eternal, Titan, Adani Ports, Bharat Electronics Ltd, State Bank of India, Bajaj Finserv, NTPC and Bharti Airtel were among the gainers. "Domestic equities opened lower, extending profit booking amid caution ahead of tomorrow's US Fed policy decision, rupee weak-



ness, persistent FII outflows and ongoing uncertainty over the US-India trade deal. IT stocks led the decline, while PSU banks, realty and consumer durables gained, with small caps outperforming other indices," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments Ltd, said. The US Federal Reserve is set to begin its two-day policy meeting later on Tuesday, where the central bank's Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) will decide on key benchmark interest rates for the world's largest economy.

"The equity benchmarks staged a partial rebound on Tuesday after a steep sell-off at the open, with value buying helping the indices trim losses through the afternoon. The Sensex recovered nearly 450 points from its intraday low, while the Nifty climbed back above 25,900, though both remained in negative

territory," Gaurav Garg, Research Analyst at Lemonn Markets Desk, said. Broader markets rebounded with BSE midcap gauge rising by 0.60 per cent and smallcap index advancing 1.27 per cent.

Among sectoral indices, Focused IT declined the most by 1.18 per cent, Information Technology by 0.89 per cent, Teck by 0.72 per cent, Auto by 0.63 per cent, Metal by 0.34 per cent, and Consumer Durables and Energy fell by 0.16 per cent each.

On the other hand, Capital Goods, Power, Industrials, Telecommunication, Consumer Discretionary, FMCG, Utilities were among the gainers. As many as 2,550 stocks advanced, while 1,625 declined and 156 remain unchanged on the BSE.

"Fresh tariff concerns on Indian rice exports weighed on agri-related stocks, while persistent FII outflows and the rupee's slide past 90 contin-

ued to add to investor anxiety," Ajit Mishra — SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd said.

In Asian markets, Hong Kong's Hang Seng index, Shanghai's SSE Composite, South Korea's KOSPI settled lower while Japan's Nikkei 225 benchmark ended in the green territory. European markets are trading higher. Wall Street ended lower in overnight deals on Monday.

Nair added that global sentiment was further pressured by surging Japanese bond yields and expectations of the Bank of Japan (BoJ) tightening monetary policy at its upcoming December meeting.

While the markets largely anticipate a 25-basis-point rate cut by the Fed and a rate hike by the BoJ, forward guidance for 2026 will be critical.

Meanwhile, Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth ₹655.59 crore on Monday, while Domestic Institutional Investors (DIIs) bought stocks worth ₹2,542.49 crore, according to exchange data. "In the near term, central bank commentary, currency movement and FII flows will steer sentiment, while domestic macro resilience is expected to provide a cushion against downside risks," he said.

Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, fell 0.27 per cent to \$62.33 per barrel. On Monday, the 30-share BSE Sensex plunged by 609.68 points to close at 85,102.69. Snapping a two-day gaining streak, the 50-share NSE Nifty declined by 225.90 points to settle at 25,960.55.

Many Indian professionals want to work for themselves: Report

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ New Delhi

A significant percentage of professionals in the country said they want to work for themselves in the near future, with factors like AI adoption, a strong skilling appetite and the power of trusted professional networks making it easier to start and scale their business, says a LinkedIn report.

According to LinkedIn's latest Small Business Work Change India Report, the number of Indian members adding 'founder' to their profiles has increased by 104 per cent in a year, as more than 7 in 10 professionals in the country say they want to work for themselves in the near future. The report

noted that three factors will fuel this shift: AI adoption, brand credibility and networks. "AI is becoming part of everyday operations for India's small businesses. Eightytwo per cent of SMB leaders here say it has made starting and running a business easier, and 97 per cent already use it in some form. For 83 per cent, AI has become critical for business growth," the report said.

To keep pace, SMBs (small and medium businesses) are building skills as quickly as they adopt new tools. AI literacy has risen 52 per cent year-on-year among companies with 11-200 employees, as 81 per cent of SMBs admit they are investing in AI capabilities.

Around 95 per cent of

Indian SMBs are already investing in or planning AI adoption, outpacing the global average (83 per cent). "India's small businesses are moving with extraordinary speed and ambition. What sets India apart is the combination of rapid AI adoption, a strong skilling appetite and the power of trusted professional networks. Together, these forces are reshaping how businesses build, scale and succeed," Kumaresh Pattabiraman, India Country Manager, LinkedIn, said.

As we enter 2026, India's SMBs aren't just keeping pace with global change — they're setting the direction. LinkedIn is committed to helping them build credibility, find talent and unlock opportunity at

every stage of their growth, Pattabiraman added. Globally, 61 per cent of small business owners are creating content themselves and 71 per cent said showing up authentically online matters. This focus on connection is also witnessing a rise, with 88 per cent agreeing that people skills are even more important in the age of AI.

Moreover, in India, 85 per cent of marketers say audiences now follow real voices such as customers, employees, partners and creators, because they help people make smarter decisions.

"With AI-generated content rising, SMBs are treating relationships as essential infrastructure for insight, opportunity, and resilience," the report said.

Fertiliser import likely to jump 41% in FY26: FAI

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ New Delhi

India's fertiliser imports are estimated to jump 41 per cent to 22.3 million tonnes in the 2025-26 fiscal year due to a surge in domestic demand following good monsoon rains, the Fertiliser Association of India (FAI) said on Tuesday. The world's second-largest fertiliser consumer has imported 14.45 million tonnes during April-October, up nearly 69 per cent from 8.56 million tonnes a year earlier, the industry body said.

"There has been an increase in imports of fertilisers because of a sudden spurt in domestic demand because of good rains," FAI Chairman S Shankar Subramanian told reporters ahead of the association's three-day annual seminar. Fertiliser stocks stood at 10.2 million tonnes by end-November versus 9.97 million tonnes a year earlier, including 5 million tonnes of urea, 1.7 million tonnes of DAP and 3.5 million tonnes of NPK fertilisers, he said. Shankar Subramanian, who is also managing director of Coromandel International, said India has contracted large volumes in the last two months and there are no supply constraints. While there were iso-



lated shortages during the kharif season, overall supplies remained adequate, he added. Domestic fertiliser production rose marginally to 29.97 million tonnes in April-October from 29.75 million tonnes a year earlier, FAI data showed.

Production included 17.13 million tonnes of urea, 2.32 million tonnes of DAP, 7.04 million tonnes of NPK fertilizers and 3.48 million tonnes of SSP. Over 150 companies meet nearly three-quarters of India's nutrient needs, with imports covering the rest, the association said. India, serving

more than 140 million farming households, consumes close to 70 million tonnes of fertiliser annually, second only to China. The Government provided more than ₹1.9 lakh crore in subsidies through urea and nutrient-based frameworks in 2024-25.

India has forged strategic partnerships with resource-rich nations, including Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Morocco, Qatar and Russia to strengthen supply security, FAI said. The seminar starting December 10 will be inaugurated by Fertiliser Minister J P Nadda.

FROM THE

WORLD

MEXICO

Ex-Governor

taken into custody

Mexican federal authorities took a former governor of the northern border state of Chihuahua into custody in preparation for charging him with laundering money diverted from state coffers while in office, the Attorney General's Office said Monday. Ex-Chihuahua Gov. César Duarte – identified in a statement only as “César N” in keeping with rules over the protecting the identity of the accused – was extradited by the United States three years ago to face state charges of embezzlement and was under house arrest. Juan Carlos Mendoza Luján, a lawyer representing Duarte, told the newspaper El Heraldó de Chihuahua that Duarte had been detained and that his lawyers were still gathering information, but that his detention appeared unlawful.

PAKISTAN

Hindu woman,

daughter abducted

A Pakistani Hindu woman and her minor daughter have been reportedly kidnapped by unknown gunmen in Pakistan's Sindh province, officials said. The incident took place on Saturday in the Sindhí Mohalla in Sher Shah, Karachi. According to initial accounts provided by the family, the woman was taken away by three armed individuals who forced her into a white Alto car moments after she stepped out of her home. The case has sparked a wave of fear and concern within the local community. Shiva Kaachi, a civil rights activist for the Hindu community in the Sindh province, said Rani and her minor daughter were still missing, and her family feared she would be forcibly converted to Islam and then married off to one of the abductors.

Cambodia vows fierce fight against Thailand

ASSOCIATED PRESS

■ Surin

Cambodia's powerful Senate President Hun Sen on Tuesday vowed that his country would carry out a fierce fight against Thailand as a second day of widespread renewed combat between the Southeast Asian neighbours drove tens of thousands of people to flee border areas.

Fighting broke out following a skirmish in which one Thai soldier was killed on Sunday night, despite a cease-fire that ended fighting in July over competing territorial claims. The five days of fighting then left dozens dead on both sides, and forced the evacuation of over 100,000 civilians. In a sign that neither side was willing to back down, Thai Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul said Tuesday that Cambodia had not yet contacted Thailand about possible negotiations and the fighting would continue. “We've got to do what we've got to do,” he said.

“The Government will support all kinds of military operations as planned earlier.” He had said on Monday that military action



Local people taking refuge in Prey Chamkar Ta Doak market in Banteay Meanchey province in Cambodia, near the border with Thailand

PTI

was necessary to safeguard the nation's sovereignty and ensure public safety.

In a statement posted to Facebook and Telegram, Hun Sen claimed that his country had refrained from retaliating on Monday, but overnight began to fire

back at Thai forces, saying Cambodia would “weaken and destroy enemy forces through counterattacks.”

Thailand's military said Cambodia attacked Thai positions with artillery, rocket and drone attacks on Tuesday. Thailand says that

Cambodian forces also fired at its troops Sunday and Monday, but each side blames the other for firing the first shots. “Cambodia wants peace, but Cambodia is forced to fight back to defend its territory,” Hun Sen wrote. He was Cambodia's long-

serving prime minister until 2023, when he was succeeded by his son Hun Manet, but is still widely seen as the country's de facto leader.

Cambodia's military announced on Tuesday that the new fighting had killed seven civilians and wounded

20. A Thai military spokesperson announced Tuesday that three soldiers have been killed in the new fighting.

Thailand on Monday carried out airstrikes along the frontier, which it said were a defensive action targeting military installations. Thai military spokesperson Rear Adm. Surasant Kongsiri said Tuesday that such operations would continue “until attacks stop.”

Ordinary citizens, meanwhile, had to deal with life after being relocated from the danger zones. An evacuation shelter at a university in Thailand's northeastern city of Surin is hosting more than 3,600 people. Evacuees sit or lie on thin mats spread across the floor, and several have set up small tents in their allotted areas as sleeping spaces.

At lunchtime, some line up with their own plates to receive cooked rice, while others wait in place to be served ready-to-eat meals packed in small plastic bags. An army band plays for their entertainment. Portable fans cool them during the day.

Blankets, in piles beside them, keep them warm at night, when temperatures can fall to as low as 18°C

(64°F). “We were preparing to evacuate. We hadn't left yet. But when we heard shots, we hurried out immediately,” cassava farmer Pan-ngam Kanchangthong told.

“I was scared. Who wouldn't be scared of shelling?” The Thai army said almost 500 temporary shelters have been set up in four border provinces, accommodating 125,838 people. Additional refugees from the fighting are expected to stay with relatives in safe areas.

Evacuees on the Cambodian side had similar experiences. “I felt terrified when I heard the sound of the explosion from the shelling. At that time, I was working at the garment factory,” said 44-year-old Vach Neang, a father of seven.

“I called my wife and my kids but couldn't reach them, and by that time the sound of explosions was getting louder, so the factory owner let us go home,” said Vach Neang, speaking at a former market in Cambodia's northwestern province of Banteay Meanchey that has been repurposed as a shelter. He added that he packed just a few clothes before leaving his home.

Sri Lanka bids farewell to 2 IAF choppers involved in relief work

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

■ Colombo

Sri Lanka Air Force bid farewell to two IAF helicopters after they ended their rescue mission in cyclone-hit island nation, even as INS Gharial reached Trincomalee with 700 tonnes of essential relief material from Tamil Nadu.

The Indian Air Force (IAF) choppers, which departed on Monday, were involved in airlifting immediate relief supplies to distressed communities, evacuating those affected and providing air cover for those involved in rescue missions in the aftermath of havoc caused by Cyclone Ditwah and adverse weather conditions.

“Their contribution significantly enhanced Sri Lanka's national disaster response during a period of urgent need,” the Sri Lankan Air Force said in a statement issued on their official website on Monday.

The Indian High Commission in Colombo said the helicopters evacuated



264 survivors and airlifted about 50 tonnes of relief material, adding that more Indian relief action was due.

Meanwhile, the Indian Navy Ship (INS) Gharial reached Trincomalee on Monday, with 700 tonnes of food items, essentials and clothing from Tamil Nadu.

“The consignment was formally received by Deputy Foreign Minister Hon Arun Hemachandra, who appreciated India's swift and sustained assistance,” the

mission posted on social media on Tuesday.

Tamil Nadu has sent about 1,000 tonnes of essential food items and clothes to Sri Lanka under Operation Sagar Bandhu. Of these, about 300 tonnes reached Colombo in 3 Indian Naval Ships on Sunday. Additionally, the fully operational Indian field hospital Mahiyanganaya near Kandy, is delivering life-saving treatment to flood-affected communities.

“Equipped for trauma care,

surgeries, ambulance support and critical medical services, the facility ensures urgent healthcare reaches where it matters most,” it added.

Indian Army's Engineering Task Force is also working alongside Sri Lankan authorities to restore connectivity along the main road arteries of Sri Lanka in the wake of devastation caused by Cyclone Ditwah, it said.

Indian High Commissioner Santosh Jha on Monday met Nalinda

Jayatissa, Minister of Health and Mass Media and discussed the ongoing efforts to bolster healthcare in Sri Lanka. The two discussed “deployment of field hospitals and BHISHM Cube, providing urgent and quality health care to the people of Sri Lanka in the wake of #CycloneDitwah. They also discussed next steps to strengthen these efforts,” it said. As of Tuesday, 9 am, 638 people have been killed, with 191 missing, in catastrophic floods and landslides caused by extreme weather conditions since November 16. India was the first country to respond to Sri Lanka's international appeal for assistance under its Operation Sagar Bandhu.

A UNDP analysis released on Sunday said out of the estimated 2.3 million affected by Ditwah, more than half were women, and it hit 1.1 million hectares or almost 20 per cent of the island's land area.

The cyclone triggered 1200 landslides in the hill country, where the impact of devas-

tation was severe.

“The floodwaters reached nearly 720,000 buildings, about one in every twelve buildings in the country.

Over 16,000 kilometres of roads, enough to circle the island's coastline more than twelve times, were exposed to flooding. Similarly, over 278 km of railway tracks and 480 bridges were located in flooded areas,” Azusa Kubota, UNDP Resident Representative in Sri Lanka, said.

Cyclone Ditwah struck regions already weakened by years of economic stress, he added. “After one of its worst economic crises and a slow but steady recovery underway, Sri Lanka cannot shoulder more debt to cover the costs of a rebuild from this massive natural disaster,” he said.

International partners must step up with affordable financing and innovative instruments that enable a rapid recovery and rebuilding with greater resilience, without the country falling off the debt cliff, he added.

Pakistan, Indonesia ink seven MoUs to bolster cooperation

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

■ Islamabad

Pakistan and Indonesia on Tuesday inked seven agreements to further bolster bilateral cooperation in diverse fields as Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif held “productive” talks with Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto here.

This is Subianto's maiden visit to Pakistan. The last presidential visit from Indonesia to Pakistan was undertaken by President Joko Widodo in 2018.

According to State-run Radio Pakistan, the MoUs include cooperation in higher education, a grant program for Indonesian state scholarships, and facilitation of business development for small and medium enterprises. It also includes collaboration between national archives, narcotics

control and cooperation in combating illicit drug trafficking, cooperation in Halal trade and certification, and in the field of health.

Addressing a joint press meet after talks, Prime Minister Shehbaz assured to work collectively with the Indonesian President to achieve the targets set for collaboration in different fields. “What we have decided is to promote our bilateral trade, culture, and interact in the field of medical health, education, and vocational training,” he said.

He further said that Pakistan will also send its doctors, dentists, medical professionals and other related experts to Indonesia to fulfil requirements in the field of medicine.

He said that bilateral trade of \$4.5 billion between the two nations largely com-

prised palm oil imported by Pakistan and added that the two sides discussed ways to take collective measures to balance the trade through exports of agricultural products and IT services from Pakistan.

“We have discussed how to take corrective measures to balance this balance of trade through agricultural exports from Pakistan, through exports of IT-led initiatives,” he said.

He said that bilateral relations span over 75 years, and the visit of the Indonesian President coincided with the anniversary of the establishment of their diplomatic ties. “Let us agree to celebrate these 75 years with great fanfare in Jakarta and in Islamabad simultaneously, that will convey a very loud and clear message to all and sundry,” he said.

Lithuania Govt declares national emergency

ASSOCIATED PRESS

■ Vilnius

Lithuania's Government on Tuesday declared a national emergency over security risks posed by meteorological balloons from Russia-allied Belarus that have violated its airspace in recent weeks. Tensions between Lithuania and Belarus have escalated after the balloons forced Lithuania to repeatedly shut down its main airport, leaving thousands of people stranded.

“In combating the Belarusian hybrid attack, we must take the strictest measures and defend the areas most affected by this attack,” Prime Minister Inga Ruginiene said. The announcement followed a Cabinet meeting of the Baltic state, which is a NATO member and strong backer of Ukraine in its fight against the Russian forces who launched a full-scale invasion in February 2022.

TENSIONS BETWEEN TWO NATIONS ROSE AFTER BALLOONS FORCED LITHUANIA TO SHUT DOWN ITS AIRPORT

Interior Minister Vladislav Kondratovic said that the state of emergency means the army would be given the possibility to patrol in the border area, together with police and other uniformed services or alone, in order to detect the balloons.

He promised the impact on civilians would be limited. While the balloons are used to smuggle cigarettes into Lithuania, officials in Vilnius see their numbers and trajectories as deliberate acts of disruption orchestrated by Belarus. Kondratovic said Lithuanian prosecutors launched an investigation into the balloons and that the secret services would provide

information about the connection with the Minsk regime. “I have no information that the Belarusian side is trying to curb the senders of the balloons,” the minister said. “And this is one of the proofs that this is a hybrid attack.” In October, Lithuanian authorities closed two border crossings in response to the airspace violations by the balloons.

Belarus' authoritarian President Alexander Lukashenko denounced Lithuania's move to close the border as a “mad scam” and part of a “hybrid war” against his country. He suggested that Vilnius itself needs to combat the smuggling of contraband.

Lithuania, Poland, and other European Union countries in the region have in recent years accused Belarus of other activities aimed at triggering instability, including with cyberattacks. They also accuse Minsk of direct-

ing a large influx of migrants from the Middle East and Africa to their borders to create a migration crisis. “Belarus is signalling to Lithuania that it can raise the price at any moment,” Linas Kojala, head of the Geopolitics and Security Studies Centre in Vilnius, told. “Yesterday with weaponised migration, today with balloons that are hardly separable from regime control.” Europe overall has been on high alert since drone intrusions into NATO's airspace reached an unprecedented scale in September and the Russian invasion of Ukraine nears its fourth year.

However, smuggling balloons is a challenge unique to the Baltic states bordering Belarus. Representatives of the EU and NATO have expressed support but offered scarce concrete information about what could be done.

UN to grant \$4.5 million to help cyclone-hit Sri Lanka

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

■ Colombo

The United Nations on Tuesday announced the release of \$4.5 million from its Central Emergency Response Fund to assist Sri Lanka in recovering from the devastation caused by Cyclone Ditwah. “Cyclone Ditwah has upended lives across the country, and many families are still struggling to meet their basic daily needs,” said Marc-André Franche, United Nations Resident Coordinator in Sri Lanka.

He said that the UN is working closely with the Government, civil society partners and the humanitarian community in Sri Lanka to ensure a coordinated response guided by evidence and priority needs. “This emergency funding will help us reach those most severely affected with the support they urgently need,” he added. Sri Lanka's Minister of Foreign Affairs Vijitha Herath thanked the UN for the contributions. “The impact of the disaster on all sectors, including daily livelihood, economy, and agriculture, requires continued international support for the rebuilding process,” Herath posted on social media.

The funds will enable the UN to rapidly scale up emergency food assistance, shelter support, and water, sanitation and hygiene services for the severely affected. Communities across Sri Lanka are continuing to grapple with the widespread impacts of the cyclone, with thousands of families still displaced after extensive damage to housing and infrastructure. Even as response efforts are underway, latest assessments indicate that the effects of the cyclone are broader and more severe than initially understood, leaving many communities in urgent need of sustained support to fully recover from Cyclone Ditwah.

Over 1.7 million people from over 500,000 families were affected by the cyclone-triggered extreme weather, with 638 deaths and 191 missing.



Mexican National Guardsman kills 3 fellow service members

ASSOCIATED PRESS

■ Mexico

A Mexican National Guardsman shot and killed three fellow service members at a barracks over the weekend in the western Mexican state of Michoacan, where the Government has surged security forces in the wake of recent high-profile killings. A federal official confirmed the shooting Monday to The Associated Press, requesting anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss it publicly. The shooting, which wounded a fourth service member, was under investigation, the official said. The suspect was in custody in Michoacan. The shooting occurred Saturday hours after a car bomb exploded in Coahuayana, Michoacan, killing five people outside a local police station. President Claudia Sheinbaum declined to give more details Monday.



ICC sentences Sudanese militia leader for Darfur crimes

ASSOCIATED PRESS

■ The Hague

Judges at the International Criminal Court (ICC) sentenced a leader of the feared Sudanese Janjaweed militia to 20 years imprisonment Tuesday for war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in the catastrophic conflict in Darfur more than two decades ago. At a hearing last month, prosecutors sought a life sentence for Ali Muhammad Ali Abd-Al-Rahman, who was convicted in October of 27 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity that included ordering mass executions and bludgeoning two prisoners to death with an axe in 2003-2004. “He committed these crimes knowingly, willfully, and with the evidence shows, enthusiasm and vigour,” prosecutor Julian Nicholls told judges at the sentencing hearing in November.

India-Russia Summit 2025: A quiet reset in a noisy world



When Vladimir Putin stepped down from his aircraft in New Delhi on the afternoon of December 4th, 2025, the moment felt almost symbolic. The world today is anything but settled - Europe still burns with conflict, the United States continues to tighten sanctions, Beijing expands its strategic ambitions, and global alliances are beginning to look like the chessboard of a new Cold War. Yet, there on Indian soil, two leaders greeted each other with familiarity, not caution. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's decision to personally receive President Putin, and later accompany him in the same vehicle, was a message written not in language but in gesture: India and Russia still trust each other, despite the storm outside.

We have watched the India-Russia relationship evolve for decades - from the days of Soviet camaraderie when every defence

installation in India seemed to carry Cyrillic markings, to the more uncertain period after the Soviet collapse, and now into this new era where India is no longer a passive customer, but an assertive nation charting its own destiny. This summit, the 23rd India-Russia Annual Summit, did not simply acknowledge that relationship - it renewed and reshaped it.

The defence discussions were among the most consequential. Russia remains one of India's oldest and most dependable military partners. The MiGs and Sukhois that roar over our skies, the T-90 tanks that guard our borders, and even the S-400 systems now protecting our strategic installations - all of these are reminders of how deeply intertwined the two nations' security frameworks are. What made this summit different was a new tone: the shift from buyer-seller to co-developer. I am told Russian officials privately reassured their Indian counterparts that Moscow is willing to open access to technologies that were once held back, and that Russia sees India as a long-term defence partner capable of building, not merely purchasing. On energy, Putin's



calm but firm declaration that Russia will continue to supply India with oil "without interruption" stood out. It was a direct counter to the pressure India has faced from Washington and European capitals ever since the war in Ukraine escalated. The truth is simple: India cannot compromise energy security because another part of the world is at war. Cheap Russian crude stabilized India's energy market when global oil prices went wild - a fact ordinary citizens may not realize,

but policymakers cannot forget. Equally significant were the discussions on building a diversified economic roadmap. In the closed-door interactions, Indian negotiators emphasised the imbalance in trade: India imports far more than it exports.

For the first time in years, both sides agreed that the economic basket must expand - into sectors such as heavy engineering, manufacturing, fertilizers, skilled labour mobility, ports, shipping lanes, and even digital payments.

The idea of a payment system insulated from sanctions - using local currencies - was not just economics. It was strategy.

Another moment worth noting came during the leaders' joint statement at Hyderabad House. Modi did not explicitly mention Ukraine, yet his reminder that "peace and diplomacy remain the only viable path" was not lost on anyone in the room.

Putin, for his part, responded not with defensiveness, but with controlled pragmatism - signalling that Russia understands India's diplomatic balancing act and respects it.

For the United States, this summit will be read carefully. Washington has grown accustomed to India's partnership - be it in the Indo-Pacific, QUAD, defence cooperation, semiconductor supply chains, or intelligence sharing.

But India's relationship with Russia predates many of its modern partnerships. It is built on decades of reliability, shared technology, and geopolitical trust that did not disappear even when Moscow grew closer to Beijing. That continuity matters - especially for a nation like India, which seeks strategic autonomy and

not alliance dependency.

Does this visit change the trajectory of the Russia-Ukraine war? Not directly. It does, however, weaken the Western attempt to make Russia a pariah state. For Moscow, having India publicly reaffirm the partnership at a time when many nations are cautious is not a minor achievement - it is geopolitical oxygen.

Looking ahead, what does this summit mean for India?

If both sides follow through, India could emerge not just as a military and economic partner of Russia, but as one of the pivotal powers shaping the emerging multipolar order. The infrastructure corridors discussed - from the Northern Sea Route to the Chennai-Vladivostok maritime link - could reshape India's access to the Arctic, East Asia, and Eurasia. Co-manufactured defence platforms could strengthen India's capabilities and reduce dependence on Western suppliers vulnerable to sanctions and political conditionality. Continued access to Russian energy, nuclear cooperation, and joint technical research could bolster India's long-term capacities - especially as its population and economy continue to expand.

Yet, caution is necessary. Implementation - not headlines - will define the true legacy of this visit. Agreements must become factories, production lines, shipping routes, training programs, and operational military assets.

India must also ensure it remains balanced: no one partnership - Russian, American, or otherwise - should become a strategic crutch. In many ways, this summit tells us something deeper about India's foreign policy evolution. India is no longer choosing sides - it is choosing itself. And nations that choose themselves are the ones that shape history. Years from now, when scholars and diplomats revisit this moment, they may conclude that this was not just another leader-to-leader visit. It was an inflection point - when India proved, not through rhetoric but through action, that it will steer its path based on sovereignty, national interest, and long-term vision. The world may be dividing into camps again. India, instead, is building corridors.

The author is the Former Director General of Police, Assam and General Secretary of the Think Tank Society to Harmonise Aspirations for Responsible Engagement-SHARE

Bangladesh EC to announce poll schedule in next 2 days



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
Dhaka

Bangladesh Election Commission (EC) has completed all preparations to hold the 13th general elections in February and will announce the schedule in the next two days, a top official said on Tuesday. "After a meeting with the President (Mohammad Shahabuddin), the schedule would be announced tomorrow evening or the day after," Election Commissioner Abdur Rahmani Masud told reporters.

He said that the meeting is scheduled for Wednesday at the Bangabhaban presidential palace.

Meanwhile, the EC officials said that Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) AMM Nasir Uddin was expected to announce the schedule in a nationwide address.

The CEC met Chief Justice Syed Refaat Ahmed on Tuesday at the Supreme Court ahead of the date for elections and a referendum to seek public opinions on a series of reform proposals rolled out by the Muhammad Yunus-led interim government.

Former prime minister Khaleda Zia's Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) has emerged as the frontrunner, with its former ally Jamaat-e-Islami and its right-wing Islamic allies being the main

rival in the absence of deposed premier Sheikh Hasina's disbanded Awami League. Both parties have announced their nominees in the election for the 300-seat parliament.

Masud said that special emphasis will be given to ensuring the cooperation of all, including political parties, in the announcement of the election schedule. He also said that the symbols of any banned or suspended parties will not appear in the final postal ballots, in a veiled reference to the Awami League. A special tribunal last month sentenced Hasina to death on charges of crimes against humanity. She is currently in India. Most of her senior colleagues and activists in the party and Government were in jail awaiting trial on identical charges, while many of them are on the run at home and abroad.

The scenario made it difficult for Awami League leaders to contest the polls as independent candidates despite having a large support base. Meanwhile, tension between Jamaat-e-Islami and the BNP over election campaigning in the Sirajganj-1 constituency erupted into violence Monday night, injuring around 15 Jamaat activists, party sources said.

The BNP has denied involvement, blaming locals for the clash.

Zelenskyy refuses to cede land to Russia as he rallies European support

ASSOCIATED PRESS
Rome

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has reaffirmed his firm refusal to cede any territory, resisting US pressure for a painful compromise with Russia as he continued to rally European support for Ukraine. "Undoubtedly, Russia insists that we give up territories. We, clearly, don't want to give up anything. That's what we are fighting for," Zelenskyy said in a WhatsApp chat late Monday in which he answered reporters' questions.

"Do we consider ceding any territories? According to the law, we don't have such a right. According to Ukraine's law, our constitution, international law, and, to be frank, we don't have a moral right either." In an interview with Politico released Tuesday, US



Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and Pope Francis waving to journalists during their meeting in Castel Gandolfo

President Donald Trump again pressed Zelenskyy to accept the US proposal that Ukraine cede territory to Putin, arguing that Russia retains the "upper hand" and that Zelenskyy's Government must "play ball."

Zelenskyy met on Tuesday with Pope Leo XIV at Castel Gandolfo, a papal residence

outside Rome, and is to have talks with Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni later in the day. The Vatican said the pope "reiterated the need for the continuation of dialogue and expressed his urgent desire that the current diplomatic initiatives bring about a just and lasting peace."

The Holy See has tried to

remain neutral in the war while offering solidarity and assistance to what it calls the "martyred" people of Ukraine. Leo, who has met three times with Zelenskyy and has spoken by telephone at least once with Russian President Vladimir Putin, has called for a ceasefire and urged Moscow in particular

to make gestures to promote peace. On Monday, Zelenskyy held talks in London with British Prime Minister Keir Starmer, French President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Friedrich Merz to strengthen Ukraine's hand amid mounting impatience from Trump.

US and Ukrainian negotiators completed three days of talks on Saturday aimed at trying to narrow differences on the US administration's peace proposal.

A major sticking point in the plan is the suggestion that Kyiv must cede control of the Donbas region of eastern Ukraine to Russia, which illegally occupies most but not all of the territory. Ukraine and its European allies have firmly resisted the idea of handing over land. "You know, a lot of people are dying," Trump told Politico, claiming that other unnamed

Ukrainian officials agree with the US administration. "His people loved the proposal. They really liked it. His lieutenants, his top people, they liked it, but they said he hadn't read it yet."

Russia, Trump reasoned, remains too powerful for Ukraine to continue fighting. "I give the people of Ukraine and the military of Ukraine tremendous credit for the, you know, bravery and for the fighting and all of that," he said. "But you know, at some point, size will win, generally." Trump also amplified his calls for Ukraine to hold national elections even though the martial law doesn't allow it. And Zelenskyy, elected in 2019, had his five-year term extended because of the war. "They're using war not to hold an election, but, uh, I would think the Ukrainian people would. Should have that choice," Trump said.

22 people killed in office building fire in Indonesia

ASSOCIATED PRESS
Jakarta

A fire ripped through an office building in Indonesia's capital, Jakarta, on Tuesday, killing at least 22 people, including a pregnant woman, police said.

Flames engulfed the seven-story building, sending thick black smoke billowing into the sky and causing panic among nearby residents and workers in a neighbourhood in central Jakarta. The fire, which broke out around midday, is believed to have started on the first floor of the building in the Kemayoran neighbourhood before spreading to other floors, Central Jakarta police chief Susatyo Purnomo Condro said.

Hundreds of personnel and 29 fire trucks were deployed to try to contain the blaze. The cause of the fire is still under investigation. Many workers in the building, which was used as a sales and storage office for a drone company, were out for lunch when a battery started sparking in a storage and testing area, said Condro, citing several witnesses. The fire was extin-



guished after three hours of intense effort. At least 22 bodies - seven men and 15 women, including a pregnant woman - were recovered from the building and taken to the police hospital in East Jakarta for identification.

A resident, Intan Puspita, whose home is close to the building, told The Associated Press that the fire started with a loud bang and workers running outside. "When asked, they said that there was an alleged short circuit in one of the batteries during the charging process," Puspita said. The fire spread quickly, and she saw workers on the upper

floors trying to escape by moving to the rooftop.

"I saw about 20 victims in the body bags being evacuated from inside," Puspita said. "It was tragic."

Television reports showed the tense evacuation of more than a dozen trapped workers, including many women, from the sixth floor using an emergency ladder extended by firefighters. Each person had to be lowered one by one from the building, and several struggled to breathe because of the thick smoke while waiting for their turn. Authorities said most of the victims died from smoke inhalation. Firefighters managed to rescue at least 19

trapped workers, some of whom suffered minor injuries, but were in a weak and traumatised condition. A police officer and a firefighter also experienced breathing difficulties.

"We will comb through the entire building again," Condro said when asked about the possible rise in the death toll. "Firefighters are cooling down the scene because the smoke is still thick, and it is not yet possible for us to enter the structure."

Jakarta Governor Pramono Anung called on company leaders to foster a workplace safety culture and to have emergency action plans for evacuation. "This case obviously shows the company does not provide emergency access' from fire in the direct physical sense," Anung told reporters when visiting the site. Families anxiously awaited news at hospitals or near the building occupied by PT Terra Drone Indonesia, a company that provides unmanned aerial vehicle technology for various industrial sectors such as construction, mining, oil and gas, energy, plantations and urban planning.

Macron faces backlash for using slur against feminist protesters

ASSOCIATED PRESS
Paris

Brigitte Macron was facing criticism on Tuesday after a video emerged of her using a slur to denounce feminist protesters. The scene filmed Sunday showed France's first lady in discussion backstage at the Folies Bergere theatre in Paris with Ary Abittan, a French actor and humorist previously accused of rape, before a performance he was about to give. The previous night, feminist campaigners had disrupted his show with shouts of "Abittan, rapist!"

Before Sunday's performance, Brigitte Macron asked him how he was feeling. When he said he was feeling scared, she made a derogatory and sexist reference to the women, adding: "We'll toss them out." Her office said in a statement that she'd been trying to calm his nerves: "As the video shows, Mrs Macron's only intention was to reassure an artist who, in his dressing room before going on stage, had just told her, I'm scared," because his show had been disrupted the previous

evening. "In no way is she attacking a cause. She does, however, disapprove of the radical methods used to prevent an artist from performing on stage, as was the case on Saturday night."

The feminist campaign group "Nous Toutes" ("All of Us") said its activists disrupted Abittan's show to protest what it described as "the culture of impunity" around sexual violence in France.

Magistrates terminated the investigation of the 2021 rape allegation against Abittan for lack of evidence in 2024, a decision then confirmed on appeal in January this year, according to French media. In a statement on Instagram, Nous Toutes said: "We denounce venues that roll out a red carpet for men accused of rape, normalising sexist and sexual violence. It is a public insult to the victims. Victims, we believe you. Rapists, we do not forgive you!"

Opponents of President Emmanuel Macron on the left wing of French politics criticised his wife's use of a sexist slur, and some said she should apologise.



Military transport aircraft crashes in Russia

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
Moscow

An Antonov An-22 military transport aircraft with seven people on board crashed in Russia's central Ivanovo Region on Tuesday during its first flight after repairs, the defence ministry said. "The aircraft crashed in an unpopulated area. A search and rescue crew has left for the accident site to determine the fate of the aircraft's crew," the ministry said. TASS reported that fragments of the An-22 were found on the shore and in the water. The An-22 is a heavy transport aircraft used by the Russian Aerospace Forces (VKS) to transport heavy weapons. The aircraft has a maximum takeoff weight of 225 tonnes and a payload capacity of 60 tonnes. With a total cargo weight of up to 40 tonnes, the An-22 can fly over 5,000 km, according to Russian TV channels.



Hamass wants pressure on Israel before next phase of ceasefire

ASSOCIATED PRESS
Jerusalem

A Hamas leader on Tuesday threatened to not move forward into the next phase of the Gaza ceasefire agreement until more pressure is placed on Israel to open up a key border crossing, cease deadly strikes and allow more aid into the Palestinian territory. The accusation came as Israel's Government says it's ready to move into the next, more complicated phase of the ceasefire deal - even as it has called on the militant group to return the remains of the last Israeli hostage held in Gaza. Husam Badran, a member of Hamas' political wing, called for the "full implementation of all the terms of the first phase" before moving forward, including an end to what he called the continuing demolition of Palestinian homes in the part of the territory still controlled by Israel.

PROSPECT

Sudha Murty to grace
Andhra University’s
‘WAVES-2025’ alumni meet



The Andhra University annual alumni meet 'WAVES-2025' is scheduled to be held on Saturday, the 13th December, under the auspices of AU Alumni Association (AAA) with the support and association of Andhra University. Sudha Murty, Member of Parliament, Rajya Sabha and founder chairperson, Infosys Foundation and Chairperson, Murty Trust, will be the Chief Guest. Dr GM Rao, founder Chairman, AAA, an eminent industrialist and an illustrious alumnus of AU, will preside. The theme of WAVES-2025 is women's empowerment. This Meet aims to bring Alumni from various affiliated colleges, Alumni from various countries, campus colleges, academicians, researchers and members from the University community. The program will include reflections from the Alumni on the centennial journey of the Institutions and felicitations to the distinguished Alumni. This year, alumni from overseas, Delhi, Hyderabad, Amaravathi and Godavari chapters are expected to participate. Andhra University Alumni are committed to supporting their Alma mater and fostering relationships with the Industry. Alumni bond with Alma mater, strengthening the AU journey of excellence and heritage. Alumni will extend their support to make AU a Global University of par excellence. The University shall be a place of learning for students across the Globe.

Sahaj gets corporate agency
licence from IRDAI

Sahaj Insurance Services Pvt Ltd, which recently received a corporate agency licence from IRDAI, aims to sell about 10 crore insurance policies designed to suit the rural population. Sahaj Insurance Services Pvt Ltd, a subsidiary of Sahaj Retail Ltd, operates a network of about 4.5 lakh digitally enabled rural centres serving over 70 crore people. In a statement, the Kanoria Foundation company said the new vertical is designed to make insurance, long characterised by low awareness and limited access in rural regions, simple, affordable and accessible at the last mile. Sahaj Centres will offer a full suite of insurance products, with trained Sahaj Mitrs facilitating customer onboarding, support and claims assistance, it said. "Customers will be able to access assisted digital enrolment, paperless processes, multi-lingual support and help with filing claims. These features are essential for first-time insurance adopters in rural markets. The services will also integrate Government-backed insurance and social-security schemes to deepen financial inclusion," Sahaj Retail Ltd CEO Biswajit Chatterjee said.

RRB rejects
question paper
compromise claims

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Railway Recruitment Board (RRB) has categorically refuted claims circulated in a section of the media, particularly in the Dehradun region, suggesting that the Level-1 question paper for the ongoing recruitment process against Centralised Employment Notice (CEN) 08/2024 has been compromised. The RRB issued a statement following reports of a candidate malpractice incident detected on 2 December 2025 during the second shift of the Computer Based Test (CBT) at the iCreate Solutions Test Centre in Dehradun. During live CCTV surveillance, a candidate named Vivek was observed consulting a handwritten chit. Examination officials immediately intervened and recovered the slip. Upon questioning, the candidate confessed that the chit had been provided by external individuals who had misled him into believing it contained correct answers. The RRB confirmed that the recovered chit merely listed numerals from 1 to 4 and bore no relevance to the examination, as the questions and answer options are uniquely and randomly shuffled for every candidate. The Board emphasised that the slip could have provided no advantage, concluding that the candidate had been deceived by external miscreants. Following established protocol, a First Information Report (FIR) has been registered at the Patel Nagar Police Station in Dehradun and the matter is currently under police investigation. The RRB reiterated that its digital system for generating, storing and administering question papers is fully secure and encrypted, asserting that the incident was one of isolated individual misconduct and did not constitute a breach of the secure examination process.

Waqf Boards’ ‘Umeed’ shows strong results

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

After the launch of the UMEED Portal on June 6, 2025, the Ministry of Minority Affairs worked tirelessly with States and Waqf Boards to train and prepare them for data upload. Seven zonal review-cum-training meetings were conducted with all States/UTs and capacity-building funds of nearly Rupees 10 crore were released in tranches to 30 States/UTs and 32 Waqf Boards.

Helpline support, VC-based training sessions and Master Trainer workshops were also organised. Yet, despite these extensive efforts, most Waqf Boards failed to utilise the first four months of the six-month upload window. They became active only in November, when over 2.42 lakh properties were initiated on the Portal. In contrast, June saw only 11 uploads, July

50, August 822 and September a little over 4,000, showing how casually the Boards treated the process



initially. The following table is self explanatory to understand the seriousness of Waqf Boards in uploading existing properties on the UMEED Portal.

UMEED Act, 1995 came into effect on 8 April 2025 and the window for uploading existing Waqf properties on the Central Portal closed on 6 December 2025.

A total of 5,17,082 properties were initiated for upload, with the main surge occurring only in the final weeks, particularly in the last six

days, when more than 2,43,582 properties were initiated on the Portal. This shows the robust nature of the UMEED Portal.

The data shows that almost all Waqf Boards, barring a few exceptions, remained inactive for the first five months and moved only when the deadline neared. Even then, the UMEED Portal handled the sudden spike smoothly, with many States ultimately completing uploads at exceptionally high level.

Those Mutawallis who could not upload their Waqf properties before the 6 December deadline are not without recourse. The UMEED Act provides a clear remedial mechanism: they may approach their respective Waqf Tribunals for resolution.

Recent media reports claiming that "only 27 per cent of Waqf properties have been uploaded" are based on

MONTH-WISE WAQF PROPERTY INITIATIONS ON UMEED PORTAL	
MONTH (2025)	PROPERTIES INITIATED
June	11
July	50
August	822
September	4,327
October	25,827
November	2,42,463
December (till 6th)	2,43,582
GRAND TOTAL	5,17,082

a fundamentally flawed and outdated premise. They rely entirely on old WAMSI figures, numbers that today have no official relevance.

WAMSI had long been recognised as unreliable: thousands of entries contained errors such as zero-area properties, mismatched

or duplicate codes, inflated land areas without proof and significant data-entry inconsistencies.

Several State Boards themselves acknowledged these defects. The Ministry repeatedly directed States to correct the data; the matter was placed before both the JPC and the Hon'ble Supreme Court. Ultimately, due to persistent inaccuracies, WAMSI was formally disabled on 8 May 2025 and stands closed for all official purposes.

Using this defunct dataset as the denominator for any percentage calculation is misleading and factually untenable.

Unlike WAMSI, UMEED is built on fresh, authenticated data captured through a maker-checker-approver workflow, with documentary evidence at every stage. Comparing this verified dataset with WAMSI's error-ridden numbers is an apples-to-stones comparison.

Himanta launches distribution of PMAY-G letters to 3.25 lakh beneficiaries

TONY DAS
■ Guwahati

Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Tuesday ceremonially launched the distribution of sanction letters to 3,25,234 beneficiaries under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana–Gramin (PMAY-G) at a significant state-level event held at Gandhi Maidan, Boko, in Kamrup district.

Addressing the gathering, the Chief Minister affirmed that the Government aims to ensure that every family currently residing in a kutchha house is provided with a pucca home. He highlighted that Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the PMAY-G scheme specifically to ensure housing for economically weaker families across the nation, a goal which

Assam has been working continuously to fulfil.

Sarma recalled the State Government's sustained efforts, including the distribution of sanction letters to five lakh beneficiaries on May 19, 2022.

This was followed by the release of the first instalment to two lakh beneficiaries in May 2022 and another three lakh beneficiaries in February 2023. He further noted that the Government had facilitated the 'Griha Pravesh' (housewarming) ceremony for more than three lakh PMAY beneficiaries in the state on a single day in July 2023.

The Chief Minister highlighted recent milestones, including the inauguration of a PMAY-G colony with 113 houses at Namchang Tea Estate cluster in Naharkatia



in March 2024. He also referenced the historic dedication of 5,67,083 completed PMAY homes by Prime Minister Modi from Meleng–Meteli

Pathar in Jorhat on March 9, 2024. He stressed that today's approval of 3,25,234 new beneficiaries, following the distribution to

3,88,358 beneficiaries in March this year, marks yet another crucial achievement for PMAY in Assam. Reiterating the

Government's commitment to welfare, he stated the goal is to create a system where poor families can easily access all welfare schemes without corruption. He cited the monthly Orunodoi assistance of ₹1,250 and subsidised ration supplies, which together provide benefits worth nearly ₹3,000 per month to every poor family in Assam. The event was attended by Panchayat and Rural Development Minister Ranjeet Kumar Dass, MLAs Hemanga Thakuria and Nandita Das, GMC Mayor Mrigen Sarania, Additional Chief Secretary B Kalyan Chakravarty, P and RD Commissioner Keerthi Jalli, Kamrup District Commissioner Deva Kumar Mishra and several other senior officials.

Darrang district distributes PMAY-G
sanction letters to over 11,700



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Guwahati

In a major push towards the Assam Government's "Housing for All" mission, the Darrang district administration on Tuesday conducted the ceremonial distribution of Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana–Gramin (PMAY-G) sanction letters to 11,753 beneficiaries.

The district-level distribution was held concurrently with the Central Programme held at Boko in Kamrup district, which was attended by Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma. The Chief Minister reaffirmed the Government's commitment to providing secure and permanent homes to all eligible rural families,

with the State-level programme being live-streamed across the three Legislative Assembly Constituencies of Darrang. The distribution drive was executed simultaneously in Mangaldai, Sipajhar and Dalgao to ensure broad outreach.

At the Mangaldai Boys' HS Field, 1,487 beneficiaries received their letters in the presence of Mangaldai MLA Basanta Das and Gurujyoti Das, Chairman of the Assam Fisheries Development Corporation (AFDC) and former MLA. In Sipajhar, 2,592 beneficiaries were handed their sanction letters at the Sipajhar CDC Field by MLA Paramananda Rajbongshi.

The largest contingent

of 7,674 beneficiaries received their letters at the Dalgao Town Field. The distribution here was overseen by MLA Mazibur Rahman and Krishna Saha, Chairperson of the Kharupetia Municipal Board.

The coordinated execution across all venues was ensured by District Commissioner Parag Kumar Kakaty, CEO Zilla Parishad Karabi Saikia Karan, Darrang Zilla Parishad President Sewali Goswami Kalita, Darrang Municipal Board Chairperson Nirmali Devi Sharma and other dignitaries. The initiative marks a significant step in the district's implementation of the flagship housing scheme.

Bintin media announces revolutionary
documentary *Bharat Ek Vishwaguru*



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Bintin Media, a youth-driven Indian production house on Tuesday announced the release of its groundbreaking documentary "Bharat Ek Vishwaguru", a powerful investigation into the gradual decline of India's ancient education system and a clarion call to revive the Gurukul model and introduce the Bhagavad Gita as a compulsory subject in the

modern curriculum. Directed and produced by Nitin Vashisth, the documentary traces India's journey from the era of world-renowned Gurukuls and universities such as Nalanda and Takshashila, to the cultural destruction under foreign invasions and finally to the impact of modern Westernized education on today's Indian youth. Speaking about the documentary, Director Nitin Vashisth said "India has the

world's largest youth population. If our youth loses its cultural foundation, India loses its future. This film is not just a project - it is a national movement to bring back values, identity and purpose into Indian education." "Bharat Ek Vishwaguru" will soon be screened for policymakers, cultural leaders, educational institutions and youth organisations across the country. Public release details will be announced shortly.

GURU NANAK DEV
UNIVERSITY,
AMRITSAR

Advertisement No. 12/2025
Walk-in-Interview

Eligible candidates desirous to join the post of Medical Officer (Male) in the University Health Centre on contract basis on a fixed salary should attend the Walk-in-Interview. As per details on www.gndu.ac.in.
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ICICI Prudential settles death claims worth ₹893 crore in H1-FY2026

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Bhopal

ICICI Prudential Life Insurance has reported an industry-leading claim settlement ratio of 99.33 per cent for the first half of FY2026—the highest among the top life insurance companies in the country.

The company's average claim settlement turnaround time during this period was just 1.1 days for non-investigated claims. It settled death claims worth ₹893.38 crore in total during the

same period. Amish Banker, Chief Operations Officer, ICICI Prudential Life Insurance, said, "Our claim settlement process is designed to deliver an enhanced customer experience and we handle every claim with utmost sensitivity. "In H1-FY2026, we achieved a claim settlement ratio of 99.33 per cent and our average turnaround time for non-investigated claims was only 1.1 days. We also settled death claims amounting to over ₹893.38 crore during the period," he said. "Our customer-first approach



and strong focus on digitalisation empower us to deliver quick claim settlements, providing timely financial relief when families need it most. With convenient digital platforms such as our mobile app, WhatsApp, chatbot and website, claimants can easily

lodge and track their claims," he added.

ICICI Prudential Life Insurance has posted an industry leading claim settlement ratio of 99.33 per cent for H1-FY2026, the highest amongst top life insurance companies in the country.

Importantly, the average claim settlement turnaround time was just 1.1 days for non-investigated claims. Also, during this period, the total value of death claims settled by the Company was at ₹893.38 crore.

Amish Banker, Chief Operations Officer, ICICI Prudential Life Insurance said, "Our claim settlement process is designed to deliver enhanced customer experience and we handle every claim with utmost sensitivity.

"In H1-FY2026, we had a claim settlement ratio of 99.33 per cent

and our average claim settlement turnaround time for non-investigated claims was just 1.1 days. Besides, we settled death claims totalling over ₹893.38 crore in the same period", he said.

"Our customer-first approach and strong focus towards digitalisation empowers us to deliver quick claim settlements, providing timely financial relief when families need it most. With convenient platforms like our mobile app, WhatsApp, chatbot and website, claimants can lodge and track claims easily," he added.

BRIEFLY

DEMBELE, CHEVALIER TO MISS MATCH AGAINST ATHLETIC



Ballon d'Or winner Ousmane Dembele and goalkeeper Lucas Chevalier will both miss Paris Saint-Germain's trip to Athletic Bilbao in the Champions League on Wednesday. PSG said Dembele is sick while Chevalier is still recovering from a right ankle injury. It's another setback for Dembélé, who returned from a left calf injury against Tottenham at the end of November and only made two more appearances in the French league. Before that, Dembele had been sidelined several weeks by a right hamstring injury sustained while playing for France in September. PSG will also still be without Morocco right back Achraf Hakimi, who has a sprained left ankle and faces a race against time to recover before the Africa Cup of Nations in his home country from December 21. Matvei Safonov is expected to start in goal in the absence of Chevalier, who was injured in a loss against Monaco after a violent tackle from Lamine Camara on November 29.

J&K: HUNDREDS PARTICIPATE IN ARMY-SPONSORED MARATHON



Hundreds of enthusiastic youth on Tuesday took part in an Army-sponsored marathon near the Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu and Kashmir's Poonch district, officials said. Commander of Bhimber Gali Brigade, Brigadier Rahul Kumar, flagged off the marathon and encouraged the youth to adopt fitness as a way of life and consider a future in the armed forces. An Army official said the marathon was part of the second edition of Mendhar festival, which commenced on November 23 and is scheduled to end on December 11. Despite the challenging terrain and sensitive location, the event witnessed participation of more than 1,500 runners from across the region, the official said.

AC Milan win 3-2 over Torino in Serie A

ASSOCIATED PRESS
■ Turin

A second-half double from substitute Christian Pulisic gave AC Milan a come-from-behind 3-2 win over Torino and swept it back to the top of Italy's Serie A.

Weekend wins for title rivals Napoli and Internazionale left Milan in third and it knew three points were required to return to the summit.

However, it was 2-0 down after 17 minutes on Monday.

Nikola Vlastić gave the home side the lead with a penalty after nine minutes, and then made the second goal eight minutes later when he powered forward to feed Duvan Zapata, whose powerful angled drive beat Mike Maignan from 12 meters.

Milan got back into the game seven minutes later, Adrien Rabiot lashing in a shot from 35 meters that will feature in many goal of the season competitions



come May. It fell to American forward Pulisic to turn the game around with two second-half goals.

After 67 minutes, one minute after replacing Davide Bertesaghi, he found himself unmarked in the box and made no mistake from close range.

Ten minutes later Pulisic put Milan ahead for the first time in the match when he swept home a low cross from the right.

Milan avoided what would

India eye podium finish in FIH junior WC

SAUMOJYOTI S CHOUDHURY
■ Chennai

The dream of reclaiming the FIH Men's Junior World Cup title might have been over, but hosts India will hope to at least finish on the podium and give the home fans something to cheer when they take on Argentina in the bronze medal match on Wednesday.

India, who won their last title nine years back in 2016 in Lucknow, lost 1-5 to seven-time champions and title holders Germany in the semi-finals on Sunday.

Heartbroken at missing out the title yet again, India would look to regroup, make amends of their mistakes and at least finish with a medal in the home tournament.

Two-time champions Argentina will, however, be a tough customer for India and they have already showed their prowess in the tournament. Argentina, who won the title in 2005 and 2021, lost 1-2 in a closely contested semifinal against Spain and



they too are hurt and desperate to finish the tournament on a high.

The Indians were simply hammered by the ruthless Germans in the semifinals. The home team simply buckled under pressure and conceded soft goals, which

they can't afford on Wednesday against Argentina if they want to stand on the podium.

The Indian backline was guilty of giving away possession easily, resulting in goals, while the forwards cut a sorry figure in front of the Germans

after a superb show in the pool stages against lowly opponents.

The likes of Dilraj Singh, Arshdeep Singh, Sourabh Anand Kushwaha, Gurjot Singh and Ajeet Yadav created a lot of chances but simply failed to convert them into

goals against the Germans. India's chief coach PR Sreejesh too admitted that his side failed to execute their plans and committed silly mistakes that ultimately put paid to their tile hopes.

"We committed silly mistakes, conceded goals and it is quite hard for these guys after conceding easy goals in a Junior World Cup semifinal. If you fail to execute your plans then that definitely is going to hurt yo," Sreejesh had said after the loss against Germany.

"Winning and losing matters a lot, it doesn't matter if you lose 1-0 or 10-0, it's the same but the problem is how we concede the goals. We need to focus on that first."

"It's all about collective effort. You need to defend well first and then you need to attack and create opportunities. We are not converting our opportunities," he added.

The Indian defence, led by skipper Rohit, will have to raise their game by leaps and bounds to control the Argentines.

The midfield too lacked cohesion against Germany the other day and the likes of Rosan Khujur, Ankit Pal, Manmeet Singh, Adrohit Ekka and Thounaojam Ingalemba Luwang will have to be more proactive and cohesive to create chances for the strikers.

Penalty corner is another area which continues to be India's perennial problem.

Anmol Ekka scored India's lone goal against Germany through a penalty corner, but skipper Rohit, India's best bet from drag-flicks, simply couldn't make his mark in the tournament from set pieces.

There is no question about his solid defensive skills but India expected more from Rohit from penalty corners.

Princideep Singh has been the stand-out performer at the Indian goal and the hosts will expect the young Punjab goalkeeper to continue his fine showing.

Meanwhile, Germany will be looking for their eighth title when they take on Spain in the summit clash, also on Wednesday. (PTI)

Goalkeeping stints in football shaped Princideep's hockey career

SAUMOJYOTI S CHOUDHURY
■ Chennai

What began as a stint at full-back eventually turned into a career between the posts for Princideep Singh, whose early goalkeeping experiences during football training sessions played a pivotal role in shaping his journey in hockey.

The 21-year-old custodian from Batala in Punjab, who has been one of India's standout performers at the ongoing FIH Junior World Cup, idolises two-time Olympic medallist and current junior men's team captain PR Sreejesh.

"I started my career with the Cheema Academy in Batala, Punjab, as a full back. That time I used to be a goalkeeper in football during training sessions but used to play hockey as full back," Princideep said.

"I used to make good saves then and from there it started. The coaches told me to



become a goalkeeper in hockey." Princideep credited Sreejesh for shaping his mindset.

"I started my hockey career in 2015 and in 2016 I saw Sreejesh bhai playing in the Olympics. I idolise coach sir only, got to learn a lot of things from him. He was himself a goalkeeper and he knew how to handle pressure," he said.

Princideep made crucial

saves against Belgium in the quarterfinal, including two in the shoot-out, to take India into the semifinal, where they fell short against Germany, losing 1-5.

Princideep admitted that playing in front of a packed stadium can test nerves but stressed the importance of internal communication. "We get so support from the crowd and it increases your confidence," he said. (PTI)

La Liga: Osasuna beat Levante 2-0

ASSOCIATED PRESS
■ Madrid

Rubén García made one goal and scored another as Osasuna beat Levante 2-0 to ease the club's relegation worries and condemn its rival to a fifth consecutive Spanish La Liga defeat.

The game on Monday pitted fourth-bottom Osasuna against last-place Levante. The home side controlled the game from the kick off, with García in commanding form against the club where he played much of his career. It was his cross from the right that brought Osasuna the lead after 13 minutes, Victor Muñoz expertly heading down and into the net.

Garcia was fortunate 23 minutes later when he got his name on the scoresheet. His shot from just outside the box was cruelly deflected past the Levante keeper Mathew Ryan.

Garcia refused to cele-



brate but acknowledged it was a vital win for his side.

"I'd have preferred it not to be against Levante, but I have to be happy because of what we were playing

for," said García. "(These three points) feel necessary." Osasuna is up to 15th in the 20-team table, three points clear of the drop zone.

Messi, Suarez to reunite on Mumbai ramp for a cause

TAPAN MOHANTA
■ Kolkata

Argentine football icon Lionel Messi will walk the ramp in Mumbai "for a cause" during his India tour, the organisers of which have requested him to bring select memorabilia from their 2022 World Cup triumph for an auction.

The sole promoter of the 'GOAT India Tour 2025', Satadru Dutta, said on Tuesday that Messi, along with long-time strike partner Luis Suarez and Argentina midfielder Rodrigo De Paul, will feature in a 45-minute fashion segment on the night of December 14. It will be a "philanthropic fashion show for a cause", Dutta said.

"It's a fully reserved night. There will be celebrity models, celebrity cricketers, Bollywood celebrities, millionaires, founders. Tiger and Jackie Shroff, John Abraham among others," he said.

Suarez will also be part of a Spanish music show, while



the organisers have "made a formal request" for Messi to bring "some memorabilia of the 2022 World Cup which will be auctioned" during the Mumbai leg of the tour.

The Mumbai event starts at 5pm at Wankhede Stadium, preceded by a Padel Cup at 3:30pm at Cricket Club of India.

Kolkata leg: Statue unveiling switched to virtual mode In the Kolkata leg, the unveiling of Messi's "biggest

ever statue" — a 70-foot structure — will be done virtually from his team hotel owing to security concerns.

"Police has not given permission so he will do it from the hotel. It will be done virtually in the morning," a Kolkata Police source said.

Earlier, the eight-time Ballon d'Or winner was scheduled to visit Sreebhumi in person for the inauguration.

Kolkata Police sources confirmed Messi will land in the

city at 1:30am in the wee hours of Saturday and will stay at a five-star hotel on the EM Bypass.

A sponsor-exclusive meet-and-greet programme will run from 9:30am to 10:30am.

A special Argentine-Indian fusion food festival will be held on the sidelines, keeping in mind Messi's love for 'mate' (Argentine herbal tea).

It will showcase Argentine herbal tea infused with Assam flavours, along with a spread of Bengali fish delicacies — including hilsa — and an assortment of local sweets.

A 25ft x 20ft Messi mural, planned for the upcoming Durga Puja season, will also be unveiled.

"Not only will he unveil his biggest-ever statue, we will have a huge mural, which will be kept at strategic Durga Puja pandal-hopping locations so that all his fans will have an opportunity to paint and post messages in a nearby message box," Dutta said. (PTI)

Manchester United beat Wolverhampton 4-1 in premier league

ASSOCIATED PRESS
■ Wolverhampton

Bruno Fernandes scored two goals and made another as Manchester United beat Wolverhampton 4-1 to move into the top six of the English Premier League.

Fernandes' first-half goal was cancelled out on the stroke of half time by Jean-Ricner Bellegarde but Bryan Mbeumo restored United's lead early in the second half on Monday. Mason Mount added a third in the 62nd minute before Fernandes rounded off a comprehensive victory with an 82nd-minute penalty.

It was the eighth defeat in a row for Wolves and saw sixth-place United move on to 25 points, level with Chelsea, which is fifth. Wolves remains bottom of

the table with two points, eight adrift of the team above it, Burnley.

"We got ourselves back in the game but, with the goals we conceded, you're never going to get anything out of a game of football," Wolves coach Rob Edwards said.

"There's a nervousness and I can understand it but, in the big moments in the game, we insisted on giving the ball back to them. We're getting punished and we've got to try and improve and be consistent — but it's not going to be a quick turnaround."

Although United has been consistently inconsistent all season, it came into the game as heavy favourites against a team that has one of the worst starting records of any Premier League side at this stage of the campaign.



Thousands of Wolves fans boycotted the first 15 minutes in a coordinated protest at the ownership of the club by Chinese conglomerate Fosun International. They had barely sat down when United took the lead with a goal that typified Wolves' season. The Brazilian player Andre lost the ball in midfield

and a counter attack led to Fernandes racing inside the Wolves box.

He fought off the attentions of Emmanuel Agbadou and, even though he lost his footing, he still managed to get in a shot that the goalkeeper Sam Johnstone got a hand to but couldn't stop from rolling into the net.

United failed to capitalize

on its pressure and it paid a price seconds before half time.

David Moller Wolfe crossed from the byline and Wolves' standout performer Bellegarde whipped his volley past Senne Lammens into the United net.

It was Wolves' first league goal since a 3-2 loss at home to Burnley on Oct. 26, and the 13th league game in succession United has failed to keep a clean sheet.

Nevertheless, United out-classed Wolves in a second-half blitz. Ruben Amorim's men were 2-1 up after 51 minutes, Mbeumo tapping in Diogo Dalot's neat pass to complete a fine counter attack.

Mount converted Fernandes' lovely chipped assist 11 minutes later before Fernandes added the fourth.

First transgenders' football league kicks off in Jamshedpur

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Jamshedpur

In a landmark development in Indian football, seven transgender teams made debut in an exclusive tournament under the umbrella of Jamshedpur Super League (JSL). The Transgenders' League, which began here on Sunday, features seven teams —Jamshedpur FT, Chaibasa FC, Chakradharpur FC, Jamshedpur Indranagar FC, Naomundi FC, Saraikela FC and Kolhan Tiger FC — in a five-a-side format.

Initially, only four teams were to compete in the transgenders' league but later three more sides were added. The tournament forms a part of the Jamshedpur Super

League, which also has other competitions such as age-group leagues.

In the inaugural match of the Transgenders' League on Sunday, Jamshedpur FT trounced Chaibasa FC 7-0, while Kolhan Tiger FC notched 3-0 win over Chakradharpur FC, and Jamshedpur Indranagar FC and Naomundi FC played out a goal-less draw.

For Jamshedpur FT's Puja Soy, scoring four goals in the opening match of the Transgenders' League was the beginning of a new identity, not as a transgender, but as a footballer finally recognised on the stage she had long dreamt of.

"Football is such a beautiful sport, and for the first time, I felt like I wasn't being

seen for my gender, but for my game," she said.

"This is the first time we are playing in a proper professional environment," said Aliya, another participant in the league.

"The support from the club and the fans makes us feel like we truly belong to the football family." For many of these players, participation itself is a liberation.

"We are thrilled to be part of this ground-breaking initiative, India's first Transgender League," said Pyari Hessa, captain of Jamshedpur FT.

"It gives us a platform we never had before and will hopefully inspire other states to create similar spaces. We're very grateful to Jamshedpur FC for making this possible."

Pandya's blazing fifty, ruthless bowlers earn India 101-run win over SA

TAPAN MOHANTA
■ Cuttack

Hardik Pandya made a memorable comeback to national colours, striking a mood-lifting unbeaten fifty and then took a key wicket as India etched a dominant 101-run win over South Africa in the opening match of the five-match series here on Tuesday.

— Arshdeep Singh, Jasprit Bumrah, Varun Chakravarthy and Axar Patel grabbed two wickets each, while Pandya fittingly chipped in with the prized scalp of David Miller. It was also South Africa's first defeat in three T20Is in Cuttack, and if India had started shakily, South Africa began disastrously.

Arshdeep set the tone with a superb away-swinging that kissed past Quinton de Kock's tentative prod for a two-ball duck.

In his next over, Arshdeep produced another beauty – a length ball that jagged back into the in-form Tristan Stubbs (14).

India went upstairs for the

review, and UltraEdge confirmed a thick inside edge onto the elbow before Jitesh Sharma completed a sharp take as South Africa were 18/2 inside four overs.

Axar was introduced in the final over of the powerplay and struck immediately.

Aiden Markram, shuffling back to work a skiddy, straight delivery, was beaten on the inside edge to get bowled. At 28/3 in six overs, South Africa were already in a hole.

Pandya then added to their misery, dismissing Miller.

Chakravarthy, operating with sharp drift and deceptive pace, got into action after the powerplay. Donovan Ferreira was late to react to a delivery that held back, and could only nick behind to Jitesh.

Marco Jansen, who had fielded brilliantly earlier, was undone by Chakravarthy's googly as South Africa slid to 68/6. The end arrived quickly thereafter with Bumrah cleaning up Dewald Brevis and Keshav Maharaj in the space of four deliveries.



India's players during the first T20I cricket match between India and South Africa at Barabati Stadium, in Cuttack

Earlier, coming back after 74 days following a left quadricep injury that forced him out of the Asia Cup, Pandya walked in at No.6 and immediately changed the tempo of the match.

India had slipped in both the power play and middle overs losing six wickets, but Pandya, who had proved his fitness at the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy for Baroda with a 42-ball 77 not out, counter-attacked with clean, fearless hitting to finish en route his sixth T20I fifty.

He began with two towering sixes against Maharaj just after a well-set Tilak Varma (26) fell. Pandya then ripped into Anrich Nortje with a 17-run over, even stepping out to a 149kph thunderbolt to punch it for four.

Jansen tried to rush him with short balls, but Pandya pulled one with vengeance before racing towards fifty that lifted the mood in the stadium.

He struck a six and four off Lutho Sipamla (2/38) in the 19th over, and reached his half-century in 25 balls with

a ramped six over third man off Nortje in the final over, celebrating it with a muted raise of the bat.

Pandya's late fireworks helped India add 71 runs in the last six overs.

But on a fresh red-soil surface offering two-paced bounce, India struggled early.

Abhishek Sharma (17), Shubman Gill (4) and Suryakumar Yadav (12) all fell inside seven overs as Lungi Ngidi (3/31) exploited the conditions superbly with clever variations.

He removed Gill early as the batter chipped to Jansen at mid-off, and later had skipper Suryakumar holding out to Markram to have India 17/2. Abhishek tried to force the pace after the field restrictions lifted, but fell to Sipamla, thanks to a stunning sliding catch by the 2.06m Jansen sprinting across from long leg to fine leg.

His brief stay of 17 off 12 balls ended just as he began to find rhythm with back-to-back boundaries as India soon slipped to 48/3 in 6.3 overs.



Desert Vipers beat Gulf Giants in Super Over thriller

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Dubai

Desert Vipers held their nerves to prevail over Gulf Giants in the first-ever Super Over finish of the IIT20 after Sam Curran and Dan Lawrence heroics here.

After the scores were tied at 179, the Vipers went on to score 13 in the Super Over with Lawrence finding the boundary once, before Thushara got his wicket. But, Naseem Shah clinched the game for the Vipers after restricting the Giants to just nine runs on Monday.

The Vipers have beaten the Giants in each of their previous five matches. Curran (44 off 36) and Dan Lawrence's (56 off 31) partnership ensured the Vipers tied the scores despite a challenging target of 180.

Azmatullah Omarzai bagged four wickets for the Giants, but it was not enough to stop the Vipers from their third straight win of the season. The lower-order batters of the Vipers also scored crucial runs in a team effort. The Gulf Giants started on the front foot, with Pathum Nissanka (56 off 29) and Rahmanullah Gurbaz (41 off 31) taking 14 runs off Naseem in the opening exchanges. The opening pair raced to a 50-run stand inside five overs and powered the Giants to 58 in the powerplay.

Nissanka continued his rich vein of form, bringing up his

third half-century in as many games, off just 27 balls. He struck Noor Ahmad for his fourth six of the innings, but the Afghan spinner had the final say, dismissing him off the very next delivery to end the 73-run opening stand.

Gurbaz then took charge, with James Vince providing solid support with 25 runs off 22 balls. Their 54-run partnership was broken by Khuzaima Tanveer, who removed Vince before sending Gurbaz back two balls later. The Giants were 129/3 at the end of the 14th over.

The Giants' bowlers fought their way back into the contest thereafter. Noor picked up his second wicket by dismissing Azmatullah Omarzai (20 off 13), while David Payne removed Moeen Ali (11 off 11). With only 38 runs coming from the final five overs, the Giants finished on 179/5.

Omarzai made early inroads for the Giants by dismissing Fakhar Zaman (1 off 9). Mark Adair struck soon after, removing Andries Gous (11 off 9), leaving the Vipers struggling at 14/2 early in the chase.

Curran and Impact Player Max Holden (15 off 15) attempted to steady the innings, but Haider Razzaq provided the third breakthrough by sending Holden back. At the halfway mark, the Vipers were 65/3, still needing 115 runs for victory.

IPL 2026 auction to feature 350 players including 240 Indians

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Mumbai

A total of 350 cricketers — 240 Indians and 110 overseas players — will go under the hammer in the Indian Premier League auction to take place in Abu Dhabi on December 16, with South Africa's wicketkeeper-batter Quinton de Kock, who recently came out of his ODI retirement, featuring in the final list.

De Kock is a late addition to the list at a base price of ₹1 crore. The list also includes Australia batter Steve Smith at a base price of ₹2 crore. Smith last played in the IPL



in 2021. A total of 1390 players registered for the Player Auction.

The number was pruned to 1005 players before 350 were finally shortlisted to battle for 77 slots available across the 10 teams for the 19th edition of the world's biggest T20 league.

The first set of players in the auction includes India and Mumbai batters Prithvi Shaw and Sarfaraz Khan, who both have kept their base price at ₹75 lakh each.

The list shared by the IPL features two Australians in Cameron Green and Jake Fraser-McGurk, along with New Zealand and

former Chennai Super Kings opener Devon Conway and South Africa's David Miller, with each of them keeping a base price of ₹2 crore.

Venkatesh Iyer, who was released by Kolkata Knight Riders, has listed himself at a base price of ₹2 crore.

Three-time winners KKR will go into the auction with the biggest purse of ₹64.3 crores, followed by five-time champions CSK with ₹43.4 crores. Sunrisers Hyderabad, who have won the IPL once, have the third highest purse of ₹25.5 crores.

Hazlewood out of Ashes series; Cummins set to return for Australia



ASSOCIATED PRESS
■ Brisbane

Australian pace bowler Josh Hazlewood has been ruled out of the Ashes series with hamstring and Achilles injuries.

Hazlewood missed Australia's two eight-wickets wins over England in Perth and Brisbane but had been expected to return later in the five-match series.

Australia coach Andrew

McDonald on Tuesday said the veteran paceman would now be targeting a return for the Twenty20 World Cup early next year.

"He'll be out of the series and his preparation will then shift toward the World Cup, which is an incredibly important campaign for us," McDonald said.

"It's really flat for him. A couple of setbacks we didn't see coming — we thought he'd play a huge part in the

series." Hazlewood has been a key member of Australia's regular bowling attack for a decade.

There was better news for skipper Pat Cummins, who is expected to return for the third test in Adelaide starting December 17 after missing the first two tests while he recovers from a back problem.

The 32-year-old paceman increased his training workload at Allan Border Field in

Brisbane while the Australians were playing the second test against England at the Gabba.

He is set to be recalled as captain when the match squad is announced Wednesday. Steve Smith has been leading the Australia XI in the absence of Cummins.

"We feel as though he'll be as best prepared as can be," McDonald said. "Us seeing him further advanced, we feel he'll be really well placed for the challenges of Adelaide."

"We feel as though the simulation in the nets has got him skill ready. His body's ready to go. Barring anything else happening in the next week, I'd be expecting Pat to be tossing the coin and putting the blazer on."

The under-fire England squad, which needs a win in Adelaide to have any chance of reclaiming the Ashes, is taking a few days out this week to rest and relax at one of Australia's iconic beach towns. The fourth test starts Boxing Day at the Melbourne Cricket Ground and Sydney will host the fifth test from January 4. England hasn't won an Ashes test in Australia since the 2010-11 series.



England's Mark Wood ruled out of Ashes series with knee injury

ASSOCIATED PRESS
■ Brisbane (Australia)

Injured fast bowler Mark Wood has been ruled out of the Ashes in a major setback for an England lineup trailing 2-0 in the five-match series.

Wood had limited impact in the first test, bowling 11 overs without taking a wicket in the eight-wicket loss in Perth. He then missed the second cricket test in Brisbane because of his troublesome left knee.

The 35-year-old Wood's fitness had been an issue ahead of the Ashes tour after he only recently returned following knee surgery in March.

Matt Fisher, who made his only test appearance in the Caribbean in 2022, was drafted into the test

squad as cover.

In an Instagram post, Wood said he was "guttured to be out the remainder of the Ashes. After extensive surgery and seven long, hard months of work and rehab to get back into the test arena, my knee just hasn't held up."

Wood said he traveled to Australia "with high expectations about making a big impact. I'm desperately disappointed that despite yet more injections and intensive medical treatment it has become clear that the flare up in my knee is worse than feared."

Wood was England's leading wicket-taker in the 2023 Ashes series, when his return from injury coincided with a big comeback by the home team.

Hardik Pandya unique in Indian T20 side: Bangar

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ New Delhi



Former India batting coach Sanjay Bangar believes there is no other player like Hardik Pandya in the national T20 set-up because the star all-rounder is capable of commanding a spot in the team merely as a specialist batter or bowler too.

Out for more than two months due a quadricep injury during the Asia Cup, Pandya will return to the Indian squad for the home five-match ODI series against South Africa beginning in Cuttack on Tuesday.

"Look at all the all-rounders in world cricket now. Does England have a back-up for

Ben Stokes? No. In one-day or even Test cricket, there is no back-up for Ravindra Jadeja. It is the same with Hardik Pandya," JioStar expert Bangar said. "He (Pandya) can command a spot in the

top five on his batting alone. He could also be one of the top three seamers in any team if he was just a bowler."

"The point is, to be that kind of all-rounder, you must earn your place with your batting and also with your bowling. There is no other player like Hardik Pandya in the Indian team." On Pandya's workload management, Bangar said he should at least play the first three matches against South Africa. "We need to see how he copes," he said, insisting that it is too early to say if he should play six or seven T20Is before the World Cup.

"Playing in the SMAT (Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy) is different from the intensity of an international game. The team

management must manage the workload of important players like him. So, if needed, we must do that for Hardik too. A fit Hardik Pandya allows the team to play its desired combination, especially with the spin options we have. That's why his presence is critically very vital."

Before the India return, Pandya made a 42-ball 77 not out for Baroda in SMAT before bowling four overs at full tilt for 1/52.

Test and ODI captain Shubman Gill is also making a return after missing almost a month of cricket owing to a neck spasm suffered while attempting a slog sweep during the opening Test against the Proteas.

Tendulkar recalls Gursharan's gesture in scoring Irani Cup ton in 1989-90

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Mumbai

Sachin Tendulkar on Tuesday recalled former India player Gursharan Singh's gesture to walk out at No 10 with a broken hand only to help him score a valiant 103 for the Rest of India in their Irani Cup match against Delhi in 1989-90.

A rampant Delhi crushed the Rest of India by 309 runs in the contest played here at the Wankhede Stadium in which Tendulkar waged a lone battle scoring 103, with former India opener WV Raman's 41 being the other noticeable performance.

Struggling at 209 for nine in pursuit of a mammoth target of 554, the former India, Delhi and Punjab player Gursharan walked out at No 10 with a



broken hand to support Tendulkar as the two put on another 36 runs for the final wicket. ROI were bowled out for 245

"As they say, promises are meant to be kept. I feel I'll go a step further and say that promises are meant to be kept, but also meant to be delivered..."

And that is what is our DNA," Tendulkar recalled at an Ageas Federal Life Insurance event here.

"I can recall an incident... Long way back in 1989 when I was playing Irani Trophy. This was a trial match before one got selected for India. I was batting in the 90s, and my partner, Gursharan Singh, had an injury - a broken hand - and he wasn't supposed to bat."

"But he was asked by the chairman of the selection committee, Raj Singh Dungarpur, to go out and bat and support his teammate. Gursharan came and helped me reach my hundred and I got selected to play for India after that. Afterward, Gursharan also became part of the Indian cricket team," he added.