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INSIDE

WORLD 8
SOUTH KOREA TO INSPECT ITS BOEING FLEET AS IT STRUGGLES TO FIND CAUSE OF PLANE CRASH



PUNJAB JAMS NORTH INDIA



Farmers block a road during the statewide 'bandh' called as part of their ongoing protest at Punjab borders, in Amritsar PTI

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ CHANDIGARH / NEW DELHI

Life was hit across Punjab due to a 'bandh' imposed by farmers who have been agitating against the Centre for a legal guarantee of a minimum support price for their crops. Rail and road traffic was crippled and commercial establishments remained shut in several places of the State. Farmers staged 'dharnas' on several roads and highways including in Patiala, Jalandhar, Amritsar, Ferozepur, Bathinda, and Pathankot as part of their bandh call from 7 am to 4 pm, throwing commuter traffic out of gear. A call for a statewide shutdown was given over a

week ago by Samyukta Kisan Morcha (Non-political) and Kisan Mazdoor Morcha and the Centre not acting on the farmers' demand for a legal guarantee for the MSP. The bandh was also enforced to express solidarity with farmer leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal who has been on a fast for the last 35 days at Khanauri border protest site of farmers. Meanwhile, the Supreme Court would on December 31 examine Punjab Government's measures to provide treatment to the ailing farmer leader. A team of the Punjab Government officials on December 29 attempted to persuade the septuagenarian to take medical aid, but he declined it, fearing use of forces to oust him from the protest site.

A high-level team of Punjab Government officials had met Dallewal requesting him to accept medical treatment irrespective of the fast continuing. A vacation bench of Justices Surya Kant and Sudhanshu Dhulia would hear the matter virtually at around 11 am on December 31. On December 28, the top court came down heavily on the Punjab Government for not moving Dallewal to a hospital and doubted the intention of the agitating farmers for resisting the administration of medical aid to their ailing leader. The Bench, however, gave the State Government time till December 31 to persuade Dallewal to move him to a hospital, giving it the liberty to seek logistical support

from the Centre, if the situation warranted. The Punjab Government said it was facing a huge resistance from the protesting farmers who had encircled Dallewal and prevented him from being taken to a hospital. On Monday, farmers observed a sit-in at Dhareri Jattan Toll Plaza which affected vehicular movement on the Patiala-Chandigarh National Highway. At Amritsar's Golden Gate, scores of farmers staged a dharna near the city's entry point. Police there assisted some stranded foreign tourists by arranging auto rickshaws for them to reach the Golden Temple. Farmers squatted on tracks at many places, forcing the railways to cancel several trains passing through the state and short-terminated or short-originated some trains. In Ferozepur, Jalandhar, Ludhiana, and Bathinda, passengers were seen stranded at stations. In Phagwara, farmers staged a dharna near the Sugarmill Crossing on NH-44, blocking the roads leading from Phagwara towards Nakodar, Hoshiarpur, and Nawanshahr. Grain markets were shut in several places across the State. In the Mohali district, farmers staged a dharna at a few points throwing normal movement of vehicular traffic out of gear. Public transport remained off roads at several places, while most private bus operators suspended services, abiding by the bandh call. Many long-distance private buses and trucks carrying fruits and vegetables were held up due to the bandh.



COLD WORSENS THE FREEZE

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

WEATHER

AQI	173
MAX	15°C(-5)
MIN	10.3°C(+3)

Amid the inclement weather conditions, north and northwest India would face the brunt of cold day spell over the coming days. The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has also forecast 'dense to very dense' fog in northern and western parts of the country during the next two-three days. Dense fog may affect some airports, highways and railway routes in the areas of met-sub-division. According to IMD, a fresh western disturbance in north India starting January 4, expected to bring snowfall and rain. Scattered precipitation is likely in the western Himalayan region from January 1 to 3, with widespread rainfall and snowfall predicted for January 4 and 5. The entire north India was covered by a blanket of dense to very dense fog on Monday. "Recent Satellite imagery detected fog layer over South Jammu, Punjab, Haryana, Delhi, north Rajasthan,

Madhya Pradesh, west and south Uttar Pradesh, south Himachal Pradesh, south Uttarakhand, southwest Bihar, west Jharkhand, north Chhattisgarh and east Gujarat," IMD wrote on X. The IMD has also predicted rain or snowfall over the 'western Himalayan region' between January 1 and January 5 due to a western disturbance. The weather department anticipated that foggy conditions would continue late at night and early in the morning across regions such as Odisha, Assam, Meghalaya, and other northeastern states until December 31. These conditions were expected to persist in Punjab, Haryana, and Chandigarh until January 1.

THE FINAL COUNTDOWN



ISRO's PSLV-C60 carrying SpaDeX and its payloads, lifts off from the first launch pad at Satish Dhawan Space Centre, in Sriharikota PTI

AAP in Election Mode

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI



On a day when the imams affiliated with the Delhi Waqf Board protested outside former Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's residence, demanding their overdue salaries, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) on Monday announced a new scheme that offers a monthly honorarium of Rs 18,000 to Hindu temple's Pujaris and Granthis of Gurudwaras if elected to the upcoming Assembly polls. In a bid to dent the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)'s Hindu's vote bank the AAP's convenor said the registration for the Pujari Granthi Samman Yojana will begin on Tuesday. He also said he would visit the Hanuman Mandir in Connaught Place on Tuesday to oversee the registration process for priests there. Registration will also be done at other temples and Gurudwaras across the city by the AAP workers, he said. During their protest the All India Imam Association claimed their monthly honorarium of Rs 18,000 (for Imams) and Rs 16,000 (for Muezzins) have been delayed for over one and a half years and accused the Delhi government of ignoring their plight. Amid a huge row over a scheme that promises a monthly stipend to

unemployed women, the announcement by Arvind Kejriwal is a continuation of his welfare schemes for the people of Delhi which has however led to serious controversies. He first announced the Sanjeevani scheme for senior citizens, then the Mahila Samman Yojana, Dr Ambedkar Samman Scholarship scheme for Dalit students and now the monthly salary scheme for priests. "Today I am making an important announcement regarding a scheme. The name of the scheme is Pujari Granthi Samman Yojana. Under this, there is a provision to give an honorarium to the priests of temples and the 'granthis' of the Gurudwara. They will be given an honorarium of about Rs 8,000 per month", Kejriwal announced while addressing a

press conference. "This is happening for the first time in the country. The priest is a class that has carried forward the rituals from generation to generation. They never paid attention to their family and we never paid attention to them," the AAP chief added. Terming Kejriwal's 'Pujari Granthi Samman Yojana' a "political stunt", the BJP claimed that no one would get even a single rupee since the latter does not have any data with him. Delhi BJP chief Veerendra Sachdeva said that Kejriwal is now a "defeated and desperate" leader who is making populist announcements daily to stay in power. Former Delhi MP Parvesh Verma claimed that Kejriwal is remembering 'Ishwar' and 'Waheguru' due to the fear of loss.

LG's New Year greetings to Delhi's Temporary Chief Minister

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI



Extending season's greetings to Delhi Chief Minister Atishi, Lieutenant Governor Vinay Kumar Saxena has taken the opportunity to hit out at her predecessor and AAP convenor Arvind Kejriwal for calling her a "temporary Chief Minister". In a strongly worded letter to Atishi, Lt Governor expressed his disapproval of the AAP chief referring to her as a 'temporary Chief Minister'. The letter, criticised the remark as an affront to constitutional values and the dignity of the office. Saxena described the comments as not only insulting to Atishi but also disrespectful to the President of India and himself as her representative. He emphasised the importance of maintaining a respectful level of public discourse, particularly regarding the role of the Chief Minister. "... I found this very objectionable and I was hurt by it. It was not only an insult to you, but also to your appointee, the President of India and to me as her representative" As a Lieutenant Governor, I am concerned about this level of public discourse and at the same time, I am hurt by the conversation of presenting the full-time Chief Minister of my government as a temporary Chief Minister..." reads the

letter. Taking a jibe at AAP over the announcement, the Delhi Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) shared a poster on X, showing Arvind Kejriwal controlling Atishi with strings, insinuating that he would run the Delhi government through her. In a statement Delhi BJP President Virendra Sachdeva, stated that the letter written by the Lieutenant Governor Vinay Kumar Saxena to Chief Minister Atishi Marlena reflects the true reality of the Delhi government. He said that while political ideologies may differ, it is "at least evident that Atishi Marlena is seen carrying out administrative duties as a Chief Minister, something that has been notably absent during the almost ten-year tenure of Arvind Kejriwal, who merely functioned as a

'ribbon-cutting' Chief Minister". The LG further outlined the challenges faced by the Delhi government including the Yamuna pollution crisis, garbage management, and the poor state of infrastructure in industrial and slum areas. He slammed the AAP supremo and said, "The public characterisation of a temporary or stopgap chief minister, as articulated by Shri Kejriwal, has no constitutional basis. It is also a deplorable violation of the democratic spirit and values enshrined in the Constitution authored by Babasaheb Ambedkar". The Lieutenant Governor lauded Atishi for her approach in governance, contrasting it with her predecessor's alleged reluctance to take on administrative responsibilities. "For the first

Security upgrade for New Year's eve

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

time during my tenure, I have seen a Chief Minister actively performing the duties of the office," he wrote. Saxena had earlier offered words of praise for Atishi, calling her "a thousands times better" than her predecessor, with whom he has had several tempestuous run-ins, on legal, administrative, and governance issues, over the past months. In September, AAP leader Atishi was named as the new Chief Minister of Delhi following Kejriwal's announcement to resign from the top post after being granted interim bail for his alleged involvement in the Delhi liquor policy case. The official announcement was made by Delhi minister Gopal Rai. Notably, several other AAP leaders were in the fray to succeed Kejriwal, including Kailash Gahlot, Saurabh Bharadwaj and Gopal Rai. Atishi was elevated to the position of cabinet minister in the Delhi government after Satyender Jain and Manish Sisodia tendered their resignations last year. She, along with Saurabh Bharadwaj, were made Delhi ministers, but Atishi was given charge of 14 departments, including education, finance, planning, PWD, water, power and public relations.

Tonight, On the eve of 2025, many will party the night away, but there are some who will be on duty keeping the National Capital safe. Meet the brave hearts who will stand in the chilling cold to help ensure that the celebrations go on safely. "We do not consider this to be a conundrum at all, we are happy to serve the people so that they can celebrate the New Year without any problem and enjoy it to the fullest," were the words of police officers who will ensure that security arrangements do not fall short and crime elements do not hamper celebrations of the common people on December 31st and January 1st. Delhi Police remains on alert as people from its neighbouring states are also expected to come to Delhi for celebrations in large numbers. Delhi shares borders with Haryana and Uttar Pradesh and lies close to Rajasthan. The traffic and local police personnel say they are neither worried nor frustration remains on their faces.

Falling Sensex, Rising Rupee: Where is India headed?

The din around the falling Sensex and depreciating Rupee has been hard to miss, and understandably, human nature makes us worry when markets falter. For many investors, even those with mutual fund investments, the recent market trends might feel like storm clouds on the horizon. But markets, much like seasons, naturally cycle through growth, correction, and recovery phases. What's happening now isn't the collapse of some fear; rather, it's a moment for perspective, patience, and clarity about the underlying factors at play. The equities landscape has seen corrections in the Sensex and Nifty, particularly since September 2024, causing unease. However, it's

worth noting that these indices have been on a nine-year bull run, delivering around 9per cent growth year-to-date, even after recent declines. Much of the decline stems from significant selling by Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs), who have offloaded over Rs 1.19 lakh crore worth of equities through exchanges this year. Interestingly, while exiting the secondary market, FIIs have invested more than Rs 1.2 lakh crore in the primary market during 2024, including Rs 17,331 crore in December alone, making them net investors in India. This dual approach suggests the sell-off is more about short-term profit-booking and global fund reallocation than a loss of confidence in India's long-term growth prospects.

Global factors have also fueled this sell-off. China's aggressive stimulus measures boosted the CSI 300 index by 25per cent since the announcement, diverting significant FII flows from India. Investors, however, are closely watching to see how effectively the government can address structural economic challenges and navigate concerns of potential overvaluation in the market. Weak domestic Q2 earnings, with 44per cent of companies missing profit expectations as per an analyst report, further dampened short-term sentiment. The year 2024 was a battleground between bulls and bears, characterised by intense volatility driven by key events such as the Indian general elections, the US presidential race, and a host of geopolitical tensions, including the Israel-Iran conflict. Yet, India's



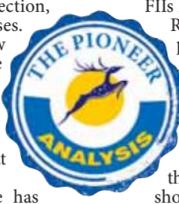
PROF. GOURAV VALLABH

macroeconomic fundamentals remain strong with high potential bank lending, 13-year low gross non-performing assets (GNPA) at 2.5 per cent as of September 2024, expected inflation easing, and robust private spending. This correction, while concerning, does not signal a structural problem. Now, let's address the Rupee, another point of concern. Over 2024, the Rupee depreciated by

around three per cent, with approximately two per cent occurring in the last quarter against the US Dollar. The Dollar is strengthening because of Donald Trump's public pronouncements favouring universal tariff hikes (more on the import of Chinese goods), mass deportation of illegal immigrants and income tax cuts. If translated into policy, these are expected to increase the US economy's inflation. As a result, the 10-year US Treasury yield, now above 4.5per cent, has made US assets more attractive, narrowing the India-US bond yield spread to ~230 basis points, its lowest level since 2006, and has halved in 2 years. All this makes capital outflows from emerging markets, including India. Although the Rupee is hitting lows against the US Dollar, its exchange rate has scaled an all-time high in real terms. The

Real Effective Exchange Rate (REER) index of the rupee touched a record of 108 in November 2024, strengthening by 4.5per cent during this calendar year. The REER measures the rupee value not only against the dollar, but against the global currencies. This was a broad dollar strengthening that reduced the attractiveness of the Indian currency, thus making it vulnerable to greater selling pressure and further depreciation. The rupee is not weakening as much as the dollar is strengthening against all currencies. The Rupee has appreciated against major currencies like the Euro, Pound, and Australian Dollar. The Euro fell from Rs 91.84 on December 31, 2023, to Rs 89.10 by December 30, 2024. Similarly, the Australian Dollar dropped from Rs 56.64 to Rs 53.33 and Swiss Franc dipped from

Rs 98.88 to Rs 94.71 over the same period. This shows the Rupee's resilience even against some of the world's strongest currencies. Despite these challenges, India's external accounts have shown resilience. The Current Account Deficit (CAD) narrowed slightly to 1.2per cent of GDP in Q2 FY25 from 1.3 per cent in the previous year. The fiscal deficit, which had ballooned to 9.2 per cent during the pandemic, is now down to 5.6 per cent. In this context, the Rupee's movements reflect global dynamics rather than intrinsic weaknesses in India's economy. Emerging market currencies, including the Brazilian Real, Indonesian Rupiah, Chinese Yuan, and Russian Ruble, also depreciated against the Dollar, reflecting the Dollar's global strength rather than specific Rupee weakness.





Online application for Anganwadi workers and assistants to start on January 2: Arya

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The Women Empowerment and Child Development (WECD) minister Rekha Arya announced that applications for Anganwadi workers and assistants can be submitted online starting from January 2 and will close on January 31.

She said that mini Anganwadi centres were upgraded in all districts of the

State, which resulted in the creation of new posts. She emphasised the necessity to amend the rules for these appointments. The Anganwadi Recruitment Rules were revised in the previous cabinet meeting, paving the way for the hiring process. Subsequently, the department issued government orders on December 18 and 23 for the recruitment, she said

Consequently, submission of online applications for the said vacancies will start from 10 AM on January 2 until 5 PM on January 31. Arya clarified that only women can apply and these vacancies are exclusively in rural areas. Additionally, it is mandatory for applicants to be permanent or native residents of the respective village, she said.

Focus on T-3 strategy to deal with anaemia in pregnant women: Bhadauria

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The mission director of National Health Mission (NHM) Swati Bhadauria has said that the health workers should work on the T-3 strategy- test, treat and talk- to deal with the problem of anaemia in pregnant women.

She gave the order during her inspection of health centres in Udham Singh Nagar district on Monday. The MD said that the T-3 strategy gives priority to timely diagnosis,

treatment and consultancy for anaemia. She directed the officers to ensure availability of necessary equipment for testing of anaemia. Bhadauria said that all the health centres should be equipped with necessary resources for treatment of severe cases of anaemia.

In her visit the MD inspected wards, SNCU, labour room, emergency, mammography, radiology, laboratory, telemedicine service and OPD

at the district hospital in Rudrapur. She was informed that about 700 dialysis are done every month in the hospital. Bhadauria also visited the district TB centre of Udham Singh Nagar. She directed the district TB officer to ensure the availability of TB medicines. Chief medical officer of Udham Singh Nagar, Dr Manoj Kumar Sharma and other senior officers accompanied the MD during her visit.

Many attend Yoga conference at Chamu

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Addressing the one-day Yoga practitioners' conference hosted by Chamu Bharat Swabhiman Trust and Patanjali Yoga Samiti, Rajasthan at Chamu, the chief central in-charge of Bharat Swabhiman Trust Haridwar, Swami Paramarth Dev said

that they must take Yoga to one and all. The district in-charge of Jaipur Rural Bharat Swabhiman, Hanuman Singh Rolania said that a new, robust India could be built by connecting the youngsters with the health-building practice of Yoga.

Yoga Guru Swami Ramdev joined the congregation virtually and addressed all the Yoga enthusiasts present. A large number of Yoga teachers and practitioners aside from prominent academicians attended the gathering.

707 students receive degrees at Navrachana University's 12th convocation

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Navrachana University, Vadodara, celebrated its 12th annual convocation, conferring degrees on 707 students from various disciplines across undergraduate, post-graduate and doctoral programmes. Of the 707 graduating students, 379 were girls and 328 were boys.

Eleven of the 17 gold medalists were also girls. Moreover, six students, including three girls, were awarded PhD degrees. A total of 516 students received bachelor's degrees, 166 students received master's degrees and 24 students received degrees upon completion of five-year integrated

programmes. In her address, chairperson of Navrachana Education Society, Tejal Amin said that the graduates would continue to make the institution proud with their academic achievements and contribution to society.

IN BRIEF

Major General meets CM on Agniveer recruitment

DEHRADUN: Major General Manoj Tiwari met chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhami at the latter's camp office here on Monday. He told the CM that camps would be set up at the State and district levels to ensure maximum participation of the State's youngsters in the upcoming recruitments under the Agniveer scheme. He further said that so far 4,500 candidates have been selected from Uttarakhand for Agniveer, adding that recruitment would also be done on 2,000 vacant posts soon.

THDCIL receives 'India's Best Hydropower Project Enterprise' award in Vizag

DEHRADUN: THDC India Limited (THDCIL) has been presented with the 'India's Best Hydropower Project Enterprise (Storage Hydropower & Development of PSPs)' at the PRAKASHMAY 17th ENERTIA Award 2024 for its exemplary role in sustainable energy, power and renewables. The award was conferred by the Central Electricity Authority chairman Ghanshyam Prasad at a ceremony held in Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh. The THDCIL chairman and managing director RK Vishnoi congratulated the entire team for this achievement. He also highlighted the cutting-edge technology being deployed at the 1,000 MW Tehri Pumped Storage Plant (PSP).

Pantnagar shines at NAAS zonal elocution contest

RUDRAPUR: The final-year UG students Shagun and Chitransh Deviyal from the College of Agriculture affiliated to GB Pant University of Agriculture and Technology shone at the NAAS Zonal Elocution Contest for Zone 5 held at Acharya Narendra Dev University of Agriculture and Technology Kumarganj, Ayodhya. According to the university sources, they displayed exceptional oratory skills and effectively handled the question and answer sessions. Despite the competition being intense, Shagun secured second place and consequently, GBPUAT would now be represented at the national-level NAAS Elocution Contest. Congratulating the participants, the vice-chancellor, Manmohan Singh Chauhan said that such competitions helped foster students' skills, talents and overall personality development. He also appreciated the guidance, encouragement and motivation extended by faculty members which played a crucial role in the students' success.

Rajpur Road residents express concerns ahead of New Year celebration

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Residents along Rajpur Road, particularly from Jakhan to Old Mussoorie Road, have voiced their concerns regarding the heightened traffic congestion and disturbances caused by tourists during the New Year celebrations. They have noted that in order to avoid the disruptive activities associated with tourism, such as loud music in vehicles, heavy traffic and reckless driving, they are refraining from leaving their homes unnecessarily. The authorities must consider the impact of tourism policies and prioritise the well-being of local residents, especially those residing in the Rajpur Road area, the local residents said. A local resident near Jakhan area Sunita Chaddha said that an influx of tourists from Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi and beyond has begun as the New Year approaches. Unfortunately, the annual increase in visitor numbers results in major inconvenience for the locals. The rise in tourist activity has increased traffic congestion in the area. Further, local residents have been adversely affected by various disturbances caused by tourists, such as loud music late into the night and excessive alcohol consumption.

The authorities must address these issues and consider the social well-being of the residents, which has been significantly disrupted, she said. Another local resident, Hashmeet Singh said, "I have refrained from going outside for nearly a week due to the increased traffic congestion caused by increased tourist footfalls in the Rajpur Road area. It is disheartening to witness the negative impact on the city's atmosphere caused by the disruptive behaviour often exhibited by tourists. This situation has become an annual occurrence that ultimately disrupts the celebration of the New Year for locals like us." The founding president of the Rajpur Community Initiative Reenu Paul told this correspondent that the rise in tourist numbers during the summer vacation, New Year celebrations and snowfall is an annual feature. Every year during these periods, she has witnessed various accidents in

the vicinity of Rajpur Road. As a result, local residents have experienced significant financial and emotional burdens. Many residents have suffered damage to their properties due to these accidents. Additionally, the traffic congestion, loud music, alcohol consumption and other nuisance caused by tourists during this time negatively

impact the local community. She emphasised that both she and many others have ceased visiting locations outside their residences from now until the celebrations commence to avoid the disturbances associated with tourism. Regarding the recent decision by the authorities to permit hotels and eateries to operate for 24 hours for a few days during

New Year celebrations, she emphasised that such a tourism policy is not beneficial as it will exacerbate the conditions and hardships faced by local residents. Governmental support for tourism should align with limits and take into account the welfare of both visitors and the local community, she added.

CENTRAL GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES WELFARE HOUSING ORGANISATION
(An autonomous body of GOI under the aegis of M/o Housing & Urban Affairs)
9th Floor, 'B' Wing, Janpath Bhawan, Janpath, New Delhi - 110 001.
Ph - 23717249/23355408/23322192

DEMAND SURVEY FOR HOUSING PROJECT IN BHOPAL

The Central Government Employees Welfare Housing Organisation (CGEWHO) has successfully completed 33 housing projects across India since its inception in 1990. CGEWHO is committed to providing affordable housing exclusively for employees of the Central Government, Central PSUs, State Governments, Union Territories, Autonomous Bodies, Corporations & Nationalised Banks.

CGEWHO is now conducting a demand survey for a proposed housing project in Bhopal.

Key Details:

- Location:** The proposed project will be located on a 4.45-acre plot (Plot number BG-22) in the Misrod Barrai 45 Master Plan Road Scheme near Hoshangabad Connecting Road, Bhopal.
- Project size:** Approximately 300 Dwelling Units (DUs) are planned in a multistoried building, with each unit featuring three or four bedrooms. The units will have an approximate Super Built-up Area (SBA) ranging from 1500 to 2000 sq.ft.
- Eligibility:** The survey is open only to employees of the Central Government, Central PSUs, State Government, Union Territories, Autonomous Bodies, Corporation & Nationalised Banks.
- Reservations:** 50% of Dwelling Units (DUs) will be reserved for the respondents of the Demand Survey, allocated based on priority.

How to Apply:

- Visit CGEWHO website www.cgewho.in for details, terms and conditions and to download the application form.
- Completed forms must be submitted within 30 days through post or e-mail to the following address:

Dy. Director (Administration), CGEWHO
'B' Wing, 9th Floor, Janpath Bhawan
Janpath, New Delhi- 110 001
E-mail: marketingcgewho@gmail.com

For any queries, you may contact the following individuals:
Sh. Roshan Kishore (M) 9560022232, Sh. Nitish Garg (M) 8826461114
CEO, CGEWHO reserves the right to abandon the scheme or the demand survey without assigning any reason whatsoever.

CBC 20105/12/0016/2425 Chief Executive Officer
CGEWHO

उत्तराखण्ड शासन
सामान्य प्रशासन विभाग,
संख्या-1744/XXXI(15)G/24-40(सा०)/2018
देहरादून: दिनांक 27 दिसम्बर, 2024
प्रेस नोट

मा० श्री राज्यपाल, उत्तराखण्ड के द्वारा राज्य के जिलाधिकारियों/मुख्य विकास अधिकारियों/अपर जिलाधिकारियों/उप जिलाधिकारियों एवं जनपदों में कार्यरत अन्य जिला स्तरीय अधिकारियों के द्वारा जनपद में वित्तीय वर्ष 2023-24 के दौरान किये गये उत्कृष्ट कार्यों के सापेक्ष उन्हें "राज्यपाल उत्कृष्टता पुरस्कार 2024" से पुरस्कृत किया जाना प्रस्तावित है। इस हेतु इच्छुक अधिकारियों से आवेदन पत्र आमंत्रित किये जाते हैं।

आवेदन पत्र ई-मेल के माध्यम से gadukgovt@gmail.com पर अथवा व्यक्तिगत रूप से अथवा डाक/कोरियर अथवा किसी भी अन्य माध्यम से प्रेषित किया जा सकता है। आवेदन पत्र विज्ञापित प्रकाशन की तिथि से 30 दिन के भीतर, सचिव, सामान्य प्रशासन विभाग, उत्तराखण्ड शासन, देहरादून के कार्यालय में प्राप्त होना आवश्यक है। विज्ञापित प्रकाशन की तिथि से 30 दिन के पश्चात् एवं अन्य प्रारूप पर प्राप्त आवेदन स्वीकार नहीं किये जायेंगे। आवेदन पत्र का प्रारूप संलग्न है।

(विनोद कुमार सुमन)
सचिव

"राज्यपाल उत्कृष्टता पुरस्कार 2024" हेतु आवेदन पत्र का प्रारूप

- अधिकारी का विवरण :-
 - अधिकारी का नाम
 - पद का नाम
 - कार्यालय का नाम व पूरा पता
 - पिता/पति का नाम
 - मोबाईल नं०/ई-मेल आई०डी०
 - पद का कार्यकाल/अवधि (जिस समयावधि के उत्कृष्ट कार्य हेतु पुरस्कार हेतु आवेदन किया जा रहा है-
 - पद का नाम -..... अवधि-
 - पद का नाम -..... अवधि-
- पूर्व में मा० श्री राज्यपाल उत्तराखण्ड द्वारा पुरस्कृत किये जाने का विवरण-
पुरस्कार प्राप्ति का वर्ष/कार्यरत पद का नाम/जनपद का नाम-
- महत्वपूर्ण उपलब्धियों/कार्यों का विवरण जिसके सापेक्ष पुरस्कार हेतु आपेदन किया जा रहा है (अधिकतम 100 शब्दों में विवरण प्रस्तुत किया जाये)-
- विशिष्ट कार्यों/उपलब्धियों को Power Point Presentation के माध्यम से प्रस्तुत किया जाए। इस बारे में प्रस्तावित Power Point Presentation के बारे में विवरण (अधिकतम 10 स्लाइड)-
 - PPT के स्लाइडों की संख्या
 - PPT की भाषा (हिन्दी/अंग्रेजी)
- आवेदन पत्र के साथ संलग्न किए जाने वाले अभिलेखों/प्रपत्रों का विवरण-
 -
 -

मैं प्रमाणित करता/करती हूँ कि ऊपर दिए गए तथ्य/विवरण/अभिलेख मेरी जानकारी के अनुसार पूरी तरह सत्य है तथा किसी भी तथ्य को त्रुटिपूर्ण तरीके से प्रस्तुत नहीं किया गया है।

स्थान: हस्ताक्षर

दिनांक: अधिकारी का नाम

पद का नाम

नोट :- उपरोक्त प्रारूप पर टाईप किया हुआ अथवा हाथ से लिखा हुआ, स्पष्ट एवं पूर्ण रूप से भरा हुआ आवेदन पत्र सचिव सामान्य प्रशासन विभाग उत्तराखण्ड शासन, देहरादून को प्रेषित किया जाना चाहिए। आवेदन पत्र प्राप्ति की अन्तिम तिथि विज्ञापित प्रकाशन की तिथि से 30 दिन के भीतर नियत की गयी है। आवेदन पत्र ई-मेल द्वारा gadukgovt@gmail.com पर अथवा व्यक्तिगत रूप से/डाक/कोरियर अथवा किसी भी अन्य माध्यम से प्रेषित किया जा सकता है।

FORM NO. [See Regulation 33(2)]
By Regd. A/D, Dasti failing which by Publication.

OFFICE OF THE RECOVERY OFFICER- I
DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL
DEHRADUN
Paras Tower, 2nd Floor, Majra Niranjanpur, Saharanpur Road, Dehradun

NOTICE FOR SETTLING A SALE PROCLAMATION UNDER RULE 53 OF THE SECOND SCHEDULE TO THE INCOME TAX ACT, 1961 READ WITH THE RECOVERY OF DEBTS & BANKRUPTCY ACT, 1993.

RC/789/2023 13-12-2024
ICICI BANK LIMITED
Versus
M/S NAGPAL TRADERS & ORS

CD No. 1. M/s Nagpal Traders, Bareilly Road, Haldwani, Uttarakhand- 263139 (Through its partners Defendant No.3 to 5 Ranbir Nagpal, Sarita Nagpal & Ankur Nagpal)

CD No. 2. M/s Nagpal Traders, Roof of Right of First Floor in Building No. 5-1048, Located at Plot No. 5/706, Janpath Market, Complex Village Gorakhpur Malla, Pargana Babarchoi Khata, Tehsil Haldwani, District Nainital, Uttarakhand- 263139. (Through its partner Defendant No.3 to 5)

CD No. 3. Ranbir Nagpal S/o Sh. Damodar Das Nagpal, R/o Behind Nagpal Traders, Bareilly Road, District Nainital, Uttarakhand-263139.

CD No. 4. Sarita Nagpal W/o Sh. Ranbir Nagpal, R/o Behind Nagpal Traders, Bareilly Road, District Nainital, Uttarakhand-263139.

CD No. 5. Ankur Nagpal S/o Ranbir Kumar Nagpal, R/o Behind Nagpal Traders, Bareilly Road, District Nainital, Uttarakhand-263139.

CD No. 6. Sarita Nagpal W/o Sh. Ranbir Nagpal, Roof Right of First Floor in Building No. 5-1048, Located at Plot No. 5/706, Janpath Market, Complex Village Gorakhpur Malla, Pargana Babarchoi Khata, Tehsil Haldwani, District Nainital, Uttarakhand-263139.

Whereas you was ordered by the Presiding Officer of DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL DEHRADUN who had issued the Recovery Certificate dated 11/12/2023 in OA/224/2020 to pay to the Applicant Bank(s)/Financial Institution(s) Name of applicant, the sum of Rs. 1,68,28,186.21 (Rupees: One Crore Sixty Eight Lakhs Twenty Eight Thousands One Hundred Eighty Six and Paise Twenty One Only) along with pending-lite and future interest @ 11.00 % simple interest yearly w.e.f. 02/07/2020 till realization and costs of Rs 1,80,000 (Rupees One Lakh Eighty Thousands Only), and whereas the said has not been paid, the undersigned has ordered the sale of undermentioned immovable/immovable property.

2. You are hereby informed that the 19/02/2025 at 10.30 A.M. has been fixed for drawing up the proclamation of sale and settling the terms thereof. You are requested to bring to the notice of the undersigned any encumbrances, charges, claims or liabilities attached to the said properties or any portion thereof.

Specification of property
Immovable Property Plot No. 5/706, House No. 5-1048, Ground Floor (Upper Ground Floor) situated at Nagpal Palika, Haldwani, Nainital Road, Kathgodam, Uttarakhand. (Property No. 5/706, Roof of upper Ground Floor, Janpath Market Complex, Village Gorakhpur Malla, Tehsil Haldwani, District Nainital, Uttarakhand) admeasuring 811.20 sq mtr or 8731.75 sq ft wide sale deed bearing Serial No. 323 dated 12.01.2007.
Given under my hand and the seal of the Tribunal, on this date: 13/12/2024.

Recovery Officer
DEBTS RECOVERY
TRIBUNAL, DEHRADUN



BJP leader Saurabh Thapliyal files nomination as mayoral candidate from Doon

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The mayoral candidate of Bharatiya Janata Party from Dehradun, Saurabh Thapliyal filed nomination in the Municipal Corporation of Dehradun (MCD) on Monday.

office to officially file his nomination papers. He was accompanied by a large number of BJP supporters, including key party leaders such as Dharampur MLA Vinod

Addressing the media after filing his nomination, Thapliyal expressed gratitude to the party for entrusting him with this important responsibility. He pledged to fulfill this role with utmost dedication and commitment, emphasising his determination to deliver on the party's vision for Dehradun.

Acknowledging the challenges and opportunities that come with the expansion of Dehradun's municipal wards from 60 to 100, Thapliyal outlined his priorities for the city. He assured that his focus will be on ensuring cleanliness, beauty and hygiene in every ward, alongside enhancing basic infrastructure and public amenities to improve the quality of life for all residents.



Several candidates reached the MCD premises to file their nominations on the final day of the nomination process for the urban local bodies elections on Monday. Thapliyal also arrived at the corporation's

Chamoli and Rajpur Road MLA Khajan Das. The gathering reflected the party's robust support for their candidate, with workers and office bearers turning up in significant numbers to express solidarity.

Congress mayoral candidate Pokhriyal files nomination in MCD

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The Congress candidate Virendra Pokhriyal filed his nomination paper for the position of mayor, Municipal Corporation of Dehradun on Monday. He filed his nomination papers with a large number of party workers and leaders. Pokhriyal was accompanied by the Pradesh Congress Committee (PCC) president Karan Mahara, the vice president of Uttarakhand Congress Suryakant Dhasmana, the president of Mahanagar Congress Jaswinder Singh Gogi and other senior leaders of the party.



of the DAV PG College from 1993 to 1996, Pokhriyal actively participated in the statehood movement. He was arrested many times during the movement for the separate State of Uttarakhand. After the creation of Uttarakhand, the Congress party appointed him as the president of Garhwal

division of its youth wing. In the year 2007, he was appointed the district president of the Kisan Congress. He was made the chairperson of the Uttarakhand State housing corporation in 2013. Pokhriyal is also known for his active participation in the cooperative movement in the State.

Dissent erupts in U'khand Cong over ticket distribution

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Dissent erupted in the Uttarakhand Congress over distribution of tickets for the elections of Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) in the State. On denial of party ticket to his wife for the position of mayor of Pithoragarh, the State vice president (Organisation) of Congress, Mathuradutt Joshi has threatened to resign from the party posts. The State unit of the party was also rocked by a video which went viral on Monday in which a claimant of the party ticket for a ward in Dehradun levelled serious charges on the senior leaders. Taking cognisance of the indiscipline by the party leaders the president of Mahanagar Congress Jaswinder Singh Gogi expelled Nemichand Suryavanshi, Ajay Rawat and Karan Kannojiya from the party for a period of six years. Rukmani Joshi, the wife of the vice president of the party's State unit Mathuradutt Joshi had staked claim for the party ticket for the post of Pithoragarh mayor. The party however fielded Manju Luthi from here which triggered an emotional outburst from Joshi, a party veteran. Joshi said that he has served the party for the

last 48 years and has never asked anything for himself. "Harish Rawat, Yashpal Arya and Pritam Singh never gave me a chance to contest elections. This time I had requested that the party should give the mayoral ticket to my wife who in the past was a member of district Panchayat. But the party appears to support mafia elements. After serving the party for such a long time one gets hurt by such treatment," he said. Joshi added that he has decided that he will no longer remain active in the party works and said that if needed he will quit from the party posts. The spokesperson of Uttarakhand Congress Garima Dasgupta said that the Congress party has distributed the tickets in a transparent and fair manner. On the grievance of Mathuradutt Joshi, she said that he should have put his grievance in the party forum. "The party has always been very generous towards Joshi and under many State presidents he has always remained second in command in the party organisation. It is not proper for him to make derogatory comments on the official candidate of the party," she said.

BJP accuses Cong of selling tickets, calls it recurrence of old pattern

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The Bharatiya Janata Party State media in-charge Manveer Singh Chauhan has accused the Congress party of indulging in its age-old practice of selling election tickets, describing the latest allegations by Congress workers as a repeat of its tainted record. Chauhan extended his sympathies to disgruntled Congress workers and remarked that the chaos within the party stems from its leadership's anticipation of an electoral defeat. Commenting on videos of Congress ticket aspirants alleging malpractice, which have gone viral on social media, Chauhan termed the situation both unfortunate and disgraceful.

of perpetuating unethical practices within the party.

He alleged that a party accustomed to selling the nation during its tenure in power is now plagued by the habit of selling election tickets internally. Chauhan further claimed that the BJP's double-engine government has won the trust and admiration of the public, which leaves Congress candidates with little to no chance of winning elections. While acknowledging that the issue is internal to Congress, Chauhan asserted that such incidents are detrimental to political integrity and ethical governance.

He also criticised Congress leaders for their hypocrisy, accusing them of spreading lies about the erosion of democracy in the country while allegedly murdering democracy within their own party. Chauhan expressed confidence that both BJP and the public are well aware of Congress's reality. He claimed that Congress workers are now awakening to their party's misdeeds. It is time for voters to teach Congress another lesson in the ensuing elections, he added.

MDDA records surge in flat bookings

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

With a focus on quality construction and timely delivery, the Mussoorie Dehradun Development Authority (MDDA) housing schemes have gained popularity, resulting in a surge in flat bookings. The attractive discounts offered under various schemes have further fuelled public interest, turning dreams into reality for countless families, the MDDA vice chairman Banshidhar Tiwari said.

companies specialising in advanced construction techniques, accelerating progress and maintaining high standards.

He informed that prominent projects like the Aalyam scheme on Sahasthradha Road and those near ISBT have seen a consistent flow of bookings. The authority has introduced several incentives, including GST exemptions, one per cent discount for women and senior citizens and an additional two per cent discount on one time payments. Tiwari also announced plans for expanding MDDA's housing schemes to new locations, including Shahpur in Vikasnagar. Efforts to develop a land bank are underway to ensure affordable and quality homes are made available across the city. He stated that with such initiatives, MDDA continues to fulfill the vision of providing Doon's residents with a home of their own.

He stated that Dehradun is a city where the dream of owning a home is cherished by many and the city is now witnessing a housing revolution led by MDDA. He said that the MDDA has made significant strides in monitoring and expediting projects that were previously delayed. The MDDA has emphasised on quality and punctuality that ensured that residential projects meet the expectations of the citizens. Tiwari said that defaulter contractors have been replaced with

BJP and Congress mayoral candidates file nominations in Haldwani

PNS ■ HALDWANI

Gajraj Bisht of the Bharatiya Janata Party and Lalit Joshi of the Congress filed their nomination for the mayoral position in the Municipal Corporation of Haldwani on Monday. Bisht was accompanied by MP and Union minister of State Ajay Tamta, Kalandhungi MLA Banshidhar Bhagat and former mayor Jogendra Pal Singh Rautela, among others, while filing his nomination. Bisht thanked the people for their support. He said that the BJP's double-engine government will continue to facilitate development of Haldwani. The manner in which the BJP is standing united without any factionalism shows clearly that the party will win this election, he said. The works of the previous mayor will also be carried forward, Bisht added.

party leaders and supporters while filing his nomination. Haldwani MLA Sumit Hridayesh, former Assembly speaker Govind Singh Kunjwal and other party leaders accompanied Joshi. Addressing party workers at the Congress office, he expressed confidence in his chances of defeating his BJP rival. Stating that he was receiving considerable public support, Joshi said that he will achieve a win with the help of party workers and leaders. Hridayesh said that the BJP mayor had disappointed the public during the past 10 years.

He claimed that the people will teach the BJP a lesson and elect Joshi as the mayor of Haldwani. Kunjwal said that the people are facing problems related to roads, electricity and drinking water, and will support the Congress to resolve these issues.

The Congress candidate Joshi was accompanied by

CM directs effective measures to save people from cold wave

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhama has directed the senior officers of the State administration to take effective measures to protect the people from the cold wave. He said that all the necessary facilities should be made available for those staying in night shelters in the districts. The CM directed that the senior officers, the district magistrates and senior/superintendents of police should periodically inspect the arrangements of the night shelters. Chairing a review meeting on the preparations of the administration on cold wave at the secretariat on Monday, Dhama said that in view of the cold wave, blankets, gloves, socks and other essential items should be made available to the needy. He said that people should also be informed about the places where bonfires have been arranged at night in the districts. The CM directed the officers to ensure that the roads are not blocked for a long time due to snowfall. In the areas where there is heavy snowfall, proper management of the necessary resources should be done to remove snow from the roads. He also

asked the DMs to keep data of pregnant women in the districts so that in case of any emergency, medical facilities can be provided to them as soon as possible. He also instructed the officers to make necessary arrangements for stray cattle in view of the cold

Yamunotri and Gangotri. Disaster Management secretary Vinod Kumar Suman gave detailed information about various works being done in the state to protect the people from the cold wave. The deputy chairman of State disaster manage-



wave. The CM sought information from all the DMs about the arrangements made in the districts to protect people from the cold wave. He also directed the officers to make necessary arrangements for the convenience of the devotees at the winter abodes of Badrinath, Kedarnath,

ment advisory committee Vinay Rohila, chief secretary Radha Raturi, additional chief secretary Anand Bardhan, principal secretary RK Sudhanshu, DGP Deepam Seth, head of forest force Dhananjai Mohan and other officials were present in the meeting.

Cold day conditions likely in parts of State today

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Parts of the State may witness dense fog and cold day conditions on Tuesday. The State Meteorological Centre has issued a yellow warning (Watch) regarding the possibility of moderate to dense fog and cold day conditions likely to occur at some places in Haridwar and Udham Singh Nagar districts today. Apart from this, dry weather is likely to prevail in

all districts of the State. The provisional State capital Dehradun is forecast to witness a mainly clear sky with moderate to dense fog likely to occur during the morning hours. The maximum temperature is likely to be about 22 degrees Celsius. There was some relief from the cold in parts of the State with temperatures rising a few notches above normal on

Monday. The maximum and minimum temperatures were 21.1 degrees Celsius and 9.7 degrees Celsius respectively in Dehradun, 15.5 degrees Celsius and 13 degrees Celsius in Pantnagar, 16.7 degrees Celsius and 2.9 degrees Celsius in Mukteshwar and 15.8 degrees Celsius and 3.4 degrees Celsius in New Tehri.

COAS reviews operational preparedness, interacts with troops in Uttarakhand

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Upendra Dwivedi visited Dehradun on Monday where he reviewed operational preparedness and interacted with troops stationed in the region. He was accompanied by Lieutenant General Anindya Sengupta, General Officer Commanding - in - Chief, Central Command. During his visit, the COAS received comprehensive briefings from Lieutenant General DG Misra, General Officer Commanding, Uttar Bharat Area, and Major General Naveen Mahajan, General Officer Commanding, Golden Key Division. The briefings covered the region's operational capabilities, ongoing security initiatives, and infrastructure development.



ings, General Dwivedi interacted with the troops and praised their professionalism, dedication and unwavering

commitment to the nation. He underscored the critical importance of maintaining peak operational efficiency and adaptability in an increasingly complex and evolving security environment. The COAS also highlighted the Army's ongoing efforts to modernise equipment, improve training standards and foster innovation to effectively address future challenges. He reaffirmed the leadership's unwavering commitment to the welfare of soldiers and their fam-

ilies, acknowledging their sacrifices in the service of the nation. In a special address, General Dwivedi extended his heartfelt wishes for a happy and prosperous 2025 to all personnel.

This visit underscores the proactive approach taken by the COAS to ensure mission readiness while boosting the morale of the troops deployed in varied and challenging terrains. Prior to reaching Dehradun, the COAS had accompanied Defence minister Rajnath Singh to the premier training establishments of the Indian Army at Mhow Military Station on December 29-30.

ICICI Bank Branch Office : ICICI Bank Ltd, Hig17, Awas Vikas Colony, Rudrapur, Uttarakhand- 263153

PUBLIC NOTICE-TENDER CUM E-AUCTION FOR SALE OF SECURED ASSET
[See proviso to rule 8(6)]
Notice for sale of immovable assets

E-Auction Sale Notice for the sale of immovable asset(s) under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 8 (6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002.

This notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower(s) and Guarantor(s) that the below described immovable property mortgaged/charged to the Secured Creditor, the Physical possession of which has been taken by the Authorised Officer of ICICI Bank Limited will be sold on 'As is where is', 'As is what is' and 'Whatever there is' as per the brief particulars given hereunder:

Sr. No.	Name of Borrower(s)/ Co-Borrowers/ Guarantors/ Loan Account No.	Details of the Secured asset(s) with known encumbrances, if any	Amount Outstanding (D)	Reserve Price Earnest Money Deposit (E)	Date and Time of Property Inspection (F)	Date & Time of E-Auction (G)
(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	(E)	(F)	(G)
1.	Uttaranchal Packaging Pvt Ltd, Bhagwati Pura Chand Bhatt, Puri Chand Bhatt, Harish Bhatt, Rajendra Prasad Bhatt -A/c No- 053305003840, 053355000031	Flat No. 005, Ground Floor, Ganges Tower, Block C Omaze Riviera, Pant Nagar, Plot No. B, Intergrated Industrial Estate, Pantnagar, Comprising of Khasra Nos 75, 76, 77/1, 77/2, 83/1/2, 84/1/2, 85/1/2, 94/1/1, Village Bhura Rani, Tehsil Rudrapur, District Udham Singh Nagar Uttarakhand. Area: 1095 Sq Ft	Rs. 2,19,78,194/- As On December 02, 2024	Rs. 39,40,000/- Rs. 3,94,000/-	January 20, 2025 From 12:00 Noon to 02:00 PM	February 06, 2025 From 11:00 AM to 12:00 Noon

The online auction will be conducted on the website (URL Link- <http://www.disposalhub.com>), of our auction agency M/s NexXen Solutions Pvt. Ltd. The Mortgagees/ Noticees are given a last chance to pay the total dues with further interest by February 05, 2025 before 05:00 P.M. else the secured asset(s) will be sold as per schedule.

The prospective bidder(s) must submit the Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) Demand Draft (DD) (Refer Column E) at ICICI Bank Ltd, Hig17, Awas Vikas Colony, Rudrapur, Uttarakhand- 263153 on or before February 05, 2025 before 05:00 P.M. Thereafter, they have to submit their offer through the website mentioned above on or before February 05, 2025 before 05:00 P.M. along with the scanned image of the Bank acknowledged DD towards proof of payment of EMD. In case the prospective bidder(s) is/ are unable to submit his/ her/ their offer through the website, then the signed copy of tender documents may be submitted at ICICI Bank Ltd, Hig17, Awas Vikas Colony, Rudrapur, Uttarakhand- 263153 on or before February 05, 2025 before 05:00 P.M. Earnest Money Deposit DD/PO should be from a Nationalised/ Scheduled Bank in favour of 'ICICI Bank Limited' payable at Rudrapur.

For any further clarifications in terms of inspection, Terms and Conditions of the E-Auction or submission of tenders, contact ICICI Bank Employee Phone No. 9372730494/8584874809

Please note that Marketing agency 1. M/s NexXen Solutions Private Limited, 2. Ageo Assets Management Private Limited 3. Matex Net Pvt. Ltd. 4. Finvin Estate Deal Technologies Pvt Ltd 5. Ginarsoft Pvt Ltd 6. Hecta Prop Tech Pvt Ltd 7. Arca Emart Pvt Ltd 8. Novel Asset Service Pvt Ltd 9. Nobroker Technologies Solutions Pvt Ltd have been engaged for facilitating the sale of this property.

The Authorised Officer reserves the right to reject any or all the bids without furnishing any further reasons. For detailed Terms and Conditions of the sale, please visit www.icicibank.com/n4p4s

Date : December 31, 2024
Place: Rudrapur (Uttarakhand)

Authorized Officer
ICICI Bank Limited

PUBLIC NOTICE
Branch Office: ICICI Bank Limited Plot No-23, Shal Tower, 3rd Floor, New Rohtak Road, Karol Bagh, New Delhi-110005

The following borrower(s) has/ have defaulted in the repayment of principal and interest towards the Loan facility(ies) availed from ICICI Bank. The Loan(s) has/ have been classified as Non-Performing Asset(s) (NPA).

A Notice was issued to them under Section 13(2) of the Securitisation and Re-construction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002, at their last known addresses. However, it has not been served and are therefore being notified by way of this Public Notice.

Sr. No.	Name of the Borrower/ Co-Borrower/ Guarantor/ (Loan Account Number) & Address	Description of Secured Asset to be enforced	Date of Notice sent/ Outstanding as on Date of Notice	NPA Date
1.	Meenakashi Mahajan, Mehak Gupta, Nitin Gupta, Pankaj Gupta, Rupali Gupta, House No. 443, Gali No 2, Sandhu Colony, Batala Road, Amritsar- 143001. A/c No. LBAMT00006121343	Plot Private No. 61 Min., Khasra No. 18/17 Min., Khata Khatauni No. 55/94, As Per Jamabandi Year 2016-2017, Village Bal, Tehsil & District Amritsar, Punjab	05/12/2024 Rs. 68,22,661.52/-	27/10/2024
2.	Meenakashi Mahajan, Mehak Gupta, Nitin Gupta, Pankaj Gupta, Rupali Gupta, House No. 443, Gali No 2, Sandhu Colony, Batala Road, Amritsar- 143001. A/c No. LBAMT00006226925	Plot Private No. 61 Min., Khasra No. 18/17 Min., Khata Khatauni No. 55/94, As Per Jamabandi Year 2016-2017, Village Bal, Tehsil & District Amritsar, Punjab	05/12/2024 Rs. 2,23,881.52/-	27/10/2024

These steps are being taken for substituted service of Notice. The above borrower(s) and/or guarantor(s) (as applicable) is/ are advised to make the outstanding payment within 60 days from the date of publishing this Notice. Else, further steps will be taken as per the provisions of the Securitisation and Re-construction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002.

Date: December 31, 2024
Place: Dehradun

Sincerely, Authorised Signatory
For ICICI Bank Ltd.

BJP attacks Rahul Gandhi for New Year trip, Congress Responds

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Launching a scathing attack on the Congress, the BJP on Monday alleged that Rahul Gandhi "exploited" former Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh's death for his "expedient politics" and flew to Vietnam to ring in the New Year while the country is mourning his demise. The Congress hit back and asked when will the "Sanghis stop this 'take diversion' politics." "While the country is mourning Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh's demise, Rahul Gandhi has flown to Vietnam to ring in the new year," BJP's IT cell head Amit Malviya said in a social media post. Rahul Gandhi politicised and exploited Dr Singh's death for his expedient politics but his contempt for him is unmissable, he charged. "The Gandhis and the Congress hate Sikhs. Never forget that Indra Gandhi desecrated the Darbar Sahib," Malviya added. Reacting sharply, Congress leader Manickam Tagore responded saying when will the Sanghis stop this 'take diversion' politics?" He alleged that the way Prime Minister Narendra Modi denied Dr Singh a place for cremation on the Yamuna banks and his ministers cornered his family was "shameful." "If Gandhi travels privately, why does it bother you?" he asked Malviya and said "Get well in New year".

Defence Exports Hit ₹ 21,000 Crore: Defence Minister

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said on Monday India's defence exports have crossed a record Rs 21,000 crore from Rs 2,000 crore a decade ago. Addressing officers at the Army War College (AWC) in more than two-centuries-old Mhow Cantonment, Singh said a target has been set to achieve defence exports of Rs 50,000 crore by 2029. He said mastering frontier technologies is the need of the hour in the constantly evolving times, noting that military training centres are playing a crucial role in equipping and readying soldiers to deal with future challenges. "Our defence exports, which were around Rs 2,000 crore a decade ago, have crossed the record figure of Rs 21,000 crore today. We have set an export target of Rs 50,000 crore by 2029," the defence minister said. He also said Made-in-India equipment is being exported to other countries. Rajnath mentioned radical changes in warfare in his speech, saying that unconventional methods like information warfare, Artificial Intelligence (AI)-based warfare, proxy warfare, electromagnetic warfare, space warfare, and cyber-attacks are posing a big challenge. He stressed the need for the military to be well-trained and equipped to fight off such attacks and lauded training centres in Mhow for their valuable contributions. The defence minister commended the training centres for constantly improving their training curriculum as per changing times, and striving to make the personnel fighting fit for every kind of challenge. Rajnath said the Modi government is committed to strengthening integration and jointness among the three services. "In the times to come, the armed forces will be able to face challenges together in a better and more efficient way," he added. The defence minister said high-level training is provided to officers of all wings in the Mhow Cantonment. He appealed to



Defence Minister Rajnath Singh during his visit at the Army War College, at Mhow, in Indore district of Madhya Pradesh.

officers to explore the possibility of promoting integration through training in areas such as weapons training in Infantry School; AI and communication technology in Military College of Telecommunication Engineering (MCTE), and leadership - junior and senior command in AWC. Rajnath Singh said some officers will work as defence attaches in the future, and they should strive to secure national interests at the global level. "When you take up this post of defence attaches, you should imbibe the government's vision of 'aatmanirbhar Bharat'. Only through self-reliance can India strengthen its defence capabilities and gain more respect on the world stage," he added. The defence minister is on a two-day visit to Madhya Pradesh since Sunday. He said the government is committed to making India one of the strongest economic and military powers in the world. "Economic prosperity is possible only when full attention is paid to security. Similarly, the security system will be robust only when the economy is strong. Both complement each other," he added.

At AWC, the defence minister was briefed by commandant Lt Gen H S Sahi on the role and significance of the institute towards training and empowering military leaders for war-fighting across the spectrum of conflict. The defence minister was also briefed upon the significant steps in training methodology through jointness in multi-domain operations, infusion of technology in training curriculum and exchange programmes being undertaken with academia, universities and industries along with training of CAPF officers, a release stated. He was also apprised about the global footprints of the institute achieved through training the officers from friendly countries and contributing immensely towards military diplomacy. Chief of the Army Staff General Upendra Dwivedi and other senior officials of the Army were present on the occasion. The defence minister laid a wreath and paid homage to brave-hearts at the Infantry Memorial. Earlier in the day, the defence minister and General Dwivedi offered prayers at the famous Mahakaleshwar temple in Ujjain city.

Film industry praises PM Modi's WAVES summit 2025 initiative

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Akshay Kumar, Anil Kapoor, Ekta Kapoor, Praseon Joshi and Sunjay Dutt were among personalities from the Indian film industry who praised Prime Minister Narendra Modi for the WAVES Summit 2025, an initiative aimed at making India a hub of global creation. In his monthly radio address Mann Ki Baat, the prime minister on Sunday announced that India will host the World Audio Visual Entertainment Summit (WAVES) for the first time between February five and nine in New Delhi. The official social media page of the Prime Minister also shared a post about the upcoming

event which was reposted by many celebrities on the microblogging platform. In his address, Modi compared WAVES to global events like the World Economic Forum in Davos, adding the leaders from the media and entertainment industry as well as creative minds from across the globe will gather in Delhi for the Summit. He also urged all stakeholders in the entertainment and creative industries to actively participate in the WAVES. Actor Akshay Kumar termed WAVES Summit 2025 as a "wonderful idea". "Now this is PM @narendramodi ji's vision towards promoting the Media & Entertainment sector... Waves 2025 summit will hopefully be a fabulous global forum to have the entire entertainment industry come and grow together," he wrote. Anil Kapoor said Modi's visionary leadership continues to inspire. "The #WAVES2025 summit is a groundbreaking step towards making India the global hub for film and entertainment. Looking forward to seeing the world come together to celebrate creativity and collaboration #MannKiBaat," the actor added. "Excited to witness India become a global hub for film and entertainment. Looking forward to contributing to this landmark initiative," said producer Ekta Kapoor. Praseon Joshi, CBFC head and lyricist-writer, said WAVES Summit 2025 will put the "spotlight on India's content industry & its vast potential".

Baghpat doctor kills man to fake his death, escape loan repayment; arrested

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ LUCKNOW

In a chilling attempt to evade loan repayments, a Unani doctor from Baghpat, Dr. Mubarik, allegedly orchestrated his own "death" by burning a youth alive in a car. Inspired by a TV show, he meticulously planned the act to clear his debts amounting to Rs 20-25 lakh. The police, however, apprehended him after his plan unraveled due to a crucial mistake. Disclosing the details of the case, Superintendent of Police (SP) Abhimanyu Manglik said: On December 23, Jabbar Ali of Bijopura reported a burned car near a canal bridge, containing a charred body. Later, on December 26, Gulzar, a resident of Khanalampura, filed a missing person report for his nephew Sonu (31), a resident of Yamunanagar, who had been missing since December 22. During the investigation, it

was revealed that Dr. Mubarik, overwhelmed by debt, had devised this heinous plan after watching a TV show "Crime Petrol". Six months earlier, he had purchased two cars and two bikes on finance, taken out a Rs 10 lakh personal loan, and acquired Rs 5 lakh in insurance. Additionally, he owed Rs 9 lakh to his neighbor Masood, alias Leelu, for a land deal and had borrowed lakhs more from others. Dr. Mubarik bought a second-hand Maruti 800 car for Rs 26,000 a month ago to execute his plan. He needed a body that matched his physical characteristics. After failing to procure a body, he befriended Sonu, a worker at his brother-in-law's factory, who bore a striking resemblance to him. On December 22, Mubarik invited Sonu to a roadside eatery, where they drank together. He spiked Sonu's drink with sedatives, rendering him unconscious. The doctor then drove Sonu to a secluded spot near the canal, removed his chain, doused the car with petrol, and set it ablaze with Sonu inside. His intent was to fake his death, allowing his wife to claim ₹5 lakh in insurance and secure a death certificate to absolve the ₹10 lakh personal loan. However, Dr. Mubarik's scheme failed when he returned to the crime scene on December 27 to check if the car had burned completely. Acting on a tip-off, the police detained him for questioning. Upon interrogation, Mubarik confessed to the crime, revealing his meticulous planning inspired by a crime show episode he watched multiple times. Dr. Mubarik has been arrested, and further investigations are underway. The incident has shocked the local community, shedding light on the lengths some individuals go to escape financial burdens.

Kerala BJP chief K Surendran in quandary over Annamalai's public flogging

KUMAR CHELLAPAN ■ KOCHI

The anguish expressed by Tamil Nadu BJP chief K Annamalai by flogging himself in public over the ever increasing incidents of rape in the DMK ruled State has put his Kerala counterpart K Surendran in a major quandary. Annamalai's action was a fall out of a girl student getting sexually assaulted in a gruesome manner in the Anna University campus and also the charges by Annamalai that the incidents of rapes happening in the State are

shooting up in an unprecedented manner under the DMK regime. Annamalai's anguish drew instant response from Governor R N Ravi on Saturday as he made an unscheduled visit to the university campus and interacted with students as well as the authorities. A late evening release by Raj Bhavan said the Governor expressed his concern over the attack on girl students and instructed the university administrative staff to beef up the security arrangements in the campus.

The Tamil Nadu BJP chief, himself a former officer of the Indian Police Service, also declared that he would not wear footwears till the DMK Government was removed from power. Though the DMK leaders and ministers ridiculed Annamalai for his decision terming the same as theatrics, public response to his swear has rattled the State administration. But neighboring Kerala, where the BJP is struggling to get a mooring, has been interesting. Annamalai's self-inflicted torture by flogging has earned wide

appreciation from all walks of life. "He is trying to establish the BJP as a formidable force in the Dravida Land. His actions speak a lot and I will not be surprised to see the Hindutva party emerge as an alternative to the DMK and the AIADMK which is getting disintegrated fast under Edappadi Palaniswami, the reigning chief of Tamil Nadu BJP" said P Sujathan, author and political critic. Many in Kerala want Surendran also to undertake a self flogging a la Annamalai style and stop wearing footwears till the ruling

CPI(M)-led government is ousted from power in a democratic manner. "The present BJP leadership in Kerala is hand in glove with certain national leaders and they have not done anything to make the party an alternative force to the CPI(M) and the Congress. The BJP leaders in the State have resorted to attacking the minority community members, especially the Christmas Carols to send a message that the saffron brigade is an exclusive Hindu party," said Jaiby Kuruvithadam, a BJP leader based in Muvattupuzha.

AIIMS joins AI hype, to invest ₹300 Crore

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Delhi, has also joined the artificial intelligence (AI) bandwagon with Director Dr M Srinivas on Monday at a meeting held here revealing that plans are afoot to invest more than Rs 300 crore in AI by developing digital infrastructure, introducing innovative solutions that enhance patient care, streamline operations, and improve health outcomes. According to various studies, 79 per cent of healthcare organisations are presently utilising AI technology. At the meet, leaders in healthcare, technology, and policy shared insights into how AI is poised to bridge critical gaps in health communication, making information more accessible, reliable, and patient-centric. "AI is revolutionising everything from patient care to health communication," said Dr Srinivas, indicating AIIMS' commitment to integrating cutting-

edge technology into healthcare, furthering its mission to revolutionise medical practices and healthcare delivery. "We are investing over Rs 300 crore in digital infrastructure to ensure that every stakeholder - patients, doctors, and researchers - benefits from this innovation. By integrating AI, we can improve efficiency, reduce delays, and enable world-class research," he added. The experts at AIIMS also stressed the need to bridge the gap of misinformation by delivering accurate, easily understandable, and personalised healthcare information via AI to people across diverse demographics. Dr Srinivas also emphasised that leveraging AI to simplify and disseminate health information will empower patients and improve their engagement with healthcare systems, ultimately leading to better health outcomes. "A good health system isn't reliant on individuals. AI can play a vital role in making healthcare more accurate, com-

passionate, and equitable," Dr Kavita Narayan, Senior Technical Advisor, HRH for Health Systems at the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. "To truly make a difference, we must integrate technology thoughtfully and ensure collaboration between policymakers, technologists, and healthcare providers," she added. The experts also caution against overdependence on technology at the expense of human connection. KP Kochhar, Professor and Head of the Physiology Department at AIIMS, felt that there was a need to balance innovation with empathy in healthcare. "While AI can enhance precision and efficiency, we must preserve the human touch in healthcare. Compassion and technology must work together to create systems that prioritise the well-being of patients," Kochhar said, adding that AI in healthcare is a game changer, especially for a diverse and populous countries like India.

TN leads in third gender voters, but low participation

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

More people enrolled themselves in the voters' list for the 2024 Lok Sabha elections in the 'third gender' category but only 27 per cent of them turned up at the polling stations, according to Election Commission data. According to the data issued by the poll authority last week, 48,194 people were eligible to vote as third gender elector in 2024, compared to 39,075 in 2019 - an increase of 23.5 per cent over the five-year period. But only 13,058 of them actually exercised their franchise, which comes to 27 per cent of the total registered third gender electors. As per the data, Tamil Nadu had the highest number of registered third gender elector - 8,467. But only 2,709 cast vote.

'Can't ignore speeches to brainwash youth': Delhi HC rejects appeal in UAPA case

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Speeches to brainwash innocent youth and recruiting them for illegal acts against the country cannot be completely washed away in the absence of a specific terrorist act, the Delhi High Court has said and dismissed the plea of a terror case accused. A bench of Justices Prathiba M Singh and Amit Sharma made the observation while rejecting the plea of Mohd Abdul Rehman, an alleged associate of Al-Qaida's Indian outfit, against his conviction and seven-year-five-month jail term by a trial court under the anti-terror UAPA law. "Speeches which are given to brainwash innocent youth coupled with attempts to recruit them for committing unlawful and illegal acts against the country cannot be completely washed away on the ground that no specific terrorist act has

been committed," it said. The appellant argued though he was held guilty of indulging in preparatory acts for the commission of a terrorist act and recruiting persons for terrorist act, there was no evidence to show he committed such acts. The bench, however, said the terms terrorist act had a wide definition, enough to include "indulging in conspiracy with terrorist organisations and associated with persons who are rendering support to terrorist organisations", whereas the identification or existence of a specific act of terror was not required for punishment under the provisions. The High Court upheld the trial court conviction verdict, observing evidence to show he was in close connection with the other accused who were a part of a larger network. The network was said to be carrying out inflammatory speeches, dis-

seminating material, having links with Pakistan-based organisations and travelling there for secret meetings, recruiting persons for terrorist acts, collecting funds to help such travels and other activities fanning hatred against the country and its political leaders, among other things. "In conspiracies of this nature specific covert acts would not be required but secretive and clandestine support to declared terrorist organisations would also be sufficient. The evidence and the testimonies which have been recorded in the present case clearly disclose association with terrorist organisations for commission of conspiracy for committing a terrorist act. The appeal is, accordingly, dismissed," the bench ruled. The court said the planning to execute terrorist acts could extend over years and Section 18 of UAPA aimed to address

such a preparation, even when a specific terrorist act was not identified. It said it was "common knowledge" that terrorist organisations like Al-Qaida in the Indian subcontinent functioned in an extremely secretive manner and its associates often left no trail of evidence. In February 2023, the trial court convicted the appellant and other accused persons for conspiracy to commit acts that constituted preparation towards commission of some terrorist act. The trial court considered the evidence that indicated the existence of a conspiracy to commit a terrorist act, including their illegal travel to Pakistan, inflammatory speeches, various passports by creating false and fabricated documents. The State said the material showed appellant's ideology professed violence against the country and the Prime Minister.

Muslim forum says no to Rushdie ban, calls for intellectual defense

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Opposing the Muslim organisations calling for reban of Salman Rushdie's "The Satanic Verses", the Indian Muslims for Secular Democracy (IMSD) on Monday urged the Muslims to remember iconic social reformer Sir Syed Ahmad Khan's teachings and to "fight words with words" instead of resorting to book bans or burnings. The renewed sale of Rushdie's book, which has returned to Indian bookshelves 36 years after it was banned by the Rajiv Gandhi government in 1988, has been strongly condemned by some Muslim organisations.

"IMSD calls upon Muslims to recall the views expressed by Sir Syed Ahmad Khan well over a century ago. In his time, he staunchly opposed Muslims who made a bonfire of books they did not like, or demanded its ban by the authorities," the IMSD said in a statement. "His advice was simple. Fight words with words if the book in question is worthy of a reasoned critique. Burning or banning such books implies that Muslims are incapable of an intellectual and moral defense of their faith. If the book (cartoon, play, film) is nothing but a gratuitous, salacious or malicious attack on Islam or its Prophet, his suggestion was: ignore it," the statement added. The IMSD's statement is

endorsed by 42 eminent citizens, including civil rights activist Teesta Setalvad, oral historian Sohail Hashmi, poet-scientist Gauhar Raza, acclaimed theatre director Feroz Abbas Khan and documentary film-maker Shama Zaidi, among others. Earlier in November, the Delhi High Court closed proceedings on a plea challenging the Rajiv Gandhi government's ban on the book's import. The High Court stated the failure of officials to present the relevant notification from October 5, 1988 led to the assumption that the notification did not exist. To buttress their point, the Muslim forum gave the example of Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) founder Sir



Salman Rushdie holds a copy of the newly-published novel "The Satanic Verses", during a speech in Arlington, Virginia on March 24, 1992. India was one of the first countries to ban the book's import and sale, citing concerns over its content being offensive to the Muslim community.

Syed Ahmad Khan's approach to counter English writer William Muir's controversial book in 1861 where he allegedly made disparaging remarks against Prophet Mohammad. "In response, Sir Syed travelled to London to study the books and journals that Muir had relied on and eight years later published a reasoned critique debunking Muir's work," the statement said. The IMSD said Sir Syed's advice to his fellow Muslims long ago is 'the more relevant in today's new India' where "minorities are daily targets of Hindutva's hate politics". "Any ill-advised or hotheaded response to the publication of Satanic Verses - a book not many Muslims are likely to have read earlier or will read

now -- will only provide more fodder to the Muslim-baiters. Besides, it will only give free publicity to the very book they want banished," it added. Underlining the Constitution of India guarantees the right to freedom of speech along with penal action against hate speech, the statement said that Muslims, or anyone else, have the right to be offended by a book, cartoon, play or film and are within their right to invoke existing provisions of criminal law to seek redressal of their grievance. However, no one has the right to "silence the offender. A fatwa, firman or call to kill Salman Rushdie, as also the demand for a ban on Satanic Verses amounts to just that: silencing the offender," it explained.

UP Govt invites CMs, Governors of all States for Mahakumbh 2025

AI-enabled cameras, RFID wristbands and mobile app tracking will be used to track headcount of the pilgrims: Minister

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Uttar Pradesh government will invite the President, Vice President, Prime Minister, and the chief ministers and governors of all states, among host of other dignitaries, for the Maha Kumbh Mela which is set to begin from January 13. The mega religious event, which is held every 12 years, will continue for 45 days in Prayagraj. More than 40 crore devotees from all over the world are expected to attend the mega event. State Finance Minister Suresh Khanna said at a roadshow in the national capital on Monday that invites are being sent to the governors the chief minister of all states, including those ruled by non-NDA parties. "We have invited Lieutenant Governor of Delhi Vinai Kumar Saxena and will be meeting Delhi Chief Minister Atishi as well," he said at the event.

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath met President Droupadi Murmu in New Delhi on Sunday and invited her to attend the Maha Kumbh. Adityanath also extended invitations to Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and Delhi Lieutenant Governor Vinay Kumar Saxena for the grand event. As part of the invitation, the Chief Minister presented the dignitaries with special gifts, including a symbol featuring the Mahakumbh 2025 logo, a 'kalash' (sacred urn), literature related to the event, a New Year table calendar and a diary. The Uttar Pradesh chief minister reached New Delhi on Saturday and met former President Ram Nath Kovind, Union Home Minister Amit Shah, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, BJP National President and Union Health Minister Jagat Prakash Nadda, and Mizoram Governor General VK Singh. Each of them received person-

alised invitations and mementos related to the Mahakumbh. On Sunday, Yogi expressed gratitude to the dignitaries for their time through a post on his official handle on social media, sharing photographs of the meetings. With the event just weeks away, the Uttar Pradesh government has intensified efforts to invite dignitaries and the general public from across the country, with the chief minister and his cabinet ministers personally leading the outreach campaigns in different states. Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday described the upcoming 'Maha Kumbh' as the "Maha Kumbh of unity" as he asked people to return from the grand religious congregation with a resolve to banish hate and division from society. Speaking in his monthly 'Mann ki Baat' broadcast, Modi said, "Maha Kumbh ka sandesh ek ho pura desh (Message from the Maha Kumbh should be that the entire country must be united)." He added, "Ganga ki



aviral dhara, na bante samaj hamara" (Like the uninterrupted flow of Ganga, let our society remain one). Noting the diversity of people visiting the mammoth congregation, he said there is no other example of such a sight of unity in diversity. "Maha Kumbh's speciality lies not just in its vastness but also in its diversity," he said. Artificial intelligence-enabled cameras, RFID wristbands and mobile app tracking are among the methods that will be used to track headcount of the pilgrims attending the Maha Kumbh. Sharing details of the arrangements being made for the event, Khanna said the headcount of pilgrims attending the Maha Kumbh will be efficiently managed using advanced technology. "The first method is attribute

based search, where tracking will be conducted using person attribute search cameras. The second method involves RFID wristbands, which will be provided to the pilgrims. Through these wristbands, entry and exit times will be tracked using RFID readers," Khanna said at a roadshow here. "The third method is mobile app tracking, where with the consent of pilgrims, their location will be tracked through GPS using a mobile application," he added. The minister said the government is gearing up for a divine, grand and digital Maha Kumbh. "The preparations include the launch of a dedicated website and app, an AI-powered chatbot in 11 languages, QR-based passes for people and vehicles, a multilingual digital lost and found centre, ICT monitoring for cleanliness and tents, software for land and facility allocation, multilingual digital signage (VMD), an automated ration supply system, drone-based surveillance and disaster man-

agement, live software for monitoring 530 projects, an inventory tracking system and integration of all locations on Google maps," he added. Khanna said the arrangements have been made to ensure the tourists do not face parking issues. "In this regard, 101 smart parking facilities have been created, capable of accommodating up to five lakh vehicles daily. The parking area spans 1867.04 hectares, which is 763.75 hectares larger compared to the 1103.29 hectares allocated for parking in 2019. These parking facilities will be monitored through the Integrated Command Centre," he added. Meanwhile, in compliance with Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's instructions to ensure a 'digital' and 'cyber safe' Maha Kumbh, Uttar Pradesh Police has formulated a strategy to protect the devotees from cyber frauds. "We have prepared a multi-dimensional strategy to fight cybercrime during the Maha

Kumbh. Apart from police officers, we have also roped in cyber experts from specialised institutions like IIT-Kanpur. Acting on the complaints received, police have already arrested some cyber frauds," Director General of Police (DGP), Prashant Kumar, said. "We will also launch a comprehensive awareness campaign to protect the devotees from cybercrime during the event," he added. A meeting of cyber experts and top police officials was held recently at the Integrated Command and Control Centre in Lucknow which discussed various issues concerning cybercrime, the DGP said. Held in hybrid mode under the chairmanship of Additional Director General of Police (Prayagraj Zone), Bhanu Bhaskar, the meeting was attended by professors from IIT-Kanpur, ADGP (cyber crime), Prayagraj police commissioner, IG (Prayagraj range), and cyber experts, among others.

Bitter-sweet 2024 for BJP in Uttar Pradesh

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ LUCKNOW

For the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in Uttar Pradesh, 2024 will be remembered as a year of mixed fortunes. The party witnessed a significant decline in its Lok Sabha tally, dropping from 62 seats in 2019 to 32. The National Democratic Alliance (NDA) also saw a reduction, with its total seats in the state falling from 64 to 36. This dip diminished Uttar Pradesh's commanding presence in national politics. For the first time in his political career spanning from Chief Minister to Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, MP from Varanasi, had to head a coalition government where the BJP lacked an absolute majority. The year marked a historic moment for the BJP, as it became the second-largest party in Uttar Pradesh after a decade. The setback was particularly poignant, as the party even lost the Faizabad (Ayodhya) seat—a symbolic constituency given its connection to the Ram Janmabhoomi movement. Political analysts saw this loss as a wake-up call for the party, emphasizing the need for recalibrating its electoral strategy. However, the BJP managed to end the year on a high note by securing seven out of nine seats in the



state assembly by-elections. This victory allowed the party to regain its position as the leading political force in Uttar Pradesh, offering a glimmer of hope amid a challenging year. The year began with optimism for the BJP, bolstered by the consecration ceremony of Ramlala at his birthplace in Ayodhya. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's role as the main host for the event was a defining moment. For the first time in independent India, a Prime Minister publicly aligned with the sentiments of the country's majority community. The unprecedented nature of this move was underscored by comparisons to the objections

raised by India's first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, during the re-establishment of the Somnath temple. Nehru had refrained from attending the event and even discouraged the President from participating. In stark contrast, Modi's presence at the Ramlala consecration symbolized a revolutionary shift in the political narrative. This event generated immense enthusiasm among the BJP cadre and supporters, creating an atmosphere where Modi's slogan of crossing 400 seats in the Lok Sabha seemed achievable. Yet, the electoral reality fell short of these expectations, with the party's reduced tally

signaling the need for introspection. The assembly by-elections later in the year proved to be a turning point. Under the leadership of Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, the BJP reclaimed its dominance by winning seven out of nine contested seats. The Chief Minister's hands-on approach, including direct communication with party workers and meticulous planning for each constituency, played a pivotal role in this success. "The by-election results reflect not just Yogi Adityanath's administrative acumen but also his ability to galvanize the organization in challenging

times," said a senior BJP leader. The results served as a testament to Adityanath's leadership and offered a morale boost for the party as it looked ahead to 2025. From an organizational perspective, 2024 was a year of learning for the BJP. The party faced criticism for its inability to translate Modi's popularity into votes across all regions of Uttar Pradesh. "The year taught us valuable lessons about complacency and the importance of grassroots engagement," admitted a BJP strategist. "It's a reminder that even a strong leader's appeal needs to be complemented by robust on-ground efforts." As the party charts its course for the future, the setbacks of 2024 are being viewed as opportunities for recalibration. The BJP's ability to turn defeat into a rallying cry will define its trajectory in the coming years. While 2024 ended on a mixed note for the BJP, the year's experiences have set the stage for a reinvigorated approach to Uttar Pradesh's complex political landscape. The party's ability to adapt, strategize, and rebuild will determine whether it can reclaim its former dominance in the state. For now, 2024 stands as a year of introspection, resilience, and hard-earned lessons for the BJP in Uttar Pradesh.

Kerala BJP cadres want party leader to undergo flogging a la Annamalai

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ CHENNAI/KOCHI

The anguish expressed by Tamil Nadu BJP chief K Annamalai by flogging himself in public over the ever increasing incidents of rape in the DMK ruled State has put his Kerala counterpart K Surendran in a major quandary. Annamalai's action was a fall out of a girl student getting sexually assaulted in a gruesome manner in the Anna University campus and also the charges by Annamalai that the incidents of rapes happening in the State are shooting up in an unprecedented manner under the DMK regime. Annamalai's anguish drew instant response from Governor R N Ravi on Saturday as he made an unscheduled visit to the university campus and interacted with students as well as the authorities. A late evening release by Raj Bhavan said the Governor expressed his concern over the attack on girl students and instructed the university administrative staff to beef up the security arrangements in the campus. The Tamil Nadu BJP chief, himself a former officer of the Indian Police Service, also declared that he would not wear footwear till the DMK

Government was removed from power. Though the DMK leaders and ministers ridiculed Annamalai for his decision terming the same as theatrics, public response to his swear has rattled the State administration. But neighboring Kerala, where the BJP is struggling to get a mooring, has been interesting. Annamalai's self-inflicted torture by flogging has earned wide appreciation from all walks of life. "He is trying to establish the BJP as a formidable force in the Dravida Land. His actions speak a lot and I will not be surprised to see the Hindutva party emerge as an alternative to the DMK and the AIADMK which is getting disintegrated fast under Edappadi Palaniswami, the reigning chief of Tamil Nadu BJP," said P Sujathan, author and political critic. Many in Kerala want Surendran also to undertake a self flogging a la Annamalai style and stop wearing footwear till the ruling CPI(M)-led government is ousted from power in a democratic manner. "The present BJP leadership in Kerala is hand in glove with certain national leaders and they have not done anything to make the party an alternative force to the CPI(M) and the Congress.

The BJP leaders in the State have resorted to attacking the minority community members, especially the Christmas Carols to send a message that the saffron brigade is an exclusive Hindu party," said Jaiby Kuruvithadam, a BJP leader based in Muvattupuzha. Sudheer Damodaran, a political commentator, said that Surendran can revive the BJP in the State by following the footsteps of Annamalai. "People in the State are waiting for a third force to emerge in the political landscape as it is known all over Kerala that the CPI(M) and the Congress are the two sides of the same coin," said Damodaran. Meanwhile the SNDP, the platform of the powerful Eezhava community in Kerala have made its displeasure public. There is no point in continuing our alliance with the BJP as it has ignored our interests while appointing Governors and chiefs of other Constitutional institutions. The Congress under Ramesh Chennithala is certain to perform well in the coming months," said Vellappilli Natesan, general secretary of SNDP. The NDA led by the BJP is almost certain to see a realignment of forces in the coming days if the words of Natesan are any indication.

Didi finally lands at Sandeshkhali, slams BJP and LF

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Monday launched a scathing attack on the BJP and the Left for spending money to spread canards against her Government even as she landed at Sandeshkhali for the first time after the all-women movement against land grab and mass rape that hit the national headlines last year. Some 'mischievous' people had been playing 'a game of money and money only... they were intentionally misleading the people of this area... But as lies cannot last forever they have failed in their dirty mission and the people of Sandeshkhali particularly the women have come in large number to this meeting." Banerjee told a massive gathering even as she promised a number of projects. "I request the people of Sandeshkhali not to fall in the trap of the mischievous people... the BJP has plenty of money and they spend these in misinformation campaign... my message is to the mothers and sisters of Sandeshkhali to avoid those bad people... you could see things. With your eyes how some people resorted to disinformation but finally nothing came out... please don't go anywhere if someone asks you to. It's your right to get the benefits of Government schemes," Banerjee said asking the women not to go anywhere. "The Government will come at your doorstep with Duare Sarkar," one of her patent schemes via which the Government functionaries hold regional camps to address people's problems.



Sandeshkhali hit the national headlines for several weeks last year when the local women came out in hordes against strong arm tactics of local Trinamool Congress strongman Sheikh Shahjehan whose men allegedly physically exploited women and grabbed their lands to convert them into fisheries. Post Sandeshkhali incident the State Government was repeatedly indicted by the National Commissions for Women and Scheduled Tribes. Subsequently Shahjehan, also accused of other crimes like multi-crore ration scam --- along with the jailed Food Minister Jyotipriya Mullick --- was arrested by the Central Bureau of Investigation and has since been in jail. While there was a common refrain among the people against the Chief Minister for not visiting once this Sunderbans islands in North 24 Parganas off Basirhat, Banerjee's visit tended to impact the local women many of whom said they were willing to once again repose faith in her. This even as Banerjee asked the people to forget and leave behind the past incidents and move forward. "I want you to forget all that is past and proceed forwards... I want Sandeshkhali to tank among the

best... a girl from Sandeshkhali to top the board exams... someone from here to become an IPS or IAS officer... This is not a place for riots and violence. We want peace," Banerjee said before announcing a plethora of Government projects. Even as the locals requested the construction of a bridge joining the riverine islands with the mainland Banerjee said, "infrastructure projects like bridges require significant funding. I am noting your request, but we need to arrange the necessary resources... as you all know that the Centre provides us with nothing... they have stopped all the funds for rural development and I have to manage from my own resources." Aware that the Left had been quite active in the region Banerjee attacked the CPI(M) too saying, "BJP and Left have joined hands to malign the Government... while the BJP spends their ill-gotten money to mislead the people and ignite violence the CPI(M) is a party that talks big having forgotten their bloody past... they are a party of skeletons that killed people and buried them... so never believe them." Reacting to Banerjee's charges local face of the movement Rekha Patra who even unsuccessfully contested on a BJP ticket in this year's parliamentary elections said, "Didi has missed the bus... the people who have come... have been forcibly brought here... had she come the last year when the women were in trouble they would have definitely hugged her... but now they hate her and she will never be welcome here."

Farmers' bandh in Punjab cripples commuter traffic; rail, bus services suspended

PTI ■ CHANDIGARH

Life was hit across Punjab due to a bandh imposed by farmers who have been agitating against the Centre for a legal guarantee of a minimum support price for their crops. Rail and road traffic was crippled and commercial establishments remained shut in several places of the state. Farmers staged 'dharnas' on several roads and highways including in Patiala, Jalandhar, Amritsar, Ferozepur, Bathinda, and Pathankot as part of their bandh call from 7 am to 4 pm, throwing commuter traffic out of gear. A call for a statewide shutdown was given over a week ago by Samyukta Kisan Morcha (Non-political) and Kisan Mazdoor Morcha over the Centre not acting on the farmers' demand for a legal guarantee for the MSP. The bandh was also enforced to express solidarity with farmer leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal who has been on a fast for the last 35 days at Khanauri border protest site of farmers. Farmers observed a sit-in at Dhareji Jattan Toll Plaza which affected vehicular movement on the Patiala-Chandigarh National Highway. At Amritsar's Golden Gate, scores of farmers staged a dharna near the city's entry point. Police there assisted some stranded foreign tourists by arranging auto rickshaws for them to reach the Golden Temple. Farmer leader Sarwan Singh Pandher told reporters in Amritsar that emergency and other essential services were allowed to operate.



He said anyone travelling to the airport to catch a flight anyone going to attend a job interview, or anyone needing to attend a wedding, was being allowed to go. In some places, commuters were seen arguing with the protesting farmers blocking the roads. "All establishments are closed. Punjabis have shown their unity today and they are extending full support," Pandher, however, claimed. "We are seeing a successful bandh. Train services are also completely suspended and no train is entering Punjab," he said. Pandher also claimed their strike has received strong support from transporters, employee unions, traders and religious bodies. Farmers squatted on tracks at many places, forcing the rail-ways to cancel several trains passing through the state and short-terminated or short-originated some trains. In Ferozepur, Jalandhar, Ludhiana, and Bathinda, passengers were seen stranded at stations. A cancer patient from Gujarat was stranded at a train

station in Ferozepur. His wife said they had to go to Himachal Pradesh to get some medicines for him, but with train services hit, they were left in a lurch. In Phagwara, farmers staged a dharna near the Sugarmill Crossing on NH-44, blocking the roads leading from Phagwara towards Nakodar, Hoshiarpur, and Nawanshahr. A dharna was also staged at Behram toll plaza on Phagwara-Banga road. Grain markets were shut in several places across the state. In the Mohali district, farmers staged a dharna at a few points throwing normal movement of vehicular traffic out of gear. Public transport remained off roads at several places, while most private bus operators suspended services abiding by the bandh call. Many long-distance private buses and trucks carrying fruits and vegetables were held up due to the bandh. In the Ludhiana district, markets like Chaura Bazar, Saban Bazar, Vishwakarma Chowk, Gill Road and Sarabha Nagar had few shops open. The city's main bus stand was completely bereft of any traffic.

Gurugram Traffic Police issued 13.66 lakh challans till 28 December

PARVESH SHARMA ■ NEW DELHI

In a significant crackdown on traffic violators, the Gurugram Traffic Police issued 13.66 lakh challans amounting to Rs 15.17 crore till 28 December 2024. Under the leadership of Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) Virender Vij, the department issued such huge number of challans, marking one of the most successful operations in 2024. These fines include 1,74,073 challans for the wrong side, 1,49,462 challans for wrong parking, 694 challans for under-age driving, 2,15,390 challans for not wearing helmet, 27,439 challans for not wearing a seat belt, 25,968 challans for drink and drive, 17,122 challans for over speeding, 10,894 challans for signal jump, 10,967 challans for black film, 4,231 challans for using a mobile phone, 13,330 for triple riding, 33,107 without a number plate, 1,475 challans for illegal siren and 60,466 challans were issued for wrong lane driving. "The operation was part of a larger special campaign launched across all traffic zones to target violators and reckless drivers. The traffic department is also strictly enforcing various provisions of the Motor Vehicles Act to maintain law and order on the roads," Vij said. Apart from this, a special campaign was also conducted against the drivers who did not give way to the ambulance and



162 vehicles were challaned. Meanwhile, a total of 333 vehicles were impounded under NGT in the year 2024, out of which 108 are diesel and 225 are petrol vehicles. Apart from this, the Gurugram Police also identify the places with black spots and remove them. In 2024, 05 black spots were also resolved/removed by Gurugram Police. In 2023, a total of 494 people died in 1172 road accidents. Which decreased to 448 people dying in 1019 road accidents in the year 2024. Due to this, road accidents have reduced by more than 13 per cent. Gurugram Police has been monitoring traffic movement with the help of drones and fined those who change lanes/drive. Apart from this, with the help of drones. In 2024, a total of 45 green corridors were given by the Traffic Police Gurugram. Out of which 9 were given for ambulances and 36 for NSG/Army and Air Force. Under the rules of GRAP-4, checkpoints were set up by Gurugram Traffic Police on all Delhi borders, and during this time, more than 7,000 vehicles violating GRAP-4 rules were challaned.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Country shamed

The victim blaming and procedural lapses in the Anna University rape case underscores the urgent need for reform

The recent sexual assault case involving a 19-year-old student at Anna University has once again brought shame upon the nation, highlighting the pervasive nature of gender-based violence and the systemic failures in addressing it. The horrifying incident, compounded by the insensitivity of law enforcement, has triggered widespread outrage and calls for accountability. On December 23, Gnanasekaran allegedly raped the student on the university campus after threatening to release videos of her. The accused confined the survivor for over an hour and recorded the assault. While the Chennai Police Commissioner, A Arun, claimed swift action by apprehending the accused within 24 hours, the Madras High Court highlighted glaring lapses in the police's handling of the case. Particularly damning was the revelation that the First Information Report (FIR) published on the police website disclosed the victim's details, leading to further victim shaming and mental agony. The High Court's rebuke of the police was scathing. A Bench of Justices SM Subramanian and V Lakshminarayan criticised the language used in the FIR, terming it misogynistic and reflective of victim-blaming attitudes. Such lapses, the Court noted, breach the victim's fundamental rights under Article 21 of the Constitution, which guarantees dignity.

To address these lapses, the Court ordered the formation of a Special Investigation Team (SIT) comprising senior IPS officers to probe the case. It also directed the Tamil Nadu government to provide interim compensation of Rs 25 lakh to the victim and ensure her protection. The Court has rightly underscored the necessity of sensitising police personnel to handle such cases with empathy and professionalism. This case is not an isolated incident but a grim reminder of the larger problem of sexual violence that plagues India. Despite constitutional guarantees of equality and dignity, women continue to face systemic discrimination and violence. The societal tendency to blame victims, coupled with institutional apathy, exacerbates their trauma. The High Court's poignant questions — "Why can't a woman walk freely, dress as she wishes, or speak to a man without being judged?" — resonate deeply in a society still grappling with entrenched patriarchy. The Court rightly emphasised that the onus is on the State and society to protect women without perpetuating stigma or blame. The incident also exposed lapses in campus security at Anna University. The university, which allows unrestricted access to outsiders, failed to prevent the accused from entering the premises. The police's approach also came under scrutiny for prematurely ruling out the involvement of additional suspects. The Court directed the State to examine whether rules were violated during these proceedings. This tragic case underscores the urgent need for systemic reforms. Law enforcement must be trained to handle cases of sexual violence with sensitivity. The media, too, must exercise restraint in reporting such cases to avoid amplifying the victim's trauma.

PICTALK



Tourists enjoy after fresh snowfall, at Patnitop hill station in Udhampur

PTI

The teachers who shaped my life: Lessons beyond the classroom

For me, the journey of learning began in classrooms with inspiring teachers and extended into workplaces with exceptional bosses

We meet several people in our lives. While we learn something from each person, many teach us invaluable lessons that help us navigate the rough and tumble of the daily grind. These are the teachers who shape our lives. The earliest I remember are two school teachers from my classes 5 to 7. Miss Kumar taught us English; Miss Singh was the Arithmetic teacher.

It is no wonder that I developed a liking for the unlikeliest combination of English and Maths. Another was my mathematics teacher from classes 10 to 11. I was a favourite student, probably because I could discuss with him complex problems on the move while cycling to and from school. My love for communication and thinking on my feet were firmly entrenched in my psyche by him. In later years, I could not have navigated my professional journey but for the few outstanding bosses, I worked with. I joined my first job in a leading government manufacturing company. I stayed there for a year, only for the



training. It seemed like an extension of college except that we were now paid a salary and were expected to lead a structured office life. I opted to spend the last few months of the training in the computer department. I surprised myself. This was one of the two subjects in college in which I had secured a poor 'D' grade. I developed a computer-based inventory management system for the plant, the first in the organization. I worked diligently, probably also committing a few mistakes, confident of the support of my Bengali boss. I joined the railway services. It was an entirely different ball game. I was the head of a

maintenance shed with 1000+ staff working under me. My boss went to the shed with me for the first week. The next week, he threw me, not in the swimming pool, but in the ocean. It was training by fire. Yet, he was always there to guide and support me whenever I needed his help. The innumerable management lessons I learned in my first year were to hold me in good stead during my remaining professional journey of almost three decades. After 20 years of service with the railways, I decided to opt for retirement and join a government company. My boss was a soft-spoken Sikh gentleman. He also shared a common trait with my first railway boss. It was a complete freedom to operate. He taught me everything that he knew about a new subject. His only demands were integrity and honesty. I had no problems with that. He would fight fiercely for me with his seniors if the situation demanded. I never regretted my decision to leave the railways. I quit the government to join the pri-

ivate sector. It was a new jungle for me. The boardroom politics, criticism of a subordinate by those sitting at the head of the table in stage-managed whispers loud enough to be heard by the intended victim, and smirks by colleagues at the snub by a senior, were only a few of the goings-on I had not witnessed in the government sector. I had no hesitation in mentioning to a packed audience when asked about the reasons for the success of the government sector, 'Good bosses, who value others and mentor each individual like a teacher.' I hope that someone else remembers me as fondly.

These words by an unknown author resonate with me, "I wasn't born to just teach, I was born to inspire others, to change people, and to never give up; even when faced with challenges that seem impossible."

(The author is an electrical engineer with the Indian Railways and conducts classes in creative writing; views are personal)



SANJAY CHANDRA

placeable loss of dense forests sadly was not seen as a wake-up call for the authorities even though the forest cover in the hill districts is just 40 per cent of their geographical area against the Forest Policy mandated 66.6 per cent. This is very alarming as the increased number of landslides and floods can be traced to the loss of forest cover in the hills. < The maintenance of the soil health, ecological stability, and ability to counter landslides and floods depend on adequate forest cover in the hills. The biennial ISF report has since its inception in 1991 served as a reference point for the nation to assess its forest wealth and understand the problems plaguing India's afforestation efforts. But this year's report has been criticised by experts who have pointed out discrepancies and have labelled the data as "inflated." Several experts for instance have criticised the inclusion of bamboo plantations, coconut groves, and orchards among others as part of the forest cover, as these are agroforestry-related and make no meaningful contribution towards the environment. The experts opine that the inclusion of agroforest plantations such as rubber, eucalyptus, acacia and mango, coconut, areca nut and shade trees in tea and coffee plantations has led to the inflation in

India's forest cover grows, but grim realities linger

While India's State of Forests Report highlights an increase in forest cover, it also raises concerns about troubling trends such as increase in forest fires and allegations of inflated data

India's State of Forests Report (ISFR) 2023, a biennial report published by the Forest Survey of India (FSI) under the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change is finally out after a delay of almost one year. The report is being hailed as a harbinger of good news as it announced an increase in India's forest and tree cover by 1,289 Sq.km. since 2021 reaching 25.17 per cent of the total geographical area in 2023, which puts India's forest cover at 7,15,342.61 sq.km. But the report also highlights some grim aspects of India's state of forests. In the recent past, the incidence of forest fires has disturbingly gone up, especially in the hill states. These fires have destroyed many hectares of dense forests thereby ruining fragile ecosystems and irreplaceable Himalayan biodiversity.

The ISF report echoes the same and observes a sharp spike in forest fires especially in the mountain states of Himachal, Uttarakhand, and Jammu and Kashmir. The data collected using the Visible Infrared Imaging Radiometer Suite (VIIRS) presented in the report, showed that Himachal Pradesh witnessed an increase of forest fires by a stunning 1,339 per cent, while Jammu & Kashmir saw a rise in forest fire by a staggering 2,822 while Uttarakhand was relatively better off with 293 per cent rise in forest fire incidents. What the government was doing as the pristine forests turned to ashes, is a burning question. On the other hand, the report also highlighted the rapidly dwindling forest cover. Between 2003 and 2023, more than 24,000 sq km of dense forests — half the size of Punjab — have disappeared. More concerning is the fact that the loss has occurred in ecologically fragile zones such as the Western Ghats and The Nilgiris over the past decade. The Western Ghats recognised as UNESCO World Heritage Biodiversity Hotspot suffered an overall loss of 58.22 sq km in forest cover. On the other hand, the Nilgiris reported the steepest decline of 123 sq km. The report also showed a decrease of 327.30 sq km in forest cover in the northeastern region. This irre-



placeable loss of dense forests sadly was not seen as a wake-up call for the authorities even though the forest cover in the hill districts is just 40 per cent of their geographical area against the Forest Policy mandated 66.6 per cent. This is very alarming as the increased number of landslides and floods can be traced to the loss of forest cover in the hills. < The maintenance of the soil health, ecological stability, and ability to counter landslides and floods depend on adequate forest cover in the hills. The biennial ISF report has since its inception in 1991 served as a reference point for the nation to assess its forest wealth and understand the problems plaguing India's afforestation efforts. But this year's report has been criticised by experts who have pointed out discrepancies and have labelled the data as "inflated." Several experts for instance have criticised the inclusion of bamboo plantations, coconut groves, and orchards among others as part of the forest cover, as these are agroforestry-related and make no meaningful contribution towards the environment. The experts opine that the inclusion of agroforest plantations such as rubber, eucalyptus, acacia and mango, coconut, areca nut and shade trees in tea and coffee plantations has led to the inflation in



FOREST LANDS DIVERTED FOR DAMS, ROADS, RAILWAYS AND OTHER SUCH PERMANENT CONSTRUCTIONS OVER TIME ARE LOST FOREVER BUT ARE NOT DELETED FROM RECORDS, THUS INFLATING THE FIGURES. INDIA LOST 30,808 SQ KM OF OPEN AND SCRUB FORESTS ALONGSIDE 14,073 SQ KM OF MODERATELY DENSE FORESTS

the tree canopy to 1,289 sq.km. But the reality is that these categories of trees are grown for commercial purposes and are harvested in time therefore not providing any ecological value for biodiversity, wildlife conservation or acting as effective carbon sinks. Moreover, the fact that the report does not establish a correlation between forest areas or areas designated as forests in government records and forest cover also adds to the problem. Additionally, the experts also observed that the report failed to comply with the Supreme Court order in the Lafarge case which called for digitisation of forest maps, geo-referencing of Recorded Forest Areas (RFA), and documentation of diverted forest lands. The absence of these elements weakens the report's credibility. Forest lands diverted for dams, roads, railways and other such permanent constructions over time are lost forever but are not deleted from records, thus inflating the figures. India lost 30,808 sq km of open and scrub forests alongside 14,073 sq km of moderately dense forests and 1,816 sq km of dense forests to 'non-forest' uses. By the looks of it, the ISF report 2023 seems to be in a hurry to increase forest cover in India. At least on paper. This could be to do with India's target of increasing its forest and

tree cover which can absorb an additional amount of 2.5 billion to 3 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent by 2030. The government could have done well to ensure the presentation of accurate data that was based on actual tree census and not plantations, groves, and orchards. The government should have also removed those forest lands from its database that have been permanently diverted for non-forest purposes. The ISF report has immense significance for India as it is widely used as a primary information source by the central and state governments. Additionally, forestry professionals of State Forest Departments rely on the report for the effective discharge of their responsibilities. The inputs and data provided by this report regarding forest resources of India help in the evaluation and formulation of forest-related policies, programmes, and legislation. Given the crucial role played by the ISF report, the government must revisit the recent report and ensure that the questions and doubts raised by experts are effectively addressed. The onus is on the government to keep the trust intact by releasing reports based on robust and accurate data. (The author is a policy analyst. The views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

RELIEF FOR MIDDLE-CLASS

Madam — As the new year approaches, salaried employees are likely to face significant tax deductions from their salaries for the financial year 2024-2025. While taxes are deducted throughout the year, the months leading up to March 2025 will see an increased burden, further aggravating the financial challenges of India's middle class. Reduced take-home pay diminishes purchasing power, leading to decreased spending by the salaried class, which, in turn, impacts the economy. Considering these challenges, the government is reportedly exploring measures to boost consumer spending. One such measure under consideration for the financial year 2025-2026 budget is making personal income up to Rs 15 lakh per annum tax-free. Speculations suggest that the government is actively working in this direction, and the decision on tax cuts in the upcoming budget appears almost certain. Taxation is currently governed by two systems: the old tax regime (OTR) and the new tax regime (NTR). A reduction in tax liability would particularly benefit salaried employees, increasing their disposable income. This would lead to higher consumer spending, ultimately helping the economy recover from its slowdown. For the financial stability and development of middle-class families, the central government's decision to make personal income up to Rs 15 lakh per annum tax-free in the 2025-2026 budget is crucial. This move would play a vital role in ensuring better financial planning and stability for the middle class.

Dattaprasad Shirodkar | Ponda

PROFIT OVER HUMANITY

Madam — The article on caring for the stars and being careless to earth (December 30) presents worth considering arguments. The basic problem lies in the economic order in vogue in most parts of the world. The essence of the order is commodifying everything and chasing profit in every activity. In the process, small players are being gulped by the big

Koneru wins World Rapid Chess Champion



The recent chess title victory by Koneru Humpy as World Rapid Chess Champion is another feather in India's Chess success. We all know that the year 2024 has been a marvellous year for India, particularly as we successfully managed to lift so many titles in the sport of Chess. The grit and brilliance of

Indian Chess Champions has marvelled the entire world, be that the moment of India becoming the FIDE Chess Olympiad 2024 winner in Budapest, D Gukesh becoming the World Chess champion at the age of 18 in Singapore, and now Ms Koneru Humpy clinching her second FIDE World Rapid Crown in New York. This year in 2024 particularly, India spent a considerably wonderful time at the podium top stairs, enjoying many titles and trophies.

The chess prowess of Indians need no introduction today, thanks to our chess masters and grandmasters. Especially the young chess players deserve the epitome of appreciation for their wonderful game spirit, patience and sincere grit behind every move of check and mates. Kirti Wadhawan | Kanpur

INDIA'S LIBERALISATION ARCHITECT

Madam — From being an economist of great repute to RBI Governor, Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission, Finance Minister and then becoming Prime Minister of India, not many can walk in his shoes. When the economy was stuttering and license raj was the order of the day and there was a suffocating environment for industrialists, Dr. Manmohan Singh became the architect of liberalisation in 1991 along with late PV Narsimha Rao, who allowed our country to take a great leap forward. The Victor Hugo moment of our 1991 budget was doctored by him, which led to India emerging as an economic powerhouse. He may have been called an accidental Prime Minister but during those 10 years at the helm he did his job with aplomb under the given circumstances of compulsions of coalition politics.

Bal Govind | Noida

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

A G Rajmohan | Anantapur



FIRST COLUMN OVERCOMING THE GRIP OF FEARFUL THOUGHTS

Fearful thoughts often take hold of our minds, leading to obsession with worst-case scenarios



AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

We routinely become obsessed with fearful thoughts. The word obsession is defined as a persistent disturbing pre-occupation with an often unreasonable idea or feeling. We don't stop there; we think of the worst. What is the probability of that happening? But that does not prevent us from this common flaw; we do it willingly. There are several reasons for succumbing to this. We have many attachments. We are desperate for something like a good result, and a few like we shouldn't get sick. Unfortunately, these are decided by the Divine Authority based on our past 'Karmas' (deeds). We have no say in it, and they manifest at their designated times. Fortunately, they are very rarely the worst we think of. If so, life would be hellish, which it is not. This earth's planet is a place of misery (The Bhagavad Geeta 8.15) alright, but is not a concentration camp by any standard. But our imagination has no bounds.

The next big offender is a refusal to be prepared to tolerate. We want zero tolerance. Is it possible? Everything is changing like the weather. Bad 'Karmaphalas' (results of bad deeds) will manifest for sure because this is no Vaikuntha; we have most certainly a past with many bad karmas. How else are we here, not even in Heaven? We feel that we are intelligent, but hardly anyone escapes making this mistake. Yes, we are supposed to get fearful, because that protects us from acting foolishly, but excessive fear is due to faulty assessment. Due diligence is required.

The fourth offender is greed. Our desires are open-ended. Is it wise? The evidence shows that downfalls occur due to being too greedy.



But to become greedy and then fear the consequences makes zero sense. Over-stress also causes fearful thoughts, especially about health. It is better to avoid to lessen this possibility. We want to control and are unable to. We act stupidly and then fear the worst. The same problem exists in acting big, which no one can ever become; we are intrinsically small and will remain eternally so. Acting as the sole doer also evolves fearful thoughts. Giving control of our minds to fearful thoughts is making ourselves our enemies. Lord Krishna has warned about it (4.6). Similarly, intelligence is supposed to curb this tendency but, again, we find some justification in harming ourselves. This is also a sad commentary on our knowledge, about which we are so proud. A soul has severe limitations, as we realize; he must remain in the shelter of God. This is the only worthwhile solution. I am sorry to be so stern, but the proliferation of mental diseases points to it only. God controls the Creation (9.10) and He, therefore, has to guide and help to deal with it. By ourselves, we are quite helpless really. How it works? It is quite simple, but a very long drawn exercise, because this problem involves our 'svabhava' (nature). This is what I do. The moment a fearful thought crosses my mind, I pray sincerely for guidance and help, because I need to know a way out. I need exact guidance for my actions. God signals to me what I should do; He uses many ways to communicate. He helps where I fall short. Blissfully, my painful habit of fearing excessively is coming under some control. Thank God for this 'Kripa' (mercy).

(The writer is a spiritual teacher; views are personal)

Assessing efficacy and challenges of compensatory afforestation

With ecosystem at stake, the nation's approach to monetising and restoring nature demands careful evaluation and sustainable strategies write **BKP SINHA** and **ARVIND KUMAR JHA**

Compensatory Afforestation (CA) relates to the mitigation of environmental damage caused by the diversion of forest land for non-forestry purposes and is a mandatory requirement for obtaining clearances under the Forest Conservation Act, 1980; now Van (Sanrakshanevam Samvardhan) Adhiniyam (VSSA) 1980 and Rules. The Government of India guidelines state that normally CA must be carried out on a suitable non-forest land equal to the forest area proposed for diversion and for minimizing the adverse impact on the micro-ecology, such land should be located as near as possible to the diverted area. If suitable non-forest land is unavailable, CA may be carried out on degraded forest land equal to twice the area of the diverted forest land. The unavailability of non-forest land in a district is certified by the District Collector and in the exceptional case of its unavailability in the whole state/union territory (UT), the chief secretary has to certify accordingly and CA land may be identified preferably in a neighbouring state/UT. As regards CA, the Government of India guidelines of 2017 and 2019 emphasised compensation for loss of land by land and that of trees by trees.

They indicate that at least 1000 plants are to be planted in one hectare and in case 1000 plants are not possible to be accommodated, the balance may be planted in some other government forest identified by the state government. The states having more than 75% forest cover, however, are exempted from the task of procuring non-forest land for CA. Their CA can be taken up in states with deficient forest land/cover. As regards size, lands smaller than 5 hectares can also be accepted for CA if it is contiguous to a wildlife conservation area like National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries. Area equivalence criterion often leads to an understanding that any forest can be equated with tree plantations of any kind but the concept of Net Present Value (NPV) is additionally used to calculate the worth of diverted forests by attaching a monetary value to a whole range of goods and services provided by them. This amount is recovered from the project proponent.

The World Bank's 2002 strategy elaborates the NPV to include goods and services like wood and non-wood items, ecosystem services, support to wildlife, climate regulation, soil & water conservation and flood prevention, carbon sequestration, nutrient cycling, health support systems and non-material benefits which may be spiritual, inspirational, recreational, aesthetic, educational etc. Its value thus extends far beyond economics and considering the interest of different stakeholders, the values of different components may also vary, such as the cultural significance of a tree species versus its commercial value as timber.

The January 2022 guidelines of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) have clubbed the forests of India into six Eco-classes to realize NPV instead of diverted forest land. Out of them, class I includes Tropical Wet Evergreen Forests, Tropical Semi Evergreen Forests, and Tropical Moist Deciduous Forests, while class II contains Littoral and Swamp Forests.



HOLISTIC DEVELOPMENT OF GREAT NICOBAR ISLAND PROJECT IS WORTH A LOOK. THE RS 72,000 CRORE INVESTMENT WILL DIVERT 130.75 SQ. KM. OF FOREST LAND FOR INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT THAT INCLUDES A TRANS-SHIPMENT PORT, AN AIRPORT, A POWER PLANT, A DEFENCE BASE, AN INDUSTRIAL PARK AND A TOWNSHIP

Interestingly, the per hectare value of NPV for both these classes has been kept the same, an equality that appears surprising. It is crucial to arrive at a monetized figure for a unit of Nature/biodiversity and ensure that investing in it will offset the loss caused by diversion. Simultaneous sustainable development of biodiversity is of course a formidable challenge. Accordingly, any oversimplification of biodiversity assessment can lead to inaccuracies and undermine genuine conservation efforts.

The limitations faced in offsetting losses just through CA are amply covered by CAG reports. Unfortunately, the resource position at the world level also, despite the wrath of climate change being faced globally, shows an annual funding gap of about USD 700 billion in nature conservation. Against the above background, the proposed CA and NPV to mitigate the diversion of forest land in the 'Holistic Development of Great Nicobar Island' (GNI) project is worth a look. The Rs72,000 crore investment will divert 130.75 sq. km. of forest land for infrastructure development that includes a trans-shipment port, an airport, a power plant, a defence base, an industrial park, and a township.

The project involves the felling of an estimated one million trees with habitat destruction that would also impact the life, livelihood, and forest rights of the Shompen; a particularly vulnerable hunter-and-gatherer tribal group. The MoEFCC claims to have incorporated into the project some exemplary mitigation measures, including compensatory afforestation, into the project in compliance with the provisions of the VSSA 1980 while securing India's strategic national and defence interests. Out of the total CA area of 26,000 hectares, locating 24,354 hectares in Haryana is justified by highlight-

ing that planting native species in arid landscapes and near urban areas is of greater ecological value. Talks are said to be on with the Madhya Pradesh government for situating the balanced CA area. The CA in Aravali's arid/semi-arid region, approximately 2,400 kilometres away, to compensate for the loss of pristine rainforests of Great Nicobar is a significant departure from the guideline regarding the positioning of CA land. Reportedly, the CA with ₹3000 crore's investment is expected to be mostly a revival plan to improve the soil texture and fertility and to make stone boundary walls since the proposed area already has root stock requiring just protection and supplemental planting wherever required.

Indicative of the natural limits imposed by edaphic, geographical, and climatic factors, the Forest Survey of India (FSI) 2021 report on forest status shows that the carbon stock per hectare in A&N forests is fourth highest in the country; next only to Himachal, Sikkim, and J&K while Haryana has the second lowest; next only to Delhi.

This fact does raise questions regarding the possibility and efficacy of compensating adequately Nicobar's loss of carbon stock and biomass by investing CA money in Haryana. Considering the aspect of NPV, it is worth noting that Nicobar Island forests are more like that of Malaysia and Indonesia while the Andaman Islands' flora is more akin to the species found in Myanmar, Thailand, and Northeast India. FSI's rapid biodiversity assessment in A&N islands in 2018-19 found that shrubs and herbs together were more than double the number of trees. Many species found there do not occur in mainland India. The understory and emergent layers with profuse regeneration, herbs, and

shrubs indicate a vibrant ecosystem wherein approximately half of the mammals, a third of the birds, a quarter of the reptiles, and over a tenth of flowering plants are endemic. A crucible for the habitat rights of the Shompen tribe notwithstanding, it is home to the endangered Nicobar Megapode and Leatherback Turtle, and has over twenty thousand coral reefs in its vicinity. In 1989, The UNESCO declared a significant portion of the island as a biosphere reserve. Despite such uniqueness, distinctive parameters, and ecological significance; its NPV per hectare is exactly equal to the forests in Eco-classes I and II. GIN is just one project.

An in-depth analysis of forest land diversion cases can provide, in addition to actionable issues related to limitations and risks in offsetting just through the prevalent CA and NPV model, important insights into ways to minimize harm to Nature, redeemability of loss to forest ecosystems, correct determination of NPV, efficient investments in Nature recovery and restoration initiatives, handling of habitat rights of the primitive tribes and pre-agricultural communities, and regulations needed to ensure accountability.

Nature's monetization and biodiversity markets are fast emerging as potential funding sources for conservation. Their effectiveness demands an honest valuation of diverted forests and a strict implementation of conservation strategies. The outcomes depend on those having the power to decide. Only time will tell, but the decisions made today will echo through the annals of history shaping the destiny of our country and of humanity itself.

(The writers are former PCCFs of U.P. and Maharashtra; views are personal)

Indian agriculture and climate change: Challenges and strategies

India is forging a path toward climate-resilient agriculture, leveraging innovative strategies, integrated farming practices and government-led initiatives

The agriculture and allied sectors play a central role in the sustainable growth and development of India's economy. These sectors not only ensure food and nutritional security for the country's 1.4 billion people but also contribute significantly to production, employment, and demand generation through various backward and forward linkages. While agriculture constitutes about 16% of India's GDP, it supports nearly 49% of the workforce (Economic Survey, 2018). However, with over 50% of India's cultivated land dependent on rainfed irrigation, the sector is highly vulnerable to climate variability. The ongoing challenges to sustain the natural resource base further



PRAVESH SHARMA

amplify the adverse impacts of climate change, which disproportionately affect the poor. **Challenges Posed by Climate Change on Agriculture**

1. Rainfall Variability: The increasing intra-seasonal variability of rainfall has emerged as a major concern. Rainfall patterns are becoming increasingly skewed, characterized by fewer rainy days with higher intensity. This results in sig-

nificant soil erosion and exacerbates the length of dry spells. Deviations in the hydrological cycle are contributing to extreme events, such as floods caused by intense rainfall or droughts triggered by prolonged dry spells, impacting different parts of the country.

2. Temperature Rise: Rising temperatures pose a greater threat to tropical countries like India, which already operate near the higher end of the temperature spectrum. Elevated temperatures influence various climatic factors, adversely impacting crop production. For instance, extreme heat reduces fruit setting in citrus crops and increases transpiration losses in vegetables.

3. Livestock and Poultry Impact: Climate variability also affects animal production and reproduction. Increased temperatures and higher temperature-humidity index levels lead to reduced feed intake, lower milk yields, and decreased meat and egg quality. Poultry, in particular, suffers from heat stress, resulting in thinner eggshells and increased egg breakage.

4. Pests and Diseases: Climate change influences the population, survival, and geographic distribution of pests and diseases. Rising temperatures and humidity levels create favorable conditions for pest proliferation, making control measures more challenging and unpredictable.

Mitigation and Adaptation Strategies Adaptation to climate change involves anticipating adverse impacts and taking proactive



measures to minimize damage or leverage emerging opportunities. Given that most Indian farmers are smallholders with limited coping capacity, building resilience is key.

1. Water Resource Management: Enhancing rainwater productivity through scientific rainwater harvesting, recycling, and precision water use is essential. Improved irrigation techniques and water budgeting can mitigate the impact of erratic rainfall.

2. Integrated Farming Systems: Combining crop cultivation with livestock, fisheries, and plantations offers diverse income streams and reduces climate vulnerability. Contingency planning for alternate crops and activities based on agro-climatic conditions further strengthens resilience.

3. Technology and Innovation: Developing stress-tolerant crop varieties, conserving agro-biodiversity, and promoting resource-efficient technologies are critical. Pest forecasting models, weather-based advisories, and agricultural risk management systems should be expanded to aid farmers in decision-making.

4. Community Involvement and Education: Engaging

local communities in production system management and raising awareness about climate-resilient practices is vital. Farmers, consumers, and markets must be educated to embrace sustainable agriculture practices that align with cultural and social contexts. **Government Initiatives to Address Climate Change**

The Government of India has taken several steps to combat climate change. **National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC):** Guided by the Prime Minister's Council on Climate Change, the NAPCC includes the National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture (NMSA), focusing on resource conservation, soil health, integrated farming, and water-use efficiency.

National Innovations on Climate Resilient Agriculture (NICRA): This initiative provides scientific and technical guidance for sustainable agricultural development. Key Program Interventions: Policies like the Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana, National Food Security Mission, and Soil Health Card Scheme aim to enhance soil health, water efficiency, and farm productivity.

District Agricultural Contingency Plans: These plans provide integrated solutions for crop, livestock, and fishery challenges arising from weather anomalies, supporting farmers during extreme conditions.

(The writer is a retired IAS officer; the views expressed are personal)

South Korea to inspect its Boeing fleet as it struggles to find cause of plane crash

AP ■ SEOUL

South Korean officials said Monday they will conduct safety inspections of all Boeing 737-800 aircraft operated by the country's airlines, as they struggle to determine what caused a plane crash that killed 179 people a day earlier. Sunday's crash, the country's worst aviation disaster in decades, triggered an outpouring of national sympathy. Many people worry how effectively the South Korean government will handle the disaster as it grapples with a leadership vacuum following the recent successive impeachments of President Yoon Suk Yeol and Prime Minister Han Duck-soo, the country's top two officials, amid political tumult caused by Yoon's brief imposition of martial law earlier this month. New acting President Choi Sang-mok on Monday presided over a task force meeting on the crash and instructed authorities to conduct an emergency review of the country's aircraft operation systems. "The essence of a responsible response would be renovating the aviation safety systems on the whole to prevent recurrences of similar incidents and building a safer Republic of South Korea," said Choi, who is also deputy prime minister and finance minister. The Boeing 737-800 plane

operated by South Korean budget airline Jeju Air aborted its first landing attempt for reasons that aren't immediately clear. Then, during its second landing attempt, it received a bird strike warning from the ground control center before its pilot issued a distress signal. The plane landed without its front landing gear deployed, overshot the runway, slammed into a concrete fence and burst into a fireball. Alan Price, a former chief pilot at Delta Air Lines and now a consultant, said the Boeing 737-800 is a "proven airplane" that belongs to a different class of aircraft than the Boeing 737 Max jetliner that was linked to fatal crashes in 2018 and 2019. But South Korea's Transport Ministry said Monday it plans to conduct safety inspections of all of the 101 Boeing 737-800 jetliners operated by the country's airlines as well as a broader review into safety standards at Jeju Air, which operates 39 of those planes. Senior ministry official Joo Jong-wan said representatives from the US National Transportation Safety Board and Boeing were expected to arrive in South Korea on Monday to participate in the investigation. Ministry officials also said they will look into whether the Muan airport's localizer — a concrete fence housing a set of antennas designed to guide



aircraft safely during landings — should have been made with lighter materials that would break more easily upon impact. Joo said the ministry has determined that similar concrete structures are in other domestic airports, including in Jeju Island and the southern cities of Yeosu and Pohang, as well as airports in the United States, Spain and South Africa. Video of the crash indicated that the pilots did not deploy flaps or slats to slow the aircraft, suggesting a possible hydraulic failure, and did not manually lower the landing gear, suggesting they did not have time, said John Cox, a retired airline pilot and CEO of Safety Operating Systems in St. Petersburg, Florida. Despite that, the jetliner was under control and traveling in a straight line, and damage and injuries likely would have been minimized if not for the barrier being so close to the runway, Cox said. Other observers said the videos showed the plane was suffering from suspected engine trouble but the landing gear malfunction was likely a direct reason for the crash. They said there wouldn't likely be a link between the landing gear problem and the suspected engine issue. Earlier Monday, another Boeing 737-800 plane operated by Jeju Air returned to Seoul's Gimpo International Airport shortly after takeoff when the pilot



Buddhist monks (above) pray for the victims of a plane which skidded off a runway and burst into flames (left), at a memorial altar at Muan sport park in Muan, South Korea, on Monday.

detected a landing gear issue. Song Kyung-hoon, a Jeju Air executive, said the issue was resolved through communication with a land-based equipment center, but the pilot decided to return to Gimpo as a precautionary measure. Joo said officials were reviewing whether there might have been communication problems between air traffic controllers and the pilot. "Our current understanding is that, at some point during the go-around process, communica-

tion became somewhat ineffective or was interrupted, ahead of the landing and impact," he said. Ministry officials said Monday the plane's flight data and cockpit audio recorders were moved to a research center at Gimpo airport ahead of their analysis. Ministry officials earlier said it would take months to complete the investigation of the crash. The Muan crash is South Korea's deadliest aviation disaster since 1997, when a Korean Airlines plane

crashed in Guam, killing 282 people on board. The crash left many South Koreans shocked and ashamed, with the government announcing a seven-day national mourning period through Jan. 4. Some questioned whether the crash involved safety or regulatory issues, such as a 2022 Halloween crash in Seoul that killed 160 people and a 2014 ferry sinking that killed 304 people. The Transport Ministry said authorities have

identified 146 bodies and are collecting DNA and fingerprint samples from the other 33. Park Han Shin, a representative of the bereaved families, said they were told that the bodies were so badly damaged that officials need time before returning them to their families. "I demand that the government mobilize more personnel to return our brothers and family members as intact as possible more swiftly," he said, choking down tears. The crash was yet more major news for South Koreans already reeling from a political crisis set off by Yoon's martial law decree, which brought hundreds of troops into Seoul streets and revived traumatic memories of past military rule in the 1970-80s. The political tumult resulted in the opposition-controlled National Assembly impeaching Yoon and Han. The safety minister stepped down and the police chief was arrested over their roles in the martial law enforcement. The absence of top officials responsible for managing disasters has led to concerns. "We are deeply worried whether the Central Disaster and Safety Countermeasures Headquarters really can handle the disaster," the mass-circulation JoongAng Ilbo newspaper said in an editorial Monday.

Shehbaz, Nawaz Sharif criticised for not offering condolences on Manmohan Singh's demise

PTI ■ LAHORE

Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's decision of not offering condolences on the passing of former India premier Manmohan Singh was severely criticised on social media. Singh, who was born in Gah village in Chakwal district of Pakistan's Punjab and served as prime minister from 2004 to 2014, died in New Delhi last Thursday aged 92. While condolence messages poured in from around the world, neither Shehbaz Sharif nor his elder brother and three-time former prime minister Nawaz Sharif chose to offer any words on his demise. Ironically, only Pakistan Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar offered his condolences. Contrary to this, Shehbaz Sharif and other top func-

tionaries of the Pakistan government wasted no time to offer condolences on the passing of former US president Jimmy Carter. They issued condolence messages on X, which is banned by the Shehbaz Sharif government to control dissenting voices of jailed former premier Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party on social media. "Neither Shahbaz nor Nawaz Sharif have yet offered a public condolence on the loss of Manmohan Singh. There was a message from Ishaq Dar. Still, it's perplexing. They were contemporaries, had some similar economic views, and shared a desire for better India-Pakistan relations," Wilson Centre South Asia Institute Director Michael Kugelman said on X on Sunday. He further said: "I

really don't see so much at stake with India-Pak ties now that the Sharifs feel something could be lost if they upset Modi. Also not sure I see Modi being bothered if they do say something about Singh. It's all a bit odd!" Pakistani author and expert on military affairs Ayesha Siddiqi sarcastically said on X: "Seems they — the Sharif brothers — don't want to annoy Modi, or maybe typical PMLN (Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz) that whoever is gone is gone and so done and dusted with." Pakistani journalist Ammara Ahmad said: "It has never happened before. This means that Pakistan and India have no diplomatic ties. Though they negotiated the Kartarpur corridor again this year. I can't imagine what prompted this decision. I have yet to find a press release even. Very lowly

and uncouth." Mona Farooq Ahmad, an overseas citizen of Pakistan, said on Monday: "This level of pettiness is unprecedented. In the past, leaders have always set politics aside for such moments. Their silence is truly intriguing and disappointing. It's a missed chance to show humanity and statesmanship." Amer Mirza said on X: "These individuals — Shehbaz and Nawaz — are neither serious politicians nor statesmen. We cannot hold any expectation of dignified conduct or due protocol. They are a family consumed with sustaining their ill-gotten privilege under the dark auspices of the military junta. They neither have time nor respect for the people. They are little men in big offices." Dar on Friday said he was saddened by the passing of Singh who "played a

notable role in improving India-Pakistan ties." "Saddened by the passing of Dr. Manmohan Singh, former Prime Minister of India. Born in a village in Pakistan's Chakwal district, Singh was a distinguished economist and political leader. He will be remembered for his wisdom and gentle demeanour," Dar said in a post on X. "Beyond his remarkable achievements in the field of economics, Dr. Singh demonstrated a commitment to promoting regional peace. His approach to regional issues reflected his belief that mutual understanding, dialogue and cooperation were essential for collective progress. He played a notable role in improving Pakistan-India bilateral relations during his tenure as Prime Minister," Dar said.

Missing Indian student's body found in Scotland river

PTI ■ LONDON

The body of a 22-year-old Indian student missing since earlier this month has been found in a river in Scotland and her family has been informed while formal identification is awaited. Santra Saju from Kerala was enrolled at the Heriot-Watt University in the Scottish capital of Edinburgh. Police Scotland said in a statement over the weekend that they were made aware of a body in a river near Newbridge, a village near Edinburgh. "Around 11.55 am on Friday, December 27, 2024, police were made aware of a body found in the water near to Newbridge," Police Scotland said. "Formal identification has still to take place however the family of Santra Saju, 22,

has been informed. The death is not believed to be suspicious," the police said. The statement added that a report will be sent to the Procurator Fiscal, Scotland's prosecution service and death investigation body. Saju was last caught on CCTV at an Asda supermarket store in Almondvale, Livingston, on December 6 evening. An urgent missing person's appeal was issued by the police, describing Saju as being around 5 feet 6 inches in height, of Indian ethnicity, slim build, with short black hair. She was wearing a black jacket with a fur-lined hood, beige furry earmuffs and a black facemask. Enquiries also revealed she had a black rucksack in her possession. The police appeal encouraged anyone who may recognise her to

come forward with any information. Inspector Alison Lawrie from Corstorphine Police Station said in a statement at the time: "We now know that Santra picked up a black and white shopper style bag from an address in Burnvale on Friday evening, but she did not have it when she entered the supermarket. "The bag is distinctive and someone may remember seeing her carrying it. We are continuing to review CCTV footage and have released images of Santra from the supermarket in the hope that someone recognises her. Extensive enquiries are being carried out in an effort to trace her." Her friends and family had said the disappearance was out of character and had become very worried for her safety.

Taliban to close all NGOs employing Afghan women

AP ■ KABUL

The Taliban say they will close all national and foreign non-governmental groups in Afghanistan employing women. It comes two years after they told NGOs to suspend the employment of Afghan women, allegedly because they didn't wear the Islamic headscarf correctly. In a letter published on X Sunday night, the Economy Ministry warned that failure to comply with the latest order would lead to NGOs losing their license to operate in Afghanistan. The ministry said it was responsible for the registration, coordination, leadership and supervision of all activities carried out by national and foreign organisa-

tions. The government was once again ordering the stoppage of all female work in institutions not controlled by the Taliban, according to the letter. "In case of lack of cooperation, all activities of that institution will be cancelled and the activity license of that institution, granted by the ministry, will also be cancelled." It's the Taliban's latest attempt to control or intervene in NGO activity. Earlier this month, the UN Security Council heard that an increasing proportion of female Afghan humanitarian workers were prevented from doing their work even though relief work remains essential. According to Tom Fletcher, a

senior UN official, the proportion of humanitarian organisations reporting that their female or male staff were stopped by the Taliban's morality police has also increased. The Taliban deny they are stopping aid agencies from carrying out their work or interfering with their activities. They have already barred women from many jobs and most public spaces, and also excluded them from education beyond sixth grade. In another development, the Taliban leader Hibatullah Akhundzada has ordered that buildings should not have windows looking into places where a woman might sit or stand. According to a four-clause decree posted on X late Saturday, the

order applies to new buildings as well as existing ones. Windows should not overlook or look into areas like yards or kitchens. Where a window looks into such a space then the person responsible for that property must find a way to obscure this view to "remove harm," by installing a wall, fence or screen. Municipalities and other authorities must supervise the construction of new buildings to avoid installing windows that look into or over residential properties, the decree added. A spokesman for the Ministry of Urban Development and Housing was not immediately available for comment on Akhundzada's instructions.

Bangkok hotel fire kills 3 foreigners

AP ■ BANGKOK

A fire broke out at a hotel near Bangkok's Khao San Road, a popular tourist destination, killing three foreigners and injuring several other people, Thai police said Monday. The three who died in the fire on Sunday night were all foreign tourists, Police Colonel Sanong Saengmanee told The Associated Press. One was found dead at the scene and the other two died after being transported to the hospital. Police later identified the dead as a Brazilian woman, a Ukrainian man and an American man. Four people were hospitalised, of whom one was in critical condition.

The fire erupted on the 5th floor of the six-story Ember Hotel, police said. Khao San Road is a popular backpacker street in the Thai capital that's also known for its lively nightlife. The flames were eventually contained and the cause of the blaze is under investigation. Seventy-five people were staying at the hotel at the time of the fire. Sreekanth Kolamala, a 37-year-old Indian national who lives in Singapore and was in Thailand on vacation, witnessed the rescue operation and said that firefighters "broke the glass over there to try to pull people out." Sanga Ruangwattanakul, the president of the Khao San Road Business

Association, stood outside The Ember Hotel on Monday, looking at the damage. He said 20,000 people were expected at a New Year's Eve countdown event on Tuesday night. "Now everybody's scared about what happened and they're scared it will affect the event tomorrow. But definitely there's no worry because we already had a meeting with the police station and we have over 150 police and district staff to cover on Khao San Road for security," he said. Bangkok Governor Chadchart Sittipunt also emphasized the importance of safety following the incident, especially as New Year's Eve approaches, with fireworks and other celebrations planned across the city.

Syria's long-ruling Baath party faces collapse

AP ■ DAMASCUS

A few days after insurgents in Syria overthrew President Bashar Assad, his ruling Baath party announced it was freezing its activities, marking a stunning change in fortunes for the political group that had ruled for more than six decades. Many members of the party's leadership have gone into hiding and some have fled the country. In a symbolic move, Syria's new rulers have turned the former party headquarters in Damascus into a center where former members of the army and security forces line up to register their names and hand over their weapons. Calls are on the rise to officially dissolve the Arab Socialist Baath Party that had ruled Syria since 1963. Many Syrians — including former party members — say its rule damaged relations with other Arab countries and aided in the spread of corruption that brought the war-torn nation to

its knees. "The party should not only be dissolved, it should go to hell," said Mohammed Hussein Ali, 64, who worked for a state oil company and was a party member for decades until he quit at the start of Syria's anti-government uprising in 2011 that turned into civil war. He never left the country and said he is happy the Baath rule is over. An official with Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, or HTS, the group that led the insurgent offensive that overthrew Assad, said no official decision has been made on what to do with the Baath party. The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak publicly about the matter, noted that HTS leader Ahmad al-Sharaa has said that officials who committed crimes against the Syrian people over the past decades will be brought to justice and hinted that they include party members. The Baath party, whose aim

was to unify Arab states in one nation, was founded by two Syrian Arab nationalists, Michel Aflaq and Salaheddine Bitar, in 1947 and at one point ruled two Arab countries, Iraq and Syria. A rivalry developed between the Syrian branch under Assad and his late father, Hafez, and the one in Iraq under Saddam Hussein, who was removed from power by a US-led invasion in 2003. In Syria, the Baath party became inextricably associated with the Assad family, which took power in 1970. For decades, the family used the party and its pan-Arab ideology to control the country. Many senior military jobs were held by members of the family's minority Alawite sect, and party membership was used as a cover to give it a nationalist rather than a sectarian nature. A former soldier and decades-long Baath party member who came to party headquarters to cut his military ties, Abdul-Rahman Ali, said he had no

idea it was founded by Aflaq and Bitar. He had always thought that Hafez Assad was the founder. "I am happy. We have been liberated from fear," said Ali, 43. "Even the walls had ears. We didn't dare express opinions with anyone." He was referring to the dreaded security and intelligence agencies that detained and tortured people who expressed criticism of Assad or government officials. Many Syrians were required to join the Baath Vanguard, the party's youth branch, while in elementary school, where Arab nationalist and socialist ideology was emphasized. It was difficult for people who were not party members to get government jobs or join the army or the security and intelligence services. In 2012, a year after Syria's uprising began, a paragraph of the constitution stating that the Baath party was the leader of the nation and society was abolished, in a move aimed to appease the public's demand for

political reforms. In practice, however, the party remained in control, with members holding majority seats in parliament and government. Another former soldier, who gave only his first name, Ghadir, out of fear of reprisals as a member of the Alawite sect, said he came from a poor family and joined the party so he could enter the military for a stable income. "You could not take any job if you were not a Baathist," he said. While few are mourning the party's fall in Syria, some are concerned that the Sunni majority that now controls the country could carry out a purge similar to the one in Iraq after Saddam's fall. A de-Baathification committee was formed in Iraq and its main job was purging Saddam loyalists from government and military institutions. The Sunni minority considered it a means of sectarian score-settling by Iraq's Shiite majority. The Sunni resentment and disenfranchisement that followed helped to

drive the rise of extremist groups in the country including al-Qaida and the Islamic State in Iraq. In Syria, a Baath party statement issued three days after Assad's fall called on all members to hand their weapons and public cars to the new authorities. On Dec. 24, party member and former army colonel Mohammed Merhi was among hundreds who lined up at the former party headquarters and handed over weapons. Merhi said the Baath party should be given another opportunity because its principles are good but were exploited over decades. But he said he might want to join another party if Syria becomes a multiparty democracy in the future. He handed over his Soviet Makarov pistol and received a document saying he can now move freely in the country after reconciling with the new authorities. "I want to become again a normal Syrian citizen and work to build a new Syria," he said.

66 killed as truck plunges into river in south Ethiopia

AP ■ ADDIS ABABA

At least 66 people have died and many more injured as a hospital director said Monday. The accident took place Sunday when an old, overcrowded truck that was contracted by wedding guests fell off the Gelan Bridge, where villagers said traffic crashes have happened before. The medical director at Bona General Hospital in the southern Sidama region, Lemma Lagide, told The Associated Press on Monday that 64 people died on site and two others at the hospital. He said those patients in need of more sophisticated critical care were transferred to a bigger hospital in Hawassa. Delays in rescue efforts in the remote village were blamed for the high number of casualties. Villagers said they tried to save people from the raging

river only with sticks. A villager, Serak Boko, told AP that moments before the accident, music was blasting out of the truck and people dressed in suits were dancing and waving. It is common for people in rural Ethiopia to hire trucks instead of buses to transport them to social events like weddings because they are more affordable and carry many people. Most of those on the truck were men because they are culturally required to escort the bride from her home to the groom's house. "The area always has regular accidents around the river as it is poorly constructed," said resident Fasil Atara, referring to the road lacking bumps and warnings. With desolate infrastructure and overcrowded public transportation, Ethiopia has had similar accidents in the past. In August, 38 people died after a bus rolled over in Amhara region.

South Korean authorities seek warrant to detain impeached President Yoon in martial law probe

AP ■ SEOUL

South Korean law enforcement officials requested a court warrant on Monday to detain impeached President Yoon Suk Yeol as they investigate whether his short-lived martial law decree on December 3 amounted to rebellion.

The Corruption Investigation Office for High-Ranking Officials, which leads a joint investigation with police and military authorities into the power grab that lasted only a few hours, confirmed it requested the warrant from the Seoul Western District Court. They plan to question Yoon on charges of abuse of authority and orchestrating a rebellion.

Yoon Kap-keun, the president's lawyer, denounced the detention attempt and filed a challenge with the same court, arguing that the warrant request was invalid. He also claimed the anti-corruption agency lacked the legal authority to investigate rebellion charges. Still, he evaded answering how the legal team would respond if the court approved the warrant for the president's detention.

"An incumbent president cannot be prosecuted for abuse of power," the lawyer said. "Of course, there are differing academic opinions on whether a president can be investigated for abuse of power and some assert that investigations are possible. But even when investigations are allowed, the pre-

ailing opinion is that they should be exercised with the utmost restraint."

The anti-corruption agency didn't immediately respond to the lawyer's comments.

Han Min-soo, spokesperson of the liberal opposition Democratic Party, called for the court to issue the warrant, saying Yoon Suk Yeol's detention would be the first step toward "ending the rebellion and restoring normalcy."

The warrant request came after Yoon dodged several requests by the joint investigation team and public prosecutors to appear for questioning and also blocked searches of his offices.

While Yoon has the presidential privilege of immunity from criminal prosecution, such protections don't extend to allegations of rebellion or treason.

It's not clear whether the court will grant the warrant or whether Yoon can be compelled to appear for questioning.

Under the country's laws, locations potentially linked to military secrets cannot be seized or searched without the consent of the person in charge, and it's unlikely that Yoon will voluntarily leave his residence if he faces detention. There are also concerns about possible clashes with Yoon's presidential security service if authorities attempt to forcibly detain him.

Yoon's presidential powers were suspended after the National Assembly voted to impeach him on Dec. 14 over his imposition of martial law, which last-

ing leaders the country hasn't seen since the 1980s.

In theory, the authority to investigate rebellion charges lies solely with the police, following a 2021 reform that redistributed investigative powers among law enforcement agencies and removed rebellion from the list of crimes prosecutors and the anti-corruption office could pursue. But those agencies have still been investigating rebellion accusations against Yoon, allegedly linked to charges related to abuse of power, a type of crime they are authorized to investigate.

Yoon and his military leadership have been accused of attempting to block the National Assembly from

voting to end martial law by sending hundreds of heavily armed troops to encircle the building. Lawmakers who managed to get in voted unanimously 190-0 to lift martial law, hours after Yoon declared it in a late-night television address.

Yoon has also been accused of ordering defense counterintelligence officials to detain key politicians, including opposition leader Lee Jae-myung, National Assembly Speaker Woo Won Shik and the ex-leader of his own conservative party, Han Dong-hun, a reformist who supported investigations into corruption

allegations against first lady Kim Keon Hee.

Yoon has defended the martial law decree as a necessary act of governance, portraying it as a temporary warning against the liberal opposition Democratic Party, which he has described as an "anti-state" force obstructing his agenda with its majority in the National Assembly. Yoon has claimed he had no intention to paralyze the functioning of the assembly, saying that the troops were sent to maintain order, and also denied planning to arrest politicians.

Yoon's claims have been denied by Kwak Jong-keun, the now-arrested comman-

PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice is hereby given to Public that I Mrs. Sunita Takkar, D/o Sh. Kundan Lal Kalra, owner of Flat No. 236 RFS Flats, Shekhi Sara, Phase - 1, New Delhi-110017 has lost the Original Registered Sale Deed entered on 06.05.2014 between Mrs. Raj Sehi and Mrs. SunitaTakkar bearing registration No. 2499, Book No. 1, Vol. No. 648 on Pages 164 to 174, with respect of Flat No. 236, RFS Flats, Shekhi Sara, Phase - 1, New Delhi - 110017. An Information Report in respect of Article/Document Lost is registered at Police Station Crime Branch, Delhi Police. All the persons are hereby informed not to carry out any transaction on the basis of said lost document. Any transaction carried out on the basis of such lost document shall be illegal and would be held void. Any person having found or in possession of the said document is requested to approach the owner Mrs. Sunita Takkar on vintodakkar@hotmail.com, +44740101950 or Advicate Anandep Singh at anas@vintodakkar.com, +919175103956.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Be it known to all that my client Shri Haninder Pal Singh S/o Shri Harbans Singh R/o WZ-41, Prithvi Park, Tilak Nagar, New Delhi-110018 has disowned/debarred his son Gagandeep Singh from all his movable & immovable properties and has severed all relations from him due to his misconduct. Any person dealing with him shall be doing at his/her own risk.

PRAVEEN RASTOGI (Advocate)

German govt seeks to downplay Musk's backing of far-right party ahead of poll

AP ■ BERLIN

The German government on Monday sought to downplay efforts by tech entrepreneur Elon Musk to get involved in the country's general election campaign by again endorsing the far-right Alternative for Germany, or AfD, party.

Musk caused uproar over the weekend after backing the AfD in an opinion piece in a major newspaper, leading to the resignation of the paper's opinion editor in protest.

"Freedom of expression also includes the greatest nonsense," government spokesperson Christiane Hoffmann said, adding that should wouldn't comment further on Musk's statements. She did, however, say that "it is indeed the case

for this country," Musk wrote in his translated commentary. He went on to say the far-right party "can lead the country into a future where economic prosperity, cultural integrity and technological innovation are not just wishes, but reality."

The Tesla Motors CEO also wrote that his investment in Germany gave him the right to comment on the country's condition.

The AfD is polling strongly, but its candidate for the top job, Alice Weidel, has no realistic chance of becoming chancellor because other parties refuse to work with the far-right party.

An ally of US President-elect Donald Trump, the technology billionaire challenged in his opinion piece the party's public image.

Musk's guest opinion piece for Welt am Sonntag published in German over the weekend, was the second time this month he had supported Alternative for Germany, or AfD.

"The Alternative for Germany (AfD) is the last spark of hope

THE PIONEER CLASSIFIEDS

CHANGE OF D.O.B

I, Lakhan Lal Sharma, Father of- No. 17031273H CFN Santosh Kumar Sharma, R/O- At Kasmabad, Po- Gangapur, PS- Sultanganj, Distt- Bhagalpur, Bihar- 813213, declare that in my son's service records, my D.O.B. is wrongly written as 05/01/1955 whereas my correct D.O.B. is 05/01/1965, which may be amended accordingly.

PD(1173)C

CHANGE OF NAME

I, Dinesh Chauhan S/o- Lajje Ram Village- Shahpur Sector-128 Gautam Buddha Nagar Noida, I have changed my name to Dinesh Kumar Chauhan for all future purposes.

PD(1171)C

PUBLIC NOTICE

Information is given to the general public at large that my client Mr. Harsh Rajpoot s/o Late Harsh Mohan & Mr. Hemant S/O Pooran Singh who is the owner of Freehold Residential Plot of land area measuring 25 Sq. yds. i.e. 20.90 Sq. mtr., out of Khata No. 3601, situated at Azad Vihar, Village Khoda, Pargana Loni, Tehsil & District Ghazipur, U.P., by virtue of Sale Deed dated 18.03.2013 executed by Mr. Virender Saw s/o Mr. Dharmu Saw (Doc. No. 4542). Any person(s), institution(s) having any claim and/or objection in respect of the said property shall communicate the same to the undersigned at the address within 07 days from the publication of this notice with documentary evidence in support thereof, failing which all the claim, of such person(s) / institution(s) shall not be binding upon the said property or purchaser.

Mohd. K. Hussain, (Advocate), 2E/23, 3rd Floor, Jhandewalan Extn., New Delhi-110055, Mob. 9810391672, 9871130992

PUBLIC NOTICE

This is to inform to all concern that Mrs. Shakuntala W/o Shri Indrapal R/o Village Chhalera Bangar, Sector-44, Noida G.B.Nagar U.P. who is the original owner of Residential Plot No.17, Block-BL, Sector-145, Noida (U.P.), Mrs. Shakuntala expired on Dt. 01.03.2023. The will was executed in favor of this son, Mr. Virendra Chauhan S/o Late Sh. Indrapal R/o Village Chhalera Bangar, Sector-44, Noida G.B.Nagar U.P. which is registered at Sub-Registrar, Sadar-I, Gautam Budh Nagar Bahi No. 3, Jld No.1046, Page No.271-286, Serial No.964 of Dt 05.10.2021. So it is informed to all concern that the said Property is going to be transfer in favour of Mr. Virendra Chauhan S/o Late Sh. Indrapal R/o Village- Chhalera Bangar, Sector-44, Noida G.B. Nagar U.P. on the basis of registered Will. If any one has/ have any objection he/she may file his/ her objection alongwith the sufficient proof in the Residential Plot Department of the Noida Authority within 30 days from the date of publication of this notice. **Mr. Virendra Chauhan**

PD(1171)C

PUBLIC NOTICE

This is to inform to all concern that Shri Indrapal S/o Late Sh. Ram Swarup R/o Village Chhalera, Noida. Distt. Gautam Budh Nagar U.P. who is the original owner of Residential Plot No.162, Block-C, Sector-44, Noida (U.P.), Shri Indrapal expired on Dt. 30.05.2015. The will was executed in favor of this son, Shri Shiv Kumar Singh, Shri Jagat Singh, Shri Virender & Shri Keshav, all S/o Shri Indrapal, all R/o Village- Chhalera, Noida Distt. Gautam Budh Nagar U.P. which is registered at Sub Registrar, Noida, Bahi No.3, Jld No.504, Page No.137-146, Serial No.503 at Dt.09.03.2015. So it is informed to all concern that the said Property is going to be transfer in favour of Shri Shiv Kumar, Shri Jagat Singh, Shri Virender & Shri Keshav, all S/o Shri Indrapal, all R/o Village- Chhalera, Noida Distt. Gautam Budh Nagar U.P. on the basis of registered WILL. If any one has/ have any objection he/she may file his/ her objection alongwith the sufficient proof in the Residential Plot Department of the Noida Authority within 30 days from the date of publication of this notice. **Shri Shiv Kumar**

PD(1172)C

PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice hereby given to Public at Large stating that Sh. Rohit Yadav S/o Late Sh. Charan Singh is the Owner of Residential House area measuring 100 Sq. Yds. i.e. 90.0 Sq. ft. Situated at Colony Known as Khassa No. 1449 & 1453, Village-Shahpur Bamheta, Pargana-Dasna, Tehsil and Distt. - Ghazabad, U.P., by virtue of Sale Deed dated 09.08.2023. It is notified that Sh. Rohit Yadav is the owner of the said property was Bounded as Le. EAST: Rasta 12 Ft. Wide, WEST: Other Property, NORTH: Property Deepak, SOUTH: Property Ravinder. However, the Boundaries of the said Plot on date are: EAST: Rasta 12 Ft. Wide, WEST: Property Devender, NORTH: Property Deepak, SOUTH: Property Ravinder. That, Sh. Rohit Yadav S/o Late Sh. Charan Singh is now mortgaging the said Plot in Indostar Housing Finance (Vasthali Branch, Ghazabad). Anyone having objection can raise their claim within 5 days from the date of Publication to NCR LAW ASSOCIATES (Advocate).

NCR LAW ASSOCIATES
Advocates & Consultants A-98, Sector-9, New Vijay Nagar, Ghaziabad, (U.P.)-201009, MOB- 9999826227, 9999721152

PUBLIC NOTICE

Information is given to general public at large that Mr. Sandeep Choudhary who is/are purchasing the Western Half portion of built up property bearing No. 29-A, area measuring 114 sq. yds. out of Rect. No. 6, Killa No. 20/1 & 2, situated in the area of Village Khurda Khurda, in the abadi of Shiv Pari Extn. Haba Ghazabad, Bahi - 10291 from Mr. Mukesh W/o S/o Late Mr. Naubat Rai Vij who acquired the said property by virtue of registered Will dated 20.10.2023 (Doc. No. 1036) & Surviving Member Certificate of Late Mrs. Darshan Kumari Vij alias Darshan Kumari are not available with Seller's i.e. Mukesh Vij S/o Late Mr. Naubat Rai Vij. To comply the requirements of BANK/NBC, we give this public notice to all persons having any objection regarding ownership and/or creating mortgage of the said property is/are hereby requested to intimate in writing to the undersigned within 14 days at below address.

NCR LAW ASSOCIATES
Advocates & Consultants A-98, Sector-9, New Vijay Nagar, Ghaziabad, (U.P.)-201009, MOB- 9999826227, 9999721152

NOTICE OF LOSS OF SHARES OF ESCORTS KUBOTA LIMITED

Information is hereby given that the following share certificates have been reported as lost/misplaced and the Company intends to issue duplicate certificates in lieu thereof, in due course. Any person who has a valid claim on the said shares should lodge such a claim with the Company at its Registered office within 15 days hereof.

Name of the holder	Folio No.	No. of shares (Rs. 10/-)	Certificate No.(s)	Distinctive No.(s)	
Lalita Saraf	ESC000791	50	1292570	64548983	64548987
		50	1292571	64548985	64548987
		50	1292572	64548986	64548987
		50	1292573	64548989	64548987
		50	1292574	64548990	64548987
		10	1292575	64548188	64548917
		10	1292575	64548189	64548917
		5	1292576	64548189	64548912
		1	1292577	64548189	64548913
		1	1292578	64548189	64548914
1	1292579	64548189	64548915		
1	1292580	64548189	64548916		
1	1292580	64548189	64548916		

PREM KUMAR SARAF (HUF)
(CLAIMANT)
Place : Haryana Date: 31-12-2024

NOTICE OF LOSS OF SHARES OF ESCORTS KUBOTA LIMITED

Information is hereby given that the following share certificates have been reported as lost/misplaced and the Company intends to issue duplicate certificates in lieu thereof, in due course. Any person who has a valid claim on the said shares should lodge such a claim with the Company at its Registered office within 15 days hereof.

I, Ashi Chhabra W/o Sumeet Chhabra R/o A-241, Sector-43, Noida, Gautam Budh Nagar, U.P. (201301), declare that after marriage I have changed my name from Deep Shikha Kukreja to Ashi Chhabra for all purposes.

PD(1177)C

I, Gulafsha, D/o Shri Mohammad Jalaluddin, R/o House No-1191, Gali No 1, block D, Sangam Vihar, Pushpa Bhawan, South Delhi 110062 my Father name is wrongly writes as Jalaluddin in 10th class marksheet but my Father actual name is Mohammad Jalaluddin. Jalaludin and Mohammad Jalaluddin both are same person

PD(1178)C

PUBLIC NOTICE

It has been informed that original registered property documents of Mr. Shiv Shankar Gautam S/o Sunder Lal, H- No 679/1 Flat # 5B, First Floor, Noida Basti, Deoli, Khanpur, ND- 110062 have been lost/Misplaced. If anyone finds the document please return/contact to 9953130864

NTIN BHASKAR (Advocates & Consultants) Off.: Chamber No. G-712, KKD Court, Shahdara, New Delhi-110032

PUBLIC NOTICE

Re: Land admeasuring 80 sq yards, out of Khassa No. 55, situated at Village Colony Tripati Chhapra, Pargana & Tehsil Dabri, Distt. Gausam Buzh Nagar, UP. Hereinafter referred to as "said property".

NOTICE is hereby given to general public that our client, Mrs. Kurni Devi has informed us that she is the owner of the said property vide Sale Deed executed by Mrs. Salendri Sirohi in her favour in respect of the said property. The said property is being mortgaged to the concerned Sub-Registrar of Assurances as Document No. 35537, in Book No. 1, Volume No. 21950, Pages 51-74, registered on 14.10.2022 (SRD-Padri). Our client has also informed us that Mrs. Salendri Sirohi purchased the said property from Mr. Pramod Kumar vide sale deed registered at the concerned Sub-Registrar of Assurances as Document No. 8098 in Book No. 1, Volume No. 1718, pages 104-107, registered on 14.06.2006 (SRD-Dabri). In this connection, our client has also informed us that the said sale deed dated 14.06.2006, in original, (hereinafter called the "said document") and forming part of "said documents", has been lost/misplaced and is not traceable. An FIR to this effect has also been lodged with Uttar Pradesh Police vide I. A. R. No. 2024001019536 dated 05.12.2024. If the aforesaid original document (the said document) or any one of them is/are found or has/are been found by any person, the same may be returned to our client. If the said document/under the address mentioned herein below, further, if any person, body, institution is having any claim and/or objection in respect of the said property or any part thereof, he/she may raise his/ her objections, in writing, with documentary evidence, by Registered AD Post, to the undersigned at the address mentioned herein below within 03 days of publication of this notice. Otherwise, after expiry of 03 days from the date of publication of this notice, no objection shall be acceptable.

General Public may also take note that any deal or transaction done by anybody on the basis of the said document or any of the aforesaid document shall be illegal and not binding on the parties. The person doing so shall be liable to be prosecuted under the law.

SHIVKANT ARORA, ADVOCATE FOR MISCELLANEOUS LAW OFFICES A-74, LOWER GROUND FLOOR DEFENCE COLONY, NEW DELHI-110024

PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that my client, Mr. Pramod Kumar Shrivastava is the owner Land area measuring 90 Sq. Yds. out of Khassa No. 676, situated at Village Roza-Jalaunder Pargana and Tehsil Dabri, Distt. Gautam Budh Nagar through Sale Deed dated 19.07.2005 between Mr. 1652 registered at Sub-Registrar, Haryana (Property ID BGRW125465), along with her daughter Smt. Vandana Garg S/o Mr. Pramod Garg, R/o of Flat No. 17, Priya Apartment, Sector-14, Rohini, Delhi-110085, the undersigned advocate hereby invites claims or objections from other heirs or claimants or objectors for the transfer of ownership of the above said Land/Plot/Property, of deceased, in favour of my client (Smt. Vandana Garg), within a period of 14 days from the publication of this notice, with copies of proofs to support the claims/objectors at below mentioned address. If no claims/objectors are received within the period prescribed above, Haryana Shehni Vikas Pradhikaran shall be at the liberty to transfer the ownership of the deceased to my client in the manner provided under the by-laws.

Deepak Kumar Gupta (Advocate)
Ch. No. 34-35 Court Complex, Bahadurgarh, Distt. Jhajjar, Haryana-124507. Ph: 9215686791

PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice is hereby given by Akhliyaga Solar Energy Private Limited to the public at large that the originals of documents i.e. Sale Deeds listed below are lost and are not traceable. Therefore, with respect to the loss of the below mentioned original Sale Deeds, Akhliyaga Solar Energy Private Limited through its representative has lodged a lost and found complaint bearing no. LR No.2448640/2024 dated 30.12.2024 with the crime branch, Delhi via online E-Lost Portal. If found, please contact E-Executed in favour of Akhliyaga Solar Energy Private Limited

1. Sale Deed registered as Document No. GDG-1-06677-2021-22 on 18.09.2021.
2. Sale Deed registered as Document No. GDG-1-07049-2021-22 on 24.09.2021.
3. Sale Deed registered as Document No. GDG-1-03338-2019-20 on 06.07.2019.
4. Sale Deed registered as Document No. GDG-1-14698-2022-23 on 27.01.2023.

Akhliyaga Solar Energy Private Limited
Email: ayushidixit@renew.com
Address: Commercial Block-1, Golf Course Road, DLF City, Zone 6, Sector 43, Gurugram, Haryana - 122009

NOTICE OF DISSOLUTION

Notice is hereby given that M/s Daffodils International, situated at 294, Lower ground Floor, Sant Nagar, East of Kailash, New Delhi-110065 was running under by its partners namely (1) Mr. Pankaj Mathur and (2) Mr. Abhishek Mathur as per Indian Partnership Act. The term of its existence until 26th December 2024, thereby dissolving the said firm on said date after been published in the newspaper adopted by one of its partner Mr. Pankaj Mathur for dissolution of firm at will.

It is also made clear by way of this publication that one of the partner Mr. Pankaj Mathur of M/s Daffodils International will not be liable for any transaction already done with Mr. Abhishek Mathur or entered upon by him for exchange of goods or services which has been dealt in cash or any money/ amount taken by him in his personal accounts from the general public, representing as partner of the firm, the other partner Mr. Pankaj Mathur and its firm M/s Daffodils International has no concerned nor is liable for any misdeeds done by Mr. Abhishek Mathur. Mr. Pankaj Mathur or his firm M/s Daffodils International will not be liable any further after publication of the aforesaid notice.

It is also persistent to inform all that if any firm / individual / corporation deals with Mr. Abhishek Mathur in exchange of cash, goods or services, transactions will be solely liable for doing at their own risk, cost and consequences.

This announcement serves as notice to all concerned and of the legal dissolution of the aforesaid firm.

S/d. PANKAJ MATHUR (PARTNER)

PUBLIC NOTICE

This is to inform to all concern that Sh. M.R. Venkataraman S/o Sh. M.V. Rajan R/o 16-C, Bazar, Rajendra Nagar New Delhi, who is the original allottee of Plot No. 44, Block-A, Sector-40, Noida had sold the said property on General power of attorney basis to the following person(s). GPA was executed on in favour of Smt. Anuradha Purohit D/o Sh. Gulshan Ahuja R/o I-48, Sector-41, Noida Distt. G.B. Nagar (U.P.) which is registered on Dated 10.03.1998 in Sub Registrar office Delhi. The agreement to sell was not registered or not executed. So it is informed to all concern that the said property is going to be transferred in favour of Smt. Mayani Rajni Ahuja W/o Gulshan Ahuja R/o H.No. A-50, Sector-40, Noida G.B. Nagar (U.P.) If any one has/ have any objection he/she may file his/ her objection along with the sufficient proof in the Residential Plot Department of the Noida Authority within 15 days from the date of publication of this notice.

Smt Anuradha Purohit

Public Notice

This is to inform the general public that Mr. Pramod Kumar Shrivastava is the owner Land area measuring 90 Sq. Yds. out of Khassa No. 676, situated at Village Roza-Jalaunder Pargana and Tehsil Dabri, Distt. Gautam Budh Nagar through Sale Deed dated 19.07.2005 between Mr. 1652 registered at Sub-Registrar, Haryana (Property ID BGRW125465), along with her daughter Smt. Vandana Garg S/o Mr. Pramod Garg, R/o of Flat No. 17, Priya Apartment, Sector-14, Rohini, Delhi-110085, the undersigned advocate hereby invites claims or objections from other heirs or claimants or objectors for the transfer of ownership of the above said Land/Plot/Property, of deceased, in favour of my client (Smt. Vandana Garg), within a period of 14 days from the publication of this notice, with copies of proofs to support the claims/objectors at below mentioned address. If no claims/objectors are received within the period prescribed above, Haryana Shehni Vikas Pradhikaran shall be at the liberty to transfer the ownership of the deceased to my client in the manner provided under the by-laws.

Deepak Kumar Gupta (Advocate)
Ch. No. 34-35 Court Complex, Bahadurgarh, Distt. Jhajjar, Haryana-124507. Ph: 9215686791

Public Notice

This is to inform the general public that Mr. Pramod Kumar Shrivastava is the owner Land area measuring 90 Sq. Yds. out of Khassa No. 676, situated at Village Roza-Jalaunder Pargana and Tehsil Dabri, Distt. Gautam Budh Nagar through Sale Deed dated 19.07.2005 between Mr. 1652 registered at Sub-Registrar, Haryana (Property ID BGRW125465), along with her daughter Smt. Vandana Garg S/o Mr. Pramod Garg, R/o of Flat No. 17, Priya Apartment, Sector-14, Rohini, Delhi-110085, the undersigned advocate hereby invites claims or objections from other heirs or claimants or objectors for the transfer of ownership of the above said Land/Plot/Property, of deceased, in favour of my client (Smt. Vandana Garg), within a period of 14 days from the publication of this notice, with copies of proofs to support the claims/objectors at below mentioned address. If no claims/objectors are received within the period prescribed above, Haryana Shehni Vikas Pradhikaran shall be at the liberty to transfer the ownership of the deceased to my client in the manner provided under the by-laws.

Deepak Kumar Gupta (Advocate)
Ch. No. 34-35 Court Complex, Bahadurgarh, Distt. Jhajjar, Haryana-124507. Ph: 9215686791

NORTHERN RAILWAY

E-TENDER NOTICE

Sr. Divisional Electrical Engineer/Traction Distribution, DRM's Office, State Entry Road, New Delhi for & on behalf of President of India, invites open e-tender for the under noted work:-

Name of its Location	Work with its Location	RMITIS (Roof Mounted Infrared Thermal Imaging System) for conducting monitoring and live line thermal scanning of 25KV AC OHE system.	Approx. Cost of work	Earnest Money Deposit	E-Tender Bid Online Submission Period	E-Tender Bid Submission End Date & E-Tender Open Date & Time	Fund Allocation	Website particulars where complete details of tender documents can be seen
1			Rs. 48,75,697.66	Rs. 97,500/-	09.01.2025 (00:00 Hrs.) to 23.01.2025 (15:00 Hrs.)	23.01.2025 (15:00 Hrs.)	07041032	www Ireps.gov.in
2								
3								
4								
5								
6								
7								

E-Tender No.: 43-TRD-NDL5-2024-25 Dated: 27.12.2024 3973/2024

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

Indian Overseas Bank

SONIPAT BRANCH
(Address : Gohana Road Opp. Om Petrol Pump, Sonapat (Haryana) Pin code-131001
Phone No. 0130-2200193 & Email id : iob2721@iob.in)

SYMBOLIC POSSESSION NOTICE (for immovable property) [Rule 8(1)]

Whereas The undersigned being the Authorized Officer of the Indian Overseas Bank, SONIPAT BRANCH, Sonapat, under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13(2) read with rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued a demand notice dated 13/08/2024 calling upon the borrower Shri Praveen Kumar S/o Ramkishan House no. 312/29, Dev Nagar Gali No. 06 Distt. Sonapat Haryana-131001 and Smt. Geeta W/o Shri Praveen Kumar S/o Ramkishan House no. 312/29, Dev Nagar Gali No. 06 Distt. Sonapat Haryana-131001.

Smt. Geeta W/o Parveen Kumar/Mortgagor, having residential address House no. 312/29, Dev Nagar Gali No. 06 Distt. Sonapat Haryana-131001, (hereinafter referred as 'borrowers/guarantors/mortgagors') to repay the amount mentioned in the notice being Rs. 10,52,325.56 (Rupees Ten lakhs fifty two thousand three hundred twenty five and paise fifty six only) as on 13.08.2024 with further interest at contractual rates and rests, charges etc. till date of realization within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice.

(1) The Borrowers having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrowers and the public in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him/her under Section 13(4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the said Rules on this 26th day of December 2024.

(2) The borrowers in particular and the public in general are hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of Indian Overseas Bank for an amount Rs. 10,52,325.56 (Rupees Ten lakhs fifty two thousand three hundred twenty five and paise fifty six only) as on 13.08.2024 with interest thereon at contractual rates & rests as agreed, charges etc., from the aforesaid date mentioned in the demand notice till date of payment less repayments, if any, made after issuance of Demand Notice. The dues payable as on the date of taking possession is Rs.10,47,501.50 (Rupees Ten lakhs forty Seven thousand five hundred one and paise fifty only) as on 26.12.2024 payable with further interest at contractual rates & rests, charges etc., till date of payment.

(3) The borrower's attention is invited to provisions of Sub-section (8) of the Section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available to them, to redeem the secured assets.

DESCRIPTION OF THE IMMOVABLE PROPERTY

Equitable mortgage of residential plot having Property Id 35-C-282-U-122 situated at Khatwani No. 166 Killa no. 6/16(15-16) with total land of 5K-16M, marla having share of 13/464 which works out to be measuring 96 Sq.yds. i.e., situated at 4th sub internal street called Gali no. 06 near Sonapat Gas Agency/ Shiva Shiksha School Waka called Gali no. 06 within the revenue estate of Jamalpur khurd within the abadi of Dev Nagar, Sonapat and within the M.C. limit, Sonapat pin code 131001 standing in the name of Smt. Geeta w/o shri Praveen and same is bounded by East: House of Promila West: House of Harshi & Deepak North: Hali Rasta South: Plot of Ram Kumar

• Vehicle loan no. 272103452000131 availed in the name of Mr. Praveen Kumar and Geeta is also NPA with present outstanding of Rs. 3,32,411.94 (Three lakhs thirty two thousand four hundred eleven and paise ninety four) as on 24.12.2024 payable with further interest at contractual rates & rests, charges etc., till date of payment

Dated: 26.12.2024
Place: Sonapat

Sd/- Authorised Officer
Indian Overseas Bank

EXTENSION OF PERIODICITY OF SPECIAL TRAIN

It is notified for the information of rail passengers that Railways have decided to extend the periodicity of the run of Train No. 05577/05578 Saharsa Jn.-Anand Vihar T.-Saharsa Jn. Garib Rath Special as per details given below:-

Train No.	From	To	Days of Run	Notified up to	Period of Extension
05577	Saharsa Jn.	Anand Vihar T.	Exp-Thu, Sat	31.12.24	01.01.25 to 28.02.25
05578	Anand Vihar T.	Saharsa Jn.	Exp-Sat, Mon	02.01.25	03.01.25 to 02.03.25

Note :- Rest of the instructions will hold good.

For any kind of information such as detailed Time-Table of other stations enroute and composition etc., passengers are requested to contact RailMadad Helpline No. 139 or visit Indian Railways website https://enquiry.indianrail.gov.in or NTEs App.

RailMadad Helpline No. 139

Visit RailMadad Website:- www.railmadad.indianrailways.gov.in

NORTHERN RAILWAY
Your Convenience - Our Concern
Visit us at : www.nr.indianrailways.gov.in

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

Noida

New Okhla Industrial Development Authority

Administrative Building, Sector-6, Noida, G.B. Nagar (U.P.)
Website: www.noidaauthorityonline.in

E-TENDER NOTICE

E-Tenders are invited from eligible contractors/firm for the following jobs against which bids can be uploaded and same shall be opened/downloaded as per schedule mentioned. The details and conditions of all tenders are available on Noida Authority's official website: www.noidaauthorityonline.in & <https://etender.up.nic.in>. Please ensure to see these websites for any changes/amendments & corrigendum etc.

A) Short Term Fresh-Tender Work:

Sl. No.	Jobs No.	Name of the work	Tender Amount (Rs. Lacs)
1.	36/DGM/SM(WC-1)/2024-25	M/o Building (Renovation & Maintenance work of House No. 16 in Sector-14A), Noida.	33.44

The above tenders can be uploaded by dated 01.01.2025 up to 5.00 PM. Pre-qualification shall be opened/downloaded on dated 02.01.2025 at 11.00 AM.

B) Re-Tender Work:

Sl. No.	Jobs No.	Name of the work	Tender Amount (Rs. Lacs)
2.	21/DGM/SM(WC-1)/2024-25	M/o Building (Annual Maintenance Work in CAG Guest House, Police Control Room and Staff Quarter in Sector-14A and Sector-15A),	

Happy New Year 2025

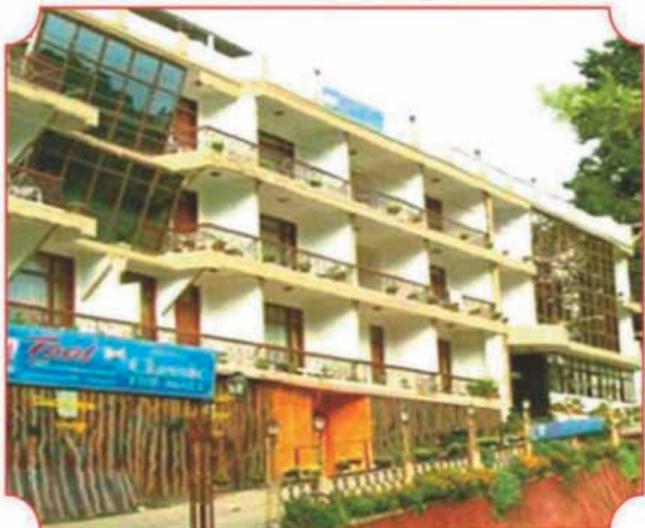
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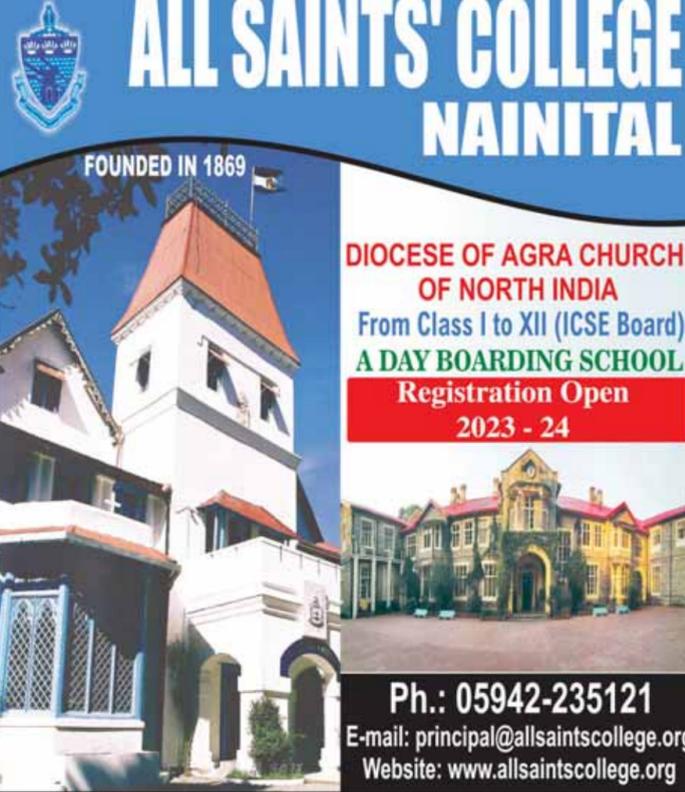
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Australia beat India by 184 runs in fourth Test

PTI ■ MELBOURNE
India slumped to a demoralising 184-run loss to Australia in the fourth Test here on Monday with contemporary greats Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli failing to come good yet again, signalling that their walk towards the exit door is not too far. Chasing a near improbable target of 340, both Rohit (9 off 40 balls) and Kohli (5) failed to battle their technical frailties and mental cobwebs as India lost seven wickets for 34 runs in just 20.4 overs in the final session to be all out for 155 in 79.1 overs. Australian captain Pat Cummins (3/28 in 18 overs) was superb as usual and Scott Boland was also magnificent (3/39 in 16 overs) in his every spell. Nathan Lyon (2/37 in 20.1 overs) took advantage of variable bounce while Mitchell Starc (1/25 in 16 overs) got the prized scalp of Kohli. This was after an 88-run fourth-wicket stand between Yashasvi Jaiswal and Rishabh Pant. "Pretty disappointing. We wanted

to fight but we could not do it," a dejected Rohit said in the post-match presentation. "We tried everything but they fought hard. We did not grab our chances," he conceded. Australia now lead the series 2-1 and unless India draw level in Sydney, a third successive World Test Championship final could become a distant dream. Even to retain the Border-Gavaskar Trophy, India would need to post a win. Save Jaiswal (84, 208 balls), whose controversial caught-behind in which the third umpire overruled technology to adjudge him out, none of the other batters performed well enough to save the team. "They batted well in the middle session. We knew that we had to get one breakthrough and anything can happen and that proved to be the case. "We had plenty of runs to play with, we had plenty of fielders with the helmet around," a beaming Cummins, who was also adjudged player of the match for his haul of



six wickets, said in the presentation ceremony. The art of saving Test matches has slowly become extinct but India would have depended on their two

senior-most players, who are also fighting to save their legacy and reputation built over nearly two decades. In case of Rishabh Pant, it was one

bad shot too many after a full session in which he concentrated. He got a rank long hop from Travis Head but after a 103-ball vigil, it all came to a naught.

Even Jaiswal's guts and grit couldn't prevent a once highly-rated, but currently a trifle over-rated, Indian batting line-up from implosion with over-the-hill seniors and young superstars unable to handle the pressure. The defeat could have severe repercussions as there seems to be no light at the end of the tunnel for skipper Rohit. As for Kohli, despite all his white-ball exploits, the problems outside the off-stump will stick out like a sore thumb. For Rohit, his ultra-defensive approach in the opening slot, is causing India to stare down the barrel with alarming regularity. Rohit did all the hard work during the first hour before opposition skipper Cummins got his bunny for the 10th time in Test matches. Kohli could never control his urge of playing the cover drive again and was caught at first slip after Mitchell Starc pushed one across with the angle. Rahul was out without troubling the scorers after getting a second good ball in the game.

Rohit's decision to bat up the order backfired and it also tinkered with Rahul's mindset despite him being perfectly fine opening the innings. The captaincy was pedestrian as he let the game drift on occasions and there were lot of phases that led to India's defeat but none more telling than the final wicket partnership between Scott Boland and Nathan Lyon where the target went out of reach on Sunday. Save Jasprit Bumrah, who once again toiled manfully for 50 overs and took nine wickets, and find-of-the-series Nitish Reddy, who scored a gritty hundred, there are no positives to be taken from this defeat. The batting, save for the second innings in the opening Perth Test, has been absolutely below par and India won't be doing themselves any favours if they have walking wickets at the top of the order. The team is going through a tough transition and it is now time that their feisty head coach Gautam Gambhir shows some spark along with chairman of selectors Ajit Agarkar.



Seniors like Rohit, Kohli haven't really contributed: Gavaskar

PTI ■ MELBOURNE
The legendary Sunil Gavaskar on Monday lashed out at senior players such as Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli for letting the team down and blamed the Indian top-order for losing the Boxing Day Test against Australia here. Set a target of 340 on the final day of the fourth Test, the Indian batters, with the exception of Yashasvi Jaiswal (84), faltered yet again to lose the match by 184 runs and trail 1-2 in the five-match series. "It all depends on the selectors. The contributions that were expected have not come. It is the top-order which has to contribute, if the top-order is not contributing, why blame the lower-order. "The seniors have not really made the contribution that they should have, all that they had to do was bat out today and live to fight another day in Sydney," Gavaskar told India Today. "It's just that the top-order didn't contribute and that is the reason India found itself in this position." While Gavaskar praised Jaiswal for his gritty knock, the batting great once again was not impressed by Rishabh Pant's shot selection, which opened the floodgates for Australia. Joining hands at 33 for 3, Jaiswal and Pant looked to have settled down, taking India to 121 in the post-lunch session, before a rash shot from Pant set the team back. "Yes, absolutely around tea time when Rishabh

Pant and Yashasvi Jaiswal had batted through the post-lunch session, it certainly looked India could achieve a draw because it was a matter of batting for another hour really without losing a wicket, and Australia would have then given up," Gavaskar said. "The whole idea was try and take into the mandatory overs and if around the mandatory overs India had just lost maybe four wickets then Australia, after a couple of overs, would have asked to shake hands but that didn't happen." As Pant got a long hop from Travis Head after a 103-ball vigil, during which he shared 84 runs for the fourth wicket with Jaiswal, he hit it straight to Mitchell Marsh at in the deep in search of a six. "...The issue is you know there is this shot called sixer in cricket and which is like a drug. Once you hit a couple of sixes, then you think that's a real a high because once you hit the ball cleanly of the middle of the bat and it goes into the stands, there is no better feeling for a batter. Sixer is a different feeling and it's a drug, it gets into your system," Gavaskar said. "The difference between a boundary and a six is just two runs but the risk percentage is 100 per cent. Boundary is hit along the ground no risk at all, a six is attempted with the ball up in the air and if you don't time it, if it hits the toe of your bat, it can go up and you can be out caught."

New Zealand beats Sri Lanka by 45 runs in second T20

AP ■ MOUNT MAUNGANUI

Sri Lanka again fell short in a Stough run chase as New Zealand won the second Twenty20 international by 45 runs Monday to take an unassailable 2-0 lead in the three-match series. The tourists were edged by eight runs chasing 172-8 in the first match two days ago and again faltered late while chasing New Zealand's 186-5 on Monday. Sri Lanka was all out for 141 in 19.1 overs. "It's really important to finish the game, no matter how it started," Sri Lanka captain Charith Asalanka said. "The way you finish is the most important thing. In the first game we were almost there to win and again we're disappointed." Once again, Jacob Duffy was New Zealand's key bowler, dismissing opener Pathum Nissanka for 37 and returning



to remove Kusal Perera for 48 when both batters looked well placed to steer Sri Lanka to victory. Nissanka made 96 in the first match in a 120-run opening partnership with Kusal Mendis before Duffy turned that match in New Zealand's favor when he took three wickets in four balls, including Mendis, to stifle the Sri Lanka chase. He took 4-15 Monday to once

again stand out as the difference between the teams. After dismissing Nissanka, Duffy produced a superb yorker to remove Perera in the 16th over when Sri Lanka was 127-4 and still in with a good chance. He then removed Wanindu Hasaranga (1) and Maheesh Theekshana (0) in the space of three balls in the 18th over as the Sri Lanka tail again failed to fire. Matt Henry took two wickets with consecutive balls in the 19th over before Zak Foulkes finished off the Sri Lanka innings with five balls remaining. New Zealand depended on a century partnership between Daryl Mitchell and Michael Bracewell to post a competitive total in the first match. It produced a more balanced batting effort Monday to reach a testing total on a tricky pitch which sometimes skidded, sometimes held up and provided a batting challenge. A strong wind across the Bay Oval also made hitting to one side of the ground difficult and gave an edge to the bowlers. Tim Robinson made 41 from 34 balls at the top of the New Zealand innings, hitting three fours and two sixes to impart early momentum while Rachin Ravindra failed again and was out for 1.



Mentally disturbing, we fell short in finding ways to win: Rohit Sharma

PTI ■ MELBOURNE
Indian skipper Rohit Sharma on Monday said the 184-run drubbing at the hands of Australia in the fourth Test here is "mentally disturbing", conceding that his team failed to fight in the match. India will now head to Sydney for the fifth and final Test trailing 1-2 in the five-match Border-Gavaskar Trophy. The series finale begins on January 3. "It is mentally disturbing when you can't do what you have come to do," Rohit, whose own poor form has been under the scanner, told reporters after the game. "It is pretty disappointing. There are ways to win games and we fell short in finding ways to win the game here. We wanted to fight till the end and unfortunately we couldn't do it," he said in the post-match presentation ceremony. Australia were struggling at 90 for six in their second innings with the overall lead yet to touch 200 on Sunday but managed to make it a 340-run target for the visitors. Rohit admitted his team could not exploit the favourable situation. "We had Australia 90 for 6. We know things can get tough, but we want to play tough cricket from hard situations. But we were not good enough. I went back to my room and thought about what else we could have done as a team," Rohit said. "But we threw everything we

had, they fought hard, especially that last-wicket partnership, which probably cost us the game there," he added. Rohit said the team wanted to have a go at the target despite its daunting nature. "We knew 340 wasn't going to be easy. We tried to set a platform and keep wickets in hand for the last two sessions, but they bowled perfectly as well. We wanted to go for the target, but we didn't set the platform from our side," he noted. The Mumbaier lauded Nitish Kumar Reddy for making a fine hundred during the first innings, and hoped the youngster will climb the ladder. "He's coming here for the first time, these conditions can get really tough, but he showed great character, solid technique as well. "He's got everything to be successful at this level, I hope he goes from strength to strength, and he's got all the backing from the team as well," he said. The 37-year-old also patted pacer Jasprit Bumrah for leading the Indian bowling attack almost singlehandedly. "Absolutely brilliant, We've been watching him for so many years now, coming here and getting the job done. He's not a statistical person. "He just wants to play for the country and do well for the team, but unfortunately he's not got a lot of support from the other side," he added.

Jaiswal's caught-behind dismissal sparks controversy

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

India opener Yashasvi Jaiswal's incontinent dismissal sparked a controversy on the final day of the fourth Test against Australia here on Monday, as third umpire Saikat Sharfuddoula ruled him out despite no edge being registered on the Snicko. Jaiswal, who was batting on 84, miscued a hook off pacer Pat Cummins' short-pitched, down the leg delivery, and the batter was initially given not out by on-field umpire Joel Wilson after Australia appealed for a caught-behind dismissal. However, upon review, third umpire Saikat adjudged that there was a deflection off Jaiswal's gloves/bat based on the visual evidence. Saikat overruled the Snicko, which showed no spike, leading to chants of "cheater, cheater" around the Melbourne Cricket Ground. Jaiswal was ousted after playing a solid 84 off 208 deliveries. At one stage, he seemed to steer India to a draw before the visitors lost wickets in clusters in their chase of 340, eventually going down by 184 runs.



The left-hander argued with the on-field umpires over the decision before walking back. "In my view the decision was out. The third umpire did make the correct decision in the end," Former ICC Elite Panel umpire Simon Taufel told Channel 7. "With the technology protocols, we do have a hierarchy of redundancy and when the umpire sees a clear deflection off the bat there is no need to go any further and use any other form of

technology to prove the case. "The clear deflection is conclusive evidence. In this particular case what we have seen from the third umpire, is they've used a secondary form of technology, which for whatever reason hasn't shown the same conclusive evidence of audio to back up the clear deflection. "In the end the third umpire did the right thing and went back to the clear deflection and overturned the umpire field. So, in my view correct decision made," he added. This incident follows a similar controversy in the opening Test in Perth, where opener KL Rahul's dismissal sparked a debate. After on-field umpire Richard Kettleborough had ruled in Rahul's favour following Australia's appeal, the home team used DRS to challenge the decision. Third umpire Richard Illingworth had overturned the call despite not having the benefit of a split-screen view which would have given him a clearer picture of whether the Mitchell Starc delivery actually grazed the bat or the snicko responded to a hit on the pads.

India's peerless fast bowler Jasprit Bumrah nominated for ICC Cricketer of the Year award

PTI ■ DUBAI

Operating at a level rarely seen in the game before, India's peerless fast bowler Jasprit Bumrah was on Monday nominated for the ICC Men's Cricketer of the Year award and also featured in the list for the best player in the Test format. Bumrah, who has left the Australian batters scrambling for survival with his incredible display of fast bowling in the ongoing five-match series Down Under, has been nominated for the top award, named after legendary West Indies all-rounder Sir Garfield Sobers, alongside England's prolific duo of Joe Root and Harry Brook, with swashbuckling Australian batter Travis Head completing the list. Besides Bumrah, who has been at the top of his game throughout 2024, Root, Brook and Sri Lanka's Kamindu Mendis featured in the list for the ICC Test Cricketer of the

Year award. Bumrah has been the best bowler in Test cricket in 2024 with 71 wickets from 13 matches at an average of 14.92 and a strike rate of 30.16, the best figures for any bowler. The right-arm pacer has also been the top bowler in the Border-Gavaskar Trophy with 30 wickets in a mere four Tests. "Having returned to the Test arena following his recovery from a recurring back injury in 2023, Bumrah dominated the bowling charts in 2024. Featuring across 13 Tests in the calendar year, Bumrah delivered his best-ever annual tally — 71 wickets — finishing the year with more Test wickets than any of his counterparts," the ICC said on its website. "Be it the pace-conducive conditions in South Africa and Australia, or tougher conditions for quicks at home, Bumrah was equally impressive through the year. However, it was on India's

tour of Australia that the pace spearhead produced his magnum opus," it added. The ICC rated Bumrah's match-defining spells at Perth, to guide India to a 295-run win, among his most memorable performances along with his dominating show in T20 World Cup. "Bumrah nabbed 15 wickets from eight outings — including a couple in the final against South Africa — as India went unbeaten at the 2024 T20 World Cup," the ICC said. Head was nominated after finishing as the leading run-scorer of the T20 World Cup and being at the forefront of Australian batting in Tests. "Typifying an aggressive brand of batting, the southpaw brandished runs at a brisk rate in the shortest format, and finished among the leading run-getters at ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2024. In the Test arena, Head was vital to Australia's push for defending their ICC World



Test Championship title," the ICC said. England mainstay Root has been the most dominant batter in the year, amassing 1,556 runs from 17 Tests at 55.57. The 34-year-old crossed the 1,000-run mark in a calendar year for the fifth time in his career while scoring six tons and five

fifties. The game's global governing body said, "Across 17 Tests, Joe Root compiled his second-best annual run-tally in Tests — second only to his 1,708 runs from 2021. It was also the fifth instance of Root scoring over 1,000 Test runs in a calendar year." "With six Test hundreds to go alongside five half-centuries, Root was a consistent performer for England — both home and away. His impressive run with the bat saw Root amass joint-fifth highest tons in Tests (36) alongside Rahul Dravid," it added. The ICC recalled Root's career-best 262 against

Pakistan at Multan, also his sixth double century in Tests, and termed it one of his best efforts. Root's compatriot Brook is also in the list of four shortlisted players after scoring 1,100 runs from 12 Tests at 55.00 with four centuries and three fifties. Brook is fourth in the list of highest run-scorers in 2024 behind table-topper Root, India's Yashasvi Jaiswal (1,478 runs at 54.74) and England's Ben Duckett (1,149 runs at 37.06). "A flagbearer of England's quickfire brand of batting, Harry Brook emerged as a breakthrough performer in the longest format," the ICC said. "A noticeable trait in his performances was the fact that most of his runs (723) came away from home while playing the same number of games as he did in England (6)," it added. Brook's "blistering" 317 off 322 deliveries was one of his

top performances in the year. Sri Lanka's Mendis, who hit 1,049 runs from nine Tests at 74.92, is also in the list after enjoying a terrific year, during which he became the joint-third quickest to score 1000 Test runs, equalling Sir Don Bradman's 13-innings mark to reach the milestone. "Mendis averaged more than any of the batters who played more than two Tests in the calendar year — a staggering 74.92 from nine matches," the apex body said. "His performances with the bat helped Sri Lanka push their claim for their first-ever appearance in the ICC World Test Championship Final with wins over New Zealand, England and Bangladesh," it added. Mendis' twin centuries against New Zealand at home, which helped him finish as the fifth highest run-scorer this year, were called his most "memorable performance" by the ICC.

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Nainital set to welcome New Year with Sound of Music
Upscale hotels preparing to make 31st evening memorable



Afzal Hussain Fauji

Preparations have been completed in the posh, elegant hotels located across the famed lake town Nainital to usher in the New Year in style while bidding a warm farewell to the passing year. With Nature having laid the perfect setting for the advent of the New Year, almost all these hotels have been sold out. They have lined up musical programmes as part of the two-night three-day package to add further mirth to the New Year jamboree. Most of the hotels, including those located in the high-end Mall Road, are appropriately decked up to welcome the festival guests. But not quite content with this,

some of them have made special preparations to make the New Year advent look grandiloquently different. Hotel Namah Nainital in its new avatar is going to make the 31st evening memorable for the tourists with the Karanam the Band from Delhi. Resham Bhalla will be the main attraction of the programme which will feature a myriad of musical instruments. Besides, the guests putting up at these hotels will be given a culinary treat to mark the mirthful occasion. The general manager of Namah Nainital Naresh Gupta said that nothing is being left out of the celebration to make the experience as mirthful as possible. "As far as the musical programme is concerned, Kumauni folk music has been included to add the local flavour to the celebratory mood," he added.

The celebration will be held with live music at Hotel Sherwani Hilltop. Separate arrangements have been made for a gala dinner, too. The general manager Siddharth Sharma said that more than half a dozen entertaining pro-

grammes await the guests.

Naini Retreat, on its part, keeps in store a musical party for the New Year revellers. According to its general manager D S Jeena, many programmes will be hosted for the elderly and children along with musical chair competition. Vikram Vintage will have a couple dance and colourful programmes with DJ Balrampur House.

Arrangements have been made for live music, bonfire and gala dinner. Likewise, multiple programmes will be hosted in Swiss Hotel.

Meanwhile, Nainital Hotel and Restaurant Association has decorated many parts of the town, including Mall Road and Thandi Sadak with gaudy illumination which has added to the beauty of the picturesque town. Special preparations have also been made in Khurpatal Lake Inn. According to hotel operator Ganesh Singh Bisht, hosting entertaining programmes figures prominently in their tourism promotion drives.

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