

Rahul looks to revive withering Congress roots from Pachmarhi

STAFF REPORTER ■ Bhopal

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Saturday urged newly appointed District Congress Committee (DCC) presidents of Madhya Pradesh to focus on strengthening the party's grassroots network and rebuilding public trust through consistent engagement and accountability. Addressing the DCC training camp in Pachmarhi, Gandhi said that the Congress must re-establish its connect with the common people and represent their real issues. He emphasised that the organisation's revival depends not on slogans but on sincerity and discipline at the local level. Gandhi interacted directly with district presidents and senior office-bearers, discussing strategies for expanding outreach, improving booth-level coordination, and combating misin-

formation. He told party leaders that Congress workers should act as "people's representatives in the truest sense", listening to grievances, defending constitutional values, and standing firm against divisive politics. After the training session, Gandhi joined DCC presidents and their families for dinner at MPT Hotel Highland, symbolising his outreach to the state cadre and recognition of their grassroots role. Earlier in the day, he held a closed-door meeting with the Madhya Pradesh Congress leadership at Ravi Shankar Bhawan, reviewing the state's organisational preparedness. According to party sources, Gandhi's visit is part of a broader national plan to rejuvenate the Congress organisation from the district level upward, ahead of the next round of assembly elections.

Rahul Gandhi also held a separate meeting with senior Congress leaders from Madhya Pradesh, during which issues of factionalism, coordination, and organisational discipline prominently figured. According to sources, Gandhi urged state leaders to set aside internal differences and work collectively to strengthen the party at every level. He stressed that mutual coordination, regular communication, and consensus-driven decision-making were essential for rebuilding public confidence ahead of future elections. Participants described the discussion as candid and constructive, focusing on unity and accountability within the organisation. Several senior leaders reportedly emphasised the need for regular meetings of the Pradesh Advisory Committee (PAC) and the General Committee to ensure greater

coordination between state and district-level leadership. Referring to the growing perception of factional divisions, leaders at the meeting reportedly agreed that the party should move away from the "ekla chalo" (go it alone) approach and instead foster decisions based on consensus. The meeting also saw discussion over remarks recently made by Kamleshwar Patel regarding state in-charge Harish Chaudhary. Patel, who attended the meeting, clarified his position before Rahul Gandhi, stating that his comments were made "in the interest of the party" and not intended to cause offence. He added that there was "no reason for anyone to be upset" over his statement. State Congress president Jitu Patwari appealed to all senior leaders to cooperate and maintain unity in the organisation, assuring Rahul Gandhi that the

entire team was working cohesively to revive the party's base in Madhya Pradesh. In his remarks, Rahul Gandhi reportedly acknowledged the close margins by which the Congress had lost several constituencies in the previous elections and encouraged leaders to remain confident and determined. "We are losing Madhya Pradesh by a narrow margin - we must fight together, and with courage, to bring Congress back to power," he said, according to sources. During the meeting, former chief minister Digvijaya Singh presented Rahul Gandhi with a detailed blueprint for strengthening the party at the booth level. Singh outlined strategies to expand the Congress's grassroots presence, improve communication between local and state units, and enhance voter outreach in rural constituencies.



Rahul Gandhi addresses newly-appointed district Congress presidents at the training camp in Pachmarhi on Saturday.

Police rip out high-value cannabis plants from Dhar cotton fields

PNS ■ Indore

In a sweeping crackdown on illegal cannabis cultivation, Dhar police on Saturday uprooted 515 cannabis plants weighing 1,361.38 kg and valued at nearly Rs 1.31 crore. The action marks one of the largest operations in recent months under Madhya Pradesh Police's intensified drive against narcotics. Acting on intelligence that traffickers were concealing cannabis crops amid cotton plantations in rural areas, Superintendent of Police Mayank Awasthi ordered a district-wide operation. Additional SP Vijay Dawar and SDOP Monika Singh supervised the raids, which were executed by Manawar police led by SHO Ishwar Singh Chauhan. The first raid took place at

Jamniyamota's Linepura village, where 75 plants weighing 112.60 kg, valued at Rs 5.60 lakh, were found in a field owned by Sardar, son of Bhure Singh Chauhan. The second operation in Bapudud village yielded 130 plants weighing 386.98 kg, worth Rs 38.69 lakh, from Nanbai's field. A third strike at the same village uncovered 310 plants weighing 861.80 kg and valued at Rs 87 lakh, cultivated by Rameshwar alias Pomadia, son of Nirbhay Singh. SP Awasthi described the coordinated action as a "decisive strike against drug traffickers," warning that those who profit from narcotics would face severe consequences. Police said the seizures have rattled local smuggling networks, and investigations are continuing to trace broader syndicates behind the cultivation.

Shukla bats for cottage industries, promises Haat for Rewa

STAFF REPORTER ■ Bhopal

Deputy Chief Minister Rajendra Shukla on Saturday said the state government is committed to promoting cottage industries and local products to generate large-scale employment and strengthen the rural economy. Speaking at the "One District-One Product and Export Promotion" workshop in Rewa, Shukla said the foundation of economic prosperity lies in education, health, and self-employment. He added that the establishment of more cottage industries and the marketing of local products would create livelihoods while supporting artisans and small entrepreneurs. "If our local entrepreneurs are assured of a market for their products, their economic prosperity will automatically follow," he said. Shukla lauded the Madhya Pradesh Industrial



Development Corporation (MPIDC) for inviting Assam's "Bamboo Lady of India", Neeramoyee Sharma, to the event. He said her expertise in bamboo-based crafts would help local artisans improve product quality and income. Shukla also announced that a haat bazaar would soon be constructed near Venkat Bhavan in Rewa to provide local producers a platform to exhibit and sell their products directly to buyers.

Sharma shared insights on bamboo craftsmanship, demonstrating how small decorative and utility items can be made profitably with minimal bamboo use. She encouraged locals to cultivate bamboo to earn additional income and reduce reliance on plastic, pointing out that bamboo matures quickly and releases ample oxygen. Forest Officer Lokesh Nagpure said large-scale bamboo harvesting is planned next year to ensure sufficient availability. He added that 175 farmers in the district have already planted over 264,000 bamboo saplings under a state subsidy scheme. MPIDC Executive Director U K Tiwari said the initiative aims to take local products "from local to global" by providing training, improving quality standards, and facilitating access to domestic and international markets for small producers and artisans.

CM greets LK Advani on birthday

STAFF REPORTER ■ Bhopal

Chief Minister Mohan Yadav on Saturday extended warm greetings and best wishes to former Deputy Prime Minister and Bharat Ratna awardee Lal Krishna Advani on his birthday. In his message, Yadav said Advani's lifelong dedication to the nation and his exemplary service to public life continue to inspire generations. "His commitment to Mother India and the organisation remains a guiding force for all of us," the Chief Minister said. Yadav also prayed for Advani's good health, happiness, and long life, describing him as a towering statesman whose leadership has left an enduring imprint on India's political and cultural landscape.

Two youths held for exploiting women on marriage pretext

STAFF REPORTER ■ Bhopal

Two young men have been arrested in separate incidents of sexual exploitation of women under the pretext of marriage. Berasia police on Saturday arrested Samandar Gurjar for allegedly raping a 19-year-old girl after promising to marry her, only to later withdraw citing caste differences. His father, Vishnu, has also been booked for caste-based insults following the victim's complaint. Investigators said Samandar, who frequently visited the girl's home, proposed to her earlier this year. Trusting his commitment, she entered into a physical relationship with him. When she pressed him to formalise the marriage, he told her

his father objected due to her caste. A rape case has been registered, and Vishnu remains at large. Police sources said such cases are becoming increasingly common, particularly among young adults who meet online or through neighbourhood contacts. Officers said that emotional manipulation and social prejudice often intertwine in these crimes, making them difficult to detect until victims come forward. In a parallel case, Nishatpura police arrested Aman Ansari (19) for allegedly raping a waitress he met through social media. The victim told police that Ansari, who owns a horse-carriage business, lured her to his home, engaged in a physical relationship after assuring marriage, but later refused when she confronted him.



Students perform in an Inter-college district level dance competition titled 'Ojas' during Youth Festival-2025-26, at Sant Hirdaram Girls College in Bhopal on Saturday. Pioneer photo

Minister says CM committed to farmers' welfare, announces model rate for soybean

STAFF REPORTER ■ Bhopal

Agriculture Minister Adal Singh Kansana on Saturday underscored Mohan Yadav government's commitment to the welfare and prosperity of farmers while announcing a model rate of Rs 4,033 per quintal for soybean under the Bhavantar Scheme. The rate, applicable from November 8, will determine compensation for farmers who sold their soybean produce in agricultural mandis. Kansana said the Bhavantar Scheme was designed to ensure that soybean growers receive the full benefit of the Minimum Support Price (MSP) and are protected from losses due to market fluctuations. The minister said enthusiasm among farmers for the scheme is clearly visible across mandis in the state. "A total of 9,36,352 farmers have registered under the Bhavantar Scheme 2025," Kansana said, adding that trad-

ing has taken place in 243 mandis and sub-mandis since the scheme's launch. According to official data, 1,44,180 farmers have sold 24,67,100 quintals of soybean so far. The highest arrivals have been reported in Ganjbasoda, Dewas, Ujjain, Indore, and Agar mandis, where trading is progressing smoothly. Reiterating the government's pro-farmer stance, Kansana said soybean producers will receive an additional Rs 1,300 per quintal, to be disbursed on November 13. He added that the state government remains committed to ensuring fair returns for cultivators and safeguarding their livelihoods. Kansana credited the progress to the guidance of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, saying the Madhya Pradesh government is implementing welfare and development-oriented programmes to advance towards a "Strong India, Strong Madhya Pradesh."

Top officials review Simhastha 2028 railway projects, urge faster work

PNS ■ Ujjain

A review meeting on Simhastha-related railway works was held on Saturday under the joint chairmanship of Mela Officer and Divisional Commissioner Ashish Singh and Railway Nodal Officer ADRM KL Meena. Collector Roshan Kumar Singh, Municipal Commissioner Abhilash Mishra, District Panchayat CEO Shreyansh Koomat, railway officials, and representatives of several departments attended the meeting. The Simhastha Mela, held once every 12 years, draws millions of devotees to Ujjain, placing immense pressure on the city's transport infrastructure and public amenities. Mela Officer Singh and ADRM Meena directed officials to speed up construction of holding areas at Naikhedi,

Chintaman, Panvasa, Mohanpura, and Vikram Nagar railway stations to ensure smooth movement of pilgrims. They instructed that work on connecting roads and approach routes to platforms at these stations begin immediately. Collector Singh urged departments to promptly approve pending proposals related to railway projects and pressed for faster execution of railway overbridges and other key infrastructure works. Officials decided to coordinate closely to ensure that all construction and logistical preparations are completed before the upcoming Simhastha Mela, one of the largest religious gatherings in the country. The review meeting reflected the administration's intent to remove bottlenecks and streamline interdepartmental coordination as Ujjain prepares to host millions of devotees during the sacred event.

Defence firms, MSMEs map future ties at Jabalpur conclave

PNS ■ Jabalpur

The Vendor Development Program and B2B meetings at Vehicle Factory Jabalpur (VFJ) marked the second day of the Indian Defence Manufacturing Conclave 2025, bringing together leading defence manufacturers, PSUs, and MSMEs to strengthen indigenous production and local supply networks. The programme was inaugurated by B Rajesh Kanna, General Manager of AVNL, VFJ. Representatives from major defence organisations including BEL, HAL, BDL, TASL, AWEIL, Ashok Leyland, MIL, MIDHANI, GRSE, and IOL made detailed presentations on their production capacities, procurement policies, and opportunities for collaboration with smaller firms and startups. In the second session, a series of B2B meetings between DPSUs, OEMs, MSMEs, and startups led to preliminary trade agreements and the drafting of a roadmap for joint production work. VFJ Chief General Manager Praveen

Meet focuses on strengthening India's defence supply chain through innovation and local partnerships

Kumar interacted with company representatives, exploring ways to improve coordination, speed up production processes, and promote vendor inclusion in defence manufacturing. Officials from participating PSUs and OEMs emphasised the importance of MSMEs and local vendors in developing cutting-edge defence products under the Make in India initiative. They expressed willingness to extend full cooperation in innovation and product development. The Defence Conclave exhibition running alongside the programme continued to attract steady crowds, with visitors viewing advanced, indigenous equipment and technology designed to boost India's self-reliance in the defence sector.

Police bust tractor tyre smuggling trick, seize 150 kg poppy husk

PNS ■ Mandsaur

The Narayangarh Police have arrested two smugglers in Mandsaur district for attempting to transport 150 kilograms of Doda Chura (poppy husk) hidden inside tractor tyres. Police said the operation was conducted under Superintendent of Police Vinod Kumar Meena and SDOP Malhargarh Kirti Baghel. Acting on a tip-off, Inspector Rajendra Kumar Pawar and Sub-Inspector Karulaj Prajapati intercepted an unnumbered Swaraj 855 FE tractor near Khejdi Phanta. Upon inspection, police discovered plastic bags of Doda Chura concealed within cavities of the tractor's rear tubeless tyres. The narcotics were seized on the spot. The arrested men were identified as Mangilal (26) of Karadiya, Ratlam, and Vikram alias Vinod (35) of Sakhatoli, Sitamau. A case has been registered at Narayangarh Police Station under Sections 8/15 and 29 of the NDPS Act. Police are interrogating the accused to trace the supply network.

Harmony takes centre stage at St Mary's Convent Annual Function

STAFF REPORTER ■ Bhopal

St Mary's Convent Senior Secondary School, Tulsī Nagar, Bhopal, celebrated its Annual Function for the Foundational Stage with great zeal and enthusiasm on Saturday. The floral welcome for the esteemed guests was followed by the auspicious lighting of the lamp. The event commenced with a graceful prayer dance by the tiny tots, filling the atmosphere with devotion and serenity. The welcome song by the little ones and the welcome address by the Principal, Sr Maria Jagtap, extended a heartfelt greeting to everyone present. This year's theme, 'Symphony of Love', beautifully wove together the spirit of harmony and togetherness through cultural presentations including a family song, action song, Marathi dance, Western dance, English play, Minion dance, and Pahadi and Sambalpuri folk dances, reflecting the vibrancy of India's cultural diversity. The English play, 'The Sound of Music', presented with AI-replaced characters, was a captivating show. The Hindi play, too, was humorous and insightful and received much applause. A special highlight of the day

was the School Report Presentation by the adorable Marians Airlines crew, who creatively showcased the school's new initiatives, achievements, and joyful learning experiences of the year. The Chief Guest, Dr Sr Romana Fernandes, Mother General of The Poor Sisters of Our Lady (PSOL), delivered an inspiring address appreciating the efforts of the young performers and encouraging parents and teachers to continue nurturing holistic growth among children. Ms Jyoti Ratre, who holds the record as the oldest Indian woman Everest, was the Guest of Honour and was felicitated by the Principal. The cultural extravaganza continued with a Hindi play, cowboy performance, qawwali, bhanga dance, patriotic song, and the grand finale - a spectacular show that left the audience spellbound. Principal Sr Maria Jagtap, in her message, expressed gratitude to the parents and staff, inspiring them to take pride in the shared journey and grow as one family. The programme concluded with a vote of thanks proposed by Sr Namrata, the Headmistress. It was a joyful platform for young Marians to express their talents.



Students present a cultural programme during annual day celebrations of St Mary's Convent Senior Secondary School in Bhopal on Saturday. Pioneer photo

Hospitality safety in focus at FSAI fire and security yatra

STAFF REPORTER ■ Bhopal

The Fire and Security Association of India (FSAI), Indore Chapter, hosted the India Fire and Security Yatra 2025, focusing on safety and security in the hospitality industry. The event drew over 200 professionals, including architects, consultants, contractors, facility managers, and government officials. Chief Guest Rohit Sisonia, IAS, Additional Commissioner,

Indore, underscored the need to follow National Building Code 2016 standards, stressing that systems must be designed according to a building's actual fire load. He lauded FSAI's role in building awareness and promoting professional excellence in life safety. FSAI National President Srinivas Vellori said the Yatra connects design, engineering, and operations with a culture of safety and accountability. Indore Chapter Chairman Mayanka Dadu urged

regular fire audits in hotels and commercial spaces to safeguard lives and assets. A panel featuring experts from D'Park Corporation, New Fire Engineers, Aadharshila, and Radisson Blu discussed integrating technology and standardising safety protocols. Technical sessions covered electrical safety, smoke extraction, and Building Management Systems, highlighting FSAI's mission to fortify India's hospitality safety framework.

Pathways to piety converge at annual Bhopal Ijtema

STAFF REPORTER ■ Bhopal

Islam recognises two pathways to piety: infaradi ibadat, the individual practice of devotion, and ijtemai ibadat, the collective pursuit of faith. The former is a solitary communion between believer and Creator; the latter is its social counterpart, where worship deepens through companionship, compassion and shared purpose. Within ijtemai ibadat lies the spirit of ijtimaiyat - the belief that faith must manifest through khidmat-e-khalq (service to creation) and akhlaq (ethical mutualism with all beings). In Islam, akhlaq extends beyond human relations to mercy toward animals, respect for the earth and stewardship of ecological balance. The annual Bhopal Ijtema, to be held from November 14-17, 2025, embodies this union of worship, service and steward-



ship. The word Ijtema derives from the Arabic ijtima, meaning gathering or assembly. Organised by the Tablighi Jamaat, the congregation draws hundreds of thousands from across India and abroad to the Eintkhedi-Ghasipura grounds, where 120 acres of covered pandals have been raised within a 300-acre site. Nearly 1.5 lakh devotees can sit together in the main area, while seventy parking zones can accommodate

about 50 000 vehicles. The event will be managed by 25 000 volunteers, supported by 5 000 police, municipal and health staff. Sweeper-bag systems, dust-free flooring, vehicle-repair units and medical camps are in place. The Ijtema has been declared a plastic-free, zero-waste zone, with reusable utensils, biodegradable materials and strict segregation of waste - part of a sustained effort to reduce its carbon footprint.

Beyond the meticulous logistics, the Ijtema's moral foundation rests on Bhopal's residents, who have long "owned" the gathering through quiet acts of hospitality. Households open their courtyards to travellers; shopkeepers and hawkers distribute drinking water; community kitchens provide food around the clock; and local drivers offer free or low-fare rides to the grounds. In providing water, food, shelter and transport, they transform faith into practice - demonstrating that akhlaq is lived through service to all creation, not only through prayer. The congregation will open with sermons and hundreds of simple, collective nikahs, concluding on November 17 with the dua, the final mass prayer. For Bhopal, the Ijtema remains not only a gathering of believers, but a reaffirmation that devotion can be humble, sustainable and profoundly human.

Two NEET aspirants booked for submitting forged certificates

Bhopal: Koh-e-Fiza police registered an FIR late Saturday against two NEET aspirants accused of submitting forged certificates to secure MBBS seats at Gandhi Medical College. Acting on a complaint from the college administration, police booked the duo under forgery and cheating charges. GMC Dean Dr Kavita Singh said the candidates, from Bihar and Maharashtra, used the fake documents during Saturday's counselling session. Verification revealed mismatched signatures and invalid issuing authorities, leading to cancellation of their admissions. Police said the suspects, both in their early 20s, have been summoned for questioning as investigators probe possible involvement of touts. Officials warned aspirants against unethical practices as NEET 2025 counselling.



Senior Congress leader and Rajya Sabha MP Digvijaya Singh with Congress State President Jitu Patwari and leader of opposition Umang Singhar addresses a joint press conference at PCC headquarters in Bhopal on Saturday. Pioneer photo

Congress leaders unite against SIR, say BJP govt rigging voter lists

STAFF REPORTER ■ Bhopal

The Madhya Pradesh Congress on Saturday launched a sharp attack on the BJP-led central government and the Election Commission of India (ECI), accusing them of large-scale manipulation of voter lists under the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) process. Calling it a "direct assault on democracy", the party denounced a nationwide agitation, including a mass rally at Delhi's Ramlila Maidan and the submission of a memorandum to the President carrying over five crore signatures. Addressing a joint press conference, Madhya Pradesh Congress president Jitu Patwari, former chief minister Digvijaya Singh, Leader of Opposition in the State

Assembly Umang Singhar, and SIR Committee chairman Sajjan Singh Verma alleged that the SIR process was being misused by the BJP to delete names of legitimate voters and manipulate the electoral rolls in its favour. Former chief minister Digvijaya Singh claimed that under the new SIR guidelines, citizens were being asked to furnish proof of citizenship - a demand he described as unconstitutional and discriminatory against the poor, homeless, and marginalised communities. "It is the Election Commission's duty to prepare and maintain accurate voter lists, not to ask citizens to prove their citizenship," Singh said. He further alleged that in Bihar, nearly 62 lakh names had been deleted from the

electoral rolls, most belonging to minority communities. "The BJP is using the pretext of preventing infiltration to achieve political gains," he charged. Singh added that during the UPA government, nearly 88,000 illegal immigrants were identified and deported, while under the NDA government since 2014, only 2,400 people had been traced - "barely 3 per cent of the total identified earlier." Singh demanded that the voter list be made available in a machine-readable format and that Aadhaar cards be accepted as valid proof for voter registration. He also proposed that the electoral rolls be frozen on the day of election notification, preventing any further addition or deletion of names thereafter. Leader of Opposition Umang

Singhar accused the BJP of preparing to remove over 50 lakh voters in Madhya Pradesh under the SIR drive, disproportionately affecting migrant workers, tribals, and other marginalised groups. Launching a scathing attack, he said, "Voter fraud has now reached an international level - even models from Brazil have become voters in our country. What could be a bigger scam than this?" Singhar added that the Congress was waiting for the Election Commission to schedule a meeting with Rahul Gandhi to review the ongoing revision process and ensure transparency. The Congress leaders said the party would continue to expose what they described as the BJP's "systematic attempt to distort democracy" through voter list manipula-



Students participate in an inter-school painting competition organised at PM Shri Demonstration Multipurpose School, in Bhopal on Saturday. Pioneer photo

Bhopal shivers as mercury nosedives

STAFF REPORTER ■ Bhopal

Bhopal shivered at 8.4°C on Friday night - 7.9 degrees below normal - marking its second-coldest November night in a decade, just behind last year's 8.2°C. The chill arrived a week earlier than usual as icy winds from the north swept across Madhya Pradesh. Rajgarh was the coldest in the state at 7.4°C, followed by Rewa (9.6°C), Gwalior (10.5°C), Ujjain (10.4°C) and Jabalpur (12.2°C). Indore, meanwhile, recorded its coldest November night in 25 years. Meteorologists attributed the early onset of winter to low humidity after the monsoon, melting Himalayan snow and a shift in wind direction from southwest to northeast.

Morning walkers in Bhopal were seen wrapped in wool-lens, while tea stalls did brisk business as residents huddled around stoves for warmth on Saturday. In Jhabua, where the minimum temperature plunged 8.4 degrees in three days, the district collector delayed school timings to protect children from the morning chill. The India Meteorological Department forecast deeper cold and increasing fog, with visibility already reduced to 1-2 km in Mandla and 2-4 km in Rewa and Jabalpur. Farmers continue to bear the brunt of erratic weather. Unseasonal rain has damaged cotton and newly sown Rabi crops, forcing resowing in several districts and deepening rural distress as winter tightens its grip on the state.

197 clear MPPSC 2023, Panna's Ajit Mishra tops

Bhopal: The Madhya Pradesh Public Service Commission (MPPSC) on Saturday declared the final results of the State Service Examination 2023, selecting 197 candidates for 229 posts. Ajit Mishra from Panna, currently a Naib Tehsildar in Maihar, topped the list. Abhishek Jain from Damoh was appointed Deputy Collector, while Guna's Monika Dhakad and Vidisha's Shivani Rai were selected as DSPs. Yashpal Swarnkar from Sagar secured third rank. According to MPPSC OSD Dr R Panchbhai, seven posts reserved for ex-servicemen remained vacant. The main examination was held in March 2024, and interviews took place between July and August 2025.

Bhopal police sound cyber alarm after hackers leak Rajkot hospital footage

STAFF REPORTER ■ Bhopal

A chilling cyberattack on a Rajkot maternity hospital, where hackers leaked sensitive CCTV footage of women online, has jolted Bhopal police into warning residents to tighten their digital defences. The breach, traced to weak default passwords like "admin/admin123," showed how everyday surveillance cameras can be turned into tools of spying and exploitation. Investigators said the hackers seized full control of the hospital's system in minutes. In an urgent advisory, Bhopal police urged residents to immediately change factory-set credentials and create long, complex passwords mixing letters, numbers and special symbols. "One

careless click or password can destroy your privacy," the advisory warned. The police recommended switching on multi-factor authentication wherever available, updating camera software regularly, and using strong Wi-Fi passwords. They also advised separating CCTV devices on a guest network and avoiding installation in intimate spaces like bedrooms or bathrooms. Users have been told to access footage only through a secure VPN and disable remote viewing when not needed. "A small dose of vigilance can shield you and your loved ones from devastating cyber threats," the police said. Suspected cybercrimes can be reported through the National Cybercrime Helpline at 1930 or by contacting the Bhopal Cyber Cell at 9479990636.

Two killed, one critical in SUV crash

Indore: Two college students were killed and another critically injured when a speeding Scorpio SUV rammed into their motorcycle near Life Care Hospital at 2 AM Saturday. Police said the SUV, travelling at over 100 km/h from Nakshatra Chowk, collided head-on with the students' bike. The impact flung the victims several metres and left the motorcycle entangled in a divider near a petrol pump. The deceased were identified as Krishna Pal Singh Tanwar and Ayush Rathore, both 20-year-old BTech students at Prestige College. Their friend, Shreyansh Rathore, 20, a law student, is battling for life. Police have seized the abandoned SUV and launched a manhunt for its four occupants who fled after the crash.

Sub-engineer booked for forging promotion order in Singrauli

STAFF REPORTER ■ Bhopal

Singrauli police on Saturday registered an FIR against Sub-Engineer Shivani Garg of the Singrauli Municipal Corporation for allegedly forging a promotion order to obtain a higher post. The Waidhan police acted on a complaint filed by Municipal Commissioner Savita Pradhan. According to police, Garg submitted a fabricated promotion order on August 21, 2025, claiming elevation to Assistant Engineer by the Chief Minister's Office in Bhopal. She presented the document to the corporation and sought to assume the new post. Commissioner Pradhan later sought confirmation from the Urban Administration

Department and the Chief Minister's Office on September 12. The probe, concluded on November 4, found the order to be fake. Investigations suggest the document was created by the accused herself. City Superintendent of Police PS Paraste said a case has been registered under relevant sections for fraud and forgery. "The investigation is underway to determine how the fake order was prepared and to identify any accomplices," he said. Officials said Garg was transferred to the housing section after doubts arose about the order. She later went on leave and has not returned. Her mobile phone remains switched off. The case was registered at Waidhan police station.

Missing for 12 years, Bhopal girl found living independently in Chennai

STAFF REPORTER ■ Bhopal

A 12-year-old kidnapping mystery has been solved under Operation Muskan 02, with Piplani Police Station's Anand Nagar Outpost tracing a woman missing since 2013. Now 27, she was found living and working independently in Chennai. The case, which carried a Rs 10,000 reward since 2015, was revived after Bhopal Police Headquarters ordered renewed scrutiny of pending child-abduction files. Under DCP Vivek Kumar Singh, Addl DCP Gautam Solanki and ACP Aditi B Saxena, Inspector Chandrika Yadav and SI Santosh Raghuvanshi led the

successful operation. The team analysed call records, reactivated informants and raided multiple locations before making the breakthrough. The girl disappeared on November 24, 2013, from Bal Vihar, Anand Nagar. Her mother's report led to a case under Sections 363 and 366 of the IPC. Despite appeals on Doordarshan and extensive citywide searches, the case went cold for more than a decade. A fresh lead emerged from suspects interrogated in Raisen, and with family assistance, police finally tracked down and reunited the woman with her relatives after 12 long years.

No parking, no problem: VIP vehicles defy rules at secretariat

STAFF REPORTER ■ Bhopal

No Parking signs outside Vallabh Bhavan and Satpura Bhavan mean little when the vehicles belong to those working inside. Cars with "M P Government" and "Police" markings are parked daily along restricted stretches, while traffic police look the other way. Both buildings house key state departments and remain among the city's most tightly guarded zones. Yet the roads outside are lined with official cars and SUVs from morning till evening. Guards are quick to whistle at auto-rickshaw or taxi drivers who stop briefly but do not question government

vehicles. "If we stop for a booking, they tell us to move," said auto driver Prince Ahirwar, who frequently drives through the area. "Government cars can stay there all day." Taxi driver Iqbal Khan said fines are swift when the violator is not a government employee. "When we park even for a minute, the e-challan arrives at home. The same law should apply here too," he said. At neighbouring Satpura Bhavan, vehicles overflow from official parking areas onto adjoining streets, reducing road space and slowing traffic. Office hours bring daily jams, especially near the gate facing

Vallabh Bhavan. Elsewhere in Bhopal, traffic police are less forgiving. In New Market and TT Nagar, two-wheelers and cars are lifted within minutes. Near Nadra Bus Stand, regular enforcement drives are conducted. "Law should be equal for everyone," said Arvind Sahu, a resident whose car was towed near Shyamla Hills. "They said it was a no-parking zone, though there was no sign." Officials maintain that enforcement is uniform across the city. On the ground, the rows of parked vehicles outside the two government complexes tell another story - one where traffic rules stop short of the State secretariat.



Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav during an election campaign in support of NDA candidate Shyam Dev Paswan in Bodhgaya state assembly constituency, Gaya district Bihar on Saturday. Pioneer photo

Beyond the Bylines: The man who scripted his own chapter

KISHAN SINGH RANA ■ Bhopal

When 28-year-old Deepak Dangi left his hometown in Berasia with a small bag and a big dream, he wasn't sure what he was chasing - a career, perhaps, or maybe a sense of direction. What he found instead was a story of self-belief, struggle and quiet success written right here in Bhopal. Born into a farmer's family, Deepak grew up watching his father labour in the fields from dawn till dusk. Like many small-town youths, he dreamed of cracking a government exam - the only ticket, he thought, to stability. "But after a few years of chasing vacancies and seeing scams and corruption nibble at the system, I gave up that dream," he says, the disappointment still flickering in his eyes. He moved cities - Delhi,

Lucknow, Bengaluru - in search of better opportunities. Each time, he found himself at another desk, in another BPO, earning just enough to survive but never enough to live. "By the end of the month, my pockets were always empty," he recalls. "It felt like I was running on a treadmill - lots of effort, no movement." Then came Nikhil Dhakad, a colleague who became a friend, and soon, a brother. "We both wanted out," Deepak says with a smile. "So one night, over chai, we decided we'd start a café. It sounded impossible - but also exciting." They began saving. Slowly, painfully. When they finally had enough, they rented a small space at Chinara Fortune on Hoshangabad Road - right in the heart of Bhopal's bustling corporate corridor. "Having worked in BPOs, I knew most worked late nights, they needed a place



that was affordable, friendly and open when others weren't. Naming the café was another story. "We first thought of Two Brothers Café, but that was already taken," Deepak laughs. "One evening, I said, 'This chapter will never end,' and it struck us - Chapter First Café was born." From the very beginning, Deepak did something different - he hired his staff on a profit-sharing basis instead of fixed salaries. "It makes everyone feel like an owner,"

he says. The gamble paid off. On their very first day, they made a net profit of Rs 5,000. Within three months, they opened a second outlet at Trilanga, and not long after, a third at Minal. "Of course, we've had ups and downs," Deepak admits. "But there's a joy in seeing something you've built with your own hands grow and thrive." Today, Deepak's journey has branched beyond cafés - he also runs a tours and travels company with 21 vehicles and 14 employees. "To achieve something, you must step out of your comfort zone," he says. "Education today doesn't guarantee success. The system is broken - what matters more is skill, patience and faith in yourself." He reflects thoughtfully on how business families in India raise their children. "In communities like Bania and Sindhvi, parents teach their kids how to trade, not how to

chase jobs. It's a mindset difference. They teach you to build, not beg." When he isn't running his ventures, Deepak loves simple pleasures - Dal Bati cooked by his mother ("because it's pure"), evenings at Manuabhan Tekri or Lake View ("my peaceful places"), and Akshay Kumar films ("he's the only one who's stayed consistent"). He calls Bhopal "the best city for growth" - a place with both heart and opportunity. "People here are loving," he says softly. "But politics creates fear and divides us. I stay away from it. I just want peace." As their conversation ends, Deepak smiles at the thought of home. "The happiest day of my life was when my wife came into it," he says. "She reminds me that success means nothing if you don't have someone to share it with."

Swept aside, sanitation staff halt work over pay delay

STAFF REPORTER ■ Bhopal

Heralded as heroes in the run-up to the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, sanitation workers in Bhopal found themselves swept to the sidelines yet again on Saturday when an official manoeuvre staggered their wages for the month of October. With only half their wages in hand, sanitation workers across the state capital went on strike, bringing garbage collection to a standstill. The agitation began early in Kolar, where workers parked garbage trucks outside the local municipal office, before spreading to several other areas. Congress leader Ravindra Sahu Jhumarwala joined the protest, warning that he would go on a hunger strike if the issue was not resolved immediately. After a day of heated meetings between union leaders and civic representatives, officials announced that the remaining 15 days' salary for October would be



credited on November 10 and 11, based on Aadhaar-linked attendance records. The unrest stems from the Bhopal Municipal Corporation's decision to replace the Sarthak mobile app with an Aadhaar-based attendance system from October 16. Because of the change, workers were paid only for the second half of the month - a move that triggered resentment across the workforce. "Half a salary is not enough to run a household," said Sonu Dagar, president of the Bharatiya Safai Mazdoor Sangh. "The Corporation should have introduced the new system from November 1 instead of mid-

month." Dagar added that workers had also sought gender-sensitive attendance timings - 8 am for women and 7 am for men - to help manage domestic responsibilities, but the request was turned down. "The same workers who helped Bhopal secure second place in national cleanliness rankings and were once showered with flowers are now being humiliated with half pay," said Umashankar Tiwari, general secretary of the Class III Employees' Union. "This treatment is deeply disrespectful." Municipal Commissioner Sanskriti Jain said payments were being processed transparently. "Ensuring that all employees receive their pending dues on time is our top priority," she said. By evening, after assurances of full payment, the workers began dispersing. But garbage heaps remained unattended across Kolar and other neighbourhoods.

IN FOCUS



A painted stork eats a fish at a pond at the National Zoological Park in New Delhi. The zoo reopened for visitors on Saturday, after more than 2 months of shutdown following the detection of avian influenza

PTI

Election officer suspended over dumped VVPAT slips

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Samastipur/New Delhi

An assistant returning officer was suspended on Saturday and a case registered against him after a large number of VVPAT slips were found on the roadside in Bihar's Samastipur district, said a statement. The VVPAT slips were found scattered on the roadside near a college in the Sarairanjan assembly segment of the district. The Election Commission swung into action after a purported video of it went viral on social media. The statement issued by the Chief Electoral Officer's office said the district magistrate has been directed to visit the spot and inquire into the matter. The first phase of the assembly polls in 121 seats

took place on November 6. RJD Rajya Sabha MP Manoj Jha has written to Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar requesting enhanced security measures at EVM strongrooms in Bihar. Referring to reports of power disruptions in strongrooms, Jha's letter said, "I write to bring to your immediate attention reports of electricity disruptions at strongrooms where Electronic Voting Machines (EVM) are currently being stored in Bihar. These reports have raised serious concerns about the security protocols." He urged the Election Commission to take cognisance of the matter and ensure mandatory 24x7 CCTV surveillance of all entry and exit points to the strongroom premises.

Kharge slams NDA Bihar poll predictions

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

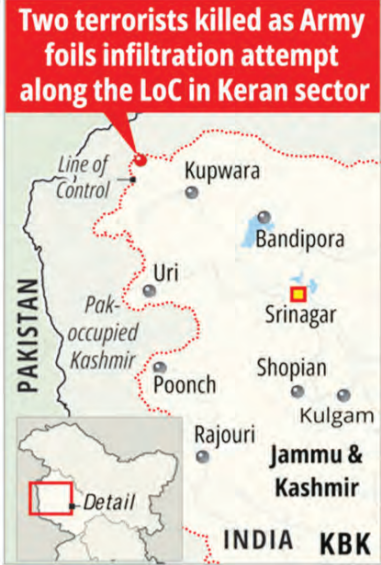
Pointing out that NDA's "400 plus" claim in the Lok Sabha elections was way off the mark, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Saturday rubbished Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah's predictions of the NDA's victory in the Bihar assembly polls. Kharge also asserted that "all was not well" in the BJP-led coalition, as there were doubts that Nitish Kumar, the JD(U) president and longest-serving chief minister, would be backed for another term in office. "The Prime Minister can say anything. Ahead of the Lok Sabha polls, they kept saying 400 paar," said Kharge, pointing to the performance of the BJP in last year's general elections, when it fell short of a major-

ity and became dependent on allies like JD(U) and Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu's TDP for survival in power. When his attention was drawn to the fact that Shah, the most trusted aide of Modi and the BJP's principal strategist, has been claiming that the NDA's tally in the 243-strong Bihar assembly could be "160 plus", the Congress president said, "I would again say you keep in mind their boast of 400 paar which came a cropper." The octogenarian bristled at the Prime Minister's repeated claim that the Congress was reluctant to name RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav as the INDIA bloc's chief ministerial candidate but relented when a 'katta' (unlicensed, country-made pistol) was placed on his head. "Nobody can scare us. Not even the Prime Minister. And

Two terrorists neutralised in J&K's Kupwara district

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ Jammu

With the advent of the peak winter season, the handlers of Pakistan-based terrorist outfits have started pushing small groups of heavily armed terrorists inside the Indian territory along the Line of Control (LoC) in the North Kashmir district of Kupwara. Late Friday night, the joint team of security forces neutralised two terrorists in the Keran sector of Kupwara while they were attempting to sneak inside the Indian territory. This is the second infiltration bid successfully foiled by the security forces in the Kupwara sector in the last month. On October 14, two infiltrators were killed in the Machil sector of the district. According to ground reports, the gunfight erupted in the forward area after alert troops spotted suspicious movement near the LoC late last night. As troops challenged them, the infiltrators retaliated, leading to an exchange of gunfire. "Two terrorists have been neutralised by the security forces in the ongoing operation," the Army's Srinagar-based Chinar Corps said on X. Earlier, the Army said troops launched a joint operation based on specific intelligence inputs about a possible infiltration bid in the sector. "On 07 November 2025, based on specific intelligence input from agencies,



regarding an infiltration attempt, a joint operation was launched in the Keran sector of Kupwara. Alert troops spotted suspicious activity and challenged, which resulted in terrorists opening indiscriminate fire. Contact was established and terrorists were trapped," the Chinar Corps said. In the coming weeks, the Indian army is also anticipating a spike in infiltration bids by heavily armed terrorists ahead of the closure of mountain passes in the

higher reaches of North Kashmir owing to snowfall in the area. Intelligence reports have also reported the presence of a large number of trained terrorists in the launching pads close to the line of control. In Jammu, the Army's Western Commander, Lt Gen Manoj Kumar Katiyar, reviewed the operational preparedness of troops deployed in forward areas along the Jammu-Pathankot sector on Friday. The review by the General Officer Commanding-in-Chief comes as the troops prepare for the winter months to effectively counter threats posed by terrorists operating in the higher reaches and forest belts in the Jammu sector. "Lt Gen Katiyar reviewed the operational preparedness of troops deployed in forward areas of Jammu, Kathua, Samba (in Jammu division) and Pathankot (in Punjab), ensuring they remain poised to respond to any contingency," Western Command said in a post on X. Meanwhile, anti-terrorist operations have been intensified by the security forces in the Doda and Kishtwar districts to flush out the foreign terrorists hiding in the area, taking advantage of the natural cave-like structures and dense forest area in the upper reaches of the region. Similar operations are being conducted across the frontier districts of Rajouri and Poonch.

Punjab bypoll: EC suspends Tarn Taran SSP

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Chandigarh

Just three days ahead of voting in Punjab's Tarn Taran assembly bypoll, the Election Commission on Saturday suspended the district's Senior Superintendent of Police Ravjot Kaur Grewal. She was posted as Tarn Taran SSP in September. Meanwhile, IPS officer Surendra Lamba has been posted as the new SSP of Tarn Taran following the approval of the Election Commission. Earlier in the day, Amritsar Police Commissioner Gurpreet

Singh Bhullar was assigned the additional charge of Tarn Taran SSP with immediate effect. Though no reason has been mentioned for the suspension of Grewal, the action against the SSP came after Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) president Sukhbir Singh Badal lodged a complaint with the Punjab Chief Electoral Officer against the officer. The Aam Aadmi Party questioned the suspension of the SSP, claiming that the action was taken without any "concrete complaint." AAP leader Baltej Pannu alleged that the EC was

acting at the behest of the BJP. He claimed the opposition parties were "unnerved" by the "immense" support of the people for the AAP in the bypoll. SAD president Badal had accused the SSP of using the police to lodge false FIRs against his party's leaders and cadre to stop them from campaigning for the November 11 bypoll. He hailed the EC's move on Saturday, saying the AAP's "gambit to influence the bypoll by misusing" the police force has been thwarted. In his letter to the Punjab CEO last month, Badal had alleged that the

local police were being "misused" for the political gains of the ruling Aam Aadmi Party. He had alleged that as AAP has realised that it cannot win the bye-election "fairly", it has made the SSP its "de facto" in-charge in Tarn Taran. "The SSP is registering false cases against Akali sarpanches and workers in order to intimidate them and prevent them from participating in poll activities", Badal had alleged. The SAD had claimed that politically motivated FIRs were registered against its leaders and workers.

Flight operations at Delhi airport return to normal: DIAL

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Flight operations at Delhi's Indira Gandhi International Airport (IGIA) are now normal, the airport authority said on Saturday, following 36 hours of disruptions caused by a technical glitch in the Air Traffic Control (ATC) flight planning system. The malfunction led to widespread delays across more than 900 flights, while several others were cancelled, affecting hundreds of passengers. However, the incident has reignited concerns over India's aviation safety infrastructure - issues that were highlighted over two months ago by a Parliamentary Standing Committee on Transport, Tourism and Culture. Following the technical snag, Union Civil Aviation Minister Rammohan Naidu has directed that a detailed

root-cause analysis be undertaken to prevent recurrence of such glitches in the future. He alongwith senior officials had visited the airport to take stock of the situation. He also instructed officials to plan for more system advancements, including additional or fallback servers to strengthen ATC operations. Meanwhile, on Saturday, 129 flights were delayed, as per a flight tracking website, Flightradar 24. Among these 129 flights, 53 were arrivals, while 76 were departures. The average delay for arrivals was reported as five to 10 minutes, and for departures, it was around 19 to 25 minutes. Delhi International Airport Ltd (DIAL) on Saturday morning said the technical issue that affected the AMSS is gradually improving. In an advisory issued at 11:55 hours, IGI Airport confirmed that all flight operations were now normal. "All flight

operations are normal at Delhi Airport. Passengers are advised to stay in touch with their respective airlines for the latest flight updates," DIAL said in a post on X. The chaos began around 3 pm on Thursday, when a malfunction in the Automatic Message Switching System (AMSS) disrupted the flow of crucial flight plan data to the Auto Track System (ATS) - a core part of the Air Traffic Control (ATC) network. The AMSS is responsible for automatically feeding flight plan information to ATC screens, and its failure forced controllers to process flight plans manually, slowing down operations significantly. The IGI airport in the national capital, which has four runways, handles more than 1,500 flight movements daily. In an earlier update, Delhi International Airport Limited (DIAL) on Saturday said that

President Murmu leaves for Angola, Botswana



President Droupadi Murmu departing for her State visit to Angola and Botswana

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

President Droupadi Murmu on Saturday departed for a six-day State visit to Angola and Botswana as part of India's efforts to open up new avenues for collaboration and expand partnership with the two countries in the African region. This will be the first-ever state visit by an Indian head of state to these countries. In the first leg of her journey, Murmu will reach the Angolan capital of Luanda and hold high-level engagements between November 8 and 11. She will be in Gaborone, the capital of Botswana, from November 11 to 13. Murmu will hold bilateral talks with her Angolan counterpart, Joao Manuel Goncalves Lourenco, and attend the 50th anniversary celebrations of the African nation's independence. She is also scheduled to address the Angolan parliament and interact with members of the Indian community in that country. India and Angola are also celebrating the 40th anniversary of their diplomatic ties this year. "India and Angola enjoy very close ties of friendship

and cooperation, which have been growing across sectors. We have a vibrant energy partnership with Angola," Sudhakar Dalela, Secretary (Economic Relations), Ministry of External Affairs, said at a press briefing on Thursday. The visit will provide an opportunity to review the entire gamut of bilateral ties and to expand mutually beneficial cooperation in sectors such as agriculture, health, energy, trade and investments, technology, infrastructure development, defence, and people-to-people connections, he said. In Botswana, President Murmu will meet her counterpart Duma Gideon Boko and also address the national assembly at Gaborone. "We are confident that the visit of Hon'ble Rashtrapatiiji will further strengthen India's long-standing collaborative ties with Angola and Botswana, and open up new avenues for collaboration and expanding our partnership. "It is also, as I said earlier, reflective of India's firm commitment to further strengthen its multifaceted partnership with the African continent," the secretary had said.

Ease of justice must for all: PM Modi

"When justice is accessible to everyone, is timely and reaches every individual without regard to social or financial background, only then does it become the foundation of social justice," he said. He said legal aid plays a crucial role in ensuring that justice reaches everyone. Modi also referred to technology becoming a key medium for inclusion and empowerment, and lauded the e-courts project as a brilliant example of this in justice delivery. "It shows how technology can make the judicial process modern and humane," he said. Noting that mediation has always been a part of Indian civilisation, the prime minister said the new Mediation Act is carrying forward this tradition in a modern form. At the event organised by NALSA (National Legal Services Authority) to mark its 30 years, Modi also launched a new training module on community mediation and said he is confident it will prepare resources that will help in resolving disputes, maintaining harmony and reducing litigation. He said lakhs of disputes are being resolved faster and at a much lower cost through Lok Adalats and pre-litigation settlements. "Under the legal aid defence counsel system started by the Government of India, more than eight lakh criminal cases have been settled within just three years. These efforts by the Government have ensured ease of justice for the less privileged," he said.

NALSA was constituted under the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987, to provide free legal services to the weaker sections of society and to organise Lok Adalats for amicable settlement of disputes. The CJI acts as its Patron-in-Chief and the next senior-most Supreme Court judge is the Executive Chairman. Besides, the state legal services authority has been constituted in every state to give effect to the policies and directions of the NALSA and to give free legal services assistance to the people and conduct Lok Adalats in the state. Article 39A of the Constitution provides that the state shall secure that the operation of the legal system promotes justice on a basis of equal opportunity and shall, in particular, provide free legal aid to ensure that opportunities for securing justice are not denied to any citizen by reason of economic or other disabilities. Articles 14 and 22(1) of the Constitution also make it obligatory for the state to ensure equality before the law and a legal system which promotes justice on the basis of equal opportunity to all.

World Bank's debarred list shows over 50...

The group's A2Z Powertech Limited, A2Z Infraservices Limited and A2Z Powercom Limited, Mansi Bijlee and Rice Mills Limited, Ecogreen Envirotech Solutions Limited, Magic Genie Smartech Solutions Limited, A2Z Waste Management (Aligarh) Limited, A2Z Waste Management (Ludhiana) Limited, and Rishikesh

FROM PAGE - 1

Waste Management (formerly known as A2Z Powertech Limited) also faced debarment from the World Bank in 2021. A2Z Infra Engineering Limited (previously known as A2Z Maintenance and Engineering Services) was first caught by the World Bank for corrupt practices in November 2020 for violating supply and procurement rules. This group now faces legal actions in many Municipal Corporations for violating contracts in waste management, and some of its companies are also closed down. In 2016, the World Bank cracked its whip on more than 10 Indian companies for fraudulent practices involving bribery charges. More than 50 companies are on the debarred list of the World Bank, published since 1999.

'65-volt jhatka' to INDIA bloc in Bihar poll: PM

PM urged the electors to "break the record of the first phase on November 11" and ensure that the NDA not just wins "all the seats but established a lead in every booth". "My campaign ends today but canvassing will continue tomorrow. But voters' job begins on the day of polling. I will come again for the swearing in of an NDA government," said the Prime Minister. Asserting that the people of Bihar "do not want a katta sarkaar", Modi voiced alarm over the RJD's poll campaign, in which children came on stage declaring that they wished to become "rangdaar" (street bullies), armed with unlicensed pistols and double barrel guns (dunaali)".

Although the Prime Minister refrained from mentioning leaders of the RJD and the Congress by names, he made ample references to "royal families" running these, "one most corrupt in the country" and the other "most corrupt in Bihar". Modi's speeches during the assembly polls also had references to the abrogation of Article 370 and Operation Sindoor, and the opposition was charged with "capitulation before religious extremists" for not supporting the government on Triple Talaq and Waqf laws. He also touched upon the problem of migration, which has been made a major poll issue by Jan Suraj Party founder Prashant Kishor. The PM promised that in its next innings in power, the NDA will ensure "sons of Bihar get employed on the home soil and make their motherland proud". Shah and Singh, both former BJP presidents, were, however, more blunt in their attacks on Rahul Gandhi. Home Minister addressed three rallies in the north-eastern corner of the state. Widely regarded as the BJP's principal strategist, Shah, who has often called himself "son of a bania, who knows how to keep accounts", used the analogy of a shop to berate Gandhi and asserted that the Congress leader's "dukaan" will be shut after the drubbing in Bihar assembly polls. Singh, who held three election meetings in south-western extreme of Bihar, called into question Gandhi's pro-Dalit stance, saying had he been so concerned about empowerment of SCs and STs, he would have offered the post of Leader of Opposition to someone from these deprived sections.

DDA scheme: Over 1,000 flats booked...

LG reiterated the importance of expanding such initiatives to meet the housing aspirations of all sections of society. The Jan Sadharan Awaas Yojana Phase II carries forward the strong legacy of Phase I, which had set new benchmarks in DDA's affordable housing segment. Phase I, launched in September 2025, had offered around 1,200 affordable category flats across well-connected residential areas of the city. "The scheme received an exceptional response, with all units being booked on the very first day of opening, reflecting the high public demand and trust in DDA's housing initiatives. Phase II of the Jan Sadharan Awaas Yojana offers approximately 1,500 flats under the LIG and EWS categories, located across key areas of Delhi, including Shivaji Marg, Ramgarh Colony, Rohini, and Narela," the Authority said. "These locations have been carefully selected to combine affordability with accessibility, ensuring that residents benefit from improved connectivity, essential amenities, and planned urban infrastructure. With transparent online booking and public-friendly procedures, the DDA continues to uphold its mission of ensuring "Housing for All" while promoting balanced and sustainable urban growth," it said. A DDA official said that the authority's website faced heavy traffic for six hours due to the bookings under the scheme. "For helping the public in booking their flats, DDA is increasing the capacity of servers to handle the surge in traffic," he said.



Meghwal hails Constitution framers for free legal aid



Union Law Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal lauded the farsightedness of the framers of the Constitution on Saturday for making a provision for free legal aid. He also said justice delivery should not be considered just as a sovereign task but also a citizen-centric service.

Minimum temperature to go down across Bengal: IMD

The IMD on Saturday forecast a fall in minimum temperature by 2 to 4 degrees Celsius across West Bengal during next four days as dry weather will prevail over all the districts. It said that shallow to moderate fog will occur in sub-Himalayan districts of West Bengal on Sunday in the morning hours.



Om Birla inaugurates Bundi Mahotsav with rituals



Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla inaugurates three-day Bundi Mahotsav 2025 which began on Saturday with the worship of Lord Ganesh at the entrance of the historic Taragarh Palace, followed by a series of cultural and traditional events.

Sanitation workers' protest enters 100th day in Chennai

The protest by the Greater Chennai Corporation sanitation workers against privatisation of solid waste management and demanding job regularisation entered its hundredth day on Saturday. The workers who are against the privatisation of solid waste management in Royapuram and Thiru Vi Ka Nagar areas have also been demanding that the civic authorities reinstate the workers removed from service.



SC ensured no interference in economic policy matters: CJI

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Judiciary has been a steady guardian of the rule of law, Chief Justice of India BR Gavai said on Saturday while emphasising that the apex court has ensured it does not interfere in the policy matters of economic considerations unless there is a violation of fundamental rights or other provisions of the Constitution.

Speaking at the Sixth Full Meeting of the Standing International Forum of Commercial Courts, he said in commercial and corporate matters, the Supreme court has been vigilant in ensuring transparency and integrity, rejecting attempts to misuse legal or corporate structures for fraudulent gain.

"The Supreme Court has ensured that it does not interfere in the policy matters which have economic considerations involved unless there is a violation of fundamental rights or other provisions of the Constitution."

"Similarly, the Court has reaffirmed that any interpretation of a commercial statute must be in consonance with the legislative intent while maintaining fairness and public interest," the CJI said. Gavai said the Supreme Court has consistently upheld the delicate balance between economic freedom, regulatory discipline, and fairness.

"It has reinforced that the power of the State, particularly in matters of taxation and



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Chief Justice of India BR Gavai during the inauguration of national conference on strengthening legal aid delivery mechanisms at the Supreme Court in New Delhi

regulation, must rest on a clear statutory foundation and operate within the limits of the Constitution.

"The Court has emphasized that while regulatory bodies must preserve financial stability and public confidence, their measures must always be proportionate and reasonable," he said.

"In commercial and corporate matters, the Court has been vigilant in ensuring transparency and integrity, rejecting attempts to misuse legal or corporate structures for fraudulent gain."

"It has underscored that the discipline of timely resolution and accountability is vital for the health of the financial system, while also recognising that commerce must ultimately serve human welfare and social justice," he said.

The CJI said across diverse areas, such as corporate governance, insolvency, arbitration, and environmental accountability, the Court's approach has been principled rather than interventionist.

Gavai said as India transitions to a digital and green

economy, commercial law must promote sustainability and ethical enterprise.

"Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) norms are not foreign imports. They resonate with Article 48A and the spirit of trusteeship in our constitutional philosophy. "Increasingly, Indian companies are integrating ESG principles in corporate reporting. This is a welcome trend, for markets function best when anchored in responsibility. Profit must be aligned with purpose," he said.

Priyanka Gandhi criticises PM Modi's katta comments in campaign

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Katihar/Bhagalpur

Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Saturday claimed that the Prime Minister Narendra Modi was not maintaining the dignity of his post by using words such as *katta* (country-made pistol) and *donali* (double-barrel gun) during the election campaign in the State. She also said that her party was now fighting the same battle against the "Modi empire" that Mahatma Gandhi once fought against the British imperialists.

"The battle that the INDIA bloc and Congress are fighting today is the same battle that Mahatma Gandhi once fought against the British imperialists. Even today, we are fighting for your rights and the truth. Even today, we are fighting against an empire, which is the Modi empire," she claimed. "Today, PM Modi runs the government in the same way. He suppresses people and divides them. The rights for which Mahatma Gandhi fought are in danger today. The most important among those rights is the right to vote," she added.

Addressing back-to-back rallies in Bihar's Katihar, Bhagalpur, and Purnea districts, Vadra claimed, Vadra alleged that on the one hand, the PM was hailing 'Vande Mataram', which stood for non-violence, on the other, he was using words like *katta* and *donali*



Congress General Secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra addressing a rally for Bihar Assembly elections in Purnia district

at public rallies.

"Though they commemorated the 150th anniversary of the national song, at one point in time in history, the BJP and RSS were reluctant to sing Vande Mataram, which was a song of the Independence movement and signifies the nation's unity," she claimed. The Wayanad MP claimed that the "BJP's nationalism is fake" as they only talk about it when elections approach.

"Their Agnipath scheme has demotivated the youth of Bihar who once prepared for being recruited in the army with a lot of rigour and nationalistic fervour," she claimed.

Vadra also criticised the NDA government, alleging that it has failed to provide employment to the youth and was handing over all public sector undertakings to Modi's "two corporate friends".

"We want to reserve

2,000 acres of land for industries and the education sector in Bihar, unlike the NDA government that has given large tracts of land to Adani at Re 1," she said. Vadra accused the NDA of keeping numerous Government posts vacant and "closing all avenues of employment". "A decade has passed since PM Modi promised 2 crore jobs to Indian youth, and recently, he said he will give 1 crore jobs to the people of Bihar. Why did he not give these jobs in the last decade," she asked.

"The NDA leaders keep talking about the seven decades of Congress rule in India. They should know that Congress governments of the past built institutes like IITs, IIMs and AIIMS," she said. Vadra alleged that, on the contrary, PM Modi has devised a new type of politics based on religion, wherein politicians don't have to work.

ED ATTACHES ₹21 CRORE ASSETS OF KARNATAKA MLA SATISH KRISHNA

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Saturday said it has attached assets worth ₹21 crore of Karnataka Congress MLA Satish Krishna Sail as part of a money laundering investigation against him linked to a case of alleged illegal export of iron ore.

A provisional order was issued under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) on November 6 and the attached properties belong to Sail, who holds these assets through his Goa-based company named Shree Mallikarjun shipping Pvt Ltd. (SMSPL), the ED said in a statement.

The 59-year-old legislator from the Karwar assembly seat in Uttara Kannada was arrested by the federal probe agency in September.

He later obtained an interim bail on medical grounds which, the ED said, has been cancelled by a special PMLA court on Friday.

The attached properties include 12,500 square metres of open land in Chicalim Village, Mormugao in Goa, 16,850 square metres of agricultural property known as "Pedro Galle Cotta" located in Mormugao Taluk (south Goa) and multiple floors of a commercial building situated at Vasco Da Gama in Goa bearing a current market value of about ₹64 crore, it said.

The book value of these properties is ₹21 crore, according to the ED.

Bihar's mood signals NDA comeback: CM Mohan Yadav

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Patna

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav on Saturday addressed a series of rallies across Bihar, declaring that public enthusiasm clearly reflected a returning wave for the NDA. Speaking in Belhar, Pipra and Bodh Gaya, Yadav said the "pulse of the people" suggested the alliance was on course to form the next government in the heartland state.

Yadav urged voters to stay active until polling day on November 11, saying every

vote would shape Bihar's future. "Delhi has Modi ji and Bihar has Nitish Kumar," he told cheering crowds, adding that citizens must not become complacent before the final vote is cast. Taking aim at Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, Yadav said the opposition had "accepted defeat even before the battle began". He claimed Gandhi's absence from the campaign trail showed that he had "abandoned Bihar's election for a holiday in Pachmarhi".

Highlighting development under Prime Minister Narendra



Modi, Yadav said the NDA government had worked for farmers, soldiers, women and youth, transforming India into

a "new nation where terrorists no longer find refuge".

He praised Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar for main-

taining law and order and advancing infrastructure, describing the NDA as a "double engine government" driving rapid progress.

Calling on voters to "teach a lesson" to those who insult Bihar's culture, Yadav said Gandhi's remarks about Chhath Puja reflected disrespect. "On polling day, your finger will be the Sudarshan Chakra," he said.

Yadav concluded that only within the NDA could a tea seller rise to become Prime Minister and a common man like him serve as Chief Minister.

World recognising Jain lifestyle: VP

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Vice President CP Radhakrishnan on Saturday said the Jain lifestyle of vegetarianism is recognised worldwide as a model of environmental responsibility and that he turned vegetarian over two decades ago.

Addressing an event to mark the 8th 180 'Upvas Parna' ceremony of Jain Acharya Hansratna Surishwar here, the vice president said ahimsa, as

propagated by Jain spiritual leaders, is the way to bring world peace.

"The Jain lifestyle of vegetarianism, compassion towards animals and sustainable living is recognised worldwide as a model of environmental responsibility," Radhakrishnan said.

He said he was fond of non-vegetarian food, but quit it in 2000 after a visit to Kashi.

Following the practice of foregoing something one likes the most before taking a holy dip in the Ganga, he

gave up non-vegetarian food, he said. "When you are taking non-vegetarian food, it is different. When you are taking vegetarian (food), your mindset is entirely different. That is. My experience," the VP said.

"The aggression has gone, patience has come in and arrogance is gone...," he said.

Talking about the inner strength required for fasting, Radhakrishnan said he was astonished to know that Prime Minister Narendra Modi fasts on all nine days during Navratri.

PM Modi flags off four new Vande Bharat Express trains connecting major cities

CYRIL SAM
■ Bengaluru/Ernakulam

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday flagged off four new Vande Bharat Express trains connecting major commercial and religious cities while cutting travel times. The new services were inaugurated along the Banaras-Khajuraho, the Lucknow-Saharanpur, the Firozpur-Delhi and the Ernakulam-Bengaluru routes, expanding India's network of semi-high-speed trains.

The PM flagged off the Banaras-Khajuraho Vande Bharat from Varanasi at 8.30 am, while virtually inaugurating the others. Speaking at the inauguration, the PM said, "Infrastructure has played an important role in the development of most nations. The development of a city begins on its own as soon as it gets better connectivity. Infrastructure is not limited to huge bridges and highways. These trains not only connect heritage cities but also accelerate development. Trains like Vande Bharat, Namoh Bharat, and Amrit Bharat are laying

the foundation for the next generation of Indian Railways"

In Kerala, the inaugural run of the Ernakulam - Bengaluru Vande Bharat was attended by Governor of Kerala Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar, Union Minister of State for petroleum, natural gas and tourism Suresh Gopi, Kerala's Minister for industries, law and coir P Rajeev, Ernakulam MP Hibi Eden among others.

This is the third Vande Bharat in Kerala and will connect the State to commercial centers in Tamil Nadu and Karnataka. Currently, Kerala has two Vande Bharat trains on the Thiruvananthapuram-Kasaragod route and the Thiruvananthapuram-Mangaluru routes. These are among the most profitable routes for southern railways in the State.

The newly launched train will reduce travel time between Ernakulam and Bengaluru by about two hours. It will depart Ernakulam junction daily at 2.20 pm (except

Wednesdays) and reach Bengaluru KSR at 11 pm. It will stop at Thrissur, Palakkad, Coimbatore, Tiruppur, Erode, Salem, Jolarpettai and Krishnarajapuram before terminating at Bengaluru KSR. By comparison, the fastest train on this route, the Bengaluru-Ernakulam Superfast Express, currently takes 11 hours.

Speaking at the inauguration, Governor Arlekar said, "Vande Bharat trains define how rail transport can be."

We have the largest rail network but we need to improve it everyday to achieve the status of a developed nation. Vande Bharat trains are another step in that direction."

The train will serve as an important link between the textile hub in Coimbatore, Tiruppur, Erode and the commercial cities of Bengaluru and Ernakulam. A train along this route has been a long-standing demand of the State. Speaking before the inauguration, all the dignitaries reiterated how the State has made various representations to the Centre



Security personnel keeping vigil as a new Vande Bharat train leaves the Ernakulam South railway station following its virtual flag-off by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Ernakulam, Kerala

and have even raised the issue - of connecting the State to Bengaluru - in the Parliament.

"The latest Vande Bharat train not only connects two major economic centres but will also boost tourism and

sustainability," MoS Gopi added. Vande Bharat trains are semi-highspeed, self-propelling, Electric Multiple Units (EMUs), which aim to connect cities up to 800 km away. First introduced in February 2019, currently,

there are 80 such trains. Seen as a successor to Shatabdi Express trains, these trains are expected to replace the former in the coming years.

The Banaras-Khajuraho Vande Bharat will save

about 2 hours 40 minutes compared to the special trains currently in operation.

It will connect some of India's most revered religious and cultural destinations, including Varanasi,

THE PM FLAGGED OFF THE BANARAS-KHAJURAH VAND E BHARAT FROM VARANASI AT 8.30 AM, WHILE VIRTUALLY INAUGURATING THE OTHERS

Prayagraj, Chitrakoot, and Khajuraho. While the Lucknow-Saharanpur Vande Bharat will save nearly 1 hour of travel time. The Lucknow-Saharanpur Vande Bharat Express will benefit passengers from Lucknow, Sitapur, Shahjahanpur, Bareilly, Moradabad, Bijnor and Saharanpur, while also improving access to the holy city of Haridwar via Roorkee.

The Firozpur-Delhi Vande Bharat will be the fastest train on this route, completing the journey in just 6 hours 40 minutes. The Firozpur-Delhi Vande Bharat Express will strengthen connectivity between the national capital and key cities in Punjab, including Firozpur, Bathinda, and Patiala.

■ States Focus ■



CM KHANDU ENHANCES DORJEE KHANDU MERIT SCHOLARSHIP

Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu on Saturday announced a major enhancement of the Dorjee Khandu merit scholarship, while inaugurating the academic and administrative blocks at a college in Tawang. The chief minister said the scholarship amount, instituted in memory of his father, has been increased from ₹35,000, ₹23,000, and ₹15,000 for the first, second, and third positions respectively, to ₹5 lakh, ₹3 lakh, and ₹2 lakh from the current academic year. “This is our way of encouraging academic excellence and honouring the legacy of Karamveer Dorjee Khandu,” he said.



MAN KILLED IN ELEPHANT ATTACK IN CHHATTISGARH

A 36-year-old man was trampled to death by a wild elephant in Chhattisgarh’s Korba district, a forest official said on Saturday. The incident took place on the intervening night of Friday and Saturday at Botli village under Kartala forest range, Korba Divisional Forest Officer Premrata Yadav said. A tusker attacked Shivnarayan Rathia and crushed him, killing him on the spot, she said.

Centre invested ₹21,000 crore in Northeast education: Sitharaman

TONY DAS
■ Guwahati

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Saturday claimed that the Central Government has invested ₹21,000 crore in the education sector in the Northeast in the last 11 years. Connectivity has also received a boost in the region during the period, with new states put on the railway map and several greenfield airports constructed, she added.

Sitharaman, who was on a two-day visit to Assam since Friday, was speaking after laying the foundation stone for the State’s first university focussed on technical and vocational education and training at Bholaguri in Gohpur in Biswanath district. The ‘Swahid Kanaklata Barua State University’ will be built at a cost of ₹415 crore on a total area of 241 acres, with a built-up area of 7 lakh sq ft.

“Since 2014, the Centre has invested ₹21,000 crore in the education sector in the Northeast. Over 850 new schools have been opened. The first AIIMS in the region has become operational, and over 200 new skill development institutes have been operationalised. The country’s first sports university is also coming up in the region,” Sitharaman said. In Assam alone, 15 new medical colleges have been built, while South Asia’s largest cancer care centre is coming up in the state and the state will also soon have the region’s second IIM, she added. “To boost the education sector, the Centre is working in coordination with the state Governments of the region,” the Union



Union Minister of Finance Nirmala Sitharaman along with Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma is performing Bhumi Puja to mark the auspicious beginning of Kanaklata Barua State University at Bholaguri in Gohpur on Saturday

PIONEER PHOTO

minister said. Besides developing roads, bridges and tunnels, the Centre is also working on the aviation and railway sectors in the region, Sitharaman said. She said that in the last 11 years, 10 new greenfield airports have been built in the region. Manipur and Meghalaya have been added to the country’s railway map for the first time during this period, she added.

Paying tributes to freedom fighter Kanaklata Barua, Sitharaman said, “At the age of 17 years, when she should have been entering a university to study, she sacrificed her life for the nation to keep our national flag high.

A university in her name

should have come up a long time ago.” Barua was a member of the *Mrityu Bahini* during the freedom struggle and was killed in police firing while leading a procession to hoist the national flag at Gohpur police station on September 20, 1942, during the Quit India Movement.

Union Finance Minister said that while conserving the Gohpur police station or building a memorial there will attract people, the university in her name will inspire generations of youth, and lauded the initiative as a step in the right direction.

She maintained that it was a privilege for her to lay the foundation stone of a varsity dedicated to the

memory of Barua and exhorted the youth who will enroll to carry in them the essence of deep patriotism that Barua and other freedom fighters of the area embodied.

The University will offer courses in various technology domains, including artificial intelligence and machine learning, cybersecurity, blockchain, drone and navigation technology, quantum computing, brain computer interface, internet of things, and smart cities and smart environments.

It will feature academic blocks for 2,000 students, hostels for 1,620 students, residential quarters, a guest house and a student facility centre.

Rahul should have appointed SC, ST or minority leader as LoP: Rajnath

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Sasaram/Bhabua

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Saturday said that Congress leader Rahul Gandhi should have made someone from the SC, ST or minority communities the leader of opposition of Lok Sabha if he is really concerned about them.

Addressing back-to-back rallies in Rohtas and Kaimur districts, Singh dismissed Gandhi’s allegation of ‘vote chori’ as “baseless”, and said he should approach the Election Commission if he has a complaint with evidence.

“If Rahul Gandhi is really concerned about Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes or minority communities, he should have given the post of leader of opposition in Lok Sabha to someone from these communities,” Singh said.

Gandhi became the leader



of opposition in Lok Sabha after the 2024 polls.

“If Rahul Gandhi thinks that votes are being stolen in Bihar, he should file a complaint with the EC. He is not doing that; he is simply levelling baseless allegations against a constitutional body. He is simply lying,” he alleged.

Singh alleged that Congress creates rift among the people over caste, creed and religion, as it believes in “divisive politics”.

“Rahul Gandhi is raising the issue of reservation in the defence forces. Our defence forces are above all these. He should not drag them into politics,” he said.

ED attaches ₹67.03 crore properties of banned PFI

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has attached eight immovable properties — some used as terror camps — worth ₹67.03 crore of banned Popular Front of India (PFI). The properties were held in the name of various trusts and that of its political front — Social Democratic Party of India (SDPI).

The properties include places where multiple physical education training programmes were being imparted to carry out violent and terrorist activities in India to achieve the goal of forming an Islamic Nation of India.

Earlier, ED had attached the movable and immovable properties valued at ₹61.98 crore. The total attachments in this case, including the present attachment of ₹67.03 crore, amounts to ₹129 crore.

The agency started probe against PFI and others under

PMLA, 2002 on the basis of FIR registered by NIA, along with various FIRs registered by other law enforcement agencies against PFI and others.

“Investigation revealed that the office bearers, members and cadres of PFI, were conspiring and raising/collecting funds from within India and abroad through banking channels, Hawala, donations etc. for committing and financing terrorist acts across India,” the agency said in a statement.

Further, investigation has revealed that SDPI is a political front of PFI and PFI used to control, fund and supervise the activities of SDPI.

SDPI was majorly dependent on PFI for its day-to-day functions, policy making, selecting candidates for election, public programs, cadre mobilization and other related activities.

Additionally, investigation has also revealed that the expenses made by PFI for and on behalf of SDPI, were maintained in the

dairies secretly and not reflected in the bank accounts of PFI.

Funds have been collected extensively by PFI and SDPI from foreign countries mainly gulf countries and also locally in the garb of relief and social activities.

“The proceeds were used for furtherance of criminal conspiracy to carry out violent and terrorist activities in India to achieve the goal of forming an Islamic Nation of India, jeopardising our secular fabric and disrupting the Unity and Integrity of the nation,” the agency said.

Investigation by ED has led to the quantification of Proceeds of Crime (POC) to the tune of ₹131 Crore, so far.

So far 28 leaders, members and cadres of PFI have been arrested by ED and multiple Prosecution Complaints in this regard have been filed before Hon’ble Courts.

The arrestees include National President of SDPI MK. Faizy, the Chairman,

General Secretary, office bearers, and members of both the National and State Executive Councils (NEC & SEC) of the PFI, as well as Physical Education (PE) Coordinators and Trainers who were providing weapons training to the PFI members and cadres.

During probe, ED found that PFI ideologues were ex-Students Islamic Movement of India (SIMI) members. SIMI was the student’s wings of Jamaat-e-Islami. The history of origin of PFI can be traced back to the ban of Jamaat-e-Islami after the demolition of Babri Masjid.

At that time, properties of Jamaat-e-Islami were attached and sealed under UA(PA).

Taking inspiration from these developments senior PFI members who were part of National Development Front (NDF) at that time, deliberately formed various trusts all across Kerala and registered various properties owned and controlled by PFI under them.

being made on an issue that was already addressed promptly.”

Officials described the incident as a case of negligence rather than deliberate misconduct but stressed that accountability would be fixed at every level. The Education Department has sought a comprehensive report from all districts within 48 hours to verify the implementation of mid-day meal hygiene norms statewide.

The episode has reignited debate over the management of welfare schemes in rural areas. While the opposition has accused the state of administrative indifference, Government officials insist their response was swift and corrective measures were taken before the controversy escalated.

The Sheopur administration said the situation has since normalised and that meals are now being served in proper utensils under close supervision.

THE STATE CONGRESS CHIEF ALLEGED THAT PARTH PAWAR’S COMPANY, AMEDEA, EARLIER GRABBED GOVERNMENT LAND BELONGING TO THE AGRICULTURE DAIRY AT BOPODI IN PUNE

belonging to the Agriculture Dairy at Bopodi in Pune, using forged documents”.

In another serious allegation, Sapkal said that Union Minister Murlidhar Mohol of the BJP had grabbed the Jain Boarding land in Pune. “Once the matter came to light, the transaction was cancelled, but the issue is far from over. The Charity Commissioner involved in the case is a relative of Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis — what action was taken against him?”, Sapkal asked.

Demanding a white paper on the questionable land deals in Mumbai and Pune where plots worth crores were allegedly “being grabbed at throwaway prices”, Sapkal said: “In Mumbai, hundreds of acres of land was given away free to Adani. Government land was also allotted for the BJP’s Mumbai office. Fadnavis’ protégé Mohit Kamboj has been granted SRA land.

“A massive scam has taken place in Pune’s ring road land acquisition, and people deserve to know who really prospered from the Samruddhi Mahamarg project. Hence, a white paper on all land transactions must be published,” Sapkal said.

Charging that the BJP-led Mahayuti Government was “thick-skinned and shameless” to the core, the State Congress chief said: “Every day a new scam surfaces, yet no action is taken. People in power and their relatives have set out to loot the state”.

ED BUSTS IMMORAL TRAFFICKING RACKET IN BENGAL

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Enforcement Directorate carried out raids and dismantled an organised immoral trafficking racket operating primarily through bar-cum-restaurants and dance bars in the state of West Bengal.

During the probe, ED had found the accused were involved in the exploitation of vulnerable women through false promises of employment and coercion into prostitution and thereby generating substantial illicit Proceeds of Crime. The accused persons identified as part of this racket include Jagjit Singh, Ajmal Siddiqui, Bishnu Mundra and their associates.

The agency initiated probe based upon multiple FIRs registered under various sections of the IPC, 1860, Arms Act, 1959 and Immoral Traffic Prevention Act, 1986 which constitute scheduled offences under PMLA, 2002 and charge sheets filed by the West Bengal Police, against various accused persons including Singh, Siddiqui, Mundra and others. During probe, the agency sleuths found that an organised trafficking and prostitution racket is being operated by the above-named persons primarily through bar-cum-restaurants owned or controlled by them.

The accused persons exploit vulnerable women under false employment promises and coerce them into prostitution for generating substantial proceed of crime. These illicit funds, acquired in cash, amounting to several crores, are being laundered through multiple companies under their control. “During the searches, cash worth over ₹1.01 crore and digital devices have been seized along with various property documents. A number of bank account details under use and operation of the accused/suspect persons have been identified,” the ED said in a statement.

Chandrayaan-2 data helps ISRO study moon’s poles

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Bengaluru

ISRO on Saturday said it has collected advanced data from the Chandrayaan-2 lunar orbiter to gain a deeper understanding of the Moon’s polar regions, including parameters describing the physical and dielectric properties of its surface. This is India’s major value addition towards future global exploration of the Moon, it said.

According to an ISRO statement, the Chandrayaan-2 Orbiter has been in orbit around the Moon since 2019 and has been providing high-quality data.

One of the payloads, the Dual Frequency Synthetic Aperture Radar (DFSAR), is the first instrument that has mapped the Moon using the L-band in full-polarimetric mode and in the highest resolution (25m/pixel).

This advanced radar mode sends and receives signals in

both vertical and horizontal directions, making it ideal for studying surface properties, it said.

The space agency said that since its launch, about 1,400 radar datasets have been collected and processed to create polarimetric mosaics of the north and south polar regions (80 to 90 degrees latitude) of the Moon.

“Using the datasets, scientists from the Space Applications Centre (SAC), Ahmedabad, have developed advanced data products on the potential presence of water-ice, surface roughness, as well as an important electrical property, namely the dielectric constant, which describes features like density and porosity of the Moon’s surface,” it said.

The algorithm for analysing the full-polarimetric data has been developed, and the data products have been generated indigenously by ISRO, the space agency said.

PM, CM should be ashamed: Rahul on MP midday meal video

GIRISH SHARMA
■ Bhopal

A video showing school-children eating mid-day meals served on newspapers in Madhya Pradesh’s Sheopur district has triggered a political storm after Rahul Gandhi’s tweet condemning the incident, even as the State Government claimed it had already acted before his remarks.

The clip, reportedly filmed in Hullapur village, showed primary school students eating rice and lentils laid out on sheets of newspaper instead of clean utensils. The footage went viral on November 4, prompting criticism from parents, locals, and social media users. On Saturday morning, Leader of the Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi shared the video on X (formerly Twitter), tagging Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister Mohan Yadav, and writing that both “should be ashamed.” His

post quickly gained traction, turning the issue into a national talking point.

However, the Madhya Pradesh Government maintained that prompt action had already been taken well before Rahul Gandhi’s tweet. Officials said the Sheopur district administration and the Women and Child Development Department had conducted an inquiry and cancelled the registration of the Self-Help Group (SHG) responsible for preparing and distributing the meals on November 6, two days after the video surfaced online.

According to official records, a detailed inspection by the Block Education Officer confirmed that hygiene standards had been violated.

The SHG’s contract under the mid-day meal programme was terminated immediately, and the group was barred from future Government food distribution work. The order also



directed departmental proceedings against local supervisors who failed to monitor food safety.

District Collector Arpit Verma ordered inspections across all schools in the region to ensure meals are served in proper utensils and under sanitary conditions. Officials were instructed to provide fresh replacement meals the same day to

all affected children.

Defending the state administration, Madhya Pradesh BJP media in-charge Ashish Agrawal said, “The video went viral on November 4, and by November 6, the Government had already taken action.

Rahul Gandhi’s tweet came later. It’s unfortunate that political reactions are



PROSPECT



Full flying display by Indian Air Force ahead of the main event on 9th November 2025 at Lachit Ghat,Guwahati

JSW Cement Q2 profit at ₹75.36 cr

JSW Cement Ltd has reported a profit of ₹75.36 crore for September quarter FY26, led by double-digit gain in sales volume. The company had incurred a loss of ₹75.82 crore in the July-September period a year ago, according to a regulatory filing from JSW Cement, part of the \$23 billion JSW group, on Friday.

Revenue from operations was at ₹1,436.43 crore in September quarter FY26 as against ₹1,223.71 crore a year ago. Total expenses were at ₹1,348.72 crore in the quarter. Total volume sales were at 3.11 Million Tonnes (MT) in Q2/FY26 as against 2.71 MT in the corresponding second quarter of FY25. Total income, which includes other income of the company, was at ₹1,460.06 crore in the September quarter. In the first half (H1) of FY26, total consolidated income of JSW Cement was at ₹3,041.93 crore. Total net debt was at ₹3,231 crore as on September 30, 2025. This "marks a significant reduction as against ₹4,566 crore on June 30, 2025, primarily due to receipt of the IPO proceeds," it said.

Indian Army holds medical relief, cancer awareness camps



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Kohima

On the occasion of National Cancer Awareness Day, the Indian Army organised medical relief and health awareness camps at various locations in Assam and Manipur, reaffirming its commitment to ensuring healthcare access and spreading awareness amongst local communities in remote and far-flung areas.

In Manipur, at Jalenbung Village in Kangpokpi District and Primary Health Centre (PHC) Andro in Imphal East District, the medical camp provided essential consultation, cancer awareness sessions focusing on prevention and early detection and distribution of free medicines.

More than 200 people benefited. The camp included general medical check-ups, specialised consultations, maternal and child healthcare guidance, health awareness

talks and distribution of wellness kits.

On similar lines in Assam, a special awareness programme was organised at Kakopathar Senior Secondary School, Tinsukia District, Assam to educate and sensitize students about cancer, the silent killer. The programme was attended by 50 higher secondary students and ten teachers, who actively participated in the interactive session.

A highlight of the event was a live demonstration using a bottle, cotton, a cigarette and water to simulate the harmful effects of cigarette smoke on human lungs. These outreach initiatives underscore the Indian Army's continued dedication towards strengthening community welfare, enhancing public health awareness and extending humanitarian assistance to the remotest regions, thereby reinforcing the bond between the Army and the people of the NE region.

Khattar plans cities sans waste dumpsites

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Union Minister Manohar Lal Khattar on Friday launched two flagship initiatives – the Dumpsite Remediation Accelerator Programme (DRAP) and the Urban Investment Window (UiWIN) in a major step towards building sustainable and investment-ready cities across India.

The move marks a major leap in India's urban transformation, with DRAP targeting the elimination of legacy waste dumpsites by September next year and UiWIN aiming to unlock private and multilateral investments to fuel infrastructure growth in cities, in line with the vision of 'Viksit Bharat.'

The Union Minister of Housing and Urban Affairs inaugurated DRAP, UiWIN and other key initiatives during the two-day 'National Urban Conclave 2025' in the capital.

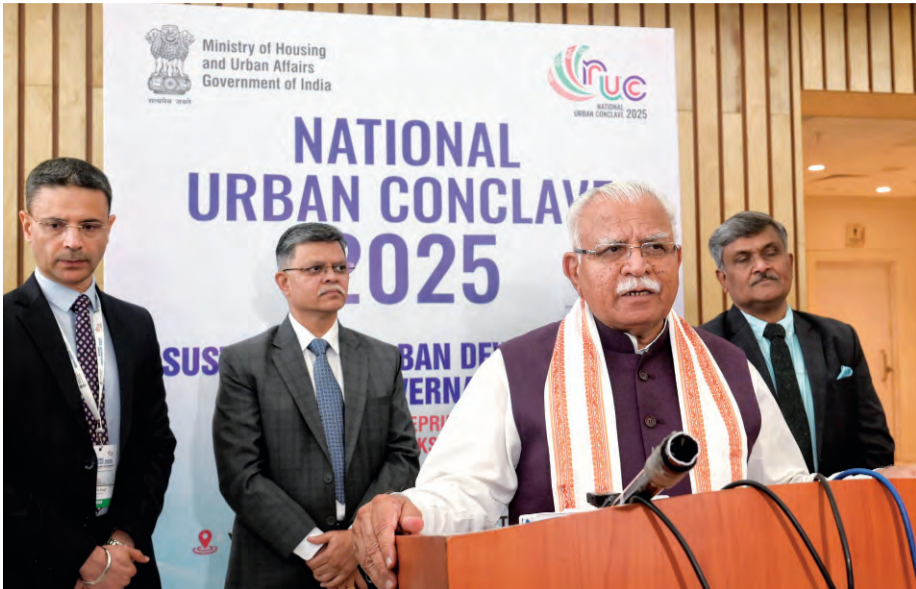
Speaking at the event, the minister highlighted that these initiatives would be

pivotal in building cleaner, greener and more liveable cities, aligning with the broader vision of 'Viksit Bharat @2047.'

He pointed out that by 2047, India's urban population will account for around 50 per cent of the total population. To cater to this growing demand, all stakeholders, including central and State Governments, private players and individuals, must collaborate and invest substantially in urban development, a critical step towards realising the dream of a 'Viksit Bharat.'

According to the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA), the two-day conclave, themed 'Sustainable Urban Development and Governance,' brought together policymakers, urban planners and experts to chart the roadmap for building future-ready, livable cities.

Under DRAP, the Centre will fast-track the remediation of remaining dumpsites across urban India in a mission-mode effort to achieve 'Lakshya Zero Dumpsites' by September



Union Minister Manohar Lal inaugurating National Urban Conclave 2025 at Yashobhoomi in New Delhi

2026. The initiative aims to reclaim valuable land for public use and community development.

Currently, 1,428 sites are under remediation, with 80 per cent of the legacy waste concentrated in 214 sites across 202 Urban Local Bodies (ULBs). DRAP will pri-

oritise these high-impact locations, which collectively hold around 8.8 crore metric tonnes of legacy waste.

The Government has allocated central financial assistance of ₹550 per tonne for waste remediation. To date, MoHUA has disbursed ₹4,181 crore for projects worth

₹10,228 crore, benefitting 2,484 ULBs across 28 States and Union Territories.

So far, 1,048 out of 2,476 dumpsites, holding about 25 crore metric tonnes of waste, have been remediated, reclaiming nearly 7,580 acres of land. The Ministry added that the Urban Investment

Window (UiWIN) would serve as a one-stop platform to attract private capital and long-term concessional funding from multilateral agencies such as the World Bank and Asian Development Bank.

UiWIN will also focus on promoting Public-Private Partnership (PPP)-based urban projects to accelerate sustainable infrastructure development.

MoHUA Secretary Srinivas Katikithala said the conclave reflects a "collective urban effort" to make Indian cities more affordable, secure and sustainable. He emphasised that India requires a cohesive "Team Urban" to fulfil the vision of a 'Viksit Bharat' by 2047, so that all initiatives and programmes can come together under one roof for timely decision-making.

The first day of the conclave also featured technical sessions on regional planning, transit-oriented development, city mobility, livelihood generation and capacity building, setting the tone for India's next phase of urban renewal.

NBCC inks pact with Pantheon Elysee Real Estate Development

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

State-owned NBCC (India) Ltd has signed an initial agreement with Pantheon Elysee Real Estate Development LLC to develop projects in the UAE. NBCC is into project management consultancy and real estate.

In a Statement on Saturday, the company announced that it has signed a broad frame work Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Pantheon Elysee Real Estate Development LLC, a prominent real estate player based in Dubai, UAE. This partnership solidifies NBCC's commitment to strengthening its presence in the Middle East construction landscape. The MoU was signed by Pradeep Sharma, ED (Engg)

and Ali Abusafieh, Legal Director, Pantheon Elysee Real Estate Development LLC, in the presence of NBCC CMD K P Mahadevaswamy.

Under the terms of the MoU, NBCC and Pantheon will collaborate on the execution of high-quality residential, hospitality and mixed-use real estate projects across the United Arab Emirates.

They intend to develop the projects worth Dh 3 billion, the Statement said.

The collaboration will leverage NBCC's six decades of engineering excellence and project management expertise alongside Pantheon's robust local development portfolio.

NBCC has completed the India Pavilion in Dubai for the Dubai Expo 2020 at a cost of \$46.8 million.



CM Conrad K Sangma inspecting the ongoing works at the PA Sangma Integrated Sports Complex, Tura and also checked the progress of the indoor stadium and the indoor swimming pool

Gold prices drop for 3rd week as dollar gains

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Gold prices extended losses for the third consecutive week as a strong US dollar and cautious remarks from Federal Reserve officials weighed on investor sentiment, analysts said.

The sustained firmness in the dollar and a wait-and-watch approach from the US Federal Reserve have dampened demand for the safe-haven asset, keeping bullion prices in a narrow trading range through the holiday-shortened week, they added.

On the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX), gold futures for December delivery slipped by ₹165, or 0.14 per cent, during the past week, to settle at ₹1,21,067 per 10 grams on Friday.

The yellow metal largely hovered near ₹1.21 lakh per 10-gram level, which is still about ₹11,000 below its October 17 peak of ₹1.32 lakh

per 10 grams. In the international market, Comex gold futures for December delivery rose by \$13.3, or 0.33 per cent, in the past week. It had settled at \$4,009.8 per ounce on Friday.

Analysts said the metal started the week firm, briefly trading above the \$4,000 mark before a stronger dollar dragged prices lower. Renewed risk-aversion in the mid-week provided limited support, helping gold trim its losses.

"Gold traded in a tight consolidation range through the week. While bargain-buying emerged on mid-week dips, the strong directional momentum that was visible in October has tapered.

"The market currently appears to be in a pause-and-assess phase, with participants waiting for clearer cues from the US dollar and Treasury yields before committing to larger positions," Chirag Doshi, CIO of Fixed



Income Assets, LGT Wealth India, said.

NS Ramaswamy, Head of Commodity and CRM, Ventura said, "Gold prices continue to remain firm, supported by a softer US dollar and expectations of another Federal Reserve rate cut.

"The dollar index has been lodged within the trading range of 98-99-100 since August," he said, adding that

a softer dollar could provide near-term relief for bullion.

Ramaswamy pointed out that the prolonged US Government shutdown, entering the second month, has delayed the release of key economic reports of employment and inflation data, creating a 'data vacuum' and heightening uncertainty.

"Private reports indicate signs of weakness in the

labour market, leading the Federal Reserve to ease policy rates sooner than believed. Lower interest rates tend to support gold," he said.

According to Chirag Doshi, a stronger dollar and higher yields initially weighed on precious metals. Renewed risk aversion later in the week lent some support.

"A key negative catalyst came from China, which reduced its VAT exemption on certain retail gold purchases, likely cooling physical demand sentiment in Asia," Doshi said.

Silver underperforms as industrial sentiment softens amid global slowdown fears: Silver prices also eased during the week, reflecting a similar consolidation seen in the yellow metal.

On the MCX, the white metal futures for December delivery declined by ₹559, or 0.38 per cent, in the holiday-shortened week. It had closed at ₹1,47,728 per

kilogram on Friday.

Comex silver futures for December delivery edged lower last week. It had settled at \$48.14 an ounce on Friday.

"Silver continued to exhibit high-beta behaviour, moving more sharply than gold on both upswings and pullbacks," said Doshi, adding that "short bursts of festive and industrial demand triggered quick rallies, but these were often met with equally fast profit-taking, indicating that short-term traders are driving price action, rather than long-term investors building strategic positions". He added that exchange-traded funds (ETF) outflows have removed a key cushion, making domestic prices more sensitive to global fluctuations.

"However, because the rupee remained weak, the downside in MCX prices was limited—resulting in consolidation rather than a sharp correction," Doshi said.

Ayurveda health camp held in Tihar Jail

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Peoples' Foundation, a Delhi-NCR based social trust working in the field of Holistic Health, in collaboration with All India Institute of Ayurveda, Govt of India, New Delhi organised an Ayurved based Mega Health Camp and Medicine distribution in central jail number 3, Tihar jail.

The day-long camp was held for extensive health checkup and free medicine distribution to inmates and staff was inaugurated by SBK Singh, IPS, Director General of prisons, Delhi.

Before opening the camp, the DG also inaugurated - Ausadhi Udayan- a garden of medicinal plants - arranged by jail authorities and AIIA.

Speaking on the occasion, the DG said that Ayurveda was best suited to the overall maintenance of health



and lifestyle disorders without any side effects. He praised the joint initiative of AIIA and the Peoples' Foundation and Pramod Gupta, superintendent of jail number 3 for organising such noble initiative for the welfare of inmates. Pankaj Kumar, IAS, AIG (Prisons) and DIG Kuldeep Singh were also present during the inauguration ceremony.

VN Jha, President of the Peoples' Foundation said that their organisation was committed to spread benefits and message of science of Ayurveda to large masses of Indian society. Peoples' Foundation has been organising health camps in Tihar jail for last 4 years.

A large pharmacy was set up and managed by the staff of AIIA, volunteers and coordinators of the Peoples' Foundation. SBK Singh, DG (prisons) too presented mementos to senior doctors in his office.

Assam rifles strengthens operational readiness through drone integration training

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Guwahati

A focused training programme on drone integration and operations was recently organised to enhance the operational readiness of Assam Rifles personnel. The initiative aimed at strengthening the use of Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS) for surveillance, reconnaissance and real-time situational awareness in field conditions.

The training included modules on mission planning, data interpretation and drone handling techniques, enabling participants to develop greater technical proficiency and adaptability. The course also emphasised the importance of precision, safety and coordinated teamwork during aerial operations.

The initiative reflects Assam Rifles' commitment to embracing modern technology as a force multiplier in its mission of ensuring peace, stability and security across the North



East. Through continued emphasis on skill development and innovation, the Force continues to evolve in line with emerging operational demands.

By investing in such forward-looking training programmes, Assam Rifles reaffirms its dedication to maintaining high professional standards and operational excellence, while remaining steadfast in its role as the "Sentinels of the North East."

FROM THE

WORLD

BRAZIL

Bolsonaro's appeal rejected

The majority of justices on Brazil's Supreme Court panel reviewing former President Jair Bolsonaro's appeal rejected his request on Friday. Justice Alexandre de Moraes, the case's rapporteur, rejected all defense arguments, calling them "unfeasible," and said there were no omissions in the sentencing. Justices Flávio Dino and Cristiano Zanin concurred with De Moraes. The vote of Justice Cármen Lúcia is still pending, but she is expected to align with the other panel members. The panel has until November 14 to submit their votes, and the decision won't be finalized until then. Although unlikely, justices could change their votes before then. Bolsonaro was convicted in September of attempting a coup following his 2022 electoral defeat and was sentenced to 27 years and three months in prison.

TAIWAN

Hsiao calls for closer EU ties

Taiwan's deputy leader urged the European Union to boost security and trade ties with the self-governing island and support its democracy in the face of growing threats by China. "Peace in the Taiwan Strait is essential to global stability and economic continuity," Vice President Bi-Khim Hsiao told lawmakers assembled for a China-focused conference in the European Parliament building. While Hsiao did not formally address the whole EU Parliament – the European trade bloc does not have formal diplomatic relations with Taiwan – her visit drew ire from China. "In an era marked by increasing fragmentation and rising authoritarianism, this gathering affirms something vital – that democracies, even when far apart, are not alone," she added to a standing ovation in Parliament.

Russian drone strike in Ukraine kills 4

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Kyiv

A Russian drone slammed into a tower block in eastern Ukraine early on Saturday while many were sleeping, killing four and injuring 12 people, Ukrainian authorities reported. The attack in Dnipro, Ukraine's fourth-largest city, was part of a large Russian missile and drone barrage across the country that targeted energy infrastructure. In eastern Ukraine, fighting for the strategic city of Pokrovsk has reached a key stage, with both Kyiv and Moscow vying to persuade US President Donald Trump that they can win on the battlefield. Russia fired a total of 458 drones and 45 missiles, including 32 ballistic missiles. Ukrainian forces shot down and neutralised 406 drones and nine missiles, the air force said, adding that 25 locations were struck.

Authorities switched off power in several regions due to the attacks, Ukrainian Energy Minister Svitlana Grynchuk said in a post on Facebook. A fire broke out and several apartments were destroyed in the nine-story building in Dnipro, the emergency services said. Rescuers recovered the bodies of three people, and two children were among the injured. Almost four years after its all-out invasion, Russia has been pummeling Ukraine with near-daily drone and missile strikes, with many civilians killed and injured.

The Kremlin claims its only targets are linked to Kyiv's war effort. Russia's Defence



Ukrainian Emergency Service firefighters evacuating a resident following a Russian rocket attack that hit a multi-storey apartment building in Dnipro AP

Ministry asserted Saturday that the nighttime strike hit military and energy sites supplying Ukrainian forces.

Moscow and Kyiv have traded almost daily assaults on each other's energy targets as US-led diplomatic efforts to stop the nearly four-year war had no impact on the battlefield. Ukraine's long-range drone strikes on Russian refineries aim to deprive Moscow of the oil export revenue it needs to pursue the war.

Russia wants to cripple the Ukrainian power grid and deny civilians access to heat, light and running water in what Kyiv officials say is an attempt to "weaponise winter." Russian forces,

meanwhile, repelled a "massive" nighttime strike on energy facilities in the southern Volgograd region, its Gov. Andrei Bocharov said Saturday, two days after Ukraine claimed to have hit a key oil refinery there with long-range drones. Bocharov added that the strike knocked out power in parts of the region's northwest but caused no casualties. There was no immediate comment from Kyiv.

Russia's Defence Ministry said on Saturday that its forces shot down 82 Ukrainian drones during the night, including eight over the Volgograd region. Two people were injured in the neighbouring Saratov region

after a Ukrainian drone strike blew out windows in an apartment block, according to regional Governor Roman Busarin.

Pokrovsk sits along the eastern front line, part of what has been dubbed the "fortress belt" of Donetsk, a line of heavily fortified cities crucial to Ukraine's defence of the region. It could also be a key point in influencing Washington's stance and swaying the course of peace negotiations, analysts say.

Russian President Vladimir Putin claims his forces are on the cusp of winning. As a prerequisite for peace, he demands that Ukraine cede the Donbas, made up of Donetsk and neighbouring

Luhansk, one of his key war aims. Russia troops advanced near Pokrovsk and the nearby town of Myrnohrad, the Russian Defense Ministry said Saturday, claiming both were encircled. It also said Russian forces surrounded Ukrainian defenders in Kupiansk, a key railway hub in the northeastern Kharkiv region.

Kyiv did not immediately respond to Moscow's claims, which could not be independently verified. Ukrainian officials have previously acknowledged that the situation in Pokrovsk is dire. But they said there was no blockade either there or in Kupiansk, and that fighting continued.

Tanzania Govt charges hundreds with treason



Mourners gathering for the funeral of someone who died during post-electoral violence in Arusha, Tanzania FILE PHOTO

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Nairobi (Kenya)

Tanzanian authorities charged hundreds of people with treason over demonstrations around disputed polls last month, in a major escalation of political tension as the country reels from violence in which an unknown number of people were killed.

In addition to dozens criminally charged a day earlier in Dar es Salaam, dozens more face similar treason charges elsewhere in the East African country, according to numerous charge sheets that became publicly available Saturday.

Police also issued arrest warrants for some of the top opposition officials who had not yet been jailed. They include Brenda Rupia, communications director for the Chadema opposition group, as well as John Mnyika, its secretary-general.

Chadema is Tanzania's leading opposition party. Its leader, Tundu Lissu, has been jailed for several months and also faces treason charges after he urged electoral reforms ahead of voting on Oct. 29. Authorities face questions over the death toll after security forces tried to quell riots and opposition protests before and after the vote.

Chadema has claimed that more than 1,000 people were killed and that security forces were trying to hide the scale of the deaths by secretly disposing of the bodies. The Catholic Church in Tanzania has said that hundreds were likely killed. President Samia Suluhu Hassan, who automatically took office as vice president in 2021 after the death of her predecessor, took more than

97 per cent of the vote, according to an official tally.

She faced 16 candidates from smaller parties after Lissu and Luhaga Mpina, of the ACT-Wazalendo party, were barred from running.

Rights groups described a climate of repression ahead of voting. There were enforced disappearances, arbitrary arrests and extrajudicial killings, according to Amnesty International and others.

Tanzania's Government denies the allegations. The African Union said this week that its observers had concluded the election "did not comply with AU principles, normative frameworks, and other international obligations and standards for democratic elections."

AU observers reported ballot stuffing at several polling stations and cases where voters were issued multiple ballots. The environment surrounding the election was "not conducive to peaceful conduct and acceptance of electoral outcomes," the statement said.

Single-party rule has been the norm in Tanzania since the advent of multi-party politics in 1992. But Government critics point out that previous leaders tolerated opposition while maintaining a firm grip on power, whereas Hassan is accused of leading with an authoritarian style that defies youth-led democracy movements elsewhere in the region.

A version of the governing Chama cha Mapinduzi party, which maintains ties with the Communist Party of China, has ruled Tanzania since its independence from Britain in 1961, a streak that Hassan extended with her victory.

Trump administration launches 175 probes into H-1B visa abuse

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New York

The Trump administration has launched about 175 investigations into H-1B visa abuse, including lapses such as low wages, non-existent work sites and the practice of "benching" employees.

According to the US Department of Labour, the probes were part of a broader effort for the protection of American jobs.

"As part of our mission to protect American jobs, we've launched 175 investigations into H-1B abuse," the Labour Department said in a post on X Friday. It added that under the leadership of President Donald Trump and Labour Secretary Lori Chavez-DeRemer, the agency will

continue taking action to put American workers first. Chavez-DeRemer said in a post on X that the Labour Department "is using every resource at our disposal to put a stop to H-1B abuse and protect American jobs. Under the leadership of @POTUS, we'll continue to invest in our workforce and ensure high-skilled job opportunities go to American Workers FIRST!"

The Trump administration has launched a massive crackdown to check abuse in the H-1B visa programme, which is used by companies, particularly technology firms, to employ foreign workers in the US.

Indian professionals, including technology workers and physicians, are among the largest cohort of H1B visa holders. A report in

Fox News said that the Department of Labour could not provide details on the specifics of the 175 current investigations, "which account for over USD 15 million in calculated back wages to workers."

The federal department however said that it has "uncovered a bounty of concerns", with investigations finding that some foreign workers with advanced degrees are paid far less than what is promoted in a job description.

The Labour Department said this practice drives down wages for visa-holders as well as American workers, while also forcing American employees with the same qualification to accept lower wages to stay competitive, the Fox News report said.

to the fast-growing Eastern China Region, which also includes the AI hub of Hangzhou and trading hubs of Yiwu and Keqiao, the textile capital of China, he told . IndiGo will begin its daily flights from Delhi to Guangzhou from November 10. The airline has formally kicked off the resumption of flights on October 26, operating the Kolkata to Guangzhou flight.

The flight services between the two sides were suspended following the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. They were not restored in view of the over-four-year border face-off in eastern Ladakh, which ended in October last year.

Philippines prepares for new storm

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Dak Lak

Typhoon Kalmaegi brought fierce winds and torrential rains to Vietnam, killing at least five people, flattening homes, blowing off roofs and uprooting trees.

In the Philippines, where the storm left at least 204 dead earlier in the week, survivors wept over the coffins of their loved ones and braced for another typhoon. As the storm moved on, recovery work began in battered towns and villages in both coun-

tries. Across Vietnamese, people cleared debris and repaired roofs on their homes. Jimmy, who lost his wife and nine close relatives after the typhoon unleashed flooding in the province of Cebu, was overwhelmed with sorrow and guilt as he ran his palm over his wife's casket.

"I was able to swim. I told my family to swim, you will be saved," said Abatayo, 53, pausing and then breaking into tears.

"They did not hear what I said because I would never see them again."

No US officials to attend G-20 summit: Trump

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New York/Washington

US President Donald Trump said it is a "total disgrace" that the G20 will be held in South Africa later this month, announcing that no American official will attend the Summit as long as "human rights abuses" against the ethnic minority group of Afrikaners continue in the country.

Earlier this week, Trump had announced that he would not be attending the G20 Summit in South Africa, as he questioned the country's membership in the grouping of major economies. "It is a total disgrace that the G20 will be held in South Africa. Afrikaners (People who are descended from Dutch settlers, and also French and German immigrants) are being killed and slaughtered, and their land and farms are being illegally confiscated,"



Trump said in a post on Truth Social on Friday.

"No US Government Official will attend as long as these Human Rights abuses continue. I look forward to hosting the 2026 G20 in Miami, Florida!" he added.

In February this year, just weeks after being sworn in as US President for a second term, Trump issued an order condemning South Africa's

"shocking disregard" of its citizens' rights by enacting legislation that enabled the South African Government to seize ethnic minority Afrikaners' agricultural property without compensation.

In the wake of this, Trump had said that the US shall not provide aid or assistance to South Africa and shall promote the resettlement of Afrikaner refugees escap-

ing Government-sponsored race-based discrimination, including racially discriminatory property confiscation.

In his remarks at a business forum in Miami, Florida, on Wednesday, Trump said, "I am not going. We have a G20 meeting in South Africa.

South Africa shouldn't even be in the Gs anymore because what's happened there is bad. I am not going. I told them I am not going. I'm not going to represent our country there. It should not be there." South Africa assumed the year-long G20 Presidency on December 1, 2024, and will host the grouping's leaders for a Summit meeting in Johannesburg from November 22 to 23, the first time that the G20 Summit will be held on African soil. The US will take over the Presidency of the G20 from South Africa and head the grouping from December 1, 2025, through November 30, 2026.

Fire at perfume depot in Türkiye kills six people

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Istanbul

A fire at a perfume depot in northwestern Türkiye on Saturday morning killed six people and left one person injured, officials said.

The cause of the blaze in Kocaeli province was not immediately known. The fire broke out around 9 am local time, with local media reporting it was preceded by several explosions.

Emergency teams and firefighters were immediately dispatched to the site, and the fire was brought under control within an hour.

The province's governor, İlhami Aktas, said that six had died and one was injured and was receiving treatment. He added that the cause of the fire was yet unknown and was under investigation.



James D Watson, DNA structure hero, dies at 97

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Washington

James D Watson, whose co-discovery of the twisted-ladder structure of DNA in 1953 helped light the long fuse on a revolution in medicine, crime-fighting, genealogy and ethics, has died, according to his former research lab. He was 97. The breakthrough – made when the brash, Chicago-born Watson was just 24 – turned him into a hallowed figure in the world of science for decades. But near the end of his life, he faced condemnation and professional censure for offensive remarks, including saying Black people are less intelligent than white people. Watson shared a 1962 Nobel Prize with Francis Crick and Maurice Wilkins for discovering that deoxyribonucleic acid, or DNA, is a double helix, consisting of two strands that coil around each other to create what resembles a long, gently twisting ladder.



Nigeria's promises to step up anti-terror operations

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Kathmandu

Nigeria's new Army Chief promised to increase operations against "terrorists" in the country's north on Friday, less than a week after US President Donald Trump threatened US military involvement if Nigeria did not stop attacks on Christians in the country. Chief of Army Staff (COAS), Lt Gen Waidi Shaibu, speaking to troops in Maiduguri, the capital of Borno State, northeast Nigeria, emphasised that the new push must succeed. Failure was "not an option" as the military enters a critical phase of the decade-long conflict, he said. "You have been training to defeat the terrorists. This time, you are going to do it differently," Shaibu told the assembled troops. "All combat enablers have been provided. New platforms have been introduced, all to ensure that you succeed."

Israeli Army returns bodies of 15 Palestinians

ASSOCIATED PRESS
■ Khan Younis

Israel on Saturday returned the bodies of 15 Palestinians to Gaza, hospital officials in the strip said, a day after militants returned the remains of a hostage to Israel under the terms of the tenuous ceasefire agreement in the two-year war.

The exchange marked another step forward for the tenuous, US-brokered truce. As part of the deal, Israel has returned the remains of 15 Palestinians for each Israeli hostage. The Nasser Hospital in the city of Khan Younis said the 15 bodies were brought there.

The return came shortly after Israel confirmed the remains given back Friday night were of an Israeli man who died while fighting Hamas in the militants' October 7, 2023, attack that started the war. The hostage's body was identified as that of Lior Rudaeff, according to a statement from Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office.

Meanwhile, Israeli settlers attacked Palestinian farmers and journalists in the occupied West Bank on Saturday, the latest violence to mar the territory. The Hostages and Missing Families Forum said Rudaeff was born in Argentina and moved to Kibbutz Nir Yitzhak, a farming community in south-



ern Israel, as a child. He volunteered for more than 40 years as an ambulance driver and was a member of the community's emergency response team.

The forum said he was killed in the Hamas-led attack and that his body was taken to Gaza. Since the ceasefire took effect on October 10, Palestinian militants have released the remains of 23 hostages, including Rudaeff's body,

with five still remaining in Gaza. Including the remains returned on Saturday, Israel has handed over the bodies of 300 Palestinians. Health officials in Gaza have struggled to identify the bodies without access to DNA kits, and have so far identified 89 of the bodies, according to Gaza's Health Ministry.

Under the terms of the US-brokered ceasefire, Israel is supposed to allow substantially more aid into Gaza.

However, relief efforts under the pact still fall well short of what is needed in Gaza, according to Farhan Haqq, deputy spokesperson for the United Nations. More than 200,000 metric tons of aid is positioned to move into Gaza, but only 37,000 tons, mostly food, have been admitted, he said. The 2023 Hamas-led attack on southern Israel killed about 1,200 people and saw 251 taken hostage. Israel's sweeping

military offensive has killed more than 68,800 Palestinians in Gaza, according to Gaza's Health Ministry. The ministry, part of the Hamas-run Government and staffed by medical professionals, maintains detailed records viewed as generally reliable by independent experts. Palestinian health officials said 11 people were injured in an attack by Israeli settlers in the West

Bank, the latest as settler violence reaches new highs during this year's olive harvest.

The UN humanitarian office has said that in October, it documented the highest monthly number of Israeli settler attacks on Palestinians and their property in the West Bank since the office began keeping track in 2006.

There were over 260 attacks, or an average of eight incidents per day, the office said. Palestinian paramedics said that journalists, volunteers and farmers were among those injured in the attack on the central town of Beita. A Palestinian photographer for Reuters was among the injured.

The circumstances of the attack were not immediately clear, and Israel's military did not respond to a request for comment. A video of the aftermath circulating in Palestinian media shows a man holding a camera, blood trickling down his face and chest. It then showed the inside of a hospital, where a man in a journalist's vest marked "press" and others with bandages on their heads were lying on the beds. With settler violence surging in the territory, volunteers, activists, and journalists have joined this year's olive harvest in an attempt to help Palestinian farmers safely reach and return from their fields.

US President endorses Vivek for Ohio Governor race



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ New York

US President Donald Trump threw his weight behind Indian-origin Republican leader Vivek Ramaswamy, saying he will be a "great" governor of Ohio.

Ramaswamy, an entrepreneur-turned-politician, had an unsuccessful run during the Republican presidential primary last year. Later, he endorsed Trump and quickly emerged as his close confidant. In a post on Truth Social on Friday, Trump said, "Vivek Ramaswamy will be a GREAT Governor of Ohio, and has my Complete and Total Endorsement - HE WILL NEVER LET YOU DOWN!" "I know Vivek well, competed

against him, and he is something SPECIAL. He is Young, Strong, and Smart!" Trump said. Calling him a "very good person", the US President said Ramaswamy "truly loves" the US. "As your next Governor, Vivek will fight tirelessly to grow the economy, cut taxes and regulations, promote MADE IN THE USA, champion AMERICAN energy DOMINANCE, keep our now very secure border, SECURE, stop migrant crime, strengthen our military/veterans, ensure LAW AND ORDER, advance election integrity, and protect our always under siege Second Amendment." Ramaswamy, 40, thanked Trump for his support and endorsement.

Arrests of Afghan nationals in Pak jumps 146% in one week



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Peshawar

Arrests and detentions of Afghan nationals in Pakistan surged by 146 per cent in the week ending November 1, driven largely by the reopening of border crossings, according to a UN report.

A total of 7,764 Afghan nationals were arrested and detained during the week, a sharp rise from the previous seven-day period, said the joint report by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and International Organisation for Migration (IOM) released recently. The crackdown was

concentrated in Balochistan, which accounted for 86 per cent of the arrests.

The arrests and detentions surged by 146 per cent in the week ending November 1, the report noted.

Between October 26 and November 1, Afghan Citizen Card (ACC) holders and undocumented Afghans made up 77 per cent of those arrested, while Proof of Registration (PoR) card holders comprised the remaining 23 per cent, it said.

Across Pakistan, the districts of Chagi, Attock and Quetta recorded the highest number of arrests and detentions between January 1 and November 1 this year.

Indian Missions worldwide mark 150 years of Vande Mataram



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Washington/Ottawa

Indian diplomatic missions across the globe commemorated 150 years of the country's national song 'Vande Mataram' with mass renditions, cultural performances and community gatherings, reaffirming the spirit of unity and national pride among the diaspora.

Written by Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay in 1875, Vande Mataram was first included in his novel Anandamath and later became a rallying cry during India's freedom movement. Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday inaugurated year-long commemorations to mark its 150th anniversary.

The Embassy of India in Washington marked the milestone on November 7 with a group rendition by students from the Indian diaspora, it said in a social media post on Saturday. In Ottawa, High Commissioner Dinesh K Patnaik led members of the Indian diaspora and officials of the High Commission in singing 'Vande Mataram'. The event also featured an Odissi dance performance.

"As we honour this immortal ode, we reaffirm our resolve towards a confident, self-reliant and resurgent Viksit Bharat 2047," the mission said in a social media post. In Doha, Ambassador Vipul led a mass singing of the national song at an event the embassy described as a "time-

less tribute to the spirit of patriotism and unity that binds our nation".

In Riyadh, Ambassador Suhel Ajaz Khan joined the Indian community in singing 'Vande Mataram', saying he felt "proud" to pay tribute to the spirit of the motherland.

The High Commission of India in Canberra organised a community gathering in Perth where High Commissioner D P Singh led the recitation. "The collective recitation was joined by the all-women crew of the Tri-service expedition 'Samudra Pradakshina' on board IASV Triveni — a stirring tribute to India's spirit, unity and Nari Shakti across the seas," the mission said in a social media post. In London, officials of the High Commission joined in singing the national song, calling it a tribute to a "timeless ode to our motherland that continues to inspire unity, pride, and love for India".

Several other Indian missions, including those in Nepal, Peru, Chile, Argentina, Colombia, Dubai, Singapore, and South Africa, also organised recitations and community events to mark the 150th anniversary of the national song. On 24 January 1950, the Constituent Assembly of India officially adopted 'Vande Mataram' as the national song, giving it enduring significance. Prime Minister Modi, in his speech on Friday, said Vande Mataram "connects us to our history and gives our future new courage".

Pakistan brings in amendment to create new post of Chief of Defence Forces

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Islamabad

Pakistan on Saturday brought in a Constitutional amendment to create a new post of chief of defence forces to ensure greater coordination and unified command among the three services. The 27th Constitutional Amendment bill presented in parliament proposes changes to Article 243 of the Constitution, which deals with the armed forces among other issues. Under the amendment bill, the President will appoint the Army Chief and the Chief of Defence Force on the advice of the Prime Minister.

The Chief of Army Staff, who will also be the Chief of Defence Forces, will appoint the head of the National Strategic Command in consultation with the Prime Minister. The head of the National Strategic Command will be from the Pakistan Army, it adds.

The Government will be able to promote individuals from the armed

forces to the ranks of Field Marshal, Marshal of the Air Force and Admiral of the Fleet. The rank and privileges of Field Marshal will be for life, meaning that Field Marshals will remain Field Marshals for life.

The bill says that the post of Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee will expire on November 27, 2025. According to a local media report on Friday, the move is said to have been inspired by lessons drawn from the four-day conflict between Pakistan and India in May and the evolving nature of modern warfare that demands integrated operational response.

In response to the April 22 Pahalgam terror attack, India launched Operation Sindoor on May 7, targeting terror infrastructure in territories controlled by Pakistan. The strikes triggered four days of intense clashes that ended with an understanding on stopping the military actions on May 10. Air Chief Marshal A P Singh last month said at

least a dozen Pakistani military aircraft, including US-origin F-16 jets, were destroyed or damaged in Indian strikes.

India has been maintaining that Pakistan pleaded for ending the hostilities in May after the Indian military pounded various Pakistani military infrastructure.

Soon after the conflict, the Pakistan Government promoted Army Chief General Asim Munir to the rank of Field Marshal, making him the second top military officer in the country's history to be elevated to the position. The 27th Constitutional Amendment bill also proposes to set up a Federal Constitutional Court, change the process for appointing high court judges, and change the threshold for provincial cabinets. Law Minister Azam Nazeer Tarar presented the bill in the Senate, the upper house, hours after it was approved by the cabinet.

Tarar said that the bill had 49 clauses. "Let me clarify that there are three main areas and two ancillary," he said.

UK spies shared Nijjar intel with Canada: Report

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ London

It was with the help of British spy call intercepts that the Canadian authorities drew alleged links between India and the killing of Hardeep Singh Nijjar in June 2023, a new documentary released this week has claimed.

'Inside the Deaths that Rocked India's Relations with the West' by 'Bloomberg Originals' reports that a British intelligence agency — believed to be the UK's Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ), often referred to as the country's listening post — intercepted calls that appeared to be discussing three targets.

Nijjar, a Canadian Sikh designated a terrorist by India in 2020 for Khalistani extremism, was allegedly among the names on the

intelligence passed on to the Canadian authorities under the 'Five Eyes' intelligence sharing agreement between the UK, US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. In late July 2023, there was a "breakthrough" in the Nijjar murder investigation case when the UK obtained "relevant information", the video documentary claims.

The British intelligence would only be shared under strict conditions: hand-delivered to Ottawa and kept off electronic systems and only a handful of Canadian officials, pre-approved by London, could see it, it claimed. "The file was a summary of conversations intercepted by a British intelligence agency between individuals who analysts believe were working on behalf of the Indian government," the documentary claims.



Founder of Educate Girls Safeena Husain with others posing for pictures after the Indian non-profit organisation received the prestigious Ramon Magsaysay Award in Manila, Philippines

PTI

Bulgaria prevents oil refinery shutdown

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Sofia

Bulgaria is racing to prevent the shutdown of its only oil refinery before US sanctions on the Russian owner take effect later this month. Parliament in Sofia approved legal changes that grant additional state authority to a government-appointed manager of the Lukoil-owned Burgas refinery on the Black Sea coast. The move came after a top international commodities trader dropped plans to purchase Lukoil's international assets, as the company rejected US Government allegations of being "the Kremlin's puppet." Lukoil said it was selling its international assets in response to US sanctions aimed at pushing Russia to agree to a ceasefire in its war against Ukraine. The company has stakes in oil and gas projects in 11 countries, including the Burgas refinery, as well as gas stations in many countries.

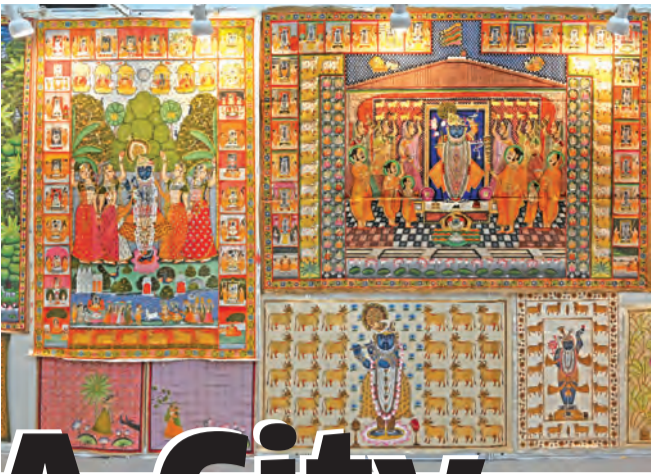


ICE opens call centre to track migrant children

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Washington

US Immigration and Customs Enforcement plans to open a national call centre to help local and state law enforcement agencies find unaccompanied migrant children who entered the country illegally, according to a federal contracting document released this week. ICE said it has an "immediate need" to establish an around-the-clock call centre in Nashville, Tennessee, capable of handling 6,000 to 7,000 daily calls to help law enforcement with "locating unaccompanied alien children." ICE seeks to open the call centre by the end of March and be fully operational by June. ICE also issued another notice seeking information on vendors able to transport thousands of detainees daily from across Texas, where a new state law taking effect next year mandates all counties with a jail enter into ICE partnerships.





PHOTOS: PANKAJ KUMAR

A City Painted

The mood is not that of a marketplace but of a living conversation-between form and feeling, between tradition and the future, says SAKSHI PRIYA

Where Does Art Begin And Where Does It Take Us? From the first lines on cave walls to the bold abstractions of contemporary canvases, art has always been humanity's instinctive language.

Long before words or scripts, people painted what they saw, felt, and feared. Prehistoric handprints in Bhimbetka or the frescoes of Ajanta captured memory, imagination, and emotion.

THE FESTIVAL BRINGS TOGETHER GALLERIES AND ARTISTS, CONNECTING NEW TALENT WITH MASTER ARTISTS

Art has always been about connection between artist and viewer, past and present, silence and expression. Art challenges us to see the world differently, offering spaces where perception, thought, and feeling converge. This is precisely what the India Art Festival 2025 — A National Celebration of Contemporary Indian Art achieves, presenting a platform where creativity flows across generations, regions, and traditions.

This edition brings together artists and galleries from Hyderabad to Mumbai, Mumbai to Kolkata, and Kolkata to Delhi, creating a national dialogue in contemporary art. Visitors encounter a remarkable variety of mediums and visions as they move from one exhibit to another.

One striking work,

'Harnessing Chaos', balances photographic precision with painterly abstraction. Movement and disorder converge into form, prompting the question: How do we find order in chaos? Can turbulent moments transform into insight?

The piece captures the tension between control and spontaneity, inviting reflection on how we navigate uncertainty. In contrast, Ajit Ooviyar's canvases radiate colour and energy, exploring harmony through vibrant strokes. Parul Jain's modern texture works draw attention to the materiality of paint itself, layering surfaces to create depth. Sonia Verma's black-and-white series, accented with subtle red, conveys restrained intensity, questioning how simplicity can hold power. A Durga-inspired Madhubani painting blends tradition with contemporary interpretation, portraying courage, strength, and resilience. Aarti Studio's 'Quiet Beauty of Thought' examines contemplation through texture, invit-

ing viewers to engage with their own impressions. Each work encourages interpretation, prompting reflection on the surfaces, colours, and forms that surround us.

Standing before a canvas, viewers are invited to interpret, question, and reflect. Each artwork sparks thought and imagination, prompting personal responses to texture, colour, and form. Every painting becomes a mirror for our own emotions and ideas.

The IAF 2025, under the direction of Minakshi Patil, is at the Constitution Club of India, New Delhi, and continues till today, offering audiences the chance to stand before the artworks, interpret their meanings, and engage directly with the evolving narrative of contemporary Indian art.



Reviving the timeless art of Dastangoi



GYANESHWAR DAYAL

When the noted historian Yuval Noah Harari says that stories made the human race what it is, he has a point. Indeed, stories are inseparable from human existence; from the earliest times, they have helped shape human civilisation. Over time, the art of storytelling became more refined and compelling. The Urdu tradition of storytelling, *Dastangoi*, is a case in point-engaging, captivating, almost addictive. Centuries ago, in the bustling bazaars of Mughal India, crowds would gather under flickering lamplight as a lone storyteller began: "Ek tha Dastan — there was once a tale..." With a sweep of his robe and a glint in his eye, he would conjure empires, djinns, and lovers out of thin air.

The audience, spellbound, would forget where the story ended and life began. That was the magic of *Dastangoi* — the ancient Urdu art of storytelling that turned words

into worlds. This timeless tradition was brought beautifully back to life at Le Meridien New Delhi, where *Dastangoi* — Gharwali, performed by celebrated artists Sunil Mehra and Pallav Mishra, transported guests into the wry, witty, and fiercely human world of Ismat Chughtai.

Rooted in 13th-century Persian origins and later flourishing in the Mughal courts, *Dastangoi*-from dastan (story) and goi (telling) — was once the beating heart of oral culture. These tales of valour, trickery, romance, and philosophy were performed in marketplaces and royal durbars alike, where the storyteller's only tools were voice, gesture, and imagination.

Mehra and Mishra's performance reimaged this legacy with contemporary sensibility. Every pause, glance, and word pulsed with emotion, reminding the audience that *Dastangoi* is not about grand sets — it is about the human voice weaving magic in the air.



Devotional dialogue dazzles



PHOTOS: PANKAJ KUMAR

SAKSHI PRIYA

Some performances rise above the familiar format of a concert and become a contemplative experience. *Tu ka Mhane Kahe Kabira*, presented by Pancham Nishad Creatives at Kamani Auditorium, was an evening where poetry, philosophy, and music converged to explore the essence of Bhakti.

The presentation brought together the spiritual legacies of SantTukaram and SantKabir, representing two schools of devotion — Saguna, which worships the divine in form, and Nirguna, which seeks the formless truth. Though separated by time and region, their verses

share a reflection on human faith and inner seeking. Ranjani and Gayatri presented Tukaram's Abhangwani with emotional intensity, blending lyrical devotion with vocal precision.

Their rendering of Tukaram's verses carried the intimacy of prayer and the discipline of classical form.

In contrast, Bhuvanesh Komkali's Kabirwani reflected an austere beauty, his restrained style allowing Kabir's words to shine through with unembellished clarity. The accompaniment by Mandar Puranik on tabla, Krushna Salunke on pakhawaj, and Anurodh Jain on rhythm created a balanced, textured soundscape.Dhanashree Lele's nar-

ration provided philosophical context, explaining how both saints, though rooted in different traditions, spoke of the same quest for unity with the divine.

Her commentary gave structure to the dialogue between Saguna and Nirguna Bhakti, helping the audience grasp the intellectual and spiritual depth of the compositions.

By the end, *Tu ka Mhane Kahe Kabira* left the audience thoughtful and deeply moved. It succeeded in transforming devotional music into an inquiry into truth and devotion, demonstrating how ancient philosophy can find expression through disciplined artistry and contemporary performance.



Layers of Thought, Lines of Light

SAKSHI PRIYA

What is it that an artist truly confronts when she stands before a blank canvas — the world, or herself? Bharati Shah's *Rubaru*, on view at Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi, invites that very confrontation — an intimate meeting between mind, matter, and movement. The exhibition, her 68th and 16th solo show, reflects Shah's lifelong engagement with abstraction, colour, and consciousness. Painting for over three decades, she does not confine herself to themes. "I don't get inspired by any theme or anybody. What comes to my mind is just pure mind," she said. Her process is instinctive, with no planning or calendar-driven compulsion. "I have at least seven, eight exhibitions a year and only when I have exhibitions, I go out; otherwise, I'm in my studio working. Ten hours a

day I work." The works in *Rubaru* are vivid and contemplative — acrylics on Italian linen and canvas that shift between stillness and energy. Gratitude 1, expansive and breathing, opens like an offering, its brushwork deliberate yet spontaneous. *Jal Thal Nabh 2* carries a cosmic temperament, its palette reflecting the meeting of water, earth, and sky — an unbroken continuum of existence.

Colour becomes language in *Vermillion Sun 2*, where warmth spills across the frame in waves that seem to radiate memory. In contrast, *Midnight Blues 1* is an inward whisper — indigo layered with reflection, a nocturnal space where light and thought coexist. Shah's *Harmony 2* is a quieter symphony, a visual arrangement that feels like listening to silence itself. When asked how she wishes her visitors to perceive these works, her reply was immediate: "When I finish a painting, I'm done with it. I want them to have their own perspective and make their own story. And I like to listen to what they are."

This openness turns her exhibition into a dialogue. Every viewer becomes a co-creator, completing the artwork through personal reflection. Her world is filled with colour, literally and philosophically. "It's a temple, it's really colourful," she said, describing one of her pieces.

"Everything is colourful — our moods, our clothes, our flowers, our way of life. Everywhere you see colours." Her canvases bring this sensory abundance alive. Works such as *Serenity 2* and *Solace 1* move through delicate transitions of light, invoking quiet renewal, while *Doors and Windows 2* and *Brahma the Creator* play with form and suggestion, offering glimpses into inner and outer thresholds.

Though her works bear traces of cubist structure — a lineage tracing back to Picasso and Braque — Shah approaches the form intuitively, independent of its history. "I stumbled upon it not knowing the history behind it," she said. "It allows me to explore and understand my mind without being tied down by any parameters. I am free to create not what my eyes see but what is deep in my soul." *Rubaru* in Urdu means face-to-face — an encounter. Shah's exhibition is exactly that: an encounter with the unseen currents that move within us. The viewer stands before each work as one stands before a mirror — without expectation, without direction, yet inevitably transformed.



FOR HER, PAINTING IS AN ACT OF HEALING. EACH STROKE BECOMES A GESTURE OF RELEASE, AN ARTICULATION OF THE UNSAID.THE PLAY OF COLOUR IN HER WORK IS EMOTIONAL VOCABULARY, SHAPING EXPERIENCE THROUGH LIGHT AND TONE



PHOTOS: PANKAJ KUMAR



USTAD AMJAD ALI WATCHED THE PERFORMANCES INTENTLY, WITNESSING POETRY, RHYTHM, AND DEVOTION BLEND BEAUTIFULLY ON STAGE

Dhaka

 BRIEF

In women's recurve,

With compound archery now included in the Los Angeles 2028 Olympics, the 22-year-old 2023 World Cup winner has returned to compound as he would look to reclaim his form and rhythm after slipping to world No.105.

Compound,	Men:
Abhishek	Verma,
Prathamesh Fuge,	Sahil
Jadhav, Prathamesh Jawkar;	
Women: Jyothi Surekha	
Vennam,	Chikitha
Taniparthi, Prithika Pradeep,	
Deepshikha.	

■ Monaco

They prioritized cases involving active and high-profile athletes, so the 12 named on Friday were long-since retired athletes or relatively obscure figures. The best known was arguably

Russia remains banned from international track and field over the invasion of Ukraine. World Athletics and the AIU have previously voiced concerns over how to ensure a level playing field on doping issues when Russia is eventually readmitted.

■ Sao Paulo

Piastri has struggled lately; he's winless in five races and has not reached the podium since Monza in July two months ago when he finished third. Verstappen, who aims to become the fourth driver to win five world titles, knows how to win in Brazil after victories in 2019, 2023 and 2024, when he fought from 17th at the start. "We are very excited by the idea that we could be the one that are attempting to kind of stop Verstappen's dominance," Stella said. The Dutchman has shown great noise at Interlagos, a track featuring climbs and drops with changes of gradient. The middle sector has slow corners where aerodynamic downforce can make the difference. The track is also renowned for its dramatic changes in weather.

■ Cairo

■ Los Cabos (Mexico)

"We all know how big



He was at 17-under 127.
Dunlap is well outside the
top 100 but is exempt in 2026

"I just hit it right, my only bad swing off the tee all week," Dunlap said. "This place gives you a lot of room off the tee but if you do miss it, then you're going to pay the price for it." Valimäki came into the week at No. 103, though he at least has a card for the European tour next year. He'd rather have access to bigger money and ranking points on the PGA

The Indian team, comprising Ravinder (569), Kamaljeet (540) and Yogesh Kumar (537), took the silver with an aggregate of 1646. South Korea totalled 1648 to win the gold medal, while Ukraine took the bronze with a combined total of 1644. A total of 11 teams were in the fray.

Defending champion Rio Takeda, who has not been in contention all week, had a 68 and was nine shots behind. Minjee Lee of Australia, one of the highest profile players in the field, was 14 behind the leaders after a 74.

Bremen climbed into seventh place while Wolfsburg was 12th.

Rybakina, the 2022 Wimbledon champion from Kazakhstan, has won all four of her matches this week, and clinched the win over Pegula on her first match point. "It was not easy to come back but I'm glad I managed to find my way in the second set and win it in this three-sets battle," Rybakina said. "The serve, when I needed it, helped me." Pegula reached the final in 2023.

■ Riyadh

No. 6 Rybakina beat No. 5 Jessica Pegula 4-6, 6-4, 6-3 on the back of 15 aces. Sabalenka was pushed to the brink by No. 4 Anisimova, who matched Sabalenka's power and aggression for more than two hours in a rematch of the US Open final. The first set lasted an hour. Anisimova missed five break chances and racked up 24 unforced errors. But she halved that in the second set and broke

1. DEEPAK MEGHWAL S/O
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Pradesh-458441, have
changed my name to
SUNNY SANON.
PD(3420)A

Sr. No.	Loan Account Number	Borrower's Name	Outstanding Amount as on 06 th Nov 2025	Date of Sale Notice
1	XXXXXXXXXX0096	KAMAL SHAH	3,35,832.08	07-11-2025
2	XXXXXXXXXX9426	VYANKTESH MURTHY	55,997.54	07-11-2025
3	XXXXXXXXXX7300	SANJEEV KAPADIA	3,24,492.92	07-11-2025
4	XXXXXXXXXX1164	SHAILESH VYAS	2,91,563.14	07-11-2025
5	XXXXXXXXXX7456	KRISHNA VERMA	99,672.09	07-11-2025
6	XXXXXXXXXX1028	RAVINDER SINGH MEHTA	1,30,810.01	07-11-2025
7	XXXXXXXXXX5170	DIPESH SAINI	1,03,023.00	07-11-2025
8	XXXXXXXXXX1107	VISHNU PRASAD DUBEY	2,58,494.07	07-11-2025
9	XXXXXXXXXX3240	VISHAL GOUTAM	3,24,962.37	07-11-2025
10	XXXXXXXXXX0791	KOMAL HORA	6,54,353.11	07-11-2025
11	XXXXXXXXXX5490	LAXMI PRASAD	36,966.08	07-11-2025
12	XXXXXXXXXX2730	VINOD KUMAR DIXIT	1,81,947.00	07-11-2025
13	XXXXXXXXXX2044	RAMJEE GUPTA	3,30,437.34	07-11-2025
14	XXXXXXXXXX1897	REETA PANTHI	3,27,393.60	07-11-2025
15	XXXXXXXXXX8160	NAMRATA PATEL	1,02,644.20	07-11-2025
16	XXXXXXXXXX5860	HARIOM SHARMA	29,161.00	07-11-2025
17	XXXXXXXXXX7050	SHIVA SHARMA	9,70,255.12	07-11-2025
18	XXXXXXXXXX7081	GEETA BAJPAI	7,79,444.00	07-11-2025
19	XXXXXXXXXX6232	ARCHANA WADEKAR	8,40,957.20	07-11-2025
20	XXXXXXXXXX1221	DOUWASI PRASAD SAHU	4,80,745.00	07-11-2025
21	XXXXXXXXXX3562	ARVIND SINGH	2,03,992.72	07-11-2025
22	XXXXXXXXXX9065	JAYESH GUJRATI	3,85,428.04	07-11-2025
23	XXXXXXXXXX3036	BANSH BHADUR PRASAD SHARMA	2,46,154.67	07-11-2025
24	XXXXXXXXXX4495	URMILA PRAJAPATI	9,99,649.00	07-11-2025
25	XXXXXXXXXX1444	MEENKA DAUGHTER OF SHANIRAM	9,98,293.55	07-11-2025
26	XXXXXXXXXX4468	SHAKUNTALA RUHAL	2,58,624.40	07-11-2025
27	XXXXXXXXXX6332	GUNJAN PRAJAPATI	9,99,398.30	07-11-2025
28	XXXXXXXXXX7410	DURGA GUJARI	9,96,279.82	07-11-2025
29	XXXXXXXXXX1012	RAM MILAN PRAJAPATI	9,99,793.67	07-11-2025
30	XXXXXXXXXX6072	ASHISH GOYAL	4,36,307.80	07-11-2025
31	XXXXXXXXXX3032	POONAM DUBEY	2,50,774.00	07-11-2025
32	XXXXXXXXXX0090	MOODAN GOPAL	10,08,288.00	07-11-2025
33	XXXXXXXXXX5807	POORVI MURJANI	8,77,092.00	07-11-2025
34	XXXXXXXXXX8510	ARJUN CHOUDHARY	2,66,407.82	07-11-2025
35	XXXXXXXXXX1323	ANUDESH KUMAR	1,27,384.32	07-11-2025
36	XXXXXXXXXX2525	DILIP GANDHI	3,03,072.82	07-11-2025

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Ice broken with PCB, options being worked out to bring back Asia Cup trophy

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ New Delhi

The cricket boards of India and Pakistan have managed to “break the ice” on the Asia Cup trophy dispute and will work towards finding a plausible solution in the coming days, BCCI secretary Devajit Saikia told PTI after meeting PCB chairman Mohsin Naqvi on the sidelines of an ICC gathering in Dubai.

The Asia Cup Trophy wasn’t presented to India by Naqvi, who also happens to be the Asian Cricket Council (ACC) chairperson, after the winning team refused to accept it from him due to his anti-India position.

Suryakumar Yadav’s men defeated Pakistan in the

final of the T20 event held in Dubai on September 28.

“I was a part of both the informal and formal meeting of the ICC. PCB chairperson Mohsin Naqvi was also present. During the course of a formal meeting, it was not on agenda but ICC facilitated a meeting between myself and the PCB chief separately in the presence of a senior ICC office-bearer and another senior official,” Saikia told PTI on Saturday.

“It was really good to start the process of negotiation. Both sides cordially participated in the meeting which took place on the sidelines of the ICC board meet,” he added, assuring that a solution will be worked out soon.

While Saikia didn’t wish

to name any ICC official, it is reliably learnt that deputy chairman Imran Khawaja and CEO Sanjog Gupta initiated the discussions between the two cricket boards.

“Definitely, in coming times, if things go in a positive way, the issue will be sorted at the earliest,” Saikia sounded positive.

The trophy has been lying at the ACC headquarters in Dubai with the staff there instructed by Naqvi to not move it without his permission. Naqvi, who is also the interior minister of Pakistan, has insisted that the Indians will have to accept the top prize from him.

“Both sides will work out something to solve the issue at the earliest. The ice



has been broken now, so various options will be worked out.

“There will be options from the other side as well and we will also give options on how to settle this issue and come to an amicable solution,” Saikia said.

While there was speculation that a dispute resolution committee will be formed by the ICC to handle the matter, the BCCI secretary categorically denied any such move by the world body.

“Although one of the senior persons from ICC is involved in the process of negotiation, there is no requirement of any such thing (a committee) at this stage. The issue will be resolved before any such

drastic step is taken by the ICC,” Saikia assured.

The two teams clashed thrice during the Asia Cup and tensions were high in all the matches. The Indians maintained a no-handshake policy with their Pakistani counterparts for the entirety of the tournament as a gesture of solidarity with the Pahalgam terror attack victims.

As hostilities mounted, players from the two teams openly mocked each other through offensive gestures resulting in penalties on both the sides for “bringing the game into disrepute.”

hosting the Women’s World Cup in India and Sri Lanka. the Indian women’s team led by Harmanpreet Kaur defeated South Africa in the final in Navi Mumbai to claim its maiden ICC title.

“...they appreciated India’s efforts...They congratulated India and South Africa (the two finalists) for their wonderful performances. The South African women’s team was congratulated for three successive final appearances.

“It is now clear that South African women’s team’s graph is on the rise,” said Saikia, who also attended the Financial & Commercial Affairs (F&CA) meeting as well as HR and Remuneration Committee meetings of the ICC.

India clinch T20I series against Australia

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Brisbane

India clinched the five-match T20 International series against Australia 2-1 after the fifth and final game was abandoned due to rain here on Saturday.

Put in to bat, India made a blazing start with openers Abhishek Sharma (23 not out off 13 balls) and Shubman Gill (29 not out off 16 balls) going on the offensive.

But lightning stopped play with India cruising at 52 for no loss in 4.5 overs. Soon after, heavy rain lashed the Gabba, forcing the match to be abandoned.

Earlier, Australia had their chances to remove the dangerous Abhishek early but failed to capitalise on them.

Glenn Maxwell dropped a

sitter after the left-hander miscued a shot in the opening over, while Ben Dwarshuis spilled a regulation catch in the fourth over when Abhishek was on 11.

Three balls later, Abhishek thrilled the Indian fans with a powerful flat six over mid-wicket. Gill, meanwhile, took a special liking to Dwarshuis, cracking three boundaries off the left-arm pacer in the third over to keep India’s brisk start intact.

The first T20I had also been washed out, while Australia won the second game by four wickets.

However, India bounced back strongly to win the third and fourth matches by five wickets and 48 runs respectively.

Australia had won the preceding ODI series 2-1.



Abhishek: I prepared myself well for Australian conditions

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Brisbane

Abhishek Sharma prepared himself “mentally and technically” for months to take on the Australian challenge, and the results showed as the young opener took the ‘player of the series’ award in India’s hard-fought 2-1 triumph Down Under.

Having impressed with his aggressive batting at the top, the 24-year-old said he had for long looked forward to testing himself on the bouncy Australian pitches and against high-quality pace attack.

He ended with 163 runs in five outings even as two matches were rained out.

“I have been waiting for this tournament. When I got to know we’re going to Australia for the T20Is, I was very excited,” Abhishek said after India sealed the rain-affected series 2-1 on Saturday.

“Throughout my career, I’ve seen that Australia is very batting-friendly, and I wanted to prepare myself for these kinds of bowlers and conditions.”

The left-hander said his preparation focused on facing world-class fast bowlers and adapting his game to Australian surfaces.

“If you want to play good cricket and do well for your team, you have to face

world-class bowlers. I was practicing for these kinds of bowlers because that’s how you improve as a player,” he said, when asked if Josh Hazlewood’s absence in the last three T20Is made it a bit easy for the India players.

He was also asked about his ultra-aggressive approach and Abhishek credited the Indian team management for giving him

strengthened his resolve to push for a T20 World Cup berth next year.

“It will be a dream come true if I get to play the World Cup. As a kid, I always dreamt of winning it for India. I will make sure I’m ready for that tournament,” he said.

Australia captain Mitchell Marsh, while



Jurel stakes claim for Test berth with second ton in a row

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Bengaluru

Dhruv Jurel made a strong case for his continued presence in the senior Test eleven with his second hundred in as many innings against South Africa A while fortifying India A’s position on the third day of the four-day match here on Saturday.

Jurel (127 not out) had the perfect foil in Harsh Dubey (84) during the sixth wicket stand worth 184 runs, guiding India A to 382 for seven declared in their second innings for an overall lead of 416.

At stumps, South Africa A were 25 for no loss, needing 392 more runs to overhaul the target of 417. Lesego Senokwane (9) and Jordan Hermann (15) were at crease.

Jurel show: Jurel was India’s wicketkeeper batter during the home Test series against the West Indies while Rishabh Pant was recuperating from a foot injury that he sustained in England. Now recovered



sufficiently, Pant is expected to take the place of Jurel in the eleven against South Africa next week but the former had certainly put the selectors in a quandary with twin hundreds in this match.

He had made an unbeaten 132 in the first innings here, and now, the five wise men will at least have to give a thought as to how to squeeze in Jurel in the eleven either in Kolkata or Guwahati. Just like that

century, this innings of his too was perfectly poised and did not offer a single chance to the SA bowlers.

Jurel once again unfurled his safe yet effective method to accumulate runs. There were hardly any aerial shots, and the runs flowed in through well-timed cuts past the point, drives through covers and flicks off his pads.

Jurel brought up his fifty in 83 balls while Dube, a tad quicker from 76 balls.

India bow out of Hong Kong Sixes

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Hong Kong

India suffered three consecutive defeats to bow out of the Hong Kong Sixes cricket tournament, while Australia and Pakistan won their respective games to qualify for the semifinals, here on Saturday.

In a must-win Pool C game against Kuwait, India lost by 27 runs to finish third in the group behind Kuwait, who topped the group, and Pakistan, who came in second.

Chasing 107, India were bowled out for 79 for 6 with Kuwait’s Yasin Patel taking three wickets for 23 runs. Following the result, Pakistan and Kuwait advanced to the quarterfinals, while India dropped into the ‘Bowl’ matches.

Pakistan then defeated South Africa by five wickets to advance to the semifinals.

In the ‘Bowl’ stage match against the UAE, India’s struggles continued.

Despite quick-fire knocks from Abhimanyu Mithun (50 off 16) and Dinesh Karthik (42 off 14), India failed to defend their total of 108 as UAE’s Khalid Shah hit a blistering 50 off 14 balls to seal a four-wicket win.

Nepal then defeated India by 92 runs in the final game.

Nepal posted a massive 137 for no loss in six overs, and then restricted India to 45 for 6. Rashid Khan starred for Nepal by scoring 55 off 17 deliveries and taking three wickets.

Meanwhile, Australia powered into the semifinals with a 54-run win over Bangladesh, thanks to half-centuries from Ben McDermott (51 off 14) and skipper Alex Ross (50 off 11), while Chris Green picked up 3/32. Pakistan defeated South Africa by five wickets to make the last-four grade.

After South Africa posted 102/3, Pakistan chased down the target in 3.5 overs, with Abdul Samad smashing 50 off 10 balls.

World Cup brings new financial success for women cricketers

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ New Delhi

Putting in the hard yards on field brought them the long-awaited World Cup trophy and now it’s time for India’s path-breaking women cricketers to rake in the moolah as their brand valuation goes through the roof.

Top performers like Smriti Mandhana, Shafali Verma, and Jemimah Rodrigues can expect their market value to go up by over 50 per cent, which would translate into endorsement deals of over one crore individually, according to the management firms handling them. And the brands lining up to make them the face of their campaigns could range from automobile companies to banks to FMCs alongside the expected deals with athleisure, lifestyle, beauty and personal care and education corporations.

Tuhin Mishra, MD and Co-Founder of Baseline Ventures, which manages



Mandhana, Richa Ghosh and Radha Yadav, and Karan Yadav, Chief Commercial Officer of JSW Sports, which has Shafali and Jemimah on its roster, were both pumped up about the future of women cricketers in their responses to PTI queries.

“We’re seeing a steep jump: 2 times to 3 times in endorsement value for the

top tier. Jemimah has moved from roughly Rs 60 lakh to Rs 1.5 crore+.” Shafali has climbed from around Rs 40 lakh to Rs 1 crore+,” Yadav said.

“We are expecting anywhere between 25–55 per cent increase for the top players. For players who had standout moments in the World Cup, that number

could potentially be higher,” asserted Mishra. “We are also hopeful that this win really solidifies women’s cricket in the commercial market, where brands look at long-term partnerships rather than short-term campaign bursts,” he added.

Yadav said the increased connect with fans, as evident from the explosion

in their social media engagements, has also contributed to the rise in the players’ brand value.

“This isn’t just because of the trophy. Their visibility, relevance, cultural reach, and audience engagement have exploded. You can see that in social metrics too.

“Jemimah’s following has doubled to 3.3M, and Shafali has grown by almost 50 per cent. The bigger shift is that brands now view them as year-round storytellers, not only cricket-season faces. So pricing is beginning to reflect that,” he explained.

Mishra said the women are primed to make another breakthrough by endorsing brands which were traditionally promoted by male players.

“We’re seeing interest across industries for women athletes in India like athleisure, lifestyle, beauty and personal care and education. But what’s encouraging is that top women cricketers are now also entering spaces that were earlier considered male-dominated.

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New Market, Bhopal - 462003
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Biltan Market:
E-5/26, Opp. Arera Petrol Pump, Biltan Market,
Arera Colony, Bhopal - 462016
☎ 0755 - 4003647

Sarafa Chowk:
14, Sarafa Chowk,
Bhopal - 462001
☎ 0755 - 4289959

Platinum Plaza:
14-17, Platinum Plaza,
T.T. Nagar, Bhopal - 462003
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Politics is the art of
looking for trouble,
finding it whether it exists
or not, and applying the
wrong remedy
- Ernest Benn



THE ASPIRATIONAL STATES

In 2025, Jharkhand, Uttarakhand, and Chhattisgarh mark 25 years since their formation-states born of aspirations for self-determination, better governance, and inclusive growth. Over the past quarter-century, each has charted a unique path, balancing economic development with cultural preservation and environmental challenges. As they celebrate this milestone, it is a moment to reflect on their journey of transformation, shaped by resilience, reforms, and the relentless spirit of their people

Jharkhand: A story of resilience & renewal

Jharkhand, one of India's youngest states, completes 25 years of its formation in 2025, a journey marked by courage, hard work, and transformation. From its birth to today, the state's progress reflects the determination of its people to build a distinct identity and a better future, despite many challenges.

Historical Background and Formation

The dream of a separate Jharkhand existed long before the state was officially created on November 15, 2000. With its rich tribal culture, abundant minerals, and unique traditions, the region always had a strong sense of identity. The demand for a separate state grew stronger in the 1970s under the leadership of the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM), which voiced the aspirations of tribal and local communities for political rights and fair economic development. This dream finally came true with the Bihar Reorganisation Bill, 2000, which separated 18 southern districts of Bihar to form Jharkhand - India's 28th state. It was both the fulfilment of a long struggle and the beginning of a new chapter in self-governance and planned development.

The Naxal Challenge: Courage, Sacrifice, and Determination

From its inception, Jharkhand faced one of India's toughest internal security challenges — Left-Wing Extremism (LWE), or Naxalism. Extremist groups tried to exploit the region's difficult terrain and social inequalities, leading to years of violence and loss.

Official records show that since 2000, 551 police personnel have lost their lives in anti-Naxal operations, and around 823 civilians have been killed in extremist attacks. Landmines, ambushes, and assaults on police camps created fear, while schools, health centres, and local governance suffered in affected areas.

Yet, in the face of this adversity, the Jharkhand Police and local people demonstrated extraordinary courage and commitment. Security forces worked in dangerous conditions with limited resources but stood firm to uphold law and order. As former Chief of State Police, I had the privilege of witnessing this journey closely. I saw police vehicles being blown apart and senior officers, including District SPs, targeted in ambushes. But I also witnessed the unmatched bravery of officers and jawans who continued to serve with dedication, often at great personal risk.

The police understood that the fight against Naxalism could not be won by force alone. Alongside strong security measures, they focused on communication and trust-building. Cultural campaigns like the street play "Phir Ek Nayee



RAJEEV KUMAR
Former DGP, Jharkhand

Subah Hoojee" and the film "Pratyavartan" highlighted the futility of violence and motivated misguided youth to return to normal life. These creative efforts were widely appreciated for their positive impact on society.

Through intelligence-based operations, cooperation with central agencies, and effective rehabilitation programmes, extremist networks were gradually weakened. Once-dangerous areas such as Jhumra Pahar, Prasanth Hills, Saranda, and Burha Pahar were freed and brought back into the fold of governance and development.

Today, Naxal influence has shrunk to only a few isolated pockets, thanks to years of coordinated security efforts and growing public confidence in democratic and developmental processes. The story of Jharkhand's fight against extremism is not just about law and order — it is a story of human courage, sacrifice, and the

strength of democratic resolve.

Political Evolution and Governance

Jharkhand's political journey has seen frequent changes in leadership and coalition governments, reflecting its social diversity and evolving democracy. While this sometimes caused policy disruptions and administrative instability, it also allowed representation for different regions and communities.

In recent years, greater political stability has led to more consistent governance, better financial management, and improved coordination among government departments. These changes have strengthened institutions and helped the state focus more effectively on development.

Economic and Infrastructure Growth

Jharkhand holds over 37 per cent of India's mineral wealth, making it a key contributor to the country's industrial economy. Turning this mineral strength into broad-based prosperity has been challenging due to environmental and regulatory hurdles.

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Chhattisgarh: At a turning point of growth

Chhattisgarh recently celebrated its 25th foundation day. Like a 25-year-old youth, the state too is advancing toward a strong identity and economic self-reliance. Born out of Madhya Pradesh, it is striving to embrace modernisation while preserving its rich cultural heritage — a journey filled with both opportunities and challenges.

Economic Progress, Opportunities, and Challenges

The economic growth of Chhattisgarh has been remarkable. In the fiscal year 2022-23, the state's Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) grew by 8 per cent, higher than the national average. The government allocated 39 per cent of its total budget toward social welfare. The unemployment rate places Chhattisgarh fifth in the country, yet behind this positive statistic lies the issue of underemployment and skill mismatch. The imbalance between youth potential and industrial demand remains a concern.

To bridge this gap, the state launched robotics and artificial-intelligence courses from 2024-25, preparing its youth for global competitiveness.



GANESH SHANKAR MISHRA
Retd. IAS Officer; served as
Principal Secretary, Chhattisgarh

However, in rural and tribal regions, the weak infrastructure of primary and secondary education continues to be a major challenge.

Agriculture remains the backbone of the state's economy, providing employment to 77 per cent of the population. Fertile soil, diverse climate, and abundant water resources make it suitable for high-income crops. For increasing agricultural income, the development of micro-irrigation, organic farming, warehousing, and agro-processing industries is essential.

Chhattisgarh's mineral wealth is both a boon and a challenge. While mining and industry fuel the economy, they often lead to environmental degradation, displacement, and the resurgence of Naxalism.

The Fight Against Naxalism

Union Home Minister Amit Shah has set a target to make Chhattisgarh Naxal-free by March 2026, sym-

bolising the government's unwavering commitment. The end of Naxalism will open new doors for industry, services, and investment.

Operations such as Octopus, Double Bull, and Chakrabandha have achieved remarkable success. Security forces have established permanent camps in remote forest regions.

In 2025 alone, 270 Naxals were neutralized, 680 arrested, and 1,225 surrendered. Major missions like Operation Black Forest and mass surrenders in Bijapur, Chhattisgarh, and Maharashtra reflect the growing confidence among insurgents to return to the mainstream.

Security agencies now employ cutting-edge technologies for precise monitoring and analysis of Naxal activities — including location tracking, mobile data analysis, call-log examination, social-media analytics, and AI-based data systems.

Collaboration with forensic and technical institutions has strengthened the intelligence framework.

Drone surveillance and satellite imaging have brought unprecedented improvements in operational accuracy.

With the continued cooperation between the Centre and the State, India is steadily moving toward becoming completely Naxal-free by March 2026 - a testament to decisive governance and unwavering resolve.

Now, Bastar needs a strong alternative development model so that it never regresses to its earlier conditions.

Gone are the days when exchanging salt for chironji and tendu leaves was a matter of pride. The people of Bastar deserve dignified livelihoods and better living conditions. Industrialisation of Bastar must go hand in hand with the preservation of its natural and cultural identity. The government is now taking decisive steps to free Bastar from the grip of Naxalism.

A Morning from 2006 - An Administrative Memory

In 2006, discussions were held with Tata Steel to set up a 5.5-million-ton steel plant. The then Chief Minister Dr Raman Singh had a clear vision — to free Bastar from Naxalism through development and industrialisation. I recall that in June 2006, when I was the Collector of Rajnandgaon, Dr Raman Singh told me over the phone:

"I am sending you there with a big responsibility." After becoming District Magistrate of Bastar, I worked with the district administration and police to translate his vision into reality. Since the region falls under Schedule V (tribal area), land acquisition required approval from Gram Sabhas under the PESA Act. Within a week of assuming charge, 6 out of 10 Gram Sabhas granted consent, and within the next week, the remaining 4 followed.

CONTINUED ON >> P14

Uttarakhand: Development and challenges redefined

As Uttarakhand marks its 25th year of statehood, it is apt to reflect on its journey; the achievements, the evolving landscape, and the work still ahead. From infrastructure to tourism, from power to industrialisation, the hills have witnessed lot of transformation. Yet the fragile Himalayan ecology and the aspirations of its people demand that this progress be both sustainable and inclusive.

Infrastructure & Connectivity

When Uttarakhand was created in 2000, its infrastructure base in many remote and mountainous areas was modest. Over the past quarter-century the state has made very tangible strides.

The road network has expanded significantly. According to recent data, the total road length in the state has increased from under 20,000 km to over 45,000 km. Similarly, the rail network is coming up to Karnprayag. Aerial connectivity has also improved. Now, we can't call Uttarakhand a remotely connected state.

These improvements have unlocked many opportunities; for access to markets, for tourism, for medical and educational reach. Yet challenges like landslides, terrain constraints and remote hamlets still remain.

Road Network in the Hills

Beyond the aggregate numbers, what stands out is how connectivity has improved:



ASHOK KUMAR
Former DGP, Uttarakhand

Uttarakhand. This would not have been possible in a large state like Uttar Pradesh.

Still, given the mountainous terrain, maintenance costs and environmental risks (like landslides and weather damage) persist. The state has to continuously invest in resilient infrastructure.

Heli-Services & Air Connectivity

One significant leap has been the expansion of heli-services, which are crucial in the hills.

The state government has started heli-services from many of its planned heliports, 12 out of 18 already operational.

These services not only aid pilgrimage tourism and adventure travel, but also act as lifelines during

natural calamities and emergencies.

However, the expansion also carries safety and environmental implications: high altitude operations, weather vulnerability, and the risk of overuse in environmentally sensitive zones. This calls for strict standards, rigorous monitoring and sustainable planning.

Power Generation & Energy Access

Access to reliable power is a foundation of modern development, and Uttarakhand has advanced considerably in this domain.

The distribution utility figures show strong growth: number of consumers, contracted load and lines all increasing substantially. For example, the state distribution company's input energy rose from 3,038 MU to 17,200 MU.

In the generation sphere, the state is pushing both hydro and solar. Under its Solar Energy Policy 2023 it has targeted 2,500 MW of solar capacity.

Meanwhile, hydropower projects aim to increase capacity significantly by 2031.

But the challenge remains: ensuring that remote villages, especially in the high hills, have reliable access, and that power infrastructure growth doesn't come at the cost of ecosystems or local livelihoods.

Industrialisation & Economy

From a largely under-industrialised region, Uttarakhand has evolved markedly in its economic base.

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WHEN ASPIRATIONS ARE CARVED ON A MAP

A quarter of a century ago, India's map was redrawn to realise long-cherished dreams, giving birth to Jharkhand, Uttarakhand, and Chhattisgarh. Each arose from a deep desire for self-governance, recognition, and development rooted in local identity. Twenty-five years on, these "states of aspirations" stand as living testaments to the struggles and hopes of their people-charting distinct journeys, facing unique challenges, and redefining what it means for aspirations to take the shape of a state.

Climate change & Indian agenda for COP30

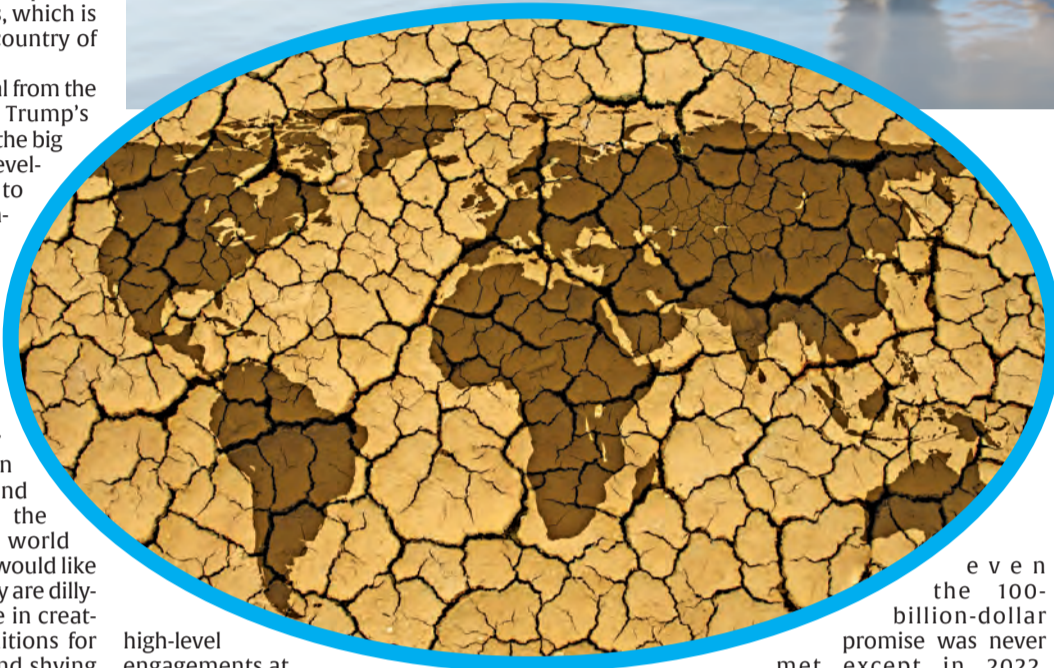
VK BAHUGUNA

The 30th United Nations Conference of Parties (COP-30) for Climate Change is slated to begin in Belém, Brazil, from 10th November to 21st November. The conference, like previous conferences, is very critical for taking stock of achievements on Paris commitments, and the entire world will be watching the proceedings and the end results. Special focus will be on the Biennial Transparency Report (BTR) released by the UNFCCC Secretariat, which has flagged the tardy progress and need to step up to evolve a broader strategy through the collective endeavours of the member nations, especially when the global temperature has for the first time breached the 1.5°C threshold this calendar year. However, the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) synthesis report released on 28th October 2025 lists out positive achievements in reducing emissions. India, in June 2025, had already achieved 50 per cent of its goal of meeting its power requirements from non-fossil fuels, which is a big milestone for a developing country of more than 143 crore people.

After the United States' withdrawal from the Paris Agreement under President Trump's administration, COP30 must bridge the big geopolitical differences between developed and developing countries to forge concrete, implementable pathways within the fore corner of common but differentiated responsibilities. In an era of extreme weather observed over the last ten years, the climatic vagaries have ravaged economies and displaced millions. These elements underscore the conference's role not as an annual ritual, but as a linchpin for equitable survival. This writer, as an Indian battling climatic extremes and observing the damages done to the environment by the developed world during the previous two centuries, would like to ask the developed world why they are dilly-dallying in not accepting their role in creating such disastrous climatic conditions for present and future generations, and shying away from providing the technology and the needed finances rather than harping on India and China for being the major emitters. In fact, if they agree on these two fundamentals, then India should be prepared to start climate-resilient administration from top to bottom to meet emission reduction and upscale mitigation and adaptation across landscapes. This writer, on moral grounds, does not believe in the principle of buying carbon credits by developing worlds from poor countries to offset their emissions, but practically it has become a norm now, though not very successful.

Having said this, one of the urgent needs for the COP30 negotiators is to take note of the Global Stocktake (GST) of COP28, which inter alia revealed that current national commitments would yield only a 10 per cent emissions reduction by 2030-far short of the 45 per cent needed to align with the 1.5°C threshold.

The conference's Brazil setting underscores the nexus of biodiversity, emissions, and equity, demanding differentiated yet collaborative roles from key actors. Therefore, Brazil, as head of the COP, had described it as an 'implementation COP', urging nations to deeply integrate the GST into national policy, especially to end acrimony on the issue of climate finance. As far as Indian views are concerned diplomatically, India has laid bare its stance through



high-level engagements at the UN General Assembly briefing. Ambassador Ruchira Kamboj voiced “deep disappointment” over COP29's finance shortfall, vowing to champion scaled-up, grant-based flows under common but differentiated responsibilities. It would be appropriate to discuss COP30 from the point of view of India's national interests.

The Indian delegation must assert to seek 'Climate Justice and Equity', leading the voice of the Global South in tandem with Like-Minded Developing Countries (LMDCs) and G77+China, and rightfully rejecting the 300-billion-dollar finance as 'eye wash and optical illusion', as

even the 100-billion-dollar promise was never met except in 2022.

Therefore, again, India should push for more than 1 trillion dollars in funds, along with accountability, transparency, and no dilution of CBDR through uniform reporting on developing nations. As demanded in COP29 regarding Intellectual Property Rights (IPR), there should be free access to green technologies without IPR barriers, enabling deployment in sectors like renewable energy, adaptation, and methane mitigation. The Indian government, while taking proactive steps as this writer has been suggesting, needs to ask for grants for climatically vulnerable areas like the Sundarbans, Northeast India, and the Western Ghats.

From the point of view of civil society, COP30 must recognise that mitigation and adaptation will have no credible progress without the active and purposeful involvement of civil society, especially marginalised sections. NGOs and other civil society groups, especially those working at grassroots levels, quite often feel aggrieved for not being consulted in preparation before the COPs and NDCs. Further, the forest department plays a key role in climate change mitigation and adapta-

tion, but they are never consulted, especially on strategy regarding Agriculture, Forests and Other Land Use (AFOLU), though AFOLU supports the livelihoods of billions of people. There are many people and organisations in India advocating for including AFOLU under Para 6.2 and Para 6.4 of Article 6 of the Paris Agreement. Para 6.2 provides guidance to countries to use internationally transferred mitigation outcomes towards their climate commitments. Para 6.4 creates a United Nations-supervised mechanism for issuing carbon credits with finances to emission-reducing projects. AFOLU, however, is a double-edged weapon: on one hand, it is a major source of anthropogenic greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, contributing approximately 20-24 per cent of total global emissions; on the other hand, AFOLU offers immense mitigation potential through carbon sequestration and emission reductions, making it essential for Paris Agreement goals of limiting warming to 1.5-2°C. The IPCC's Sixth Assessment Report stressed AFOLU's role in delivering co-benefits like biodiversity conservation, food security, and adaptation to climate impacts, but warns of trade-offs such as competition for land with bio-energy, etc. The Indian government has excluded agriculture from its emission intensity reduction target of 45 per cent by 2030 from the year 2005 and instead is focusing on the energy and industry sectors, though forestry, however, is included as a sink, with commitments to create an additional carbon sink of 2.5-3 billion tonnes of CO2 by 2030. The government may have its own reasons, primarily due to socio-economics, equity, and food security for livelihoods. As seen during previous COP discussions, excluding agriculture from NDCs and carbon markets avoids “trade coercion” that might hinder developmental rights. However, this writer feels that the Government of India must allow agroforestry as an internal mechanism to get carbon credit through Corporate Social Responsibility and government-funded projects so that farmers' income can be bolstered along with meeting mitigation goals. The Prime Minister has unequivocally reiterated that farmers' interests will never be compromised. The Indian delegation must declare this in COP30 along with other steps like a climate-resilient, bottom-up development approach.

(The writer is former Director-General, ICFRE, in the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change)

A marriage rooted in green values



ANIMESH CHAUDHARY

In the serene village of Samode near Jaipur, a quiet revolution in matrimonial tradition unfolded on Saturday as two young professionals redefined what a modern Hindu marriage can embody. Amid the rustle of peacocks and the winter sky, Pooja Malik and Lakshya Pawan Shyam Kaura celebrated a union free from dowry, expectations, or demands, an intimate gathering grounded in values rather than valuables.

Both accomplished in their own right: Lakshya, a Princeton University graduate, and Pooja, an alumna of MICA, Ahmedabad, and Lady Irwin College, the couple exemplifies a generation that harmonizes global learning with Indian ethics. Their families, rooted in equality and mutual respect, chose a wedding that prioritised conscience over custom.

In a symbolic gesture, the fathers of the bride and groom exchanged a bonsai planter, marking their commitment to a zero-dowry union. The couple also planted a sapling near the mandap, while each of the thirty guests received seed packets to nurture at home- a living reminder that meaningful change begins with small and deliberate actions.

“This Green Marriage celebrates not wealth, but values; not consumption, but contribution. It is a quiet revolution in how India can celebrate love responsibly,” said Sanjiv Kaura, father of the groom.

By rejecting extravagant displays and traditional transactional customs, the families emphasised simplicity, sustainability, and social responsibility. The ceremony sent a clear message that modern weddings can honour love, equality, and environmental stewardship simultaneously. The couple have shown that weddings need not be a spectacle of consumption but can be powerful statements of conscience, sowing seeds, both literally and metaphorically for a future where dignity, respect and sustainability flourish under one canopy of love.



(The author is government consultant)

FROM AGENDA COVER

Jharkhand: A story...

Even so, recent years have seen steady progress. Better roads, railways, airports, and power projects have improved connectivity and encouraged investment. The government's focus on renewable energy, agro-industries, and new manufacturing sectors has helped diversify the economy beyond mining. Transparent policies, public-private partnerships, and an emphasis on value addition are driving balanced and sustainable growth.

Jharkhand is now moving from being merely a supplier of raw materials to a state focused on industrial modernization and equitable development.

Social and Rural Development

Jharkhand remains deeply rooted in its villages and forests. The state's approach to development emphasizes education, healthcare, women's empowerment, and rural livelihoods.

Through Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and community-based missions, many tribal and rural families have been connected to livelihood programmes and small-scale entrepreneurship. Skill development and digital services are helping bridge gaps in employment and governance. Improved roads, electricity, and health outreach have brought visible change even in remote areas, reflecting the government's effort to make progress inclusive and people-centred.

Future Prospects and Aspirations

As Jharkhand enters its next 25 years, it stands ready for faster growth built on peace, stability, and sustainable development. The restoration of law and order in former conflict areas has created a strong foundation for new industries and investments.

The state's future goals include industrial diversification, clean energy, eco-tourism, and human resource development. With a young population and growing stability, Jharkhand aims to combine its natural wealth with innovation and entrepreneurship to become a model of inclusive growth.

The key challenge will be to maintain a

balance between economic growth, social justice, and environmental protection - ensuring that progress benefits all without harming nature.

Conclusion

The story of Jharkhand at 25 is one of resilience, renewal, and hope. From years of struggle and underdevelopment, a confident and forward-looking state has emerged. The bravery of its security forces, the dedication of its officials, and the hard work of its citizens have together shaped Jharkhand's success.

They have turned adversity into opportunity and aspiration into achievement. As Jharkhand steps into its next 25 years, it carries forward a proud legacy - of sacrifice, perseverance, and promise - with faith that peace, development, and dignity for all will continue to guide its path.

Chhattisgarh: At a turning point of growth

Subsequently, the land acquisition process began, and in record time - within two months - compensation exceeding ₹55 crore was distributed to landowners for the acquired barren land.

To ensure better health, education, and employment opportunities for Bastar's residents, an MoU with Tata Group was also signed. It included provisions for a super-specialty hospital, premium schools, an engineering college, and employment opportunities for local youth.

However, due to bureaucratic hurdles at higher administrative levels, the project could not progress. Tragically, that acquired barren land later became a victim of political opportunism, and its return to its multiple landowners was publicised as an achievement - but in my view, it was a severe setback to Bastar's growth and prosperity.

I consider it a major lost opportunity - this project could have transformed Bastar's destiny and naturally eradicated Naxalism.

Today, the vision of a Naxal-free India is yielding tangible results.

This is truly a sunrise moment for Bastar. What

is now needed is a robust developmental roadmap so that this time, the “take-off” becomes a real flight.

If Chhattisgarh utilizes this opportunity wisely, it can emerge as a leading pillar of a developed India by 2047.

Then one could truly say - “Chhattisgarhiya, sable badhiyal!”

(The people of Chhattisgarh - the best of all!)

Uttarakhand: development and...

The number of MSMEs in the state has grown to approx. 80,000 new businesses over the last 25 years, with investment of over Rs 17,000 crore.

The manufacturing sector now contributes about one-third of the state's GDP.

The state's promotion of horticulture, forests, medicinal & aromatic plants, and associated processing industries shows potential for eco-friendly industrialisation.

But caution is required i.e., heavy, large-scale industry especially in fragile hill zones, must be carefully regulated. The state's strength should lie in small, green, local industries that preserve ecology and generate local jobs.

Policing: Humane, Tech-Savvy, Efficient

Another positive narrative has been the transformation in law enforcement and public safety. The state police has come up to SMART police vision of Hon'ble Prime Minister.

The state police is increasingly using technology: digital systems, drone surveillance, cyber-units, special task forces etc.

Public-friendly measures, community policing initiatives and improved responsiveness are helping make the force more citizen-friendly.

Health & Education in the Hills: The Work Ahead

While much has improved, the hills of Uttarakhand still face gaps in health and education. Schools, colleges and medical facilities have expanded, but many high-altitude and remote

villages remain underserved.

Challenges include: attracting and retaining qualified teachers and doctors, providing year-round access (roads and power disruptions hamper this), and tailoring education & health services to the specific needs of hill communities.

This is a key priority: without strong human? capacity infrastructure, the other gains risk being undercut by migration, brain?drain and out-flow of youth.

The Industrialisation Choice: Eco-Friendly Only

Given Uttarakhand's unique Himalayan environment, there is a strong imperative to choose the right kind of industry.

Large heavy-industry projects like steel plants, major chemical plants, massive factory complexes carry high risks of environmental degradation, biodiversity loss, landslide triggers and unsustainable migration.

The state's future lies better in eco-friendly industries: small manufacturing, value-added forest products, medicinal plant processing, rural crafts, agro-processing, green tourism services, and clean energy components.

Policy must emphasise: low? impact footprint, local employment, minimal environmental harm, respect for ecology & culture, and alignment with carrying? capacity of the mountain ecosystem.

Tourism: Rapid Growth with a Caveat

Tourism has been perhaps the most visible growth story in Uttarakhand but also the most delicate.

The numbers are staggering: over 23 crore (230 million) tourist visits in the past three years.

The state's “homestay scheme” has been highly successful: more than 6,000 registered homestay operators are benefitting in rural and hill zones.

Tourism has diversified beyond the marquee hill stations to remote destinations, adventure circuits, and lesser-known valleys. This spreads economic benefit more widely.

But caution is needed: “blind tourism” meaning unplanned, over-intensive tourist

flows, infrastructure strain, ecological stress, social displacement must be avoided. The hills have finite carrying capacity. References warn about environmental risk from unregulated growth.

The homestay model, responsible tourism, smaller-scale circuits, local participation must be the template going forward.

Concluding Reflections & The Road Forward

As Uttarakhand completes 25 years as a state, the narrative is one of proud transformation i.e., better roads, better connectivity, increased tourism, growing industries, improved power access, more responsive governance. But the story is not complete, and indeed, given the fragile terrain and unique challenges of the Himalayas, the next phase must be conscious, sustainable and inclusive.

- Key imperatives for the next 25 years include:
- Ensuring health and education systems reach every village, especially remote hill clusters.
- Prioritising eco-friendly industries, rather than heavy industrialisation that may damage the ecosystem.
- Managing tourism in a way that respects local culture, ecology and infrastructure limits, maintaining balance between growth and carrying capacity.
- Strengthening infrastructure and power access, but doing so while mitigating environmental risk (landslides, glaciers, habitat disruption).
- Enhancing local employment, entrepreneurship in hill zones, so that people don't feel compelled to migrate to plains.
- Keeping governance responsive, policing citizen-centric, and public services high-tech yet rooted in local realities.

Uttarakhand has shown what is possible. The hills have come into sharper connectivity with the world. But the mountains are a gift. They demand custodianship. If the next 25 years lean into sustainable development with Himalayan wisdom, Uttarakhand will shine as a model of how mountain states can grow with dignity, ecology and equity.

Flavours of Jharkhand: Where forest, faith and food converge



ANIL
RAJPUT

In the eastern reaches of India lies Jharkhand, a land shaped by the vast contours of the Chota Nagpur Plateau and the rolling Santhal Pargana, where granite ridges, forested hills and meandering rivers create a fascinating landscape. The arrival of the monsoon season governs the rhythm of this land, from sowing to harvest, from festivals to celebration. Known as the “land of treasures”, Jharkhand is a tapestry of sal and teak groves, iron-rich valleys, and rivers like the Subarnarekha and Koel that nourish both people and plains. Although the state was formally created on November 15, 2000, its soul is ancient, embellished with rich traditions of tribal communities whose music, artistry, and food reflect a harmony between human life and nature. The people, grounded yet resilient, have built a legacy that is recognised for its culture and cuisine, which is earthy, honest, and deeply tied to the land.

The earliest stories of Jharkhand trace back to the Mesolithic and Chalcolithic periods when early inhabitants are known to have shaped microliths and copper tools to tame forests, clear land and till the soil. In the Vedic age, the region lay on the eastern periphery of Magadha where the use of iron tools transformed the landscape into fertile farmlands. As centuries unfolded, the Nagvanshi dynasty, claiming descent from the Nagas, the semi divine serpent beings of Indian mythology, consolidated rule over the Chota Nagpur plateau, building temples, tanks and forts amidst dense forests. These forests supplied elephants, timber, and lac to neighbouring kingdoms, forming a vital trade network. Later, the Mughal Empire extended loose control over the area, but the rugged terrain ensured local autonomy. When the British arrived, they mined the land and taxed the forests, provoking waves of tribal resistance. The uprisings led by Tilka Manjhi, Birsu Munda, and Sidho-Kanho became legends of defiance, asserting both identity and dignity. The movement for a separate state grew from these roots of self-determination, culminating in the creation of Jharkhand, a recognition of a civilisation whose culture, ruggedness, and food long predated its borders.

The spiritual fabric of Jharkhand reflects this continuity between land and life. Hinduism, Jainism, and tribal faiths coexist in peaceful equilibrium and harmony. The Parasnath Hill, or Shikharji, stands among India's most sacred Jain pilgrimages, while rivers like the Swarnarekha, meaning “streak of gold”, hold divine status and host festivals like Chhath Puja and Makar Sankranti. While temples dedicated to Surya, Shiva, and Durga dot the hills, faith in Jharkhand is not confined to these divine sanctuaries. Among the Oraon, Munda, and Santhal tribes, nature itself stands as a temple. Every sal tree, stream, and grain of soil holds spiritual meaning and is revered as such. The festivals of Sarhul, Sohrai and Karma are living expressions of gratitude, celebrating the flowering of trees, the fertility of fields, and the harmony of community. The blending of animism, Hindu devotion, and folk spirituality has created a culture of coexistence where reverence to nature and humanity is the accepted way of life.



The cuisine of Jharkhand is a mirror of its land, modest in appearance but rich in depth, drawing inspiration and resource from the soil, forest and seasons. Meals typically begin with rice or millet, followed by dal (lentils), sabzi (vegetables), and chutney, often ending with curd or a sweet. The aroma of sarson ka tel (mustard oil), used widely as a medium of cooking, defines the kitchen, while wild greens, bamboo shoots, mushrooms, and forest tubers provide nutrition and character. Jharkhand's food can be understood through three intertwined culinary trends: agrarian, forest tribal, and urban festive, each influenced by its surroundings and environment.

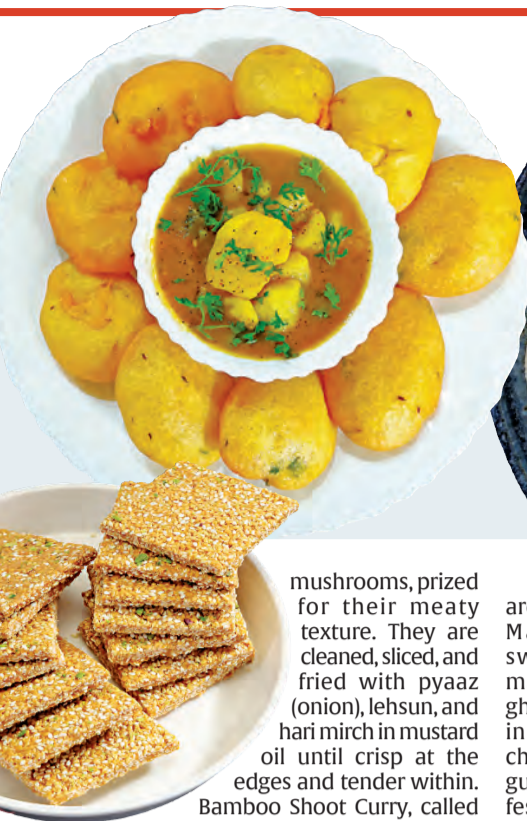
The agrarian heart of Jharkhand lies in the smoke of village hearths where rotis and rice form the traditional foundation of the meal. One of its most iconic dishes, Litti Chokha, begins with balls of gehu (wheat) dough stuffed with satttu (roasted gram flour), flavoured with jeera (cumin), hing (asafoetida), adrak (ginger), and la mirch (red chilli). These dough balls are baked slowly over coal or open fire until golden and slightly charred, then brushed with ghee and served with Chokha, a smoky mash of baigan (eggplant), aloo (potato) and tamatar (tomato) seasoned with chopped lehsun (garlic), hari mirch (green chilli), dhaniya (coriander) and a dash of mustard oil. This pairing defines the very soul of Jharkhand, rustic, balanced, and nourishing. Another staple is Dhuska, a crispy deep fried bread made by fermenting a batter of chawal (rice) and chana dal (split chickpeas). It is ladled into hot mustard oil and fried until the edges turn crisp while the center remains soft, and is served with spicy aloo bharta (mashed potato) or ghugni (yellow pea curry). The aroma of Dhuska, frying in the morning air in markets and homes, itself defines the very spirit of the land.

Equally beloved is Chilka Roti, a thin savoury pancake made of rice flour and besan (gram flour) mixed with water, salt and chopped onions.

It is cooked on a tawa until golden on both sides and eaten with Chana Dal Chutney or fresh curd. Dal Pitha, meanwhile, showcases the region's fondness for steamed foods and is one of Jharkhand's most celebrated traditional dishes especially prepared during festivals and community celebrations. Made from rice flour dough and stuffed with a spiced paste of moong dal (split green gram) or chana dal, the Pithas are shaped by hand, steamed, and served with tangy imli (tamarind) chutney. For many households, these soft dumplings are the essence of comfort food, eaten during monsoon evenings or festivals. Another dish that represents simplicity and seasonality is Bansh Kanda, or bamboo shoot stir fry, where tender shoots are boiled to remove bitterness, then sautéed with onions, garlic, and red chilli in mustard oil, their mild sourness complementing plain rice. Safed Bara, small fried lentil rings, widely sold at tea stalls across cities and villages alike, are crisp on the outside, airy within, eaten hot with green coriander mint chutney. Chura Dahi, a simple yet cooling combination of flattened rice soaked in curd and topped with sugar or jaggery, is another rural staple, especially during the summer months when light and refreshing meals are preferred. To close a meal, sweets such as Til Barfi and Tilkut hold special significance in winter. Both are made with roasted til (sesame seeds) and molten gur (jaggery), shaped into discs or slabs that provide warmth, energy, and festive delight in the cold season.

Jharkhand's forest and tribal cuisine, on the other hand, is where ancient techniques meet timeless flavour.

Ingredients that are not cultivated but gathered from the wild include mushrooms after the first rain, bamboo shoots from shaded groves, and leaves or tubers from the forest soil. Rugra Fry is one such delicacy made from seasonal rugra



mushrooms, prized for their meaty texture. They are cleaned, sliced, and fried with pyaaz (onion), lehsun, and hari mirch in mustard oil until crisp at the edges and tender within.

Bamboo Shoot Curry, called Haduwa Tarkari, combines boiled shoots with onions, garlic, turmeric and a dash of tamarind to produce a tangy, smoky curry served with rice. To wash down these hearty meals is a traditional rice based beverage called Handia, that is made by mixing boiled rice with a ranu culture, a blend of ground forest herbs, and left to ferment in earthen pots for two to three days. The resulting drink is mildly alcoholic, sweet sour in taste, and integral to tribal gatherings and harvest festivals. Equally cherished is Mahua Liqueur, distilled from the flowers of the mahua tree, a sacred and versatile plant in Jharkhand's forests. Its distinct floral sweetness and earthy aroma mark festive occasions, while Mahua Ladoo, made from dried mahua flowers, wheat flour and jaggery, represents the same heritage in a sweet, non-alcoholic form, uniting ritual and flavour.

Non vegetarian fare in Jharkhand's tribal kitchens is equally distinctive. Bonga Chicken, or bamboo smoked chicken, is made by marinating pieces of desi murga (country chicken) in salt, garlic paste, haldi (turmeric) and la mirch, then stuffed inside hollow bamboo stalks sealed with sal leaves. The bamboo tubes are placed beside an open wood fire until the meat cooks in its own juices, absorbing the scent of smoke and leaf. This dish beautifully captures the spirit of tribal ingenuity, simplicity, and harmony with nature. Dehati Mutton (local mutton), another rural classic, begins by marinating mutton in mustard oil, garlic, ginger, dhaniya (coriander powder), and red chilli paste. It is then slow cooked over firewood with chopped onions and tomatoes until the oil separates and the meat turns tender, producing a deep, spicy gravy served with rice or rotis. Fish lovers along the Koel and Subarnarekha rivers have a favourite in Machhli Bhaja that is prepared by coating river fish such as rohu, katla, tengra, magur and singi with rice flour, salt and chilli before frying them crisp in mustard oil. In forest communities, Venison Curry or wild fowl curry may be cooked with minimal spice, only garlic, onion and tamarind, allowing the natural flavour of the meat to come through. These dishes are prepared in earthen pots or banana leaf wraps, representing a culinary practice older than modern civilization, cooking that respects the ingredient and the environment equally.

Festivals and urban gatherings add another vibrant layer to Jharkhand's culinary identity. During Chhath Puja, Thekua, an essential offering, are small round sweets made by kneading atta (wheat flour) with jaggery syrup and frying in ghee until golden and crisp. They symbolise purity and gratitude and carry both cultural and religious significance. Rice Laddoos made with rice flour, jaggery and ghee are another favourite. During Durga Puja and Diwali, the



aroma of Malpua, a sweet pancake made from flour, banana and jaggery fried in ghee and soaked in sugar syrup, can be found in every home. Bowls of Kheer made with chawal (rice), milk and sugar are shared with guests, while Puri Sabzi meals serve as savoury festive spreads. Festivals are therefore marked not only for their religious significance but the delicious meals that accompany them. Urban streets bustle with vendors selling Litti Chokha, Dhuska and Bara, their stalls surrounded by chatter, the sharp scent of mustard oil and the sound of frying that defines the region's food-scape. During Sohrai, when cattle are decorated and fields are blessed, families cook both vegetarian and meat dishes, including Dehati Chicken and bamboo shoot pickles, eaten with steaming rice and handia.

Thus, every meal in Jharkhand reflects the land it springs from, the grain of the soil, the greens of the forest, and the serenity of its people. While rice or roti form the foundation, dal and vegetables add balance, wild ingredients lend surprise, and sweets or fermented drinks bring closure. Mustard oil, garlic, green chilli and coriander tie every element together in a harmony of heat, tang and aroma. There is no excess, only equilibrium. The cuisine, though simple, follows an ancient science of nourishment and sustainability, where food is cooked slowly, fermented naturally, and served fresh. Today, Jharkhand's kitchens are expanding beyond village courtyards. In Ranchi and Jamshedpur, cafés serve millet rotis with chutney dips, handia mocktails and bamboo shoot tacos. Tribal dishes once confined to forest homes now appear on culinary festival menus. Young chefs are rediscovering recipes like Rugra Fry and Dal Pitha, modernising them while preserving their authenticity. Yet the essence remains unchanged; food here is both memory and identity, a dialogue between the old and the new.

Preserving Jharkhand's culinary heritage means safeguarding not only recipes but a philosophy of life shaped by balance, respect, and resilience. The slow roasting of satttu-stuffed Litti, the fermenting of Handia in earthen pots, and the distilling of Mahua Liqueur in tribal villages embody a wisdom where nourishment and nature coexist in perfect harmony. These are not just dishes; they are stories of survival, science, and spirituality written in flavour. The turmeric that heals, the mustard oil that warms, and the garlic that strengthens have long sustained bodies and communities with quiet grace. For the traveller, the cook, or the dreamer in search of authenticity, Jharkhand's cuisine stands as both humble and profound, a living reflection of the land itself. Yet its true power lies in continuity, in ensuring that future generations inherit not only the taste but the truth behind these meals. Passing down these traditions means passing down identity, sustainability, and belonging. If we protect these culinary legacies today, we safeguard a heritage of nourishment and meaning for the generations yet to come.

(The writer is Secretary, Cuisine India Society)

Ek dum raseelo Rajasthan: Flavours fiesta!

TEAM AGENDA

From the golden sands of Jaisalmer to the tranquil lakes of Udaipur, with a whiff of the Pink City's spice and sparkle, Rajasthan's kitchens have always known how to tell a story. *Rangeelo Rajasthan: Thaata, Maat aur Rasoi*, hosted at Infinity, Crowne Plaza New Delhi Mayur Vihar Noida in collaboration with Holiday Inn Jaipur City Centre, brought that story straight to Delhi's plate. After all, Delhi may pride itself on its *butter chicken* and *chaat*, but when chefs travel from Jaipur to cook, even the capital's food lovers know it's time to sit up and take notes.

Over ten days, diners explored a cyclic menu of more than fifty dishes, ensuring fresh experiences every evening. Mewar's offerings included *Mewari Safed Maas*, *Dal Bafla*, *Gatte ki Sabji*, and *Badam Halwa* rich in ghee, milk, and dry fruits, reflecting the opulence of palace kitchens. Marwar's desert cuisine was represented through *Dal Baati Choorma*, *Ker Sangri*, *Jungli Maas*, and *Lehsun Tikka* — earthy, robust, and intensely spiced, shaped by resourcefulness and tradition. Regional specialties such as *Bajra Raab*, *Mawa Kachori*, *Ghevar*, and *Moong Dal Halwa* high-



lighted the enduring flavours of Rajasthan's varied culinary landscape.

One of the festival's most captivating highlights was the live making of traditional lac bangles, a Rajasthani craft where artisans heat natural resin, mould it deftly, and decorate it with mirrors and beads in vivid colours. The rhythmic clinking of bangles paired beautifully

with the soulful notes of Rajasthani Sufi music, filling the space with warmth and nostalgia. Visitors, including several from abroad, eagerly tasted the dishes and chatted with the chefs, many exclaiming with delight, “Maza aa gaya!”

Chefs Roushan Sharma and Hem Singh Gurjar curated the menu, ensuring each dish captured the authenticity and artistry of Rajasthan's royal and rustic kitchens. From the perfectly textured *Dal Baati Choorma* to

the delicately spiced *Mewari Safed Maas* and indulgent *Badam Halwa* and *Ghevar*, every bite showcased the region's essence while remaining approachable to modern palates.

Rangeelo Rajasthan, ran until 16th November 2025 and succeeded in translating these regal and rustic kitchens into an urban, immersive experience celebrating heritage, taste, and culture. As the evening drew to a close with folk melodies and satisfied smiles, one couldn't help but wonder — does food from the desert truly taste better when it carries the soul of its land?

Where stories boldly take flight

TEAM AGENDA

Every once in a while, something arrives with impact. That's precisely what *Barbet & Pals* feels like: a place that serves drinks and tells stories in liquid form. It is the brainchild of two of India's most well-known bartenders — Jeet Rana and Chirag Pal — who, after years of crafting cocktails behind the country's best bars, created a setting that's equal parts passion project, nostalgia, and rebellion. Step inside, and you're greeted by warm wood, glimmers of gold, and a bar that hums with a low, infectious energy. The walls seem to breathe — alive with laughter, clinking glasses, and that particular kind of magic that happens when people come together to celebrate something real. The inspiration comes from the Barbet bird-colourful, loud, always surrounded by its friends and that's exactly the mood here: no one drinks alone; everyone belongs to the flock.

The cocktail menu, aptly called “The Nest,” is intriguing. Jeet's creations are bold and playful — “Tickle My Pickle,” briny and cheeky, instantly became my favourite; “OTP” delivers a sweet-spicy punch, while “Bodo Saviour” surprises with a fresh, herbaceous

lift. Chirag's cocktails are soulful and layered — “Panache,” infused with saffron, is elegant and aromatic, while “Mind the Gap” pays homage to London's underground bars: dark, moody, and perfectly balanced. And “Root Cause” — a witty nod to Jeet's earthy, smooth, and delightfully unexpected. Then there's the “Bird's Eye View: Kumaon Edition,” a rotating micro-menu exploring wild berries, pine, and foraged roots from the hills. Each drink here is a postcard from the mountains — a tribute to forgotten Indian flavours. The food, curated by Chef Amninder Sandhu, matches the cocktails in imagination. Barbet Nibbles - crisp Khichia with raw mango and mulberry chutneys - set the tone, while Gol-Gol Bread with Nolen Gur butter offers comfort. The Bar-Brät, a Naga pork sausage with fermented bamboo shoot ice cream, is sweet, smoky, and original, and Flock Fried Chicken - crisp with truffle garlic emulsion and a poached egg — is pure indulgence.

Dessert arrives with flair — Warm Rum Bal Mithai Sundae evokes nostalgia, Limoncello Peaches & Vanilla Ice Cream tastes like summer. By the end, golden-hour chats turn to chaos and laughter; the magic is in the glass and company.



Mind wavers: Five things that influence your mind

GURUDEV SRI SRI RAVI SHANKAR

There was a beautiful garden with lots of fruits and flowers on top of a mount. The chief gardener would stand on top of this mount and look at the people in the garden and would call out to everybody, saying that there were lots of fruits in the garden like mangoes, bananas, and papayas. He would invite them to come and have those fruits. But when they went there, he would come down the hill, and he would change his mind. He would ask them to go away.

Then, he would go up the hill. Sitting there, he would again call out to others to come savour the fruits from the garden, adding what he would do with all the fruit alone, and that he was there to offer them to everybody. And, if they were happy, he would be happy too. He would talk philosophically, but the moment he came down, he'd be back to square one. The people started thinking he was a little crazy. He lost all his credibility. He himself was surprised and didn't understand what was happening to him.

A wise man in the town suggested people should dig below the hill and see what was there. They dug the place up and found the throne of a very well-known king who was known for his generosity, righteousness, and highly spiritual life. When he died, they could not find anybody else fit enough to sit on his throne because it was such a powerful seat. So, people finally buried it under that mount, and it is said that the throne had the vibration of positivity and generosity, which had an impact on the gardener when he went up the hill.

So, even the place you are in has an impact on the mind. Even in your house, you can see that you feel different in different rooms. A place where there has been singing, chanting, and meditation has a different influence on the mind.

The nature of the mind is to waver, just like the nature of water is to flow. There are five factors that influence the mind the most: Food, place, time, past impressions, and associations or actions.

The food we eat sustains our annamaya kosha. Let me explain this to you: we all have five bodies — *Annamaya kosha*, the physical body; *Pranamaya kosha*, the energy body; *Manomaya kosha*, the mind; *Vijnanamaya kosha*, the wisdom, and *Anandamaya kosha*, the bliss. [1]

Food greatly influences the mind. There is a Hindi proverb, 'jaisa ann waisa mann'. If you eat at the wrong time, or the food is not well digested, or it is the wrong food, or it is stale food, it has a certain impact on your body and mind. Even the way you have earned the food also impacts your mind and behaviour. There's a story about this.

The king of Narendra Nagar used to host saints and seers for lunch in his palace every day. Once, a saint stole a silver vessel from the palace. The king was surprised to find a saint stealing a utensil. After four days, the saint brought back the vessel. This surprised the king became even more! The king convened a meeting of learned people in his court and asked them to explain this occurrence.

The group of learned people met and debated

A wise man in the town suggested people should dig below the hill and see what was there. They dug the place up and found the throne of a very well-known king who was known for his generosity, righteousness, and highly spiritual life



“FOOD IS NOT ONLY WHAT YOU EAT. THE ENVIRONMENT IS ALSO FOOD. AIR IS FOOD FOR OUR LUNGS. HEAT OR WARMTH IS ALSO A KIND OF FOOD. PEACE AND JOY ARE FOOD FOR THE SOUL”
— GURUDEV

on the matter, and finally asked the king to find out what food was served to the saints on that day. When the king enquired, it was revealed that some thieves had stolen some rice and daal from a village. The stolen grains were confiscated by the state and brought to the palace, and the same grains were cooked for the saints on that day. The effect of the food stayed for three days. Once the effect of the food faded, the saint wondered why he had stolen the vessel! He came back and returned it.

Food is not only what you eat. The environment is also food. Air is food for our lungs. Water is also food. Heat or warmth is also a kind of food. Peace and joy are food for the soul. The aim of all of these food sources is to increase your 'prana', or the life force level.[2] Fresh food has more prana, while frozen food has very little of it. Similarly, you find a difference in the prana level when you eat fresh vegetables and eat thoroughly baked and deeply fried food. Everybody should have a little bit of knowledge of the right nutrition. If you look at the food habits of two or three generations before, Indians had a very good sense of what to eat and when! My grandmother wouldn't have a meal without some form of spinach in it. And, she would have different types of leafy vegetables on different days of the week. It was almost like a ritual. She would fast on Ekadashi. Occasionally, she would gently fry

or bake one edible variety of white coloured flower and eat it with grated coconut!

The quantity of food also impacts the mind. You may have noticed, when you eat food in moderation, you feel energetic, and when you eat too much, you feel dull and lethargic. This is why our scriptures advocate the practice of Mitahara — which means to exercise balance and restraint in eating food. From time to time, fasting on fruits or juices is also good. Gives your organs a much-needed holiday. Otherwise, we use and overuse them so much, they would have gone to labour court if they could.

The next thing is the influence of a place on the mind. Every place you are in has a different impact on the mind. Even in your house, you find that you feel different in different rooms. A place where people sing devotional songs, chant, and meditate has a different influence on the mind.

Time also impacts the mind. Time effects both the matter and the mind. You keep an apple for too long, and it starts to rot. When you look at any object, you can know how old it is. Our body changes with time. Similarly, time also has an impact on the mind. People seldom notice this! How you feel in the morning is different from how you feel in the afternoon, or how you feel in the evening is different from that at night, isn't it? The state of mind and the feeling also change with time.



THE PAST IMPRESSIONS, OR THE SANSKARAS, AGAIN HAVE A DIFFERENT IMPACT ON THE MIND. AWARENESS, ALERTNESS, KNOWLEDGE, AND MEDITATION ALL HELP ERASE THE PAST IMPRESSIONS

problem with them and you walk away feeling there is no problem at all, or it can be easily solved. You feel lighter. And when you go talk to someone and you feel the problem is heavier than you thought, and you walk away from them with a heavy heart, more depressed and more anxious—that is bad company. Such company cannot let the love blossom in your heart.

Next is, how your actions or inaction influence your mind. You have no control over the involuntary actions. But the voluntary actions that you perform, if you put your awareness and total attention on them, it makes a whole lot of difference in life. This is the power that we all have. If you master the control over your voluntary actions, you will find that your involuntary actions also come under your control. This has happened with many yogis and Siddhas. And meditation is the way to do it. It creates alertness and awareness with which you have the power to act or not act.

This brings the question, “Are we slaves of our mind?” I say no, because there is something beyond the mind, and that is the intellect. When the intellect is strong, it overcomes the impact of all these 5 factors on the mind. When the intellect is weak, the emotions take over the mind.

Now, what if the intellect also gets influenced? Then there is something beyond the intellect, and that is the Self, or the Consciousness. This is where meditation makes a big difference. When you go deep in meditation, your consciousness becomes very subtle, and your mind becomes fresh like a flower. In such a delicate state of consciousness, all thoughts move away, emotions get settled, and you experience the most tranquil, most benevolent, and most beautiful inner space.

Inside India’s political gender shift

TEAM AGENDA

Do women vote as women, or do caste, religion, and class continue to determine their political choices? This question forms the spine of Ruhi Tewari's *What Women Want: Understanding the Female Voter in Modern India*, an intelligent and engaging examination of how the Indian woman voter has evolved from the shadows of obedience into the light of agency. Drawing on nearly two decades of political reportage, Tewari weaves fieldwork, data, and conversation into a compelling study of the changing nature of India's democracy through its most transformative electorate — women.

The book opens with a vignette that feels both distant and familiar. Amsa Amma, a 21-year-old from Hyderabad, cast her first vote during the 1977 general elections, a period clouded by the aftershocks of the Emergency. She was told by her father-in-law and husband whom to vote for.

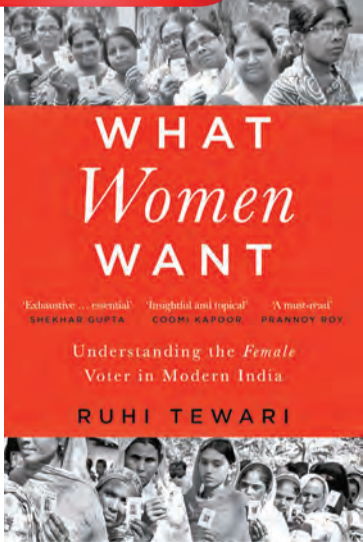
At the polling station, she followed instructions, unaware of the significance of her action. That quiet compliance reflects the condition of the Indian woman voter in the early decades of democracy — invisible, unconsulted, and politically inconsequential. She existed, but only as an extension of the men in her household. That quiet compliance reflects the condition of the Indian woman voter in the early decades of democracy — invisible, unconsulted, and politically inconsequential. She existed, but only as an extension of the men in her household.

From that scene in 1977, Tewari builds a narrative that travels through villages, cities, and political landscapes, tracing how women have redefined participation. Through layered accounts of women who now stand in polling queues of their own accord, the book portrays how political awareness among women has grown, sometimes out of necessity, often out of choice. The author observes that this rising participation has made women central to electoral arithmetic, forcing every political party to rethink its strategy and messaging.

Through her travels, she listens to voices that rarely make it into mainstream political discourse — women who discuss ration cards and gas cylin-



NEW LAUNCH



Title: What Women Want
Author: Ruhi Tewari
MRP: ₹599
Publisher: Juggernaut

ders alongside aspirations for education, safety, and dignity. These are not abstract ideals; they are lived realities shaping political behaviour.

Her examination of welfare politics is particularly incisive. The author questions whether the surge in women-centric schemes - from cash transfers to subsidised cooking gas, has truly empowered women or merely repositioned them as strategic voters in a competitive political market. Author points out that political attention towards women, though often tactical,

has nonetheless created tangible shifts in perception. Women have begun to see themselves as stakeholders in governance rather than passive recipients of policy. In this paradox of opportunism and empowerment lies the core of her argument — even when motivated by political self-interest, the system has inadvertently expanded women's political agency.

The strength of *What Women Want* lies in its layered understanding of women's political choices. The author recognises that women voters are not a homogenous group. Their decisions are influenced by caste, religion, and class, yet connected by a shared history of marginalisation. She shows how women continue to vote within identity boundaries while gradually moving beyond them through awareness and participation.

Tewari's background as a journalist is evident in her sharp observations and grounded storytelling. Her analysis of how the 'Naari voter' has emerged as a distinct political entity is especially engaging. She situates this rise within broader democratic shifts, where social mobility, education, and digital access have changed how women perceive their role as citizens.

Political parties, she notes, have adapted swiftly, recognising women not as a supporting vote bank but as a decisive one.

And as India's democracy evolves, one can't help but ask — do women vote as women, or do caste, religion, and identity still shape their choices at the ballot box?

Being on the shores of the future

The revolution sees technology as a resourceful comrade, while the algorithm acts as the subconscious, informing and driving action

FOLDED
Corner

TEAM AGENDA

The novel, *The Great Reset: Alt+Ctrl+Human* by Juan Antonio March Pujol, is a fictionalisation of social idealist possibilities, much like Philip Allott's *Invisible Power* duology. Social idealism is not an alternative to existing reality, as it might sound; rather, it is the way of making utopian moments in a dystopian world.

It is a way of discovering and sustaining the hope for a better tomorrow. And for the author of *The Great Reset*, technology, which he envisions as a soul force, will emerge as the architect of that utopia. And mind you, there is no metaphysical utopia in this book-utopia is in real time and space. It is that immediate future which humanity ought to make.

What is this tale about? It is a story that tells, with an Aristotelian subtext, how humanity can maximise its happiness by forging optimal outcomes. In the plot, we see Nour, a young Syrian-born woman, purposely moving across spaces and times. But occasionally she resembles the author, a career diplomat (leaving the reader to wonder whether this is a case of author surrogate), walking back into the Platonian cave, having seen light, with a mind full of stories to tell the victims of shadows fated to remain chained in the cave — they are stories about their potential liberation. Her (or his?) countenance reflects hope. Her forehead bears the etched lines of quiet determination-her steps confident.

All voices we hear — what Nour speaks and hears-in the novel are spatialised, not even missing the characteristics of the topography that gives the voices their character. As we hear the voices, we also hear in the background the sounds of deserts — the wind blowing across the sand dunes and the rhythmic beats of the waves on the shores; smell the aroma of gardens and the petrichor of mountains; feel the pell-mell of a city, the depth of the seas, and the silence of the caves. Time and space merge into a compelling narrative.

Nour's journeys also tell us that the



Title: The Great Reset: Alt+Ctrl+Human
Author: Juan Antonio March Pujol (Ambassador of Spain to India)
MRP: ₹495
Publisher: Vitasta Publishing, 2025

social world is a network of human relations-a mind work-superimposed on the natural habitat, the biological world. It reminds us of the findings of Edmund Jennings, the protagonist in *Invisible Power*, that the social habitat can be altered, modified, and improved through ideas. Nour — and through her the author — offers us a cornucopia of ideas.

The chapters are arranged in an alternating order-spaces and the experiences they offer, the feel of being in real places.

Therein, Nour meets many revolutionaries of mind who educate her. Then she slips into a dream of a redemptive deliberation in the United Nations.

These worlds are far apart-the world of reality and dream — yet for the reader they are so near, just a page apart. For Nour too, perhaps, they are not distant worlds-there is

just a dimensional divide between them, and, pretty much like Murakami's “narrator” who moves into the invisible city in *The City and Its Uncertain Walls* with ease, Nour also moves across these worlds with ease. Whatsoever, for the reader, the alternating builds a rhythm that gets the reading going faster-the faster it gets, the deeper the reading becomes. Then, at some point, the rhythm takes over the reader; pages turn involuntarily, and the reader surfs through emotional and powerful waves produced by the ideas.

The novel is a blue book for a top-down revolution — a revolution in minds-that Allott envisioned in *Invisible Power*. The *Great Reset* is an action plan for a revolution in minds. In that revolution, technology will be the resourceful comrade, algorithm will be the subconscious to inform and drive action.

All it takes is a will. The novel infuses hope, the master who tries to enslave our inhibitions. The novel has no moments of nihilism or ambivalence. It has sheer sanguinity and determination, coupled with ingenious and imaginative thinking. There is a strong disapproval of violence, killing, and bigotry, and an occasional lament for making histories awful that they cannot be recalled without regret.

The author is not a hopeful watcher-as the maker — of the story and the transformative schemes unfolding in the novel, but he is a functionary in it. We feel that he walks somewhere in the novel alongside Nour, or perhaps by being Nour himself.

Throughout the novel, there is a profound sense of ownership and accountability — the writer (in the protagonist's voice) has taken the responsibility to be the harbinger of change. By the end of the novel, the reader feels the author asking, in the words of Khalil Gibran, “Was it I who spoke? Was I not also a listener?” Indeed, dear author, you were with Nour who spoke, and you were also with us — your readers-who listened. We heard you — thanks for speaking!