



'NC HAS TAKEN STEPS TO RATIONALISE JOB RESERVATION'

P5



'HM SHAH'S REMARK ON AMBEDKAR AN IRREDEEMABLE SHAME'

P4



WHEN PIKETTY CAME TO INDIA

P7



BGT: RICHARDSON 'EXCITED' TO RETURN TO OZ TEST SQUAD

P12

WEATHER

PARTLY CLOUDY SKY WITH POSSIBILITY OF VERY LIGHT TO LIGHT RAIN DURING EARLY MORNING HOURS. SMOG/SHALLOW FOG IS LIKELY IN THE EVENING/NIGHT.THE MAXIMUM AND MINIMUM TEMPERATURES WOULD BE AROUND 20 AND 08 DEGREES CELSIUS RESPECTIVELY.
RAINFALL: Nil
RELATIVE HUMIDITY
Max. 100 %
Min. 49 %
TEMPERATURE
Max: 24.1 °C (+3)
Min: 07.3 °C (0)
SUN RISES
07:11 hrs
MOON RISES
01:06 hrs
SUN SETS
17:30 hrs
MOON SETS
12:26 hrs

THUMBNAILS



Naga sadhus of Shri Panch Dashnam Awahan Akhara take part in a procession during the first 'Shahi Praveshi' for the Maha Kumbh Mela 2025 celebration in Prayagraj on Sunday. ■ ANI

Rahul Gandhi summoned by Bareilly court for remarks against Economic Survey: A Bareilly sessions here has summoned Congress MP and Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi to appear before it on 7 January for his remarks related to the Economic Survey during the Lok Sabha polls. The notice was issued to Mr Gandhi on a plea filed by a All India Hindu Mahasangh leader contending that his remarks were aimed at creating 'class hatred' .

India, Kuwait to take ties to Strategic Partnership

Both sides condemn terrorism, call for dismantling terror infrastructure

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 22 DECEMBER



Kuwait honours PM with its highest national award

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 22 DECEMBER

Kuwait on Sunday conferred its highest national award, 'The Order of Mubarak Al-Kabeer', on Prime Minister Narendra Modi in recognition of his distinguished achievements and his endeavour to strengthen bilateral relations between India and Kuwait.

PM Modi dedicated the award to the long-standing friendship between India and Kuwait, to the Indian community in Kuwait, and to the 1.4 billion people of India.

This is the 20th international honour given to PM Modi by a country. Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the amir of Kuwait conferred 'The Order of Mubarak Al-Kabeer' on PM Modi. (Details on Page 5)

dering, drug-trafficking and other transnational crimes, the joint statement said.

The two sides discussed ways and means to promote cooperation in cyber security, including prevention of use of cyberspace for terrorism, radicalisation and for disturbing social harmony.

Both sides agreed that defence is an important component of the strategic partnership between India and Kuwait and welcomed the signing of the MoU in the field of defence that will provide the framework to further strengthen bilateral defence ties, including through joint military exercises, training of defence personnel, coastal defence, maritime safety, joint development and production of defence equipment.

Both sides expressed their commitment to further strengthen collaboration in the health sector. They discussed the possibility of setting up of Indian pharmaceutical manufacturing plants in Kuwait. They also expressed their intent to strengthen cooperation in the field of medical products regulation.

The two sides expressed interest in pursuing deeper collaboration in the area of technology including emerging technologies, semiconductors and artificial intelligence.

Amendment in Conduct of Election Rules conspiracy to destroy integrity of ECI: Cong

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 22 DECEMBER



Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Sunday launched a scathing attack on the BJP-led government at the Centre over the amendment made in the Conduct of Election Rules, saying this was a "systematic conspiracy" by the ruling dispensation to destroy the institutional integrity of the Election Commission of India (ECI).

Reacting to the amendment made by the Centre in the Conduct of Election Rules on Friday, he said: "Modi government's audacious amendment in the Conduct of Election Rules is another assault in its systematic conspiracy to destroy the institutional integrity of the ECI. Earlier, they had removed the Chief Justice of India from the Selection panel which appoints Election Commissioners, and now they have resorted to stonewall electoral information, even after a High Court order."

Referring to the representations submitted to the poll panel raising several issues in the last few months, the Congress chief wrote on X: "Everytime the Congress party wrote to the ECI, regarding specific poll irregularities such as voter deletions and lack of transparency in EVMS, the ECI has responded in a

condescending tone and chosen not to even acknowledge certain serious complaints.

This again proves that the ECI, even though is a quasi-judicial body is not behaving independently."

Mr Kharge, who is also the Leader of Opposition in the Rajya Sabha, asserted that the Narendra Modi government's calibrated erosion of ECI's integrity is a frontal attack on the Constitution and Democracy, and their party will take every step to safeguard them.

Notably, the ECI on Saturday categorically said candidates already have access to all the documents and papers, and nothing has been amended in the rules in this regard.

An official of the poll panel said recently Punjab and Haryana High Court in a case - Mahmoud Pracha vs ECI had directed sharing of all documents related to Haryana Assembly elections, including treating CCTV footage also as permissible under Rule 93(2) of the Conduct of Election Rules.

Informing that the rule mentioned election papers, the official said, "The election papers and documents does not specifically refer to electronic records."

"In order to remove this ambiguity and considering the serious issue of violation of secrecy of vote and potential misuse of CCTV footage of inside the polling station using artificial intelligence by a single person, the rule has been amended to safeguard misuse of CCTV footage of inside of the polling station," the official said.

'Bru rehabilitation a milestone in restoring dignity and livelihoods'

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
AGARTALA, 22 DECEMBER



Union Home Minister Amit Shah expressed his profound happiness on Sunday while addressing members of the rehabilitated Bru tribal community in a remote village in Tripura.

"I am more happy than you. Prime Minister Modi ji is also very happy that we could rehabilitate you after 40 years," he said during his visit.

The Bru (Reang) community, displaced for decades due to ethnic violence in Mizoram, has been resettled in Tripura under a historic quadripartite agreement signed on 16 January 2020.

The agreement involved the Central government, the governments of Tripura, Mizoram, and representatives of Bru organisations.

Mr Shah highlighted the government's initiatives to ensure the sustainable livelihood of the resettled families.

"We have made available 25 types of livelihood opportunities for you, including animal husbandry, dairy farming, honeybee keeping, and millet farming," he said.

The home minister also visited several homes, interacted with the villagers, and inquired about their challenges. He assured the residents who had not yet received their Ayushman Bharat health cards that the matter would be resolved within two days and instructed the district magistrate to expedite the process.

The Bru tribals, originally from Mizoram's Mamit, Lunglei, and Kolasib districts, were forced to flee due to ethnic violence in 1997, 1998, and 2009. Since then, many lived in makeshift camps in North Tripura.

The rehabilitation pact marked a new chapter in their lives, with the government committing to their dignified resettlement.

Centre forms committee under Defence Secretary to look into Air Force's overall capability development

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 22 DECEMBER



Amid the growing air power of China and Pakistan and the shortage of fighter aircraft faced by the Indian Air Force, the Defence Ministry has formed a high-level committee under Defence Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh (photo) to look into the overall capability development of the service through indigenous design, development and acquisition projects.

Government officials told ANI that the committee was formed after the Indian Air Force made detailed presentations to Defence Minister Rajnath Singh during the Air Force Commanders' Conference last month in the national capital.

During the conference, the top Defence Ministry functionaries were briefed about the futuristic combat aircraft requirements along with the gaps required to be filled in the capability that the force wants to have in the coming times to tackle the threat perception faced on both the fronts. The officials said the committee has other senior members of the Defence Ministry, including the Secretary (Defence Production), Sanjeev Kumar; Defence Research and Development Organisation chief Dr Samir V Kamat; and Deputy Chief of Air Staff Air Marshal T Singh, who is the committee's member secretary.

The Secretary of Defence Finance also attended the first meeting of the committee that took place last week. The committee is expected to submit its report to the Defence Minister in the next two to three months with a detailed assessment of the requirements of the force. The Chinese are now also likely to provide fighter aircraft to the Bangladesh Air Force, where the new government is not seen as friendly to India.

The Indian Air Force's plans of acquiring over 110 fighter aircraft of the 4.5-plus generation capability have been pending for some time with the government, and the committee may suggest a way to address the requirement through the indigenous route.

The gap in weaponry on the aircraft in terms of all types of air-to-air and air-to-ground missiles has also been widening vis-a-vis the northern adversary. The long-range surface-to-surface missile systems with the Chinese forces are also believed to have longer ranges and are in much higher numbers than what is possessed by the Indian forces.

From guns to gadgets: Smartphones putting Maoists in Chh'garh on defensive

SHISHIR ROY CHOWDHURY
RAIPUR, 22 DECEMBER



In the dense Maoist insurgency-hit forests of Bastar in Southern Chhattisgarh, smartphones have emerged as a powerful tool reshaping the lives of the region's youth and weakening the Maoist grip on local communities. While these devices are transforming their aspirations, they are simultaneously disrupting the operational strategies of Maoist insurgents.

The proliferation of smartphones, bolstered by expanding mobile networks, has not only empowered local communities but also become a strategic asset for security forces combating left-wing extremism.

The expanding reach of mobile networks and affordable smartphones has opened up new horizons for the younger generation in Bastar. Online learning platforms, government job portals, and digital skill development programmes are now accessible even in remote villages.

Youths are attending virtual classes, preparing for competitive exams, and exploring career opportunities that were once beyond their reach.

Furthermore, smartphones have enhanced awareness about government schemes, scholarships, and local job opportunities, instilling a sense of ambition and self-reliance among them.

In Dantewada, the state government's Niyad Nellanar project has proved a game-changer. Under the initiative, the district administration recently distributed more than 1,500 smartphones to villagers, along with free SIM cards and a year of free recharge. This effort ensured that even the remotest households could access digital services.

Additionally, the administration helped villagers link their bank accounts to their smartphones, enabling them to benefit from various government schemes such as direct benefit transfers, scholarships, and health services.

Emphasising the impact of the access to mobile phones, the Dantewada district collector said: "Smartphones have become a bridge between remote villages and mainstream society. With initiatives like Niyad Nellanar, we are witnessing a significant

shift in the aspirations of the younger generation. They are using digital platforms for education, job preparation, and skill development, which were once out of their reach. The government's efforts to expand mobile networks and promote digital literacy are not only empowering communities but also weakening the ideological grip of Maoists."

For decades, Maoists thrived by exploiting the isolation of Bastar's rural communities. Smartphones, however, have given the region's youth access to a world beyond the forests. Social media, online education, and entertainment platforms have introduced them to new ideas and aspirations. Many now choose education, entrepreneurship, and government programs over the Maoist movement. "The smartphone revolution has given the youth hope and a vision for a better future," says Bijapur SP, Jiten-dra Yadav.

Ironically, the same technology that is empowering the youth is becoming a liability for Maoist cadres. Smartphones have created vulnerabilities within their ranks as their reliance on mobile devices for communication

and entertainment undermines their operational secrecy. Security forces are leveraging advanced mobile tracking technologies to intercept calls, monitor messages, and pinpoint locations of Maoist leaders and operatives. "Their smartphone dependency has significantly increased our operational success in dismantling key Maoist networks," notes a senior CRPF official.

Ganesh Mishra, a journalist based in Bastar, who is an expert on left-wing extremism, highlights the transformative role of smartphones in the region. He remarks, "Smartphones have inadvertently become a critical vulnerability for Maoist cadres, allowing security forces to monitor their movements with greater precision. Simultaneously, these devices are empowering local communities by granting access to education, employment opportunities, and essential government schemes.

This dual impact of weakening insurgent networks while inspiring progress and hope among the youth is reshaping Bastar's socio-political landscape and paving the way for a brighter and safer future."

Specialised forces like the Bastar Fighters, District Reserve Guard (DRG), and Central forces trained for anti-Maoist operations are benefitting immensely from smartphone-based intelligence. Precise mobile tracking has enabled targeted operations, reducing collateral damage and improving civilian safety. Simultaneously, awareness campaigns by security forces and other agencies are encouraging responsible smartphone use among villagers, empowering communities while mitigating Maoist recruitment efforts.

Reports suggest that the Maoists have grown increasingly furious over the rising influence of smartphones in southern Chhattisgarh. Inputs from various parts of the region indicate that Maoists have started confiscating smartphones from villagers in an attempt to curb the spread of information and technology.

Sources suggest that Maoists have seized over 800 mobile phones, reflecting their desperation to counter the transformative impact of digital connectivity on local communities.

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 22 DECEMBER



The Department of Consumer Affairs will launch "Jago Grahak App", "Jagriti App", and "Jagriti Dashboard" for public use on National Consumers Day on 24 December.

As part of the government's broader strategy and ongoing efforts to strengthen consumer protection in the digital era and curb unfair practices in e-commerce and online services, the Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) notified the Guidelines for Prevention and Regulation of Dark Patterns in 2023 and specified 13 dark patterns, namely: False urgency, Basket Sneaking, Confirm shaming, forced action, Subscription trap, Interface Interference, Bait and switch, Drip Pricing, Disguised Advertisements and Nagging, Trick Wording, Saas Billing and Rogue Malwares.

The CCPA had earlier issued notices to IndiGo Airlines and BookMyShow under Consumer Protection Act,

As part of the intensive research done by students, three apps have been coded, namely: 'Jago Grahak Jago App,' 'Jagriti App,' and 'Jagriti Dashboard'

2019 for alleged misleading advertisement/unfair trade practices in the form of deceptive design patterns/dark patterns. As part of the intensive research done by students, three apps have been coded, namely: 'Jago Grahak Jago App,' 'Jagriti App,' and 'Jagriti Dashboard'.

These are part of an intelligent cyber-physical system, which operates in real-time and runs on the Airavat AI Supercomputer under the National Supercomputing Mission for AI and Data Analytics. This innovative system analyses existing text and design elements on e-commerce platforms to determine whether they are being used to influence consumer psychology.



epaper.thestatesman.com

THUMBNAILS



AAP's Sanjay Singh hails 'Mahila Samman Yojana' as a "master-stroke". Aam Aadmi Party MP Sanjay Singh has exuded confidence in the Delhi government's new scheme, 'Mahila Samman

Yojana', calling it a "masterstroke" for the party ahead of the assembly elections next year. He further said that the scheme to give Rs 2100 to women, will bring all sections of society to vote for AAP. "We (AAP) will win more seats than we won in the last Delhi assembly elections. The guarantee of giving Rs 2100 per month to women (Mukhya Mantri Mahila Samman Yojana) in Delhi will prove to be a masterstroke...People from all sections of society will vote for AAP," he said.

19-year-old woman found dead in Delhi, police suspect suicide: A 19-year-old woman was found dead in her room in the National Capital, Delhi Police said. She is survived by her five-month-old baby girl. The incident occurred in Khirki Village on December 21. According to the police, it appears to be a case of suicide. The deceased was married to a man who already had a "first wife", the police added. As per the investigation, the husband, Sandeep, married the deceased in September 2023 with the "consent of his first wife", as she was unable to conceive. "On the day of the incident, Sandeep had gone to pick up his nephew from school and found his wife dead upon his return," the police stated. The police have recovered a suicide note, a chunni used as a ligature, and the deceased's mobile phone as part of their ongoing investigation.

Muslim Rashtriya Manch holds meeting in Delhi; discusses upcoming strategy, topics of national importance: A significant meeting of the Muslim Rashtriya Manch (MRM) was held on Sunday at Urdu Ghar in New Delhi. The meeting aimed to draft MRM's upcoming strategy and deliberate on topics of national importance, according to an official press release. The gathering was organised in celebration of the platform's upcoming 23rd Foundation Day (December 24) and was chaired by the organisation's mentor, Indresh Kumar. Attendees included all national conveners, conveners of various cells, co-conveners, and senior officials. The meeting strongly endorsed Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) chief Mohan Bhagwat's statement on temple-mosque disputes. Passing a unanimous resolution, the MRM emphasized that India should focus on development and harmony rather than being entangled in such disputes.

Delhi's AQI remains 'very poor' at 388: The Air Quality Index (AQI) in the national capital remained in the 'very poor' category on Sunday, with a thin layer of fog covering parts of the city and limiting visibility. According to the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), the AQI was 388 at 7 am on Sunday in the national capital. On Saturday, the AQI in Delhi was recorded at 398, as per the CPCB. The Air Quality Index in several areas of the national capital was recorded as 'very poor'. The AQI was recorded 384 at ITO, 372 at Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium, DTU 354, IGI Airport (T3) 372, DU North Campus 381, at 7 am on Sunday. However, the AQI in several areas remained in the 'severe' category with 411 at Alipur, 427 at Anand Vihar, and 408 at RK Puram. An AQI between 0-50 is considered good, 51-100 is satisfactory, 101-200 is moderate, 201-300 is poor, 301-400 is very poor and 401-500 is severe. The minimum temperature in Delhi was recorded at 8 degrees Celsius on Sunday, according to the India Meteorological Department (IMD).

Fire breaks out in Burari firecracker factory: A fire broke out at a firecracker factory in the Burari area of Delhi on Sunday afternoon, according to a Fire Department official. No casualties were reported, however, some individuals suffered from burn injuries as a result of the fire, which was brought under control by the evening, police said.

Registration for govt's welfare schemes begins today: Ex-CM

Delhi govt will provide Rs 2,100 per month to every woman above 18 yrs of age under 'Mahila Samman Yojana' and offer free treatment for all senior citizens under 'Sanjeevani Yojana'

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 22 DECEMBER

Aam Aadmi Party national convener Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday announced the commencement of the registration process for two initiatives-- 'Mukhyamantri Mahila Samman Yojana' and 'Sanjeevani Yojana'-- by Delhi government starting Monday.

According to the AAP chief, Delhi government will provide Rs 2,100 per month to every woman above 18 years of age under 'Mahila Samman Yojana' and offer free treatment for all senior citizens under 'Sanjeevani Yojana'.

The schemes, unveiled by Kejriwal alongside senior party leaders Manish Sisodia and Delhi CM Atishi, aim to bring welfare services directly to citizens' doorsteps.

According to the party, Kejriwal, Sisodia and Atishi themselves will go to different areas of Delhi on Monday, and fill the registration forms of the people regarding the scheme.

Addressing a press conference here, Kejriwal stated that to ease the lives of women, the AAP government announced that Rs 2,100 will be deposited into their accounts every month as part of the 'Mukhyamantri Mahila Sam-



PHOTO BY-- SUBRATA DUTTA

man Yojana.

Explaining the scheme's broader impact, the AAP Supremo said, "There are many daughters whose college education is interrupted after Class 12 due to financial constraints. With this Rs 2,100, they will be able to continue their studies. It will also help them pursue higher education."

He added that the scheme will also help homemakers amid the rising inflation, to manage their households better.

Kejriwal further said, "You don't need to stand in any queues or waste your time. We will come

to your doorstep.

Across every area of Delhi, AAP has created thousands of teams. These teams will come to your home and will do registration of all the women of the house and give them a registration card (Kejriwal Kavach Card). For your convenience we are sending our teams door to door," he added.

He also unveiled the details of the 'Sanjeevani Yojana,' focusing on free healthcare for senior citizens, and under this scheme, all senior citizens above 60 years of age, whether rich or poor, will

receive free treatment, whether in private or government hospitals.

"The Delhi government will bear all the expenses of their treatment under this scheme," the AAP chief said.

Kejriwal emphasised the role of voter IDs in accessing these schemes, and said, "Our teams, who will visit every house, will register people for both the 'Sanjeevani Yojana' and the 'Mahila Samman Yojana'. I have one request for everyone: to avail these schemes, you need to be a voter in Delhi."

Slums dwellers forced to endure inhumane conditions: Sachdeva

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 22 DECEMBER

Delhi BJP President Virendra Sachdeva, on Sunday, claimed that the city is in disarray, whether it is Sunder Nagri in Northeast Delhi, Rangpuri in Southwest Delhi, Goela Dairy in West Delhi, Trilokpuri in East Delhi, or Bhalswa in North Delhi and Chhatrapur in South Delhi, with residents of slum areas and unauthorised colonies compelled to live in deplorable conditions.

He said a recent social media post by Lieutenant Governor VK Saxena highlighting the poor state of Rangpuri's hillside settlements seems to have rattled Delhi Chief Minister Atishi, as she hurriedly visited the area without involving any responsible officials and made grand promises for improvement.

The Delhi BJP chief pointed out that after a decade of governance by the Aam Aadmi Party's government in the national capital, Rangpuri continues to be in a shambles under the jurisdiction of AAP MLAs and councilors.

However, after LG brought the area's dire condition into the spotlight, Atishi tried to mislead the people with false claims about improvement projects 30 kilometers away from the area, on Rohtak Road.

He emphasized that whether it is the residents of 650 slum clusters in Delhi, the 1,750 unauthorized colonies, or the approved housing colonies, all are fed up with ten years of neglect under the Kejriwal government.

He claimed that presently, a unified demand resonates throughout the national capital, which is 'Change Government' and 'Change Delhi.'



LG says lakhs of people living in miserable conditions in city; shares video, urges CM & Kejriwal to resolve issues



STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 22 DECEMBER

Delhi Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena on Sunday expressed disappointment over the sorry state of civic affairs across various places in the national capital, saying that it was disturbing to see helplessness and miserable lives of lakhs of people.

Saxena on Sunday shared a video on his social media handle on platform X, where dirty water could be seen filled on streets, drains overflowing, while roads were submerged in the sewage water.

The video was from his visit to the Rangpuri Pahari area in South Delhi on Saturday, where people could also be seen sharing their problems related to basic amenities, including lack of potable water supply, repeated power cuts, despite their claims of getting inflated bills.

Saxena also urged the former Chief Minister, and the current CM, along with the cabinet ministers concerned of the Delhi government to visit these areas and see the hellish conditions themselves.

Atishi visits Rangpuri, pledges swift action

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 22 DECEMBER

Delhi Chief Minister Atishi visited Rangpuri Pahadi in South West Delhi on Sunday to address grievances after Lieutenant Governor VK Saxena highlighted the area's civic challenges.

She assured residents that issues such as road restoration, cleanliness, and drainage overflow would be resolved within a week.

Atishi said, "I visited the Rangpuri area, met with the residents, and understood their problems. I have assured them that all major issues, including broken roads and power cuts, will be resolved promptly."

The CM expressed gratitude to the LG for bringing these issues to the government's attention, urging him to continue sharing such concerns for swift resolution.

He also asked them to take immediate steps to improve this pathetic situation.

Saxena, explaining about the entire situation he witnessed in the area, further mentioned that stinking water accumulated on the streets and roads, was not from rain, but from overflowing sewers.

LG mentioned that the women seen in the video narrating their problems and heart-wrenching sufferings are from Delhi, not from any other state or country.

He further mentioned that similar conditions were seen

Kejriwal's welfare schemes a poll gimmick: Bansuri Swaraj

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 22 DECEMBER

Playing down AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal's announcement of registrations for welfare schemes, the AAP chief pointed out that not a single rupee has been disbursed to date under the scheme even though forms were collected for it before the Lok Sabha elections.

Addressing a press conference on Sunday, Swaraj said Kejriwal had announced a similar scheme in Punjab in 2022, but no woman received any money so far.

She said for the AAP national convener, women's respect is nothing but an election gimmick.

She demanded to know from Kejriwal why his private secretary assaulted Rajya Sabha MP Swati Maliwal, at his residence. Why has he maintained silence on this incident till date? Why his close aide involved in the assault was promoted to an advisory position in the Punjab government.

Claiming that women of Delhi are now well aware of Kejriwal's deceit, the BJP leader asked the former CM to stop serving falsehoods under the guise of Mahila Samman.

Swaraj pointed out that Kejriwal has never implemented the Ayushman Bharat Scheme, a welfare scheme of the Central government, in



Delhi, allegedly due to his political vendetta.

The New Delhi MP wondered how Kejriwal could claim to ensure women's welfare when he couldn't do justice to senior citizens with this Central scheme.

She dubbed the Sanjeevani Scheme announced by Kejriwal as a mere election stunt.

Talking about Ayushman Bharat, she said its entire cost is covered by the Central government and it is implemented in 33 states, including AAP-ruled Punjab.

Swaraj expressed surprise at the new-found concern for the senior citizens after ruling Delhi for 10 years.

She noted that while seven BJP MPs from Delhi approached the court with a demand for the implementation of the Ayushman Bharat scheme in the state, the AAP government is yet to file a reply leading the court to set a January 13 deadline for the AAP lawyer's response.



Atishi also commented on the ongoing development in the Rohtak Road and Mundka areas in Outer Delhi. She noted that the road on one side has been repaired, and once GRAP-IV restrictions are lifted, construction on the other side will commence.

She added that drainage repairs in these areas are being undertaken at a cost of Rs150 crore.

The Chief Minister affirmed that Delhiites have faith in the

Kejriwal-led government and assured continued efforts to address the city's challenges.

AAP leader Arvind Kejriwal also expressed gratitude to the L-G for pointing out shortcomings and confirmed that the government is actively addressing these issues.

Construction on Mundka roads has already begun, and the CM is expected to inaugurate the completed projects in the coming days.

him that electricity supply is extremely erratic in the area, while there is an acute shortage of drinking water, forcing the women to carry water in buckets from the tanker that comes once in 7-8 days.

He also said that he witnessed heaps of garbage on the roads and complete lack of cleanliness.

LG said that he has assured the people that the cleanliness drive will begin in a day, while he will personally monitor the progress of these efforts to ensure that the residents get at least the basic amenities for a quality life.

Villagers accuse Delhi govt of neglect at Mahapanchayat



STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 22 DECEMBER

In the run up to the Delhi legislative assembly elections, farmers and the residents of the city's entire 360 villages opened a front, condemning the prolonged alleged neglect towards the rural population, and have decided that they will only support those who will resolve their crucial issues.

In continuation of the Delhi Gaon Dehat Bachao Yatra, a movement to save city's rural belt, thousands of villagers

gathered at Mangolpur Kalan in North West Delhi, and held a "Mahapanchayat" under the leadership of north India's largest Khap Palam 360, and concluded with a resolution to support only those political leaders or parties who will actually come forward and work for solving long pending problems of the entire 360 villages of the city.

Residents of Delhi's 360 villages, who had gathered in large numbers have expressed displeasure over government's neglect towards the entire rural belt and scores of issues,

big and small, affecting their day-to-day life.

Chief of the Sarv Khap, Surender Solanki said that the city has been developed on the lands of the 360 villages, which have also contributed to the city's growth, however, since long the same villages have been neglected and deprived of even basic amenities.

He alleged that the gram sabha land that was acquired in the name of urbanization by the government, has also not been put into use for the benefit of the natives, while it

was used for various other purposes.

Solanki informed that the promises made by the government regarding house tax waiver for the rural belt also remains pending, as the same has not been notified so far.

Similarly, he said that almost all the city's villages are facing dire civic woes at the moment, with broken roads, overflowing sewers, lack of drainage system, no common areas or play areas for children and potable water supply issues etc.

The villagers had earlier decided to boycott the upcoming assembly polls, however now they have said that they are going to extend their support and welcome only those who will address and resolve their problems, adding that those who will actually resolve issues of the rural belt will only rule Delhi.

Villagers also expressed that after Sahib Singh Verma, there has been no native person who has been the CM.

MARATHON RUN



Youth take part in a marathon run organised by the Raisina Bengali School ahead of its centenary celebrations on 2 January, 2025, in the Capital on Sunday.

Subrata dutta

Bijwasan facing water, power woes daily: Residents

NEW DELHI, 22 DECEMBER

As the Assembly elections in Delhi are nearing, residents from the Bijwasan Assembly constituency in the national capital spoke to an news agency and raised the issues they are facing.

Speaking to the agency, Balram Prasad, a local, said, "This is Singhi Basti and Brijwasan Assembly. There is a lot of problem here, first of all there is no public toilet here... water comes in a tanker once a week and people fight to get the water."

Pointing towards plastic water canes, he said that he has to store the water in those jars and the entire family has to depend on that water for the whole week. He further said that he does not have an electricity meter and has been visiting the electricity office for the last three months but still, the meter has not been installed in his house. agencies

THUMBNAILS



Artistes perform Kathak dance during Kalakari Foundation's Confluence 2024, an annual national social cultural show, organised by Kalakari School of Arts and Culture in the Capital on Saturday evening.

SNS

Tribute to former PM Atal on his birth centenary: On the occasion of Atal Bihari Vajpayee's birth centenary, the Khushhali Foundation will organise a grand event, "Atal Janm Shatabdi Kavyanjali," at Bharat Mandapam, Delhi, on 25 December. The event will feature a grand poetry symposium and the launch of two books, "Sanatan Sangh Aur Sanskriti" and "Atal Bharat Ke Atal Mahapurush Atal Ji," by Dr. Bhimsen Singh. Khushhali Foundation's President, Sonu Singh, announced that the event will feature the presence of the Speaker of the Lok Sabha, Om Birla, as the chief guest.

New campaign: Simply Fresh, the flagship brand of BN Group, has launched its latest campaign 'Rakho Iraade Fresh,' with an advertisement that touches heartstrings and champions real-life heroes who embody fresh perspectives and impactful actions. The campaign's inspiring TVC pays tribute to individuals like Neeraja Kudri-moti, an IT professional who left her career to champion sustainable farming in rural India, and Narayanan Krishnan, a five-star chef turned social worker who dedicates his life to feeding the underprivileged. Their extraordinary journeys of transformation and selflessness resonate deeply with Simply Fresh's mission to promote fresh ideas and bold choices for a better Bharat.

Building collapse in Mohali leaves 2 dead

Rescue operation is underway with the authorities using heavy machinery, and sniffer dogs to search for survivors trapped under the debris of the collapsed building

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
CHANDIGARH, 22 DECEMBER

Tragedy struck Mohali as a multi-storey under-construction building collapsed in Sohna village in Mohali, Punjab on Sunday, leaving two people dead and several others feared trapped under the rubble.

Rescue operation was underway at the time of going to the press. The incident occurred at around 9:30 am on Saturday. Eyewitnesses reported a loud crash followed by clouds of dust engulfing the entire area.

Emergency services, including the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) and local fire brigade teams, rushed to the site. The rescue operation is underway with authorities using heavy machinery, and sniffer dogs to search for survivors trapped under the debris of the collapsed building.

"Preliminary reports cited structural negligence as a potential cause of the collapse. At present,



we are focusing on rescue operation, will initiate a thorough investigation later," said an official of the District Administration.

The building was reportedly part of a residential project under development by a private construction firm. Lamenting laxity in following safety protocols, locals alleged that repeated complaints about the construction quality were ignored by the author-

ities. The injured have been shifted to Civil Hospital in Mohali, and PGIMER, Chandigarh for treatment.

Authorities have cordoned off the area, urging residents to stay away from the site and facilitate the rescue operations.

According to a news agency, a 20-year-old woman hailing from Himachal Pradesh succumbed

to her injuries after being rescued from the rubble in a critical condition. On Sunday, another body, that of a 29-year-old man identified as Abhishek Dhanwal from Ambala, was recovered from under the debris.

It is said that the law enforcement agencies have booked two owners of the buildings in connection with the collapse.

In a social media post, Indian Army's Western Command wrote: "Engineer Task Force with debris clearance machine [and excavators] are operational at site. Top debris [was] removed, and efforts [are] being made to reach the basement."

Expressing his anguish over the tragedy, Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann said: "Sad news has been received that a multistorey building near Sohana in Sahibzada Ajit Singh Nagar (Mohali) has collapsed. The entire administration and other rescue teams have been deployed at the spot. I am in constant touch with the administration."

Omar to camp in Srinagar to address problems of people in extreme cold

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, 22 DECEMBER

Amid freezing temperatures and bone-chilling cold wave currently gripping the Kashmir Valley, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah announced on Sunday that he would station himself in Srinagar for the next week to personally address the challenges faced by the people.

The Chief Minister, who attended the pre-Budget and GST Council meetings in Jaisalmer, Rajasthan, conveyed his decision through a series of tweets, emphasising his commitment to addressing the challenges faced by the people



of the Valley during the severe cold spell.

The Kashmir Valley is currently experiencing one of the coldest winters in recent years, with temperatures plummeting to record-breaking lows. Srinagar recently

recorded a chilling minus 8.5 degrees Celsius, the coldest December night in over 50 years.

The intense cold spell has severely disrupted water supply and electricity, adding to the residents' struggles.

In his tweets, the Chief Minister stated: "In light of the severe cold spell in the Kashmir valley & the resultant difficulties with water & electricity supply, I have decided to cancel my forthcoming programmes in Jammu & station myself in Srinagar for the next week to personally monitor the functioning of the Power department & other important departments."

Acknowledging the impact of his decision on his scheduled engagements in Jammu, he further added: "I do appreciate that cancelling my programmes in Jammu will cause some inconvenience to the organisers & I regret the same. However under the circumstances this is the right thing to do & I will make it up to the people/organisations whose programmes have been affected."

The Chief Minister also said he is en route from Jaisalmer and will be in Srinagar by Monday morning: "I'm on my way back from Jaisalmer as I type and will be back in Srinagar tomorrow morning."

Rich tributes paid to Ladakhi shepherd who alerted Indian Army in 1999 about Pakistani intrusion in Kargil

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, 22 DECEMBER

The Lieutenant Governor of Jammu and Kashmir and the Indian Army on Sunday paid rich tributes to shepherd Tashi Namgyal, who alerted the Army in 1999 about Pakistan's intrusion in the Kargil sector of Ladakh.

Namgyal passed away in the Aryan Valley on Saturday at the age of 58 years.

The Ladakh-based Fire & Fury Corps wrote in a post on X: "Final Farewell To A Hero - Shree Tashi Namgyal. Fire and Fury Corps extends heartfelt condolences to the family of Mr. Tashi Namgyal - The first informant of Kargil intrusion leading to the War.



Immediate assistance has been provided to the family and continued support assured. Shree Tashi Namgyal is survived by his wife, two sons and a daughter. Army shall remain indebted to his contribution to the Nation

and his selfless sacrifice shall forever be remembered."

Lt Governor Brigadier (Dr) BD Mishra (Retd) wrote on X: "I am deeply saddened to know about the demise of Tashi Namgyal who is credited with alerting Indian Army

about intrusion of Pakistani forces in Kargil in 1999. The whole country is indebted to Tashi Namgyal for his nationalism, presence of mind and devotion to India's security." While searching for his missing yaks, Namgyal spotted Pakistani soldiers in Pathan attire digging bunkers atop the Batalik mountain range in early May 1999. Realising the gravity of the situation, he promptly informed the Indian Army, a timely warning that played a pivotal role in shaping India's military response.

Namgyal had attended the 25th Kargil Vijay Diwas earlier this year in Drass, accompanied by his daughter Tsering Dolkar, a teacher.

Punjab seeks ₹1,000 cr package for police modernisation, industrial incentives similar to neighbouring hill states

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
CHANDIGARH, 22 DECEMBER

Punjab raised demand for central assistance to strengthen its police infrastructure and security efforts in border districts, with a grant of Rs 1,000 crore. Industrial incentives similar to those provided to Jammu & Kashmir and neighboring hill states were also sought to support MSMEs in Punjab's border and sub-mountainous regions, during the pre-budget meeting held at Jaisalmer with Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman.

Revealing this in a press communique issued here on Sunday, Finance Minister Advocate Harpal Singh Cheema said that the state has strongly raised the demand to restore NABARD's Short-Term Seasonal Agricultural Operations (ST-SAO) limit to Rs 3,041 crore, from the reduced limit of Rs 1,100 crore for FY 2024-25.

He said that this restoration is vital to prevent farmers from turning to moneylenders, aligning with the "Sahakar se Samridhhi" principle. He said that several states raised this issue and it was discussed at length.

For road connectivity under PM Gati Shakti in Rajpura, the Government of Punjab has requested Rs 100 crore to construct a 5.6 km, 45m wide approach road connecting NH 44 to the Integrated Manufacturing Cluster (IMC) in Rajpura. This funding is essential for the timely completion of road construction and the successful implementation of the industrial cluster.

Expressing gratitude for the Vande Bharat train connecting Amritsar with New Delhi, Punjab government requested another Vande Bharat train to connect Bathinda, Punjab's agricultural and commercial hub, with the national capital.

This would ensure seamless connectivity for the Malwa region of Punjab. Minister Cheema also proposed financial support to address crop residue management in Punjab. He said despite providing 1.45 lakh Crop Residue Management (CRM) machines since 2018, high operational costs remain a challenge.

The Punjab Government has proposed an incentive of Rs 2,500 per acre, with Rs 2,000 per acre from the Government of India and Rs 500

per acre from the state. The total cost of this initiative is estimated at Rs 2,000 crore, with the Government of India requested to provide Rs 1,600 crore as budgetary support.

Furthermore, the Finance Minister Harpal Singh Cheema requested a special budget allocation for paddy diversification.

Diversifying paddy cultivation across 10 lakh hectares could result in substantial savings of over Rs 30,000 crore. The government has proposed allocating a portion of these savings towards a comprehensive diversification package.

In addressing the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Gramin) scheme, Finance Minister Cheema proposed enhancing the grant from Rs 1.2 lakh to Rs 2.5 lakh per beneficiary to accommodate rising construction costs.

The minister also highlighted the need to release pending funds under the National Health Mission (NHM), amounting to Rs 1,119 crore, and requested an increase in the honorarium for cook-cum-helpers under the PM Poshan Abhiyaan from Rs 600 to Rs 2,000 per month.

Additionally, Punjab sought support for urban transportation e-Bus services, requesting Rs 300 crore for the procurement of 250 new electric buses and the installation of charging points.

The state also called for reimbursement of procurement costs by the Government of India, modernization of driving license testing with advanced technology, and reimbursement of pending Rural Development Fee (RDF) amounting to Rs 6,857 crore.

Expressing sincere gratitude to Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman for providing Punjab the opportunity to present its suggestions, Finance Minister Cheema said that Punjab's demand for an incentive package to address the unique challenges faced by the state, particularly due to its proximity to a hostile border with Pakistan is crucial to bolster the state's infrastructure and security measures.

He expressed hope that the upcoming Union Budget will act as a catalyst for fostering citizen welfare, driving regional development, and spurring economic growth.



KIND ATTENTION

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AVOID AIR POLLUTION



PROVIDE ELECTRIC HEATERS AND WARM CLOTHING TO SECURITY AND OTHER STAFF





✓ Avoid open burning of biomass & solid waste

✓ Do not use coal and wood for heating purpose

LET'S PROTECT OUR AIR TOGETHER !

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epaper.thestatesman.com

Shah's remark on Ambedkar an irredeemable shame, says DMK

The DMK executive committee adopts resolution condemning Shah's remarks on Ambedkar

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
CHENNAI, 22 DECEMBER

Continuing its attack on Union Home Minister Amit Shah for his remarks 'insulting and demeaning' Dr BR Ambedkar, the architect of the Constitution, the DMK Executive Committee on Sunday registered its strong condemnation saying it is an irredeemable shame for parliamentary democracy under the BJP dispensation.

"Touching a new low, Amit Shah has abused and insulted Ambedkar in Parliament, the temple of democracy. The Home Minister himself engaging in such a disgusting display is an irredeemable shame on parliamentary democracy. It is unacceptable and has never happened, but the BJP's desperate attempts to divert this in and out of Parliament are absurd and ridiculous,"



charged a resolution passed at a meeting of the DMK Executive Committee, chaired by party president and Chief Minister MK Stalin.

Terming the One Nation One Poll (ONOE) Bill as anti-federal and anti-democratic, a resolution demanded that it be given up forever. Further, it blamed the BJP for the lasting stain on free and fair elections ever since the party came to power.

Then, accusing the Union government of meting out a step-motherly treatment to Tamil Nadu, a resolution pressed for the immediate release of Rs 6,675 crore from the NDRF for the relief and restoration works in the districts devastated by cyclone Fengal. Though the state had sought Rs 2000 crore for immediate relief and apprised the Central team that inspected the cyclone ravaged areas,



what was released was the pending Rs 944.80 crore. "The Union Government should bear in mind that the NDRF is not the BJP's party fund and should release the fund that the state had sought for," it said.

Earlier, addressing the meeting, Stalin said "We are not a party confined to the borders of Tamil Nadu, with the INDIA Bloc we have put the reins on those who were bent upon changing the Constitution for which we are very proud of. We have accept-

ed the onerous task of protecting and preserving democracy as well as the country's pluralistic culture and secularism besides our language and civilization. At the same time we are countering the BJP which is creating hurdles in all possible ways." Further, he called upon the party rank and file to replicate the successive electoral victories since 2019, secured in the company of the allies in 2026 as well by giving the slogan: "We will win 200 and create history".

Police release video on Sandhya theatre stampede

AGENCIES
HYDERABAD, 22 DECEMBER

The tragic stampede at Sandhya Theatre on 4 December, which claimed the life of a woman and left a young boy critically injured, continues to spark controversy.

Conflicting claims have emerged between actor Allu Arjun and the police regarding the events of that night.

To provide clarity, Hyderabad City Police Commissioner CV Anand released a video detailing the incident and the actions taken by both the police and the theatre management.

Speaking at the annual press conference held at the ICCB Building, Banjara Hills, Hyderabad, on Sunday alongside the ACP and DCP on duty that evening, CP Anand stated that an investigation into the case is ongoing.

He added that further details could not be disclosed as the matter is currently before the High Court. The video highlighted the sequence of events, includ-



ing how the police responded to the situation, and underscored the role of the theatre management in the unfortunate incident.

According to ACP Ramesh, chaos ensued when a large crowd of fans gathered at Sandhya Theater to catch a glimpse of Allu Arjun. The stampede broke out as fans pushed to enter the

theatre. In the aftermath, ACP Ramesh said he informed Allu Arjun's Manager, Santosh, about the death of a woman and the critical condition of a young boy. However, the Manager allegedly did not relay this information to the actor.

When the ACP personally approached Allu Arjun to inform him of the tragedy,

Bandi criticises Telangana CM for action against actor Allu Arjun

AGENCIES
HYDERABAD, 22 DECEMBER

Union Minister of State for Home Affairs, Bandi Sanjay Kumar, has strongly criticised Telangana Chief Minister Revanth Reddy for his alleged treatment of National Award-winning and Pan-India star Allu Arjun.

In a statement on Sunday, Sanjay claimed that the CM's actions and comments in the Legislative Assembly were defamatory towards Allu Arjun and detrimental to the Telugu film industry.

The Union Minister further accused the CM of colluding with the MIM party, describing it as an "iron leg party" that prioritises financial gains over political values.

the theater management intervened, stating they would handle the matter, but they failed to do so.

Pralhad Joshi accuses Karnataka govt of 'misusing' power days after interim bail to BJP's CT Ravi

AGENCIES
BENGALURU, 22 DECEMBER

Union Minister Pralhad Joshi accused the Congress government in Karnataka of "misusing" power days after interim bail was granted to the BJP MLC CT Ravi in an alleged derogatory remark case.

CT Ravi was arrested by the Bengaluru police on Thursday based on a complaint by state minister Lakshmi Hebbalkar for allegedly using derogatory remarks against her in the Legislative Council. He was subsequently released after an interim order passed by the Karnataka High Court on Friday.

"It is a misuse of power. They do not believe in Democracy and the Constitution," Union Minister Pralhad Joshi said taking a swipe at the Congress government in Kar-



nataka. "They are trying to misuse not only the power, they are also trying to curb political activities of their political opponents," Joshi alleged. After his release, Ravi questioned his arrest, claiming that he was shifted around four districts arbitrarily. "Why was I arrested? Why was I continuously shifted to four districts? CM says that due

to security reasons they did this... Giving security in PS is difficult for them, but giving security at an isolated place is easy for them," the BJP leader said.

Minister Hebbalkar on Friday replied to the alleged derogatory remarks made at the Karnataka legislative assembly, while speaking to reporters at her residence in Belagavi, Karnataka.

Expressing her distress over the alleged remarks, she said that when the BJP leader called Rahul Gandhi a "drug addict," she asked whether his being in accidents made him a murderer."

After completing the protest (against remarks of Amit Shah), we were seated. I, too, was sitting quietly in my seat. At that time, CT Ravi called Rahul Gandhi a drug addict. In response, I said, Even you have been in

accidents does that make you a murderer.??," she told reporters.

While narrating the incident, she said, "Following this, CT Ravi used derogatory words against me. I am also a mother... People look up to me and believe that thousands should enter politics inspired by me."

Meanwhile, Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Sunday condemned the alleged derogatory remarks of CT Ravi, calling it "a criminal offence."

"The word used by CT Ravi on Minister Lakshmi Hebbalkar was condemnable. It is a criminal offence. Ravi, who was the national general secretary of BJP, said such a thing which is shameful," Siddaramaiah said.

"Other Vidhan Parishad members have heard Ravi use that word," he added.

As of now, case is over, there is no judgment against Senthil Balaji: DMK spokesperson

AGENCIES
CHENNAI, 22 DECEMBER

DMK spokesperson TKS Elangovan (photo) said the Tamil Nadu government's plea seeking the recall of Senthil Balaji's order was going on however there is no judgement against him.

Speaking to agencies, Elangovan said "As of now the case is over, there is no judgement against Senthil Balaji.. He was already released and became the MLA."

Earlier on 21 December, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) State Vice President Narayanan Thirupathy stated that Balaji should have resigned the previous day and slammed his actions in the ongoing case.

"Senthil Balaji should have resigned yesterday... The Supreme Court has clearly said that they had some time to see the trial case filed.. we have to note that the forensic officer has not attended the hearing, he has been influenced by Balaji... Senthil Balaji was not supposed to take adjournment but he took.. he was supposed to resign yesterday. The next hearing has been scheduled for January 2025.



If he does not resign or is dismissed, this government will take heavily from the Supreme Court..." Thirupathy said while speaking to agencies.

On 20 December, the Supreme Court issued a notice to the Tamil Nadu government in response to a plea seeking to recall its verdict granting bail to Balaji in a money laundering case linked to the cash-for-jobs scam.

A bench of Justices Abhay S Oka and Augustine George Masih sought details from Tamil Nadu regarding the cases pending against Balaji and the number of witnesses that need to be examined. The State was also asked to inform how many victim-wit-

nesses are public servants and how many are common citizens. The bench scheduled the matter for further hearing on 15 January.

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) informed the apex court that Balaji's reappointment as a Cabinet Minister after his release from jail had created undue pressure on witnesses.

The bench then said, "We want to know from the state how many victims are there. If there are a large number of victims, then obviously this man occupying the position of cabinet minister, what will happen to victims?"

"On 2 December, the bench expressed surprise after learning that Balaji was appointed as Minister in Tamil Nadu immediately after being granted bail in the money laundering case. "We grant bail and the next day you go and become Minister.

Anybody will be bound to be under the impression that now with your position as a senior cabinet minister witnesses will be under pressure. What is this going on?" the top court has said.

The top court was hearing

a plea seeking to recall the 26 September judgment by which it had granted bail to Balaji on the ground that witnesses would be under pressure since Balaji was appointed minister after his release.

The court was hearing a plea to recall the 26 September judgment granting bail to Balaji. The bench had earlier stated that while it would not recall the judgment, it would limit the inquiry to whether witnesses were under pressure.

The apex court had granted bail to Balaji despite finding a prima facie case against him, citing his long incarceration since June 2023 and the unlikelihood of the trial commencing soon. Balaji took the oath of office as Minister on 29 September.

Balaji was arrested on June 14, 2023, in connection with a money laundering case related to a cash-for-jobs scam when he was the Transport Minister during an earlier AIADMK regime. The ED had arrested him based on an Enforcement Case Information Register (ECIR) filed under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act in 2021.

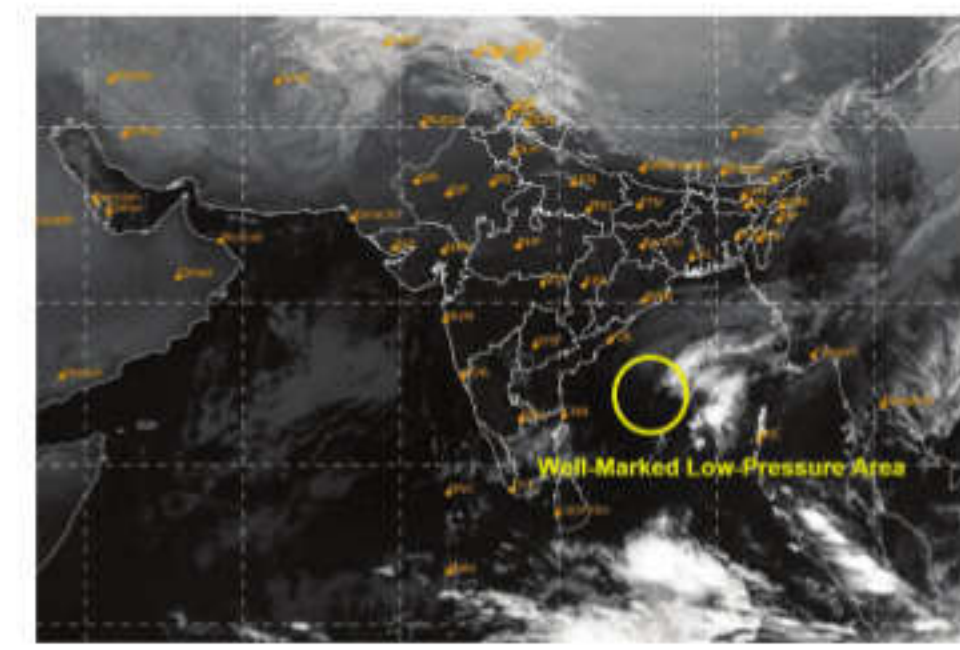
Well-marked low-pressure area over west-central Bay of Bengal: IMD

AGENCIES
AMARAVATI, 22 DECEMBER

Saturday's well-marked low-pressure area over the west-central Bay of Bengal persists over the same region at 0830 hours on Sunday.

The associated cyclonic circulation extends up to 3.1 km above mean sea level.

It is likely to move west-south westwards and reach the southwest Bay of Bengal near north Tamil Nadu & south Andhra Pradesh coasts around 24 December, the Meteorological Centre said



on Sunday.

Heavy rain is likely to occur

LEGAL NOTICES

IN THE COURT OF
Sh. Deepak Dabas, District Judge-01, North, Room No. 305, 3rd Floor, Rohini Courts, Delhi

PETITION U/S 8 SECTION OF THE HINDU MINORITY AND GUARDIANSHIP AND WARDS ACT 1956 R/W SECTION 151 OF THE HINDU MINORITY AND GUARDIANSHIP ACT

Case No.: GP - 20/24

AJAY KUMAR JAIN
-Petitioner
Vs
STATE OF NCT OF DELHI
-Defendants

The petitioner (s) above named having applied to be adopted/appointed as the guardian of the person and property of minor(s) / Lunacy MASTER ARHAN JAIN S/O SH. AJAY KUMAR JAIN, R/O CC-151C, SHALIMAR BAGH DELHI-110088.

The 23rd DAY OF JANUARY 2025 have been fixed for hearing of the application and notice is hereby given to general public that if any other relatives/friends, kinsman or well wisher of the aforesaid minor/desire to adopt be appointed/declare as guardian of the person and property of the said minor/Lunacy of desire to oppose the application of the petitioner aforesaid he/she should enter appearance in persons in this court on the aforesaid date and be prepared to adduce on that day and documentary or oral evidence which he may desire to adduce in support of his/her claim to such adoption appointment of declaration of in support his/her opposition to the application of the petitioner aforesaid.

Given under my hand seal of this court on this 06-11-2024.

District Judge-01, North, Rohini Courts, Delhi
Seal of the Court

D-7529

IN THE COURT OF
MS. SHILPI SINGH, Commercial Civil Judge cum Addl Rent Controller Cum Administrative Civil Judge, South District Court No 204 Saket Court Complex New Delhi (PROCLAMATION REQUIRING ATTENDANCE OF DEFENDANT)

(Order 5, Rule 20 of the Code of Civil Procedure)

CS SCJ 423/2024

N.D.O.H.-30.01.2025

Xnet Logistics and Supply Chain Pvt. Ltd.,
Thorough Directors,
A-18, Rama Park, Near Metro

Pillar No. 757,
Dwarka Mor, New Delhi-110059.

-Plaintiff
V/S
M/S Vconnect International,
T88C, 2nd Floor, Main Press
Enclave Road, Opp. MGF Mall,
Saket, New Delhi.

-Defendant

The above named Defendants.

Whereas you are intentionally evading service of summons it is hereby notified that if you will not defend the case on the 30th day of January 2025, the day fixed for the final disposal, it will be heard and determined ex-parte.

Given under my hand and seal of the Court on this 16th day of December 2024.

Commercial Civil Judge cum Addl Rent Controller Cum Administrative Civil Judge, South District, Saket Court Complex New Delhi
Seal of the Court

D-7538

IN THE COURT OF
MS. MONA TARDI KERKET- TA, District Judge-06, Room No 310,3rd Floor, South-East District

(SE) Saket Court Complex, New Delhi

CITATION UNDER SECTION 283 OF THE INDIAN SUCCESSION ACT, 1925

Suit No:- PC 35/2024

PUJA TALWAR
-Plaintiff
V/S
THE STATE & ANR
-Defendant

To,
1. THE STATE
GOVERNMENT OF NCT OF DELHI,
THROUGH SDM, SOUTH-EAST,
NATIONAL PARK, OLD GARGI COLLEGE BUILDING,
LALPAT NAGAR-4, NEW DELHI-110024.
2. BANK OF INDIA
THROUGH ITS BRANCH MANAGER,
NEHRU PLACE BRANCH, PARAS CINEMA BUILDING, NEW DELHI-110024.

WHEREAS an application under the Indian Succession Act, 1925, for grant of probate of the Will/letters of Administration to the Estate of Late Sh. Ashok Talwar S/o Late Sh Mukund Lal, R/o Flat No. B-437, New Friends Colony, New Delhi-25 who died on 20.09.2009, has been made by his petitioner, in the joint names of testator.

Notice is hereby given to the general public having any interest in the Probate/Letter of Administration of the Estate

of the above named Petitioner/deceased may if he/she desires, appear in this court on 22.01.2025 and participate in the proceedings before the grant of Letter of Administration/Probate.

Given under my hand and the seal of the Court, this 07th day of November, 2024.

District Judge-06, South-East District,
(SE) Saket Court Complex, New Delhi
Seal of the Court

D-7539

In the Court of
MS SAVITA RAO, District Judge (Commercial Court) - 01 South

Room No-12, Block-I, Saket Court Complex, New Delhi

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING ATTENDANCE OF DEFENDANT

(Order 5 Rule 20 of the Code of Civil Procedure)

Suit No.-:CS (Comm.) 180/2024

UNION BANK OF INDIA
-Plaintiff
V/S
ASHOK JAIN
-Defendant

ASHOK JAIN S/O KASTUR JAIN, PLOT NO. 281, BLOCK-5, DAKSHIN PURI EXTENSION, DR. AMBEDKAR NAGAR, NEW DELHI-110062

WHEREAS you are intentionally evading service of summons it is hereby notified that if you shall not defend the case on 29.01.2025 the day fixed for file a written statement within 30 days and appear in this court, it will be heard and determined ex-parte.

Given under my hand and the seal of the Court this 06.12.2024.

District Judge (Commercial Court) -01 South
Block-I, Saket Court Complex, New Delhi
Seal of the Court

D-7540

In the Court of MS SAVITA RAO, District Judge (Commercial Court) -01 South

Room No-12, Block-I, Saket Court Complex, New Delhi

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING ATTENDANCE OF DEFENDANT

(Order 5 Rule 20 of the Code of Civil Procedure)

Suit No.-:CS (Comm.) 179/2024

UNION BANK OF INDIA
-Plaintiff
V/S
NIDHI SHARMA
-Defendant
To,
M/s N.S. ENTERPRISES

THROUGH ITS PROPRIETOR
Ms. NIDHI SHARMA
PLOT No. 1402, BLOCK-G1, GALI No. 13,
GOVINDPURI, KALKAJI, NEW DELHI-110019

WHEREAS you are intentionally evading service of summons it is hereby notified that if you shall not defend the case on 29.01.2025 the day fixed for file a written statement within 30 days and appear in this court, it will be heard and determined ex-parte.

Given under my hand and the seal of the Court this 06.12.2024.

District Judge (Commercial Court) -01 South
Block-I, Saket Court Complex, New Delhi
Seal of the Court

D-7541

IN THE COURT OF
SH. DIG VINAY SINGH, District Judge (Commercial Court) West 03

Room No. 203, Second Floor, Court Extension Block, Tis Hazari Court, Delhi.

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING ATTENDANCE OF DEFENDANT

(Order 5 Rule 20 of the Code of Civil Procedure)

CS (Comm.) No/883/2023

STATE BANK OF INDIA.
V/S
BIMLA To, (Defendant)
BIMLA W/O SH. RAMESH R/O FLAT NO. 35/13, SECOND FLOOR, PHASE-3, MUKAND PUR, NORTH WEST DELHI, DELHI-110042

ALSO AT
: EMPLOYEE.- 51600296
D.E.M.S (SAFAI KARAMCHARI) MUNICIPAL CORPORATION OF DELHI ZONAL OFFICE ROOM NO.107, SECTOR-5 ROHINI, DELHI-110085

WHEREAS you, in view of the reports already received, cannot be served in ordinary way. It is hereby notified that if you shall not defend the case on the 14th day of JANUARY 2025, the day fixed for the final disposal, it will be heard and determined ex-parte.

GIVEN under my hand and the seal of the court on this 19th day of NOVEMBER, 2024.

District Judge (Commercial Court) West 03
Court Extension Block, Tis Hazari Court, Delhi.

Seal of the Court

In the Court of
Sh. Ajay Kumar Jain, District Judge, (Commercial Court) -03, (South-East District) at

CHANGE OF NAMES

I ANURADHA SHUKLA BHARDWAJ W/O MR SHARAT KUMAR SHARMA R/O A-4, SECTOR-34, NOIDA, GAUTAM BUDH NAGAR (UP) HAVE CHANGED MY NAME TO "ANURADHA SHUKLA" FOR ALL FUTURE PURPOSES.

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<https://epaper.thestatesman.com>

Kuwait honours PM Modi with its highest national award

Presented in recognition of Modi's achievements and endeavour to strengthen the country's ties with India, the award, instituted in 1974, has been conferred on select global leaders

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 22 DECEMBER

Kuwait on Sunday conferred its highest national award, 'The Order of Mubarak Al-Kabeer', on Prime Minister Narendra Modi in recognition of his distinguished achievements and his endeavour to strengthen bilateral relations between India and Kuwait. PM Modi dedicated the award to the long-standing friendship between India and Kuwait, and to the 1.4 billion people of India.

This is the 20th international honour given to PM Modi by a country.

Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad

Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the amir of Kuwait conferred 'The Order of Mubarak Al-Kabeer' on PM Modi. Sheikh Ahmed Al-Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, the prime minister of Kuwait, also graced the occasion. The conferment of the award on a historic visit of a prime minister of India to Kuwait after 43 years added a special meaning to the occasion. The award was instituted in 1974 and has since been conferred on select global leaders. 'The Order of Mubarak Al Kabeer' is a knighthood order of Kuwait and is named after the seventh ruler of Kuwait, Mubarak bin Sabah Al-Sabah, who assumed power in 1896 and took Kuwait



to new heights during his reign. The Order is awarded to heads of state and foreign sovereigns and to members of foreign royal families in sign of friendship. It has been previously awarded to foreign leaders

like Bill Clinton, Prince Charles, and George Bush besides other dignitaries like Queen Elizabeth and Prince Muhammad bin Salman. PM Modi is on a two-day visit to the Gulf nation of Kuwait at the invitation of Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-

Jaber Al-Sabah, the Amir of Kuwait. This is the first visit by an Indian Prime Minister to Kuwait in 43 years. Modi arrived in Kuwait on Saturday

afternoon. Last month, Prime Minister Modi was conferred with Guyana's highest civilian honour, 'The Order of Excellence', by the country's President.

Amit Shah blames Left rule for Tripura's backwardness

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
AGARTALA, 22 DECEMBER

Union Home Minister Amit Shah accused Left parties for leaving Tripura "backward" during their 35-year rule and credited the BJP government with bringing progress to the state since assuming power in 2018. Speaking at a public meeting following a visit to a rehabilitated Bru tribal village on Sunday, Shah contrasted the communist era with the

BJP's development agenda. "For 35 years, communists ruled Tripura, claiming to work for the welfare of the poor, yet the people remained impoverished. It was only after the BJP came to power that the state began witnessing genuine development," Shah remarked. Under Left rule, only 2.5 per cent of the population had access to piped drinking water; today, that figure has risen to 85 per cent, according to Shah.

Indira Gandhi herself voted to remove many provisions of 42nd Amendment: Jairam Ramesh

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, 22 DECEMBER

Congress MP Jairam Ramesh on Sunday pointed out the selective criticism of the 42nd amendment by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in his speech during the debate on the Constitution in the winter session of Parliament. The Congress leader said that while Prime Minister Modi and his colleagues attacked Indira Gandhi for the 42nd Amendment they, however, failed to mention that she, along with other Congress MPs, voted in favour of the 44th Amendment which removed a number of provisions introduced through the 42nd Amendment.



"During the discussion on the Constitution, the PM and his colleagues mounted a furious attack on Indira Gandhi for the 42nd Amendment that was passed by Parliament in December 1976. What they did not mention was that Indira Gandhi herself, along with other Congress MPs, then voted in favour of the 44th Amendment in December

1978, when Morarji Desai was PM. The 44th Amendment removed a number of provisions introduced through the 42nd Amendment," Ramesh posted on X. The special provisions introduced by the 42nd Amendment were charged with changing the 'basic structure' of the Constitution. He said that despite its criticism, many provisions of the 42nd Amendment remain integral to the Constitution almost 50 years later. "The PM and his colleagues also did not mention the fact that many of the provisions of the 42nd Amendment have been retained ever since it was enacted almost half a century ago. These include: the words

'socialist' and 'secular' in the Preamble that have been recently held by the Supreme Court to be part of the basic structure of the Constitution," Ramesh said. The Congress leader cited Article 39-A (provides for equal justice and legal aid), Article 43-A, Article 48-A (protection of environment and safeguarding of forest and wildlife), and Article 51-A among others as the retained provisions of the 42nd amendment. "Inclusion of education, population planning, environment, and forests in the Seventh Schedule, i.e., the Concurrent list that gives responsibility to both the Union and state governments," he added.

NC govt has taken steps towards rationalising job reservation, says J&K CM Omar Abdullah

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, 22 DECEMBER

Put in an embarrassing spot by the ruling National Conference's MP Ruhullah Mehdi who has announced to stage a protest along with unemployed youth on Monday outside the Gupkar Road residence of the chief minister for rationalisation of reservation in government jobs, CM Omar Abdullah on Sunday said that his government has not ignored or swept the issue under the carpet. Mr Ruhullah, who had given a month's time to his own party's CM to revamp the high reservation quota that has left little scope for general category candidates seeking government jobs, earlier in the morning announced that he would stage a protest outside Omar's Srinagar residence tomorrow. The NC had in its poll manifesto said the party would take steps to rationalise the job quota. Responding to the MP's announcement, Omar wrote



on X: "I understand the emotions surrounding the reservation issue. JKNC had committed to examining all aspects of it in our manifesto released before the assembly elections. It is as a continuation of this commitment that a cabinet sub-committee was constituted to move towards fulfilling this promise. That sub-committee was only recently notified & is in the process of starting its work by engaging with all stakeholders. In the meantime the reservation policy has also been challenged in the Hon'ble High Court of JK&L. We will,

of course, be bound by any judgement when the final legal options have been exhausted. "It has come to my attention that a protest is being planned in Srinagar to highlight the sense of injustice surrounding the reservation policy. Peaceful protest is a democratic right & I would be the last person to deny anyone that right but please protest knowing that the issue has not been ignored or swept under the carpet. Your government is doing what any responsible government would do - making sure everyone is heard & a fair decision arrived at after completing due process," Mr Abdullah added. Earlier, NC MP Ruhullah wrote on X: "Today marks the date I had committed to stand with those whose voices demand rationality in the reservation policy. In my response to a post on X (Twitter) by a concerned citizen, I urged everyone to wait until 22nd December to give the elected government time to

address this issue. I also said that if the matter was not resolved by then, I would join you in protest outside the CM's residence or office." He further wrote: "22nd December ends tonight. Over the past month, I've observed a range of reactions to the formation of the sub-committee. To those who believe that the issue remains unaddressed in a satisfactory manner: I stand by my commitment. Tomorrow, I will join the people in a peaceful and dignified attempt to demand answers on their issues from the government." "I request all those voluntarily coming to maintain civility and focus on raising genuine demands for a rational reservation policy. To those who seek to exploit this issue for political gains: I welcome you to step out tomorrow and step away from rhetoric. Show your sincerity where it matters—the streets. 2:00 PM | Gupkar Road | Outside the Chief Minister's Residential Office," he added.

Army gifts 'pherans' to residents of LoC

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, 22 DECEMBER

Amidst onset of the 'Chillai Kalan' (harsh part of winters) in Kashmir coinciding with the International Pheran Day, the Indian Army distributed traditional pherans to underprivileged families in far-flung villages along the Line of Control (LoC) in the Kashmir Valley. 'Pheran', a long robe, is a traditional garment to keep one warm. In a heart warming initiative to provide relief to impoverished and needy populace during the coldest period of winters, the iconic 'pherans', a symbol of Kashmiri identity and resilience, brought much-needed warmth and comfort as 'Chillai Kalan' set in, with sub-zero



temperatures recorded in the valley. The 'pheran', deeply rooted in Kashmiri culture, has become a unifying symbol during Chillai Kalan, embodying warmth, resilience, and tradition. Since 2021, International Pheran Day has been celebrated across Kashmir, with locals and tourists gathering at Srinagar's historic Ghanta Ghar and SKICC to showcase the traditional attire. The event has featured fashion shows, including one at SKICC with eminent per-

sonalities and specially-abled persons, aiming to promote Kashmir's cultural heritage. The distribution drive also saw the participation of local volunteers who helped identify families in need, ensuring that the 'pherans' reached the most deserving persons. The smile on the faces of elders and children alike captured the spirit of giving that defined this initiative. The effort has been widely appreciated by locals, with many acknowledging the Army's role in promoting care and compassion alongside security and stability in the region. The distribution drive stands as a testament to the Army's commitment for this noble cause and supporting the welfare of communities during the most challenging time of the year.

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF A PERSON ACCUSED (See Section 82 Cr.P.C.) In the court of Shri Ashish Rastogi, Additional sessions Judge, Delhi Under Section 135 F ACT C.C.No.108/2022 PS-Jammu BSES YAMUNA POWER LIMITED Vs SAHIL Whereas complaint has been made before me that Sahil S/o Idarish R/o House No.C-7/88,Gali No.5,F.RHS Portion,Chauhan Bangar Delhi-110053 has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence 135 F Act and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest thereupon issued that the said accused can not be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said accused has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant). Proclamation is hereby made that the said accused is required to appear before this court to answer the said complaint on the day of 21.03.2025 Dated this 16.12.2024 Sd/- Additional Session Judge (Electricity-I) KND Delhi Seal

KIND ATTENTION RAIL PASSENGERS!
KUMBH MELA SPECIAL TRAINS
For the convenience of Rail Passengers during forthcoming KUMBH MELA-2025, Railways have decided to run the following Special trains as per the details given below:-

02417/02418 Subedarganj - Delhi Jn. - Subedarganj SF Kumbh Special Train (Bi-Weekly) 34 Trips
Train No. 02417 Train No. 02418
ARR. DEP. STATIONS ARR. DEP.
--- 21:35 Subedarganj 19:40 ---
08:55 --- Delhi Jn. --- 09:30

Days of run : 02417 Ex. Subedarganj on every Friday & Saturday from 03.01.2025 to 28.02.2025 and 02418 Delhi Jn. on every Saturday & Sunday from 04.01.2025 to 01.03.2025
Composition: 1st AC cum 2 Tier AC, 3 Tier AC, 3 Tier AC Economy, Sleeper & General.
Stoppages: Fatehpur, Govindpur, Etawah, Tundla, & Aligarh Stations.

04145/04146 Subedarganj - Delhi Jn. - Subedarganj SF Kumbh Special Train (Weekly) 18 Trips
Train No. 04145 Train No. 04146
ARR. DEP. STATIONS ARR. DEP.
--- 21:35 Subedarganj 19:40 ---
08:55 --- Delhi Jn. --- 09:30

Days of run : 04145 Ex. Subedarganj on every Thursday from 02.01.2025 to 27.02.2025 and 04146 Delhi Jn. on every Friday from 03.01.2025 to 28.02.2025
Composition: 1st AC, 2 Tier AC, 3 Tier AC, 3 Tier AC Economy, Sleeper & General.
Stoppages: Fatehpur, Govindpur, Etawah, Tundla, & Aligarh Stations.

04111/04112 Prayagraj Jn. - Prayagraj Jn. Unreserved Kumbh Special Ring Rail 94 Trips
Train No. 04111 Train No. 04112
ARR. DEP. STATIONS ARR. DEP.
--- 06:00 Prayagraj Jn. 21:00 ---
11:15 11:20 Jaunpur 13:50 13:55
18:50 --- Prayagraj Jn. --- 06:30

Days of run : 04111/04112 Ex. Prayagraj Jn. from 10.01.2025 to 28.02.2025 (except 28, 29 & 30.01.2025)
Stoppages: Prayagraj Rambagh, Jhusi, Handia Khas, Gyanpur Road, Madhosingh, Banaras, Bhadohi, Janghai Jn., Mariahu, Zafarabad Jn., Shahganj Jn., Akbarpur, Gosainganj, Ayodhya, Ayodhya Cantt., Sultanpur, Maa Belha Devi Dham Pratapgah Jn., Mau Almna, Phaphamau Jn. & Prayag Stations.

04113/04114 Prayagraj Jn.-Prayagraj Jn. Unreserved Kumbh Special Ring Rail 94 Trips
Train No. 04113 Train No. 04114
ARR. DEP. STATIONS ARR. DEP.
--- 17:30 Prayagraj Jn. 08:00 ---
22:55 23:00 Jaunpur 01:05 01:10
07:45 --- Prayagraj Jn. --- 17:45

Days of run : 04113/04114 Ex. Prayagraj Jn. from 10.01.2025 to 28.02.2025 (except 28, 29 & 30.01.2025)
Stoppages: Prayagraj Rambagh, Jhusi, Handia Khas, Gyanpur Road, Madhosingh, Banaras, Bhadohi, Janghai Jn., Mariahu, Zafarabad Jn., Shahganj Jn., Akbarpur, Gosainganj, Ayodhya, Ayodhya Cantt., Sultanpur, Maa Belha Devi Dham Pratapgah Jn., Mau Almna, Phaphamau Jn. & Prayag Stations.

04210/04209 Prayagraj Sangam-Jaunpur-Prayagraj Sangam Unreserved Kumbh Special Ring Rail 66 Trips
Train No. 04210 Train No. 04209
ARR. DEP. STATIONS ARR. DEP.
--- 11:15 Prayagraj Sangam 17:15 ---
14:00 --- Jaunpur --- 14:15

Days of run : 04210 Ex. Prayagraj Sangam and 04209 Ex. Jaunpur from 01.01.2025 to 10.01.2025, 17.01.2025 to 26.01.2025, 06.02.2025 to 09.02.2025 & 15.02.2025 to 23.02.2025
Stoppages: Prayag, Phaphamau, Phulpur, Janghai & Mariahu Stations.

08251/08252 Raigarh Jn.-Varanasi-Raigarh Jn. Kumbh Special Train 02 Trips
Train No. 08251 Train No. 08252
ARR. DEP. STATIONS ARR. DEP.
--- 14:00 Raigarh Jn. 05:25 ---
10:00 --- Varanasi --- 10:50

Days of run : 08251 Ex. Raigarh Jn. on 25.01.2025 (Saturday) and 08252 Ex. Varanasi on 27.01.2025 (Monday)
Composition: 2 Tier AC, 3 Tier AC, Sleeper and General
Stoppages: Champa Jn., Bilaspur Jn., Pendra Road, Anuppur Jn., Shahdol Jn., Umaria, Katni Jn., Maihar, Satna Jn., Manikpur Jn., Prayagraj Chheoki, Mirzapur and Chunar Jn. Stations.

09031/09032 Udhna - Ghazipur City - Udhna Kumbh Special Train 04 Trips
Train No. 09031 Train No. 09032
ARR. DEP. STATIONS ARR. DEP.
--- 06:40 Udhna 12:45 ---
14:05 14:15 Varanasi Jn. 06:00 06:10
18:05 --- Ghazipur City --- 00:30

Days of run : 09031 Ex. Udhna on 17.01.2025 & 16.02.2025 and 09032 Ex. Ghazipur City on 19.01.2025 & 18.02.2025
Composition: 2 Tier AC, 3 Tier AC, Sleeper & General.
Stoppages: Bharuch, Vishvamitri, Vadodara, Godhra, Dahod, Ratlam, Nagda, Ujjain, Shujalpur, Sant Hirdaram Nagar, Vidisha, Ganj Basoda, Bina, Lalitpur, Virangana Lakshmi Bai Jhansi, Orai, Govindpur, Fatehpur, Prayagraj, Mirzapur, Chunar, Jaunpur & Aunrihar Stations.

09403/09404 Ahmedabad Jn. - Janghai - Ahmedabad Jn. Kumbh Special Train 18 Trips
Train No. 09403 Train No. 09404
ARR. DEP. STATIONS ARR. DEP.
--- 21:15 Ahmedabad Jn. 18:00 ---
03:00 --- Janghai --- 08:30

Days of run : 09403 Ex. Ahmedabad Jn. on 09.16, 21.01.2025 & 05, 14, 15, 18, 19, 26.02.2025 and 09404 Ex. Janghai on 11, 18, 23.01.2025 & 07, 16, 17, 20, 21, 28.02.2025.
Composition: 2 Tier AC, 3 Tier AC, Sleeper & General.
Stoppages: Anand, Chhayapuri, Godhra, Dahod, Ratlam, Nagda, Bhawani Mandi, Ramganj Mandi, Kota, Sawai Madhopur, Gangapur City, Bayana, Agra Fort, Tundla, Etawah, Govindpur, Fatehpur & Prayagraj Stations.

01455/01456 Pune-Mau Jn.-Pune Kumbh Special Train 12 Trips
Train No. 01455 Train No. 01456
ARR. DEP. STATIONS ARR. DEP.
--- 10:10 Pune 15:45 ---
17:10 17:20 Varanasi 05:25 05:35
22:00 --- Mau Jn. --- 23:50

Days of run : 01455 Ex. Pune on 08, 16, 24.01.2025 & 06, 08, 21.02.2025 and 01456 Ex. Mau Jn. on 09, 17, 25.01.2025 & 07, 09, 22.02.2025.
Composition: 2 Tier AC, 3 Tier AC, Sleeper & General
Stoppages: Daund Chord Line, Ahmednagar, Belapur, Manmad Jn., Jalgaon Jn., Bhusaval Jn., Khandwa Jn., Talvadiya, Chhanera, Khirkiya, Harda, Banapura, Itarsi Jn., Pipariya, Narsinghpur, Jabalpur Jn., Katni Jn., Maihar, Satna Jn., Manikpur Jn., Prayagraj Chheoki, Mirzapur, Chunar Jn., Shahganj Jn. & Azamgarh Stations.

09371/09372 Dr. Ambedkar Nagar-Ballia-Dr. Ambedkar Nagar Kumbh Special Train 08 Trips
Train No. 09371 Train No. 09372
ARR. DEP. STATIONS ARR. DEP.
--- 13:45 Dr. Ambedkar Nagar 05:30 ---
14:05 14:15 Varanasi 06:00 06:10
19:15 --- Ballia --- 23:45

Days of run : 09371 Ex. Dr. Ambedkar Nagar on 22.01.2025, 25.01.2025, 08.02.2025 & 22.02.2025 and 09372 Ex. Ballia on 23.01.2025, 26.01.2025, 09.02.2025 & 23.02.2025
Composition: 2 Tier AC, 3 Tier AC & Sleeper & General
Stoppages: Indore Jn., Ujjain Jn., Shujalpur, Sant Hirdaram Nagar, Vidisha, Ganj Basoda, Bina, Lalitpur, Virangana Lakshmi Bai Jhansi, Orai, Govindpur, Fatehpur, Prayagraj Jn., Mirzapur, Chunar Jn., Jaunpur Jn., Aunrihar Jn. & Ghazipur City Stations.

01033/01034 Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj (T.) - Mau Jn. - Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj (T.) Kumbh Special Train 14 Trips
Train No. 01033 Train No. 01034
ARR. DEP. STATIONS ARR. DEP.
--- 11:30 Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj (T.) 14:30 ---
17:10 17:20 Varanasi 05:25 05:35
22:00 --- Mau Jn. --- 23:50

Days of run : 01033 Ex. Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj (T.) on 09, 17, 22, 25.01.2025 & 05, 22, 26.02.2025 and 01034 Ex. Mau Jn. on 10, 18, 23, 26.01.2025 & 06, 23, 27.02.2025.
Composition: 2 Tier AC, 3 Tier AC, Sleeper and General
Stoppages: Dadar, Thane, Kalyan Jn., Igatpuri, Nasik Road, Manmad Jn., Jalgaon Jn., Bhusaval Jn., Khandwa Jn., Talvadiya, Chhanera, Khirkiya, Harda, Banapura, Itarsi Jn., Pipariya, Narsinghpur, Jabalpur Jn., Katni Jn., Maihar, Satna Jn., Manikpur Jn., Prayagraj Chheoki, Mirzapur, Chunar Jn., Shahganj Jn. & Azamgarh Stations.

09029/09030 Vishvamitri-Ballia-Vishvamitri Kumbh Special Train 02 Trips
Train No. 09029 Train No. 09030
ARR. DEP. STATIONS ARR. DEP.
--- 08:35 Vishvamitri 10:05 ---
14:05 14:15 Varanasi 06:00 06:10
19:00 --- Ballia --- 23:30

Days of run : 09029 Ex. Vishvamitri on 17.02.2025 (Monday) and 09030 Ex. Ballia on 18.02.2025 (Tuesday)
Composition: 2 Tier AC, 3 Tier AC & Sleeper & General
Stoppages: Vadodara Jn., Godhra Jn., Dahod, Ratlam Jn., Nagda Jn., Ujjain Jn., Shujalpur, Sant Hirdaram Nagar, Vidisha, Ganj Basoda, Bina, Lalitpur, Virangana Lakshmi Bai Jhansi, Orai, Govindpur, Fatehpur, Prayagraj Jn., Mirzapur, Chunar Jn., Jaunpur Jn., Aunrihar Jn. & Ghazipur City Stations.

03409/03410 Malda Town-Prayagraj Rambagh-Malda Town Kumbh Special Train (Bi-Weekly) 22 Trips
Train No. 03409 Train No. 03410
ARR. DEP. STATIONS ARR. DEP.
--- 20:45 Malda Town 14:30 ---
13:45 13:50 Varanasi 22:00 22:10
17:15 --- Prayagraj Rambagh --- 19:15

Days of run : 03409 Ex. Malda Town on every Thursday & Saturday from 02.01.2025 to 22.02.2025 and 03410 Ex. Prayagraj Rambagh on every Friday & Sunday from 03.01.2025 to 23.02.2025
Composition: 2 Tier AC, 3 Tier AC & Sleeper & General
Stoppages: New Farakka Jn., Barharwa Jn., Sahibganj Jn., Kahalgao, Bhagalpur, Sultanganj, Jamalpur Jn., Abhaipur, Kail Jn., Mokameh, Barh, Bakhtiyarpur, Rajendra Nagar, Patna Jn., Danapur, Ara, Buxar, Pt. Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Jn. & Banaras Stations

08791/08792 Durg-Varanasi-Durg Kumbh Special Train 02 Trips
Train No. 08791 Train No. 08792
ARR. DEP. STATIONS ARR. DEP.
--- 13:50 Durg 05:30 ---
10:00 --- Varanasi --- 10:50

Days of run : 08791 Ex. Durg on 08.02.2025 (Saturday) and 08792 Ex. Varanasi on 10.02.2025 (Monday)
Composition: 2 Tier AC, 3 Tier AC, Sleeper and General
Stoppages: Raipur Jn., Bhatpara, Uslapur, Pendra Road, Anuppur Jn., Shahdol Jn., Umaria, Katni Jn., Maihar, Satna Jn., Manikpur Jn., Prayagraj Chheoki, Mirzapur and Chunar Jn. Stations.

08253/08254 Bilaspur -Varanasi-Bilaspur Kumbh Special Train 02 Trips
Train No. 08253 Train No. 08254
ARR. DEP. STATIONS ARR. DEP.
--- 08:15 Bilaspur Jn. 10:40 ---
10:00 --- Varanasi --- 10:50

Days of run : 08253 Ex. Bilaspur Jn. on 22.02.2025 (Saturday) and 08254 Ex. Varanasi on 24.02.2025 (Monday)
Composition: 2 Tier AC, 3 Tier AC, Sleeper and General
Stoppages: Raipur Jn., Durg, Rajnandgaon, Gondia Jn., Balaghat Jn., Naipur Jn., Jabalpur Jn., Katni Jn., Maihar, Satna Jn., Manikpur Jn., Prayagraj Chheoki, Mirzapur and Chunar Jn. Stations.

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Fed's Caution

The US Federal Reserve's decision to lower its benchmark interest rate to a range of 4.25-4.50 per cent marks a turning point in its monetary policy. While the move aims to ease financial conditions, the US central bank's tempered outlook for further rate cuts highlights the complex interplay of persistent inflation and an evolving economic landscape. This shift, underscored by Fed Chair Jerome Powell's cautious tone, reflects not only economic challenges but also uncertainties surrounding potential policy changes under the incoming Trump administration. Inflation remains a persistent thorn in the Fed's side. Despite significant progress since its peak in 2022, recent months have seen inflation plateau, particularly in areas like shelter costs. This stagnation has pushed policymakers to reassess their trajectory. Core inflation is projected to remain above the Fed's 2 per cent target through 2025, a stark reminder of the road ahead. The implications of this are clear: rate cuts, once anticipated as a near-term solution, are now tethered to measurable progress on price stability. Persistently high inflation also impacts everyday consumers, with elevated costs for essentials like housing and food. The Fed's measured strategy aims to balance economic growth while alleviating these ongoing financial pressures. The cautious stance also reflects acknowledgment of broader uncertainties. With promises of higher tariffs, tax reforms, and stricter immigration policies on the horizon, the economic outlook remains murky. These potential shifts could amplify inflationary pressures, challenging the Fed's ability to balance growth with price stability. Mr Powell's remarks about the unpredictability of trade policies serve as a reminder of the challenges policymakers face in navigating uncharted territory.

Investors, accustomed to aggressive monetary easing during economic downturns, must now adjust to a slower pace of rate reductions. The Fed's projections for only two rate cuts in 2025 ~ half of what was anticipated just months ago ~ signal a fundamental shift in expectations. Markets, which initially anticipated more substantial easing, have recalibrated, with equities reacting negatively and bond yields rising. This measured approach, while frustrating to some, underscores the importance of stability. The Fed's primary mandate is to foster sustainable economic growth while keeping inflation in check. Premature rate cuts, without clear evidence of inflation's consistent decline, could risk undermining long-term stability. Mr Powell's emphasis on data-driven decisions reflects a commitment to this principle. The road ahead is undoubtedly challenging. Policymakers must navigate a delicate balance between fostering economic growth and mitigating inflationary risks. The Fed's decisions will also have broader implications, influencing borrowing costs for consumers and businesses. As inflation gradually moderates, the central bank's resolve to prioritise stability over short-term gains will be tested. In this era of uncertainty, the Fed's caution is both pragmatic and necessary. By anchoring its decisions in data and remaining adaptable to changing circumstances, it aims to guide America towards a more stable future. While the path may be slower than some anticipate, the long-term benefits of this approach outweigh the risks of hasty action.

Fair Lending

The government's proposal to clamp down on unauthorised private lending practices signals a decisive move to tackle unregulated financial activities that have long preyed on vulnerable segments of the population. With the advent of digital lending platforms, access to credit has become easier, but it has also brought a proliferation of predatory practices. The proposed law, with its strict penalties and regulatory framework, is both timely and necessary to protect consumers and establish order in the lending ecosystem. Unregulated lending has been a persistent issue, particularly in rural and low-income urban areas, where financial literacy is limited. The rise of digital lending apps has exacerbated the problem, with many platforms exploiting borrowers through high interest rates, hidden charges, and coercive recovery methods. This proposal addresses these malpractices with prison terms of up to seven years and fines of Rs 1 crore for unauthorized lending. For illegal recovery methods, the penalties are even steeper, with up to 10 years in prison and fines double the loan amount. These provisions send a clear message: exploitative practices will no longer be tolerated. This move also addresses the psychological toll on borrowers, who often face harassment and intimidation from unregulated lenders. Protecting their dignity and mental well-being is as important as ensuring financial justice. The inclusion of digital lending platforms in the regulatory framework is particularly noteworthy. While technology has democratised access to credit, it has also created loopholes for exploitation. Many digital lenders have used deceptive advertising and dubious loan terms to target individuals in financial distress. By banning such misleading practices and imposing penalties of Rs 10 lakh for violations, the government aims to restore trust in the lending sector. Additionally, the proposed online database of regulated lenders is expected to empower borrowers to verify the legitimacy of those offering them money, promoting transparency and accountability. While the proposed law is a welcome step, its implementation will be crucial. Digital platforms can operate anonymously and are difficult to track, making enforcement a significant challenge. Moreover, there is a risk that stringent regulations could discourage innovation in the digital lending space, which has been instrumental in financial inclusion. Striking a balance between protecting consumers and fostering a conducive environment for legitimate lenders will be critical. The government's decision to seek stakeholder feedback before finalising the bill is a positive move. Engaging with financial institutions, consumer advocacy groups, and technology experts will help refine the provisions and ensure that they are both practical and effective. Public awareness campaigns will also be essential to educate borrowers about their rights and the resources available to them. If implemented effectively, the proposed law has the potential to transform India's lending landscape, ensuring fairness and accountability. By clamping down on unregulated practices, the government is taking a strong step toward financial justice, protecting millions of Indians from exploitation while paving the way for a more transparent and equitable credit ecosystem.

Seoul searching ~ I

There were fast-paced developments in the prelude to the eventual impeachment. There was an overwhelming opinion across the board that even if President Yoon was quick to withdraw martial law after he realised his folly, he could not avoid treason charges. The Democratic Party's floor leader Park Chan-dae was emphatic when he observed that Yoon could no longer run the country normally and therefore he should step down

In an unexpected turn of political developments in South Korea, President Yoon Suk-yeol invoked emergency martial law on 3 December, the first time since 1979. In a television address, Yoon justified the decree by accusing the opposition party of engaging in "anti-state" activities. Yoon further justified his action saying that it was necessary to "eradicate pro-North Korean forces" and safeguard the "constitutional order of freedom".

The anachronistic declaration of martial law, to be withdrawn within six hours, by President Yoon was an incomprehensible shock that stirred up dark memories and painful wounds of state violence. However, South Korean democracy is resilient, and Korean society continues its efforts to properly heal and bid farewell to the darkest periods of its past.

In a peculiar democratic system in South Korea, the President need not have the support of the party he belongs to. In Yoon's case, he was at loggerheads for quite some time with the opposition Democratic Party (DP), which holds a majority in parliament. Such a situation invariably led to frictions with Opposition lawmakers who easily passed bills, only for the President to repeatedly veto them.

The prolonged standoff reached new heights when the DP introduced a bill to downsize the national budget. It further filed impeachment motions against a state auditor and three prosecutors. Controversy followed as some of these prosecutors were tied to on-going investigations into DP leader Lee Jae-myung. Yoon considered these actions as blatant anti-state acts that disrupt legitimate state institutions and an outright attempt at insurrection.

Yoon's declaration of martial law created mayhem in the country. When 190 lawmakers voted to overturn the orders, Yoon quickly lifted the martial law within six hours. Under South Korea's constitution, the President must revoke martial law if a majority of the 300-seat unicameral legislature opposes the decision.

It may be remembered that since 1948, South Korea has seen a total of 16 martial law declarations, excluding the latest. Previous decrees were largely issued under authoritarian regimes and in response to extreme situations such as war, military coups, or domestic uprisings. In Yoon's case, it was sheer misjudgement of the political pulse in the country.

Within days of the mayhem that was unfolding in Seoul, this author was conducting a Ph.D. viva online of a scholar from Delhi University who was on a scholarship from the Korea Foundation and was defending her thesis from Seoul. When asked to share information from the ground on the developments unfolding at a rapid pace, she said the situation was very scary as military troops were air-dropped throughout the night around the Presidential house, National Assembly and other critical government buildings located in the area. The reactions of the people were spontaneous. This demonstrated that people who had already tasted the fruits of democracy were not willing to



surrender their freedom and rights to an authoritarian system again. Thousands of residents rushed outside to protest the President's decision. The South Korean military prohibited activities by Parliament and political parties and banned public protests.

In the most undemocratic manner, Yoon since coming to power has had a love-hate relationship with the media, accusing the nation's fourth estate of playing politics in national affairs, which is why he intensified crackdowns on media outlets. Yoon's attempts to bring media and publications under government control since taking office had already backfired.

Yoon's political immaturity was quickly noticed when his own party members condemned the action. PPP leader Han referred to the declaration as "wrong" and vowed to "stop it along with the people." Ahn Cheol-soo, a four-term lawmaker from the PPP, described martial law as "an extraordinary act of violence that destroys our democracy." The DP leader Lee criticized Yoon's declaration as "unconstitutional", saying there were "no practical prerequisites to justify such an extreme measure."

South Korean experts were equally disapproving. While some said the situation was "flabbergasting", others said Yoon's actions were self-destructive and that the situation did not merit declaring martial law. Yoon's political immaturity was laid bare as his declaration evinced no public support and he failed to judge the public mood. Now the court is the final arbiter. Soon, calls for Yoon's impeachment or resignation gathered momentum with both the opposition and the public intensifying their demands. Yoon's approval rating had already plummeted. The reasons attributed for this were cited as his inapt handling of the First Lady's scandals and mismanagement of critical policies.

Yoon had already felt his position was shaky when several academics had started calling for his ouster from the presidency. The general public was also unwilling to see Yoon continue in office and were having rallies in and around Seoul since August 2022, demanding his resignation.

There were fast-paced developments in the prelude to the eventual impeachment. There was an overwhelming opinion across the board that even if President Yoon was quick to withdraw martial law after he realised his folly, he could not avoid treason charges. DP's floor leader Park Chan-dae was emphatic when he observed that Yoon could no longer run the country normally and therefore he should step down.

After the first attempt to impeach Yoon failed because the ruling party lawmakers boycotted, the second attempt succeeded on 14 December after ruling People Power Party lawmakers decided to vote for Yoon's impeachment realising that public protests had intensified and his approval rating had plummeted. The National Assembly passed the motion 204-85 in a floor vote. Yoon's presidential powers and duties were suspended and Prime Minister Han Duck-soo, took over his authority after copies of the document on impeachment were delivered to Yoon and to the Constitutional Court. The court has up to 180 days to determine whether to dismiss Yoon as president or restore his powers. If Yoon is thrown out of office, a national election to choose his successor must be held within 60 days.

Yoon's impeachment over his stunning and short-lived martial law decree that ended days of political paralysis proved that democracy in South Korea is vibrant and resilient. It also demonstrated that Yoon's impeachment was an outcome driven by the people's ardent desire for democracy, courage and dedication. While the Constitutional Court shall take time as per law to adjudicate Yoon's actions, the immediate challenge before Prime Minister Han Duck-soo to whom all the powers of Yoon have been transferred is to ensure that the volatility in the country's politics do not affect security interests. The fear is that North Korea might take advantage of the prevailing political fluidity and launch provocations. Han asked the foreign minister to inform other countries that South Korea's major external policies remain unchanged. The finance

minister was also asked to ensure that potential negative impacts on the economy by the political turmoil are minimised. Han's broad objective is to ensure the critical task of ensuring normal and stable operations of state affairs.

Being a major ally, Han's office briefed President Joe Biden's office in Washington about the political situation in South Korea and regional security challenges, including North Korea's nuclear programme and its military cooperation with Russia. Both sides reaffirmed their mutual commitment to maintaining and strengthening their alliance.

In South Korea's power structure, while the executive power is concentrated with the President, the Prime Minister takes the reins of the government if the President is incapacitated. There should be no worry in the prevailing confusing political situation as Han is a competent leader with vast experience. Earlier he held top government posts such as trade minister and finance minister. He also served as a prime minister from 2007 to 2008.

Support was forthcoming from allies. The US ambassador Philip G Goldberg endorsed South Korea's democratic and constitutional process. Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba said Japan was watching the developments in South Korea closely and assured Han that bilateral ties shall not be affected.

When the opposition as well as members of his own party brought in a rebellion charge against Yoon, he remained defiant, calling his martial law decision an act of governance. The conservative Yoon described the main liberal opposition DP as a "monster". He further accused the DP of flexing its legislative muscle to impeach many top officials and undermine the government's budget bill for 2025. He claimed the deployment of troops was meant to maintain order, rather than disrupt it. This evoked sharp response from DP leader Lee Jae-myung who called Yoon's speech a "mad declaration of war".

Yoon probably defended his actions by way of preparations for his defence at the Constitutional Court. But in reality Yoon was living in a fool's paradise as opinion surveys showed more than 70 per cent of South Koreans supported his impeachment. His approval rating plummeted to 11 per cent, the lowest since he took office in 2022. Yoon also overlooked the fact that his claims did not align with the testimony by some military commanders whose troops were deployed to the Assembly. This showed that Yoon did not understand the mind of the military correctly.

As per the available reports, Yoon asked Kwak Jong-keun, commander of the Army Special Warfare Command, to order his troops to quickly break down the door and drag out the lawmakers who were inside. Kwak didn't carry out Yoon's order. This showed the military was clearly not under Yoon's control. The military did not feel compelled to obey orders that were seen as illogical, irrational and smelled of dictatorship.

(To Be Concluded)

Risks in financial market

The immediate economic risks linked to the aftermath of President Yoon Suk Yeol's short-lived martial law decree seem to be fading away, at least for the moment, but concerns are still deepening over how the South Korean economy is to grapple with looming challenges in the absence of solid leadership.

Not all business sectors are mired in a slump. For instance, the semiconductor sector, led by Samsung Electronics and SK hynix, has made a strong recovery this year, helping the country's exports record on-year gains for the 14th consecutive month in November.

For Korea, which depends heavily on exports for economic growth, the much-anticipated recovery of demand for chips is certainly a welcome development.

But the stellar performance of semiconductor exports was not enough to bolster the overall economic growth rate. Major institutions including the International Monetary Fund revised down Korea's growth rate to 2.2-2.3 percent.

The underlying reason for the negative evaluation lies in the protracted slump in domestic demand. Last month, the Finance Ministry finally removed the phrase "signs of recovery in domestic demand" from its regular economic report, marking the first such move in seven months.

The Korea Development Institute, a state-run think tank, has shared the same worry, saying that declining retail

The Korea Herald
consumption limits the overall economic recovery.

According to the report released by the Bank of Korea on Tuesday, the growth of domestic companies is losing momentum.

According to a survey of some 23,000 companies, average revenue in the third quarter rose 4.3 percent from a year earlier, compared with 5.3 percent on-year growth recorded in the second quarter.

In particular, manufacturing companies saw their revenue growth slow to 4.9 percent in the third quarter, down from 7.3 percent a year earlier. The BOK said demand for AI-related chips went up but the recovery in chips for PCs and smartphones was slower than expected.

Even before Yoon's failed coup caused shock at home and abroad, experts expressed concerns about Seoul's wobbly financial market, whose performance was eclipsed by other foreign markets in Asia and elsewhere.

Bigger trade barriers in the form of higher tariffs under the incoming US administration of President-elect Donald Trump were feared to hurt Korea's export drive.

It was inevitable that Yoon's unexpected martial law order came as a major shock at a time when Korea's economy was already finding it difficult to handle sluggish domestic demand and the prospect of tougher trade battles.

The main bourse Kospi and the foreign exchange market were impacted by the unprecedented move by Yoon, who was impeached by lawmakers and suspended from his duties Saturday. Markets have stabilized, but it is still worrisome that the Korean currency traded in the 1,430 won range against the US dollar, a level that is seen as too high for companies handling imports.

The Busan Chamber of Commerce and Industry released a report Tuesday saying that major importers in the port city are struggling to handle the sharp depreciation of the Korean currency, which translates into higher import costs and lower operating profits.

PERSONAL
PROF. Jayshree Mitra Paul (1952-2022), moved on to another world on this day, continues to guide her dear students, and Saheb.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

editor@thestatesman.com

Feel of print

SIR, The author of the write-up, "Why every home must get a newspaper" (Dec. 19) deserves praise for his excellent and thought-provoking piece. His concern for the decline in print journalism is a serious issue to ponder over, viewed in the context that online editions have made inroads even in a largely conservative country like India. However, as a voracious reader of newspapers and magazines for over four decades, I strongly feel that printed newspapers in particular, though their circulation figures

have dwindled over the years, cannot die, and rather will persist for generations despite the invasion of online editions.

Ardent readers will always prefer a printed edition for a variety of reasons like, easy portability, leisure reading, "ownership" factor, and that it is also easy on the eye. The feeling of a warm newspaper right off the press is certainly a pleasurable experience which an online edition cannot give.

A print edition of a newspaper is everlasting and unchanging, whereas articles can be hidden away on an online website in a matter of a few days. If a newspaper releases a special print

publication outside of its regular edition ~ say, an edition specifically highlighting an upcoming election and its candidates, such contents often do not make it online.

If it is a busy news day and online contents are overflowing, some smaller news items may never make it on the web, leaving online readers less informed than print readers. Online reading cannot provide the kind of joy and refreshment that a reader derives while sipping his morning brew and browsing through the printed newspaper simultaneously.

Yours, etc.,
Ranganathan Sivakumar,
Chennai, 21 December.

LET'S MOVE ON

SIR, This refers to the edit 'Why now?' This is not the first time a cricketer has retired in the middle of a tour in Australia. MS Dhoni too had retired in a similar manner. All kinds of wild surmises and conjectures have been made regarding Ashwin's sudden decision to retire. Ashwin does not have a great record outside the sub continent and his record in the SENA nations isn't all that great. On Indian pitches he was almost unplayable. At 38, Ashwin was yet playing cricket at the highest levels when most others have retired. This means Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli's retirement is on the cards at the end of the tour. The selectors need to stop pampering those who are past their prime and whose best is behind them. They need to more ruthless in selecting the best teams rather than hope for old heroes to make a spectacular comeback. Let us acknowledge Ashwin's contribution to Indian cricket and wish him the best for his future and move on instead of finding reasons why he did so and blaming others for it.

Yours, etc., Anthony Henriques, Mumbai, 20 December.



When Piketty came to India

SHUBHAM SHARMA AND
SUMIT DAHIYA

Thomas Piketty, the French economist and author of the famous book Capital in the Twenty First Century, was recently in India. He delivered a lecture on the state of inequality globally as well as in India. The main highlight of his lecture was: income inequality in India is very high when compared to the developed world (Global North and Japan) and low when compared to countries like South Africa and Brazil. In comparison to China, India does not do well either.

As in terms of income shares, the top 10 per cent hold 42 per cent of the income share in India whereas the corresponding number for China is 31 per cent. In a jointly written paper with Nancy Qian, Piketty showed that between 1986 and 2003 the income share of the top 1 per cent increased by more than 120 per cent in China whereas 50 per cent in India. Why then has income inequality increased in India vis-à-vis China in the long run?

First, the income tax in China has become a 'mass tax' while income tax in India has remained an 'elite tax'. Secondly, corporations in China are held on a tighter leash by the political class. In India, the obverse is true. Since 1991 Indian corporations have got tax cuts and bonanzas in the shape of ownership of public utilities and natural resources.

Up till the UPA 2 regime corporate taxes accounted for two-thirds of total direct taxes. Currently, corporate taxes account for less than half. As against the statutory tax rate of 34.6 per cent in 2017-18, the effective tax rate for all companies was 29.5 per cent. In 2018-19, it declined marginally to 27.8 per cent. But even in these two pre-2019 years, the lowest effective tax rate was for the richest companies, at 26.3 per cent in 2017-18 and 25.9 per cent in 2018-19.

All this has not resulted in the desired uptick in investments. From a high of 27 per cent of GDP in 2007-08 it dropped to 19.6 per cent in 2020-21. Economists have different explanations for this. Some say that private investment did not peak because of the lack of money in the hands of the

consumers. Some say that Indian businesses do not have confidence in the way the economy is being managed. Their main complaints pertain to a lack of further reforms, and a lack of digitization of land records among others.

The Indian political class has never desired to have legislation to force private capital into investing in the economy. Between 2003 and 2012, Indian corporates borrowed frantically from public banks at cheap interest rates envisaging a China-like developmental story for India. Even during this period, the private sector's gross capital formation as a share of GDP remained below that of the public sector in the pre-reform era.

Prasenjit Bose et.al., have calculated that from 1980 to 1990 the public sector accounted for 11.1 per cent of gross capital formation whereas in 2012-13 the private sector accounted for 9.2 per cent. The growth period was marked by a heavy accumulation of Non-Performing Assets. The debt restructuring programme was initiated followed by the 'Indradhanush Programme' in 2015 to revamp the cash-starved public sector banks.

Through this programme, the government aimed to inject Rs 70,000 crore into the public sector banks and those banks that required support. Simply put, the purloining of money by corporations had to be paid for by public money. Even the second Narasimham Committee report that argued against government ownership of banks was opposed to such capital infusion operations for its fiscal costs to the government.

According to Piketty (as argued in his book Brief History of Equality), the Indian state has failed to adopt social policies that are ambitious and have universalist goals. He writes, "If the balance sheet on Indian quotas (affirmative action for backward and marginalized communities) is on the whole positive this experiment also illustrates the limits of such a policy. This kind of system is not sufficient for eliminating inequality; it must be accompanied by social policies that are more ambitious and have universalist goals. By construction, the places in universities, elected assemblies and public offices can concern only a small minority of the socially

disadvantaged classes. In the Indian context, quotas were often used by the elites as an excuse for not paying the taxes necessary to finance investments in infrastructure, education, and health care that would have been necessary to really reduce social inequalities in India and increase equality for all the disadvantaged classes (and not only a minority within them). In the absence of a sufficiently well-financed welfare state, inequalities did in fact begin to increase quickly again after 1980, despite their decrease over the first decades following independence."

Piketty's jottings are reflected in the National Family and Health Survey (NFHS) 5 survey report. Among India's present demographic dividend (15-49 years) only 41 per cent of women and 50.2 per cent of men have 10 years plus of schooling. 57 per cent women and 25 per cent men are anaemic. Only 11.3 per cent of children aged 6-23 months received a minimally adequate diet. According to the Annual Status of Education Report, a quarter of those between the ages of 14 and 18 struggle to read Grade-2 textbooks and only 35 per cent could divide.

India's transition to neo-liberalism was marked by inertia in socio-political mobilization demanding economic welfare. Barring the implementation of the Mandal Report which was an inclusivist and not an egalitarian step, there was nothing that would force the political class to adopt universalist pro-poor policies.

In Europe, between 1914 and 1980, a great redistribution took place on the back of three events. First, the rise of the welfare state which was in large measure the result of class struggles in the second half of the nineteenth century accelerated by the 1929 Great Depression and the wanton destruction of the two World Wars; secondly, the rise of progressive tax on income and inheritance; thirdly, the liquidation of private foreign assets in the colonies and subsequently the public debt.

The last condition is not relevant for India but the first two are. A massive non-unionized informal economy and relative prosperity of the formal sector have made labour unity



difficult to achieve. Piketty also proposed a 2 per cent wealth tax on assets above Rs 100 million and a 33 per cent inheritance tax on property valued that much. Shamika Ravi, representing the Government of India on the dais, contradicted this by asking in what way taxing the rich would increase labour productivity? All economists agree that the productivity of Chinese labour was the result of investment in health and education during the Maoist era. Even if we skirt the Chinese case, the great turnaround of Japan after the country had lost almost everything during the Second World War was possible because of compulsory and free primary

education, which had been enforced in Japan since 1876.

Any action on Piketty's moderate proposal seems difficult if not impossible. Both the Congress and the Bharatiya Janata Party have historically had good numbers of businessmen in the Lok Sabha. In the 14th and 15th Lok Sabha, Congress had 19.28 and 21.60 per cent businessmen MPs. In the 16th Lok Sabha (2014) 26.33 per cent of BJP's MPs were businessmen. In the 17th Lok Sabha, 23 per cent of all MPs were businessmen.

(The writers are, respectively, a PhD Candidate, Dept of Political Science, University of Connecticut, USA, and an Assistant Professor, Government Girls College, Gurugram, Haryana.)

IT CAME TO MIND | MANISH NANDY

To keep what is worth keeping

Those who know Winston Churchill only from his dogged wartime leadership when Germany attacked his country and have read only a few excerpts from his wartime speeches are agast when they decipher his ugly elitism, racism and sheer blimpish stodginess, when they take pains to read his memoirs, reports of his contemporaries and his exchanges with President Roosevelt. But nothing to my mind illustrates his boorishness so well as his decision to burn, yes burn, his brilliant painting by the great British painter Graham Sutherland, given him as a loving gift by parliamentarians when he retired from the House of Commons. The sole reason: he didn't like it (I, like many others, thought it magnificent).

I remembered this shameful episode when I read of the recent controversy regarding Gabriel Garcia Marquez's last novel. Marquez was unquestionably one of the greatest writers of our generation. His One Hundred Years of Solitude and Love in the Time of Cholera are elegant classics, with their remarkable use of what is now called magical realism.

When Marquez was writing his last book, he was 86 and was beginning to feel the effects of his memory loss and dementia. Until August is the story of a married woman who travels every year to a Caribbean island to place flowers on her mother's grave and to have one-night trysts with strangers. After finishing the novel, the fastidious Marquez

re-read his fifth draft and decided that 'it did not work.' Before his death, he instructed his sons, Rodrigo and Gonzalo, to destroy the manuscript. They hesitated and the manuscript lay idle for ten years. Then, hesitantly, they decided to publish it on his birthday this year, despite their father's directive.

The controversy is because Marquez's sons disregarded their father's instruction and published the book. A person's last wish is sacrosanct, no less so if the person is an eminent writer and the decision is about his work. His progeny's choice to publish the book anyway offends some. More so as it attracts the surmise that the remuneration for a master's last novel might have been a persuasive factor against the author's unambiguous preference.

Marquez's sons have, however, humbly offered that his dementia could have compromised not just his writing ability but also his critical ability to correctly judge his own writing. They did not want to take the chance of rashly scrapping a literary masterpiece. They also referred, correctly, to the thousands of readers who love Marquez's work and their reluctance to deprive such readers of the author's last book.

They certainly have a point. Nikolai Gogol destroyed his later work and no doubt the world lost some priceless literature. More recently, Franz Kafka made a close friend and editor, Max Brod, his executor, and urged him to destroy his unpublished manuscripts.

Fortunately, Brod disobeyed his friend's suggestion and preserved Kafka's later work. We were treated to some remarkable literature, even though it was incomplete in Kafka's view.

Great writers do not always produce great work. Even the masters turn out books of variable quality. Such variations and their circumstances are themselves of great interest and offer us invaluable insights in understanding the masters. That is why preserving the entire body of an author's work helps us understand his total contribution. Not to mention the simple truth that critics' views differ and often change over time, and it is not easy at a point of time to decide which particular book is worthy of preservation.

Marquez was an extraordinary novelist and a punctilious craftsman. It is easy to understand his impatience with a book that fell short of the high standard he set for himself. But it may still have features to delight many readers, besides offering us a better understanding of the whole corpus of his contribution. I also suspect that the end-point writing of a novel in an author's life has the potential of offering unique end-point insights we should not like to lose.

Some reviewers have already decided that the current book does not come up to the high standard of his best novels. Manuel Roig-Franzia of the Washington Post, for instance, has commented, like Marquez, that the book 'really doesn't work.' I still



Illustration by : Debabrata Chakrabarty

believe that it was worth publishing it posthumously and let the readers and critics judge. Marquez's sons were wise to defy his wishes and let the world read his final work.

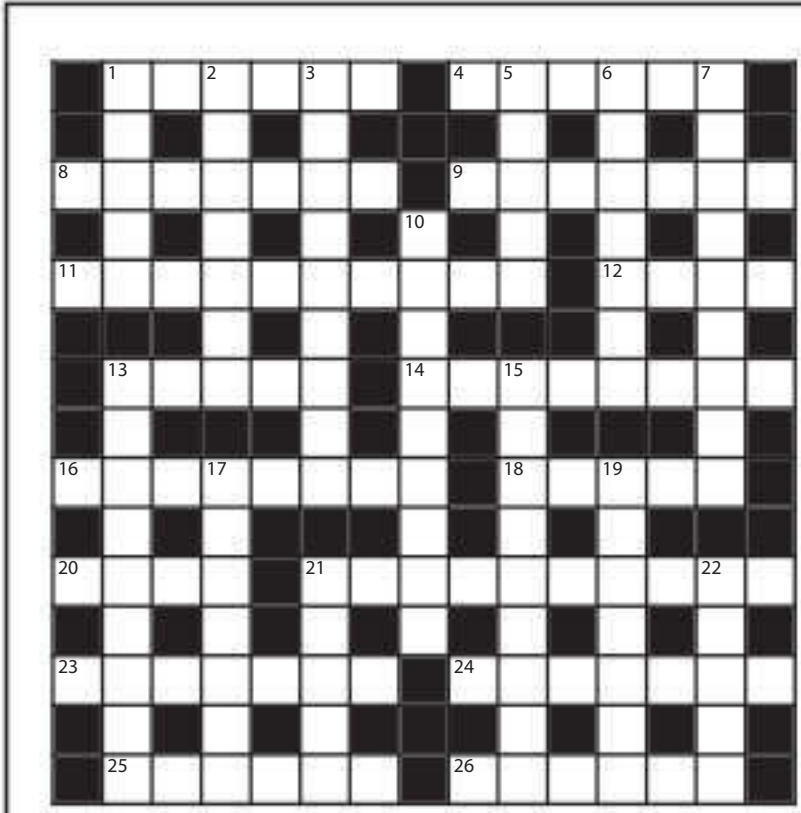
I confess, for full disclosure, to a certain bias in this matter. Few books have influenced me as much as Meditations by Marcus Aurelius. With the whole world at his feet, the second-century Roman emperor felt rather lonely and got into the habit of dictating

his thoughts at night to a scribe. The scribe was told to destroy the notes on the emperor's death. The sapient scribe did not. And we are fortunate to have the incredible treasure of Marcus Aurelius' stoic thoughts. One of those thoughts fits Marquez quite well: It is not death that a man should fear, but he should fear never beginning to live.

(The writer is a US-based international development advisor and had worked with the World Bank. He can be reached at mnandy@gmail.com)

CROSSWORD

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YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION

AUTOMATON SATIED
N H A A O U E R
TROUSER REPULSE
T U S S E P E S
BOXING GLOVES
S M B I R G Y T S
P L A U S I B L E A I S L E
A R E I R T N T I N
C U T T E R I N S I D I O U S
E L V L L O N E
P L A Y A B L I N D E R
R L T I I M U S
O C A R I N A C H A G R I N
B R O N H N G O
E A T E N T R E N D I E S T

ACROSS

- Bill's extremely chubby, scoffing last of dessert after buffet (6)
- Supplies workforce to county (6)
- Ring shortly to collect bread in Cairo, perhaps (7)
- Fascinating women with desires (7)
- Instrument controls gas blasted with protons (5,5)
- You've got me skinned – it hurts! (4)
- Family taking drug – or not? (5)
- Fearless detective's lead at the end is fair game (5,3)
- Quarrel about opening of motorcycle club – it's a source of bitterness (8)
- Take place of child originally next to dog (5)
- Run out of fish market (4)
- Colourless like benzene, which contains carbon and hydrogen (10)

- Today's theme is about a bunch of flowers (7)
- Random way to deliberately lose in archery? (7)
- Go by some label – a pseudonym (6)
- Skilful boxing starts to explain another pasting (6)

DOWN

- Convenor, one coming in daily (5)
- Current partner takes it to reproduce (7)

- Unstable nitrates – central ingredient of explosive to produce slates (5,4)
- Gulls – birds eating whatever's left (5)
- Fine performer sitting on unknown works (7)
- Winter athlete bags score that's not so perfect (9)
- Liberal Lord had a bit of luck – today's his day (5,4)

- Brown songbird raises cuckoo inside middle of reserve (9)
- Recoil, struggling to eat fish – a snapper? (9)
- Upset first man getting hold of drunk girl (7)
- I got mixed up with Rachel – I'm an idiot (7)
- Collect a pound, possibly (5)
- Subsidiary illustration of butterfly maybe not caught (5)

NOTE: Figures in parentheses denote the number of letters in the words required. (By arrangement with The Independent, London)

100 YEARS AGO

OCCASIONAL NOTE

THE official report on the disturbances at Kohat leaves an unpleasant impression that "someone had blundered," and that prompter action on the part of the local authorities might have prevented much of the bloodshed which actually took place. Apart from all racial considerations it is at least arguable that the "barracking" of executive officers which is invariably indulged in by the purely Indian press and by many members of the legislatures at such times is apt to have a demoralizing influence upon those who have to take momentous decisions during "first-class riot. The politicians cannot expect to have it both ways. If they pine for a firm exercise of lawful authority when their co-religionists are in danger, they should refrain from malevolent abuse of the executive when it is compelled to make use of its powers at times when instant action is called for. In the meantime, without endorsing yesterday's comment of the Amrita Bazar Patrika, one may sympathize with the spirit of loyal indignation in which it notes that "for days British rule was withdrawn from Kohat, and the situation was taken advantage of by hooligans." It would appear, then, that there are worse things at times than British rule. The Indian Assistant-Commissioner was in a very difficult position, and it is clear that his co-religionists attended to bring strong pressure to bear on him.

NEWS ITEMS

COSSIPORE PERTURBED

FEAR OF ENHANCEMENT OF TAXATION

AT yesterday's meeting of the Corporation of Calcutta Babu Nalini Mohan Chatterjee asked whether the Chief Executive Officer was aware "That considerable feeling has been aroused in the Cossipore district by the recent activities of the Assessment Department, and the prospect of abnormal enhancement of taxation has caused much alarm and indignation in the minds of the ratepayers."

The questioner also suggested that the revision was being made on the lines of Calcutta proper without regard to the complete absence in Cossipore of any of the amenities of city life. It was further stated that: "roads, drains and bustees have remained unwatered, unflushed and unclean, but the mode of revision shows that the rates will go up by 400 to 600 per cent, at a modest calculation."

The Secretary (Mr. B. V. Ramiah) read the following reply :—

The revision of assessment in the Cossipore District has just been taken in hand. It is yet too early to say what increase there will be in the assessment. The revision is being made according to the provisions of the Calcutta Municipal Act and it is not possible to say at this stage what increase of assessment will actually take place. The provisions of the Act will govern assessments and the valuation will be fixed on equitable basis after taking all the mitigating circumstances into account.

GURDWARA REFORM

PUNJAB GOVERNMENT'S SYMPATHY

SIR MALCOLM HAILEY paid a short visit to Sheikhpura to-day. Addresses of welcome were presented to His Excellency by the District Board, the Notified Area Committee, Co-operative Societies, District Soldiers' Board, Anjuman-I-Islamia, and Sikh Sudhar Committee to which he gave a joint reply.

Sir Malcolm Hailey expressed his gratitude to the Sikh Sudhar Committee for their recognition of sincerity of purpose which had actuated the Government in its attempts to deal with the trouble arising from the Gurdwara movement. He referred to the great Nankana Tragedy enacted in the District sometime ago, the memory of which burnt indelibly in the minds of Sikhs throughout the world and said that though there were people to-day who endeavoured to exploit that terrible and unhappy memory to the disadvantage of the Government and attempted to use it to support the methods of agitation which could only bring discredit on the whole community, they (the members of the Sudhar Committee) were best able to appreciate the unworthiness of those efforts.

"You know," said Sir Malcolm Hailey, "that the Government has in the past attempted not once, but many times to arrange for Gurdwara legislation which will satisfy all interests concerned. It must now refuse to renew the task of attempting itself to frame legislation, but it will lend all reasonable assistance to those who will make a serious and genuine effort to frame laws which will meet with the approval of different sections who can claim a voice in this matter."

Expression & dialogue must go hand in hand for success of democracy: VP

Addressing the recipients of the Chaudhary Charan Singh Awards 2024, Dhankhar called for accountability among parliamentarians

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 22 DECEMBER

Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar said expression and dialogue must go hand in hand for any democratic nation to succeed.

"Expression and dialogue define democracy. How democratic a nation is defined by the state of expression of its individuals and organisations. For any democracy to succeed, expression and dialogue must go hand in hand with great responsibility on both sides,"

Dhankhar said while addressing the awardees of the Chaudhary Charan Singh Awards 2024 here on Sunday.

He called for accountability among parliamentarians. "It is time foreverly thinking Indian to reflect deeply and hold those with



obligations accountable – especially parliamentarians. In the last quarter of the century of our independence and adoption of the Indian Constitution, the kind of spectacle I witnessed should be a cause of concern. Yet,

there seems to be no concern. People have learned to take disorder as an order. There is no sense of revulsion," the Vice-President said.

On the occasion, the Vice-President gave away the Chaudhary Charan Singh

Awards 2024, honouring outstanding achievements in agriculture, rural development, and journalism.

The Chaudhary Charan Singh Awards 2024 celebrated remarkable contributions to agriculture, rural development, and journalism. The Kalam Ratna Award was presented to Ms. Neerja Chowdhury for her dedication to insightful journalism. The Sewa Ratna Award was conferred upon Dr. Rajendra Singh, the "Waterman of India", for his pioneering efforts in water conservation. The Krishak Utthan Award went to Dr. Firoz Hossain for advancing agricultural research and innovation. Lastly, the Kisan Award was bestowed upon Mr. Pritam Singh for his contributions to agricultural excellence.

Jayant Chaudhary, Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Skill Devel-

opment and Entrepreneurship and other dignitaries were also present on the occasion.

Speaking at the event, Dhankhar lauded the extraordinary legacy of Chaudhary Charan Singh, emphasising his relentless dedication to rural development, farmers' welfare, and inclusive growth. "Chaudhary Charan Singh was one of the finest persons in the country. A person who encapsulates transparency, accountability, integrity, commitment to rural development, commitment to farmer, and was all throughout fearless in expression of his views," the Vice-President said.

Reflecting on his leadership, Dhankhar said, "Chaudhary Charan Singh is defined by sublimity, statesmanship, farsightedness, and growth that is inclusive. No wonder he became the first Chief

Minister of the largest state of the Republic of India, and then Prime Minister."

Regretting the lack of recognition of Chaudhary Charan Singh's contributions, the Vice-President said, "It pains the heart when people are short-sighted in assessing the great contributions of this man. His astounding qualities, his deep dedication, and his knowledge

of rural India are subjects of reflection for enlightened individuals worldwide. A son of the soil, he was mindful not just of rural India but urban India as well, with a vision aligned with our civilisational ethos."

He said, "Agriculture is the spine of rural development. Unless agriculture develops, the rural landscape cannot be changed. And unless the rural landscape changes, we cannot aspire to have a developed nation."

Mamata will not support ONOE because nation is benefiting from it: Minister

AGENCIES

AGARTALA, 22 DECEMBER



Union Minister Sukanta Majumdar has responded to West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's remarks on the 'One Nation, One Election' Bill, asserting that the proposed reforms would benefit the country by saving money. However, Majumdar claimed that Banerjee would oppose the initiative simply because it would be advantageous for the nation.

Speaking to ANI on Saturday, Majumdar highlighted that in a democracy, everyone in the opposition has the right to speak, there is discussion.

"Discussion took place in all the states, Mamata Banerjee said that she is against it, while many states say that they are in favour of it. Right now it has gone to JPC, and people from all parties are involved in it, they will give their suggestions and the government will include them and only after that it will be

implemented. The country will benefit from this, money will be saved but Mamata Banerjee will not support it because the country is benefiting from it," he said.

In a post on X, CM Mamata claimed that the bill is not a "carefully-considered reform", but an "authoritarian imposition".

"The Union Cabinet has bulldozed their way through with the unconstitutional and anti-federal One Nation, One Election Bill, ignoring every legitimate concern raised by experts and opposition leaders. This is not a carefully considered reform; it's an authoritarian imposition designed to undermine India's democracy and federal structure," she said.

Lot of serious discussion held on ONOE, says former Chief of Army Staff General VK Singh

AGENCIES

JODHPUR, 22 DECEMBER



Former Union Minister and ex-Chief of Army Staff, General VK Singh, emphasized on Sunday that extensive discussions have already taken place regarding the One Nation, One Election Bill. He highlighted that the bill has now been referred to the Joint Parliamentary Committee, which will thoroughly review the proposal and drive it forward for further consideration and implementation.

"A lot of serious discussion has been held on this and the committee chaired by former President Kovind ji discussed it. This bill came in the Parliament and now a Joint Committee has been formed which will discuss everything and take it forward," VK Singh told the media at Jodhpur Airport. Meanwhile,

the bill, introduced in the Lok Sabha, proposes simultaneous elections to the Lok Sabha and state assemblies across India. It has been sent to the Joint Parliamentary Committee to have a deep discussion on the bill.

The Joint Parliamentary Committee to examine the 'One Nation, One Election' Bill will have 21 members from Lok Sabha including Congress leaders Priyanka Gandhi Vadra and Manish Tewari, NCP's Supriya Sule, TMC's Kalyan Banerjee and BJP's PP Chaudhary, Bansuri Swaraj and Anurag Singh Thakur.

Akhilesh Yadav accuses BJP of ignoring farmers' issues amid Sambhal excavation

AGENCIES

FIROZABAD, 22 DECEMBER

Samajwadi Party (SP) chief Akhilesh Yadav launched a scathing attack on the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Sunday, alleging that the ruling party is focusing on Sambhal to divert public attention from farmers' issues.

Earlier today, an excavation team from the Archaeological Survey of India unearthed a stepwell in the Chandausi area of Sambhal district.

"Khudaiye se rasta nahi niklega, yeh pehle bhi galat tha. (No solution will come from digging; this was wrong before too). When we already have the Places of Worship Act, which prevents such excavations, the BJP is deliberately engaging in this to avoid discussing farmers' issues," the SP chief told reporters in Firozabad.

District Magistrate Rajendra Pensiya on Sunday confirmed the discovery of a 'baoli' (stepwell) covering an area of 400 square metres. The structure, featuring around four chambers, includes floors made of marble.

Commenting on broader issues, Yadav claimed that farmers were unable to obtain Di-ammonium Phosphate (DAP) or fertilisers for their crops when needed. He also highlighted the rising prices of essential commodities, including medicines and electricity.

"I would like to ask them: you talked about farmers before, but they are still facing immense challenges and stress. When they needed DAP, it was not available. Khad jab chahiye thi toh nahi thi (When fertiliser was needed, it was unavailable)," Yadav said.

Mayawati accuses Congress and BJP of deceptive politics over Shah's comments on Dr Ambedkar

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

LUCKNOW, 22 DECEMBER

Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) supremo Mayawati has criticized the Congress party for its reaction to Home Minister Amit Shah's comments on Dr Bhimrao Ambedkar, calling it "pure deception and selfish politics."

She alleged that both Congress and BJP are "two sides of the same coin" when it comes to exploiting issues for political gain.

On Sunday, Mayawati took to social media to express her views, stating that there is widespread anger among people across the country regarding the disrespect shown to Dr Bhimrao Ambedkar by Amit Shah in Parliament.

However, she added that the Congress party's sudden activism, despite its history of neglecting Dr Ambedkar



and his struggle for the nation's progress, is nothing more than deceptive and self-serving politics.

She further accused both Congress and BJP of exploiting Dr Ambedkar's legacy for their political interests,

The BSP has also announced nationwide protests on December 24 to highlight the issue.

She also claimed that only during BSP governments have great saints, gurus, and leaders from the Bahujan community, including Baba Saheb, received full respect.

"The casteist parties could never digest this. Especially the SP, which even went to the extent of changing the names of new districts, institutions, and public welfare schemes out of hatred," she alleged. Following Amit Shah's remarks on Dr Ambedkar, the Congress has been attacking the BJP, and protests have been organized in several parts of the country. The BSP has also announced nationwide protests on 24 December to highlight the issue.

CCPA imposes penalty on coaching institute for misleading ads

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, 22 DECEMBER

The Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) has imposed a penalty of Rs 2 lakh for misleading advertisements on Shubhra Ranjan IAS Study.

An official release said the decision was taken to protect and promote the rights of consumers as a class and ensure that no false or misleading advertisement is made of any goods or services which contravenes the provisions of the Consumer Protection Act, 2019.

In view of the violation of the Consumer Protection Act, 2019, the CCPA, headed by Chief Commissioner Nidhi Khare and Commissioner Anupam Mishra, has issued an order against Shubhra Ranjan IAS Study for misleading advertisement regarding UPSC Civil Service Exam 2023. Coaching Institutes and online edtech platforms use pictures and names of successful candidates to influ-

ence prospective aspirants (consumers), without disclosing the courses opted by such candidates or the fees paid by them and the length of the course so attended.

Shubhra Ranjan IAS Study in its advertisement made the following claims- "13 students in Top 100", "28 students in Top 200", "39 students in Top 300" in UPSC CSE 2023

Further, the advertisements prominently depicted photographs and names of the successful candidates of the UPSC Civil Service Exam 2023, without mentioning any information about the specific course opted by such candidates. Shubhra Ranjan IAS Study prominently displayed successful candidate's names and pictures and simultaneously advertised various types of courses provided by them on its official website. However, the information with respect to the course opted by the said successful candidates in UPSC Civil Service exam 2023 was

not disclosed in the advertisement. The institute offers nearly 50+ courses. However, the DG Investigation report found that most of the claimed successful students took the Political Science and International Relations (PSIR) crash course and test series which comes into play after clearing Preliminary examination. It is the right of the consumer to be informed about the specific course that successful candidates had taken from the coaching institute to make it into the final selection of CSE. For the potential consumers, this information would have contributed in their making an informed choice about the course to opt for their success at CSE.

By deliberately concealing information about the specific course opted by each of the successful candidates, the institute made it look like all the courses offered by it had the same success rate for the consumers, which was not right.

UP govt screens over 27 lakh citizens in special campaign to eradicate TB by 2025

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

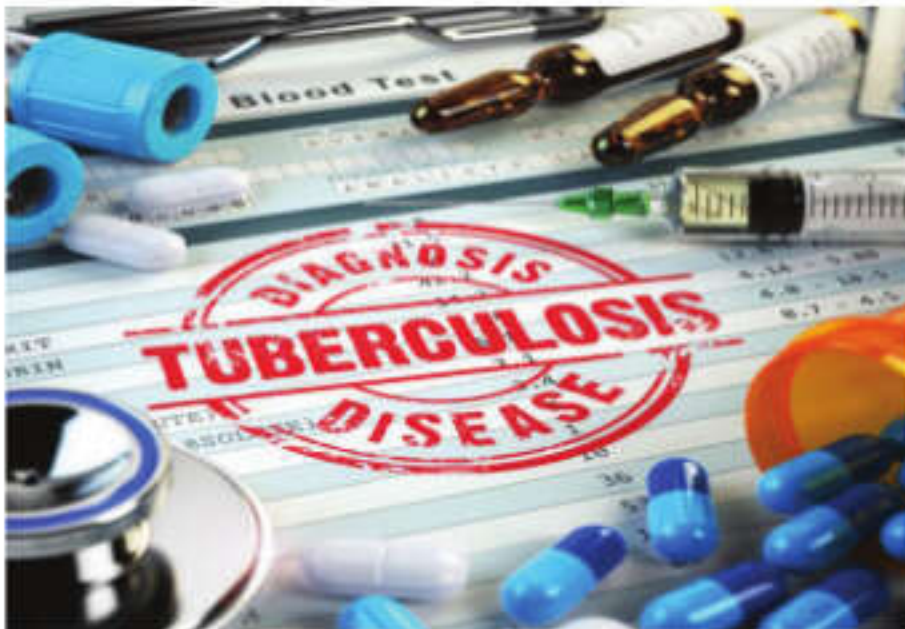
LUCKNOW, 22 DECEMBER

The Uttar Pradesh government has screened more than 27 lakh citizens as part of a comprehensive campaign to eliminate tuberculosis (TB) from Uttar Pradesh by 2025.

Directed by Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, this statewide initiative aims to rapidly identify, treat, and rehabilitate TB patients, with the campaign set to run until 24 March, 2025, health department officials here on Sunday claimed.

Focused on public participation and a holistic approach, the campaign underscores the government's commitment to building a healthier and more prosperous Uttar Pradesh.

Special efforts are underway in 15 districts with a high prevalence of TB, including Ayodhya, Sitapur, Barabanki, Deoria, Etawah, Amethi, Basti, Farrukhabad, Hathras, Pilibhit, Pratapgarh, Rae Bareilly, Rampur, Sid-



dharthnagar, Sultanpur.

The campaign prioritizes finding undetected TB cases, reducing mortality through timely treatment, and integrating patients back into society with widespread awareness and care. Between 7 December and 19 December, the campaign screened 27,00,377 individuals, conducted microscopy for 35,451 people, and performed NAAT tests for 26,642. This resulted in identifying 2,20,520 TB patients, with 49,850 receiving aid under the Nikshay Poshan

Yojana and 1,96,520 receiving preventive treatments.

The government has adopted innovative measures such as the Nikshay Mitra Abhiyan, which fosters community participation in supporting TB patients, along with deploying modern NAAT machines and mobile medical units for faster diagnosis and treatment. Partnerships with religious, social, and educational organizations further amplify awareness efforts. (Representational image)

Uttarakhand natives urge govt to include state's hilly region under 5th Schedule

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, 22 DECEMBER

A large number of Uttarakhand natives on Sunday gathered at Jantar Mantar under the banner of Uttarakhand Ekta Manch to demand the inclusion of the state's hilly region in the 5th Schedule of the Indian Constitution.

The gathering, termed the 'Uttarakhand Native Parliament', highlighted the urgent need to address burning issues of the hill state including depopulation, unemployment and environmental challenges in the Himalayan region. UKM's leader Nishant Rauthan, addressing the gathering pointed out that the 5th Schedule status existed in the region under the Scheduled District Act of 1874 and the Excluded Area declaration of 1935, however, these rights were withdrawn in 1972.

He stated that Uttarakhand's hill residents meet

the criteria required for tribal status, citing the example of Himachal Pradesh, where 43 per cent of the land falls under the 5th Schedule.

On the occasion, Dr Ajay Rawat, a historian, explained that the indigenous Khasas have inhabited the region for centuries, a fact supported by historical documents and cultural practices, he claimed.

He noted that the people of Uttarakhand, like other Himalayan tribal communities, are nature worshippers and have retained traditions reflective of their tribal roots.

Convenor of the UKM Anup Bisht emphasised that migration from the hills of the state due to lack of employment opportunities and the non-profitable rain-fed farming has left scores of villages abandoned.

He argued that implementing the 5th schedule in Uttarakhand would help create employment avenues, and encourage people to return to their native places.

UP witnesses 559 sq km increase in forest and tree cover: ISFR 2023

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

LUCKNOW, 22 DECEMBER

The 'Ped Lagao-Ped Bachao Jan Abhiyan,' a campaign led by Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath for the past seven and a half years, has yielded remarkable results.

According to the ISFR 2023 report, Uttar Pradesh, which planted over 36.80 crore saplings in 2024, recorded an impressive increase of more than 559 sq km in forest and tree cover. This achievement places Uttar Pradesh second only to Chhattisgarh, surpassing all other states in

forest cover growth.

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has congratulated the Forest Department officials and employees for their dedicated efforts in this initiative. Union Forest and Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav also lauded UP for this significant accomplishment, commending the state's commitment to environmental conservation.

According to the India Forest Status Report (ISFR) 2023 report, presented in Dehradun on Saturday, India's total forest and tree cover now spans 8,27,357 sq km,

which constitutes 25.17 per cent of the country's geographical area. This includes 7,15,343 sq km (21.76 per cent) of forest cover and 1,12,014 sq km (3.41 per cent) of tree cover.

There has been an increase of 1,445 sq km in forest and tree cover as compared to the shape-file-based assessment of 2021, which includes an increase of 156 sq km in forest cover and 1289 sq km in tree cover.

The report says among the top states demonstrating the most significant growth in forest and tree cover, UP



ranks second. Chhattisgarh leads with an increase of 684 sq km, followed by Odisha (558.57 sq km), Rajasthan (394 sq km), and Jharkhand (286.96 sq km).

Chief Minister Adityanath posted on his social media account 'X' to celebrate Uttar Pradesh's remarkable achievement in forest and tree cover. He wrote that the state is

swiftly progressing towards becoming 'Green Uttar Pradesh.'

According to the ISFR 2023 report, the historic increase of 559 sq km in forest and tree cover is a direct result of the people of Uttar Pradesh responding to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's call, 'Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam,' and embracing the Indian philosophy of 'Mata Bhoomi: Putrohaam Prithiviyah.'

The Chief Minister extended hearty congratulations to all those involved in the plantation campaign, nature enthusiasts, and the people

of Uttar Pradesh for this historic accomplishment, which he described as a significant contribution to the welfare of humanity.

Uttar Pradesh has set a new record by planting more than 36.80 crore saplings by 30 September, 2024. This follows the historic achievement of planting 36.51 crore saplings in a single day on 20 July, 2024. Over the past seven and a half years, the state has successfully planted 210 crore saplings, marking a significant milestone in its environmental efforts.

On examining the report

published by the Indian Forest Survey, Dehradun in the year 2023, the status of forest cover in Uttar Pradesh is as follows: Very dense forest 2,688.73 sq km, Medium dense forest 4,001.41 sq km, Open forest 8,355.66 sq km, Total 15,045.80 sq km (6.24 per cent), Tree cover 8950.92 sq km (3.72 per cent) and total forest cover and tree cover 23,996.72 sq km (9.96 per cent)

The five districts of UP with the highest growth are: Jhansi - 8597 acres, Amroha - 7769 acres, Etawah - 7127 acres, Kanpur Nagar - 6249 acres and Bijnor - 3343 acres.



Gaza ceasefire agreement nearly finalised:Palestinian source

Although some contentious points are still being negotiated, they are not expected to be a major obstacle to reaching a final agreement, according to an official of the Islamic Jihad movement

AGENCIES
GAZA, 22 DECEMBER

A ceasefire agreement in the Gaza Strip is imminent, with most of its terms already agreed upon, a senior official from the Palestinian Islamic Jihad movement said.

The official, who required anonymity, said the proposed agreement outlines a gradual cessation of hostilities and the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Gaza Strip, with the final deal also including a comprehensive prisoner-for-hostage exchange and a permanent end to the war between Hamas and Israel, *Xinhua* news agency reported.

Although some contentious points are still being negotiated, they are not expected to be a major obstacle to reaching a final agreement, added the



official.

The source also expressed optimism that the agreement would be finalised before the end of the year, as long as Israel does not impose new conditions.

There is political will from

all parties to reach a lasting resolution to the Gaza conflict, which has persisted for over 14 months, according to the official.

The ongoing negotiations, mediated by Egypt and Qatar with the participation of the

US, are based on a plan introduced by the US in May to end the war, which began on 7 October 2023, after Hamas's attack on southern Israel that resulted in about 1,200 deaths. Meanwhile, leaders of three Palestinian factions have

agreed that a ceasefire agreement in the Gaza Strip is "closer than ever" if Israel stops setting new conditions, Hamas said on Saturday.

These remarks followed a meeting in Cairo on Friday among leaders from Hamas, the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, according to a statement from Hamas.

The three factions reviewed the latest developments in ceasefire negotiations and the prisoner-for-hostage exchange deal, reaffirming their shared commitment to ending the "aggression" against the Palestinian people, which has persisted for over 14 months, said the statement.

It noted that the delegations also discussed the possibility of establishing a community support committee to manage post-war Gaza.

Israeli strikes across Gaza kill at least 20 as Vatican envoy visits Christians in the territory

AGENCIES
DEIR AL-BALAH, 22 DECEMBER

Israeli strikes across the Gaza Strip overnight and into Sunday killed at least 20 people, including five children, Palestinian medical officials said.

Israeli authorities meanwhile allowed Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa, the leader of the Catholic Church in the Holy Land, to enter Gaza and celebrate a pre-Christmas Mass with members of the territory's small Christian community.

A strike on a school housing displaced people in Gaza City killed at least eight people, including three children, according to Gaza's Health Ministry. The Civil Defense, first responders affiliated with the Hamas-run government, had earlier said four children were among those killed. The Israeli military said it carried out a precise strike on Hamas



militants sheltering there.

A strike on a home in the central city of Deir al-Balah late Saturday killed at least eight people, including three women and two children, according to Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital, which received the bodies. A man and his wife were killed in a strike in the southern city of Khan Younis on Sunday, just after midnight, according to the nearby Nasser Hospital. A strike on a car in Gaza City killed two people, according to the Health Ministry. There was no immediate comment from the military

on those strikes.

Israel has continued to carry out daily strikes in Gaza more than 14 months into the war with Hamas. It says it only targets militants, accusing them of hiding among civilians, but the bombings frequently kill women and children.

Israel and Hamas have recently appeared to draw closer to a ceasefire agreement that would include the release of Israeli hostages and Palestinian prisoners, but several obstacles remain, and the long-running indirect talks have repeatedly stalled.

Two US Navy pilots shot down over Red Sea in apparent 'friendly fire' incident, says US military



AGENCIES
DUBAI, 22 DECEMBER

Two U.S. Navy pilots were shot down Sunday over the Red Sea in an apparent "friendly fire" incident, the U.S. military said, marking the most serious incident to threaten troops in over a year of America targeting Yemen's Houthi rebels.

Both pilots were recovered alive after ejecting from their

stricken aircraft, with one suffering minor injuries. But the shootdown underlines just how dangerous the Red Sea corridor has become over the ongoing attacks on shipping by the Iranian-backed Houthis despite U.S. and European military coalitions patrolling the area.

The U.S. military had conducted airstrikes targeting Yemen's Houthi rebels at the time, though the U.S. military's Central Command did not elaborate on what their mission was and did not immediately respond to questions from The Associated Press.

The F/A-18 shot down had just flown off the deck of the USS Harry S. Truman aircraft

carrier, Central Command said. On 15 December, Central Command acknowledged the Truman had entered the Mideast, but hadn't specified that the carrier and its battle group was in the Red Sea.

"The guided missile cruiser USS Gettysburg, which is part of the USS Harry S. Truman Carrier Strike Group, mistakenly fired on and hit the F/A-18," Central Command said in a statement.

From the military's description, the aircraft shot down was a two-seat F/A-18 Super Hornet fighter jet assigned to the "Red Rippers" of Strike Fighter Squadron 11 out of Naval Air Station Oceana, Virginia.

Germans mourn 5 killed and 200 injured in apparent attack on Christmas market

AGENCIES
MAGDEBURG, 22 DECEMBER

Germans on Saturday mourned the victims of an apparent attack in which authorities say a doctor drove into a busy outdoor Christmas market, killing five people, injuring 200 others and shaking the public's sense of security at what would otherwise be a time of joy.

The alleged attack Friday evening in Magdeburg, about 130 kilometres (80 miles) west of Berlin, killed a 9-year-old and four adults and injured 41 people badly enough that authorities warned the death toll could



rise. Magdeburg marked the tragedy Saturday with the tolling church bells at 7:04 p.m., the exact time of the attack in the city of roughly 240,000 people. The driver, a 50-year-old doctor who

immigrated from Saudi Arabia in 2006, surrendered to police at the scene. He's being investigated for five counts of suspected murder and 205 counts of suspected attempted murder, prosecutor Horst Walter

Nopens said at a news conference.

Among other things, investigators are looking into whether the attack could have been motivated by the suspect's dissatisfaction with the way Germany treats Saudi refugees, Nopens said.

"There is no more peaceful and cheerful place than a Christmas market," Chancellor Olaf Scholz said. "What a terrible act it is to injure and kill so many people there with such brutality."

Although Nopens mentioned the treatment of Saudi immigrants angle, authorities said Saturday that they still didn't know why the suspect

drove his black BMW into the crowded market.

Police haven't publicly named the suspect, but several German news outlets identified him as Taleb A., withholding his last name in line with privacy laws, and reported that he was a specialist in psychiatry and psychotherapy.

Describing himself as a former Muslim, the suspect appears to have been an active user of the social media platform X, sharing dozens of tweets and retweets daily focusing on anti-Islam themes, criticising the religion and congratulating Muslims who had left the faith.

China says US is 'playing with fire' after latest military aid for Taiwan

AGENCIES
BEIJING, 22 DECEMBER

The Chinese government protested Sunday the latest American announcements of military sales and assistance to Taiwan, warning the United States that it is "playing with fire."

U.S. President Joe Biden (photo) authorized Saturday the provision of up to \$571 million in Defense Department material and services and in military education and training for Taiwan. Separately, the Defense Department said Friday that \$295 million in military sales had been approved.

A Chinese Foreign Ministry statement urged the



U.S. to stop arming Taiwan and stop what it called "dangerous moves that under-

mine peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait." Taiwan is a democratic

island of 23 million people that the Chinese government claims as its territory and

says must come under its control. U.S. military sales and assistance aim to help Taiwan defend itself and deter China from launching an attack.

The \$571 million in military assistance comes on top of Biden's authorization of \$567 million for the same purposes in late September. The military sales include \$265 million for about 300 tactical radio systems and \$30 million for 16 gun mounts.

Taiwan's Foreign Ministry welcomed the approval of the two sales, saying in a social media post on X that it reaffirmed the U.S. government's "commitment to our defense."

Blake Lively accuses 'It Ends With Us' director Justin Baldoni of harassment and smear campaign

AGENCIES
WASHINGTON, 22 DECEMBER

Blake Lively (photo right) has accused her "*It Ends With Us*" director and co-star Justin Baldoni (photo left) of sexual harassment on the set of the movie and a subsequent effort to "destroy" her reputation in a legal complaint.

The complaint obtained by *The Associated Press*, which *The New York Times* reported was filed Friday with the California Civil Rights Department, precedes a lawsuit. It names Baldoni, the studio behind the romantic drama "*It Ends With Us*" and Baldoni's publicists among the defendants. In the complaint, Lively accuses



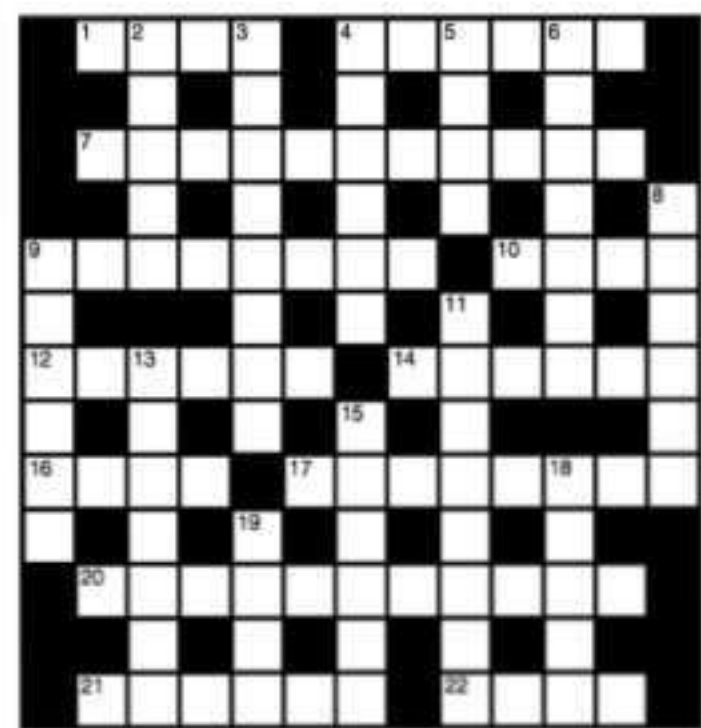
Baldoni and the studio of embarking on a "multi-tiered plan" to damage her reputation following a meeting in which she and her husband Ryan Reynolds addressed "repeated sexual harassment and other disturbing behavior" by Baldoni and a producer on the movie.

The plan, the complaint said, included a proposal to

plant theories on online message boards, engineer a social media campaign and place news stories critical of Lively. Baldoni enlisted publicists and crisis managers in a "sophisticated, coordinated, and well-financed retaliation plan" meant to "bury" and "destroy" Lively if she went public with her on-set concerns, the complaint alleges.

LEISURE

10 MINUTE CROSSWORD



- ACROSS**
- 1 Floating marker (4)
 - 4 Forbidden (6)
 - 7 Favoured pupil (8,3)
 - 9 Cosmetic item (8)
 - 10 Drag (4)
 - 12 Feel bitter at (6)
 - 14 Sine wave (6)
 - 16 Conversation (8)
 - 17 Difference (4)
 - 20 Needleless (11)
 - 21 Propulsive force (6)
 - 22 Not any (4)
- DOWN**
- 2 Exhaust (3,2)
 - 3 Sailing sport (8)
 - 4 Whiten (6)
 - 5 Bird's home (4)
 - 6 Green gemstone (7)
 - 8 Heavenly body (6)
 - 9 Song words (6)
 - 11 Throw overboard (8)
 - 13 Dependable (7)
 - 15 Interfere with (6)
 - 18 Pinny (5)
 - 19 Bill of fare (4)
- SOLUTIONS TO YESTERDAY'S CROSSWORD**
- ACROSS**
- 1 May
 - 3 Dover (Made over)
 - 7 Rock salt
 - 8 Lode
 - 9 Labyrinth
- DOWN**
- 11 Toupee
 - 13 Vienna
 - 14 Egregious
 - 16 Feta
 - 19 Rhetoric
 - 20 Sings
 - 21 Kip
- 10 Homeless**
- 1 Moin
 - 2 Yokel
 - 3 Violet
 - 5 Gorge
 - 6 Smock
 - 8 Marble

By arrangement with The Independent
Figures in parentheses denote the number of letters in the words required

BEEETLE BAILEY/Mort Walker



RED EYE/Bill Yates & Mel Casson

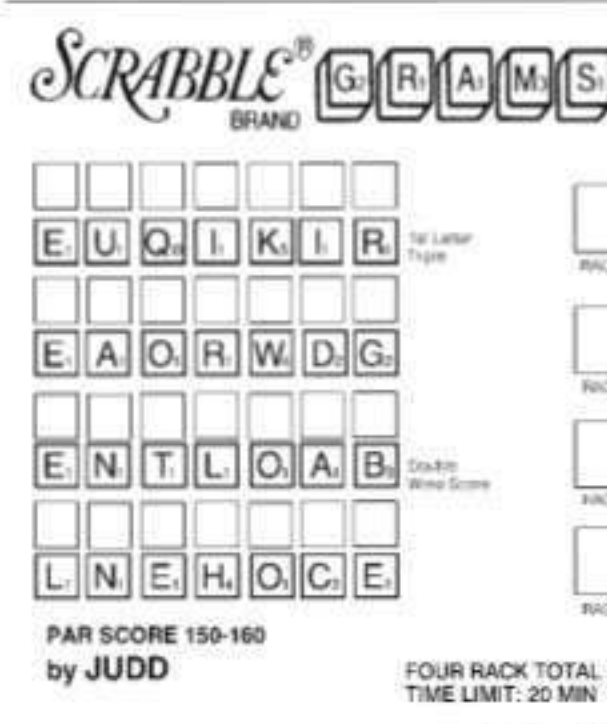


DADDY DAZE/John Kovalski



NEED TO KNOW

- HOSPITALS**
- » AIIMS 26588500, 26588900
 - » Moolchand Medcity (formerly Hospital) 42000000 & 24-hour Chemist Shop 42000447
 - » Vidyasagar Institute for Mental Health and Neuro-Sciences 26924300, 26924304
 - » Batra Hospital & Medical Research Centre 29051280, 29958747
 - » Deen Dayal Upadhyay 25496320, 25494403
 - » Guru Tegh Bahadur 22586262, 22585007
- RAILWAY INQUIRY**
- » General Inquiry 139
 - » Toll Free Nos. 1800112511
 - » SMS Inquiry Nos. 57886, 54959, 5676747
- ROADWAYS INQUIRY**
- » ISBT (General Inquiry): 23868836, 23865181
 - » Haryana Roadways 23861262
 - » Himachal Roadways 23717473, 23325320
- FLIGHT INQUIRY**
- » AIR INDIA Flight Inquiry and Reservation 18001801407
 - » INDIGO AIRLINES New Delhi City Office 435313185, Call Centre 09910383838, Reservation 18001803838, 43513186; Indigo Airlines Airport 011-25671580; Terminal I-B 25671576, Palam Road 25671579, 18001803838
 - » JET AIRWAYS Flight Inquiry and Reservation 39841111
 - » EMIRATES Flight Inquiry and Reservation 33773377
 - » Air Canada Flight Inquiry 25656421/25656431 Reservation 41528181
 - » Air France Flight Inquiry and Reservation 23466262 (City) 25652294 (Airport)
 - » Kuwait Airways Flight Inquiry and Reservation 23354373



PARAGON DOCTORS

- 1. 80
- 2. 66
- 3. 54
- 4. 278

SCIENCE

- 1. 80
- 2. 66
- 3. 54
- 4. 278

SUDOKU Concepts Sudoku



Difficulty Level ★★

Answer to previous puzzle

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that no row, no column and no 3x3 box contains the same number. The difficulty level increases through the week.

Manipur dissection

YAMBEM LABA
THE GOOD NEWS

The good news is that the chief minister of Manipur, N Biren Singh, has at long last realised that the Centre gives two hoots about him as far as administering the state is concerned. He was made to abandon his position as the chairman of the Unified Command and made to appoint his own replacement. Now 19 months since the state has been plunged into a state of turmoil and chaos with no signs of the state existing in any form, he has at last spoken out, stating that he has not been provided with any intelligence report for the past 15 months. And he also seems to be realising that his own police force has been bypassing him when he stated that the Cyber Crime unit of the police has also not been giving him any inputs. So on papers, by his own admission, we have a chief minister whose police force is ignoring him.

The better news is that Prime Minister Narendra Modi is maintaining his thunderous silence over Manipur and that Union Home Minister Amit Shah has remained non-committal on the question of replacing CM Biren.

But the fact is that the Manipur and the Assam Governors were summoned from Guwahati by the President of India and were asked to submit a report on Manipur in person. This indicates a possible imposition of Article 356 of the Constitution of India whereby Manipur would be placed under President's rule and the Assembly kept under animated suspension.

CHANGING DEFINITIONS

It has been 19 months since 3 May 2023, when the prairie fire began and Manipur brought into this present state of chaos, during which more than 260 lives have been lost, more than 60,000 people displaced and uprooted from their places of birth and settlement, and thousands of houses destroyed and whole settlements physically erased from the face of the earth, but the official version of the causes behind it is what is perplexing.

First the chief minister of Manipur, N Biren Singh, and then the Union

Home Minister, Amit Shah, blamed the verdict of the Manipur High Court directing the Manipur state government to expedite the answer to the queries by the Centre to the state government over the question of granting the status of Scheduled status to the Meiteis, pending before it for the last 15 years or so. The verdict was passed sometime in March 2023. The rally carried out under the banner of the All Tribal Students' Union Manipur (ATSUM) was on that theme, but the protesters had carried automatic rifles and created havoc en-route on their march in Churachandpur district, attacking Meitei settlements.

The High Court's verdict on the ST status was the first official cause cited. Then it changed to CM Biren's war on drugs, whereby he had destroyed illegal poppy plantations belonging to various Kuki tribes.

The chief cause of the anger of the Kukis was because of the destruction of their poppy plantations, which had an estimated annual revenue of over Rs 60,000 crores annually. This also implies that huge sums of money must have been used to grease the palms of the powers that be to have their business going for quite some years now. The term then used was 'narco-terrorists'.

Then the blame fell on the bid to evict illegal Kuki immigrants who had slipped in from across the border from neighbouring Myanmar, which was cited as the cause.

Then the cause was shifted to the actions carried out by Myanmar-based cadres of the People's Defense Force currently at war with the Myanmar military regime. Even the NIA had indicated the presence of these foreign elements in the Manipur crisis.

Then out of the blue, the Home Minister, Amit Shah, declared that the cause of the Manipur crisis was neither a case of a Hindu versus minority Christians nor action by the narco-terrorists or foreign-based trained militants at work but that it was all about an ethnic war between the Kuki-Zo-Chin groups of tribes and the Meiteis, who are predominantly Hindus.

ROLE OF THE STATE FORCES

When we talk about the state forces, we are referring to the Army, Assam Rifles, CRPF, BSF, the SSB and the

Manipur Police. The Manipur Police is already divided into the Kuki segment on one hand and the Meitei and Naga segments on the other. This divide is so pronounced that escorts of the Chief Justice have to be changed while entering Kuki areas, and the chief minister cannot venture out on the road for more than 15 to 20 kilometres beyond Imphal for fear of entering into Kuki controlled areas.

At present there are about 1,50,000 army and other Central Armed Police Forces personnel present in Manipur.



They are supposed to be controlled by the Unified Command, with the chief minister as the head, coordinating the various outfits. But shortly after the trouble broke out in May 2023, the chief minister was stripped of his position as the chairman of the Unified Command and a former IPS officer was placed in the chair. It was as if Article 355 was placed in Manipur. Then the chief minister announced that the law and order in the hill areas will be looked after by the Union Home Minister, Amit Shah and that the valley area will be looked after by him. This was not a political gimmick, as Amit Shah did not issue any statement denying it despite its being ultra vires of the provisions of the Indian Constitution.

It was against this background that the Assam Rifles began its operation. They were initially asked to referee the fight between the Kukis and the Meiteis, but over time they were seen as becoming



on the Assam Rifles has also descended on the Army also as a result.

ACTIONS OF THE STATE FORCES

Again, when we talk of state forces, it includes the Army, Assam Rifles, CRPF, BSF, SSB and ITBP and the Manipur Rifles (the armed wing of the Manipur Police and the Manipur Police Commandos).

No clear-cut role has been assigned to each of the different outfits in operation here. Notably, when the Manipur Police Commandos came under heavy attack at the border town of Moreh when Kuki and Myanmar Kuki opened fire from across the border using war-grade weapons, there was no effort to come to their aid from the Assam Rifles posted just a few hundred metres away from the police camp. It was only after a desperate SOS phone call from the commander of the Police Commandos that went viral on social media that the government thought of ferrying in immunisations and other materials. Likewise, no proactive role has been performed by all the troops in a bid to disarm the militants, both with the Kukis and the Meiteis.

They are following the role of UN Peacekeeping Forces of not firing back after even being fired upon. That the CRPF killed 10 Kuki militants in Jiribam was only when the CRPF post came under attack, including an LMG post that returned the fire.

SUGGESTIONS

The Centre has re-imposed AFSPA in areas covered by six police stations

covering foothills that are occupied by Meitei 'village defence forces'. This, in the eyes of the Meiteis, is to flush out the Meiteis who are defending the villages in the periphery from attacks by the Kukis from the higher reaches of the hills surrounding the Imphal valley.

The hill areas occupied by the Kukis are already under AFSPA, and there is no need for any extra legal shield for the armed forces should they decide to act upon them. The question is why the Kukis are being given a free hand to act at their sweet will to launch attacks on the Meiteis below.

There is an immediate need for the armed forces to occupy the hilltops where the Kukis are fortified and have their bunkers in all the areas of Koutruk in the West, Pukhao in the East, Yain-gangpokpi in the north-east and other places like Moirang and Narainsena, then Bishenpur north. Once these bunkers are occupied by the Indian Armed Forces and prevented from being used by the Kukis for firing on the Meiteis, peace would immediately arrive on all fronts. Additional forces now residing in comfort in abandoned houses of those who have since fled following the outbreak of violence should venture out and conduct regular patrols led by officers and not JCOs.

But all these might end up as wishful thinking and Manipur might be reduced to a situation whereby rebuilding it might be a near impossible thing.

The writer is a senior journalist at The Statesman



The Himalayan Orange Tourism Festival celebrates a decade-long celebration of sustainability and rural and cultural heritage.
ANWESHA SANTRA



to sustain the self-reliant Himalayan villages, which are independent of industrial products. By organising training programmes, bird festivals and cultural events, the festival has become a platform to connect rural Himalayan values with urban audiences, particularly in Kolkata. Inspired by Rabinranath Tagore's vision of uniting the people of the hills and plains through festivals, the event began in 2014.

After a series of village leaders' meetings and local festivals, "Himalayan Orange" was chosen as the title to unify the villages participating in the festival.

A taste of the Himalayas in Kolkata



The orange, being one of the region's most popular fruits, naturally became the symbol for all agro and horticultural produce—and, interestingly, for tourism as well. This year's festival featured highlights such as agrotourism, crafts, culture, cuisine and heritage. Homestays from the Darjeeling Hills, Dooars, Mirik, Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya and other villages across northeast India participated. Additionally, villages from Himachal Pradesh, other parts of India, Nepal and Bhutan also joined the celebration.

At the Himalayan Orange Tourism Festival, the stalls brimmed with stories of craftsmanship and culture. Maya, a talented artisan from Nepal, showcased a diverse array of handmade items—holders made of cardamom, bamboo flutes, stools, mats, baskets and wooden keychains. "I have another person to help me with all this work," she shared with a smile. Her stall mate, Manoj Basnet, highlighted Nepal's growing appeal for tourism, particularly among trekking enthusiasts. "Coming to Kolkata feels lovely. While I talk to people about our tourism offerings, the main reason is to establish good relations with the wonderful people here," Basnet said.

Another noteworthy participant was Prashant Giri, a tea specialist and proprietor from Nepal, who offered red, green and white teas. He detailed the subtle differences in textures and flavours, inviting visitors to sample his exquisite brews.



Moving through the festival, the aroma of freshly prepared momo drew attention to a group of women from Darjeeling, Kalimpong, Yangang and other Himalayan towns. These women, beyond their culinary skills, are also homestay proprietors. Rinchen Bhutia from Yangang, south Sikkim, emphasised the uniqueness of his town compared to popular destinations like Gangtok and Pelling. "Yangang offers sustainability, which many tourists now seek, through our homestays. Guests can stay with local families, engage in activities and

experience the authentic essence of northeast India," he explained, gesturing to his female colleague busy serving momo to a queue of eager customers.

Yuraj Pradhan, who manages a homestay in Darjeeling, elaborated on the benefits of staying with local families. "You get authentic food, insight into our daily lives and the chance to enjoy cultural events," he said. His stall featured beautiful crockery adorned with Chinese

homestay movement started by ACT in Darjeeling, empowering them to showcase their heritage skills like traditional food and hospitality practices. This initiative has now grown beyond India, influencing policies in Bhutan, Nepal and parts of Asia.

The festival's success is also attributed to substantial support from the state and central governments. Grants ranging from Rs 1–1.5 lakhs have been provided



to homestay owners in West Bengal, enabling rural entrepreneurs to thrive. "This collaborative approach has helped our villagers with loans and funding, allowing them to display over 13,000 rural products at the festival," Raj Basu added.





'NOT A MATTER OF CONCERN'

Ahead of the fourth Test in the ongoing Border-Gavaskar Trophy against Australia at the Melbourne Cricket Ground, India's right-arm seamer Akash Deep provided an update on Rohit Sharma's injury, which he sustained during a practice session on Saturday. "Injuries happen when you play cricket. This is not a matter of concern," Akash Deep told reporters ahead of the Melbourne Test.

For more updates

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THUMBNAILS

Suruchi wins fourth gold at 67th Shooting Nationals: Teenaged Haryana shooter Suruchi, continued to blaze the Dr Karni Singh Shooting Range (DKSSR) here in the national capital where the 67th National Shooting Championship Competitions (NSCC) for pistol events is going on, winning her fourth gold in two days. After sweeping the women's 10m air pistol individual competitions on Friday, she partnered Samrat Rana on Saturday to blow away Abhinav Deshwal and Yashvi Joshi of Uttarakhand 16-2 in the 10m Air Pistol Mixed Team Youth gold medal match.

BCB reveal central contract for Bangladesh Women's Cricket Team: The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) on Sunday unveiled their Central Contract list for women's national players for the period of 1st October 2024 to 30th June 2025. Four players remain in the same Grade A category as they were in the previous period, including all-format captain Nigar Sultana. While there were only two players last time out in Grade B, the list has been revised to accommodate six players.

BGT: Richardson 'excited' to return to Oz Test squad

Australia have added Richardson as an extra pace option after a calf injury ruled Josh Hazlewood out of the series

AGENCIES
HOBART, 22 DECEMBER

Australia pacer Jhye Richardson is excited over his return to the Test side for the final two games against India in the ongoing Border-Gavaskar Trophy series.

Australia have added Richardson as an extra pace option in the squad after a calf injury ruled Josh Hazlewood out of the series. Richardson admitted he was somewhat surprised by his call-up to Australia's squad for the Boxing Day Test but feels "really good" about the prospect of an international comeback against India.

Richardson, who featured for the Perth Scorchers on Saturday in Hobart, will skip Monday night's match against Melbourne Renegades to prepare for a potential Test return. The 28-year-old pacer and teenage opener Sam Konstas were the two fresh faces named in Australia's 15-player squad for the remainder of the series.

"Even a week ago, I was like, 'I'm not really thinking



about that just yet'," Richardson said on Fox Cricket during the Scorchers' clash with the Hurricanes on Saturday.

"I just wanted to stay on the park and play Big Bash cricket and make sure that the body was OK and keep ramping up (the workloads)

and following the processes that we've got in place. But here we are, and if there's an opportunity, then it's obviously really exciting."

In the Scorchers' recent loss to the Hobart Hurricanes, Richardson went wicketless, a contrast to his standout

performance in their BBL season opener, where he claimed 3-19 against the Melbourne Stars, earning Player of the Match honours.

The speedster's surprise at his selection stemmed from his gradual return to long-form cricket this domestic season. Despite limited opportunities, Richardson has consistently demonstrated his exceptional skill as one of Australia's top bowlers when fit.

Only a week earlier, Richardson had told reporters it was "unrealistic" to consider an international return, with his focus primarily on achieving consistent match fitness. He has played just one four-day game this season but made an immediate impact, taking two wickets in his first over during Western Australia's pink-ball Shield match against South Australia in Adelaide last month.

Richardson's confidence also grew after successfully returning to bowl following a dislocated shoulder sustained while celebrating one of those wickets. Although he has

played two T20 matches for the Scorchers since that first-class appearance, Richardson said shifting to Test cricket wouldn't be difficult, as much of his summer training has focused on conditioning for the longer format.

"I'd probably argue that I've had less white-ball practice leading into this Big Bash. Having played a couple of second XI games and a Shield game, we've really been prioritising trying to build (my bowling) loads to get my body right for four-day cricket," Richardson said.

"So I'll probably find it easier to go back to red-ball cricket just from a preparation point of view."

The pacer's return has been carefully managed after a series of injuries, including a side strain midway through last season's Big Bash and hamstring surgery nine months earlier. This summer, he has played four of WA's five One-Day Cup matches, two second XI games, and one Shield match before sitting out their most recent Shield game, which WA lost to NSW.

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England announces squads for upcoming India tour and Champions Trophy 2025

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, 22 DECEMBER

The England Cricket Board on Sunday announced the squads for next month's white-ball tour of India, which includes three ODIs, five T20Is, and the ICC Men's Champions Trophy 2025, as reported by

the ICC. Returning to the ODI side is experienced batter Joe Root, who last featured in the format during England's ICC Men's Cricket World Cup 2023 campaign. Root has played 171 ODIs, amassing 6,522 runs at an average of 47.60, including 16 centuries and 39 half-centuries.

BBL: McSweeney hits fiery 78 to guide Heat to thrilling win after Australia snub

AGENCIES
BRISBANE, 22 DECEMBER

Australia batter Nathan McSweeney, who was dropped from the Test side after playing three games in the ongoing Border-Gavaskar Trophy series against India, bounced back to form with a scintillating 78-run innings to help Brisbane Heat register a thrilling last-ball win against the Adelaide Strikers in the Big Bash League (BBL) on Sunday.

The 25-year-old right-handed batter went on to reveal the advice bestowed upon him by Marnus Labuschagne, a mainstay in the Aussie side. "It's always nice to bounce back. I loved my time on the Australian Cricket team. You know sharing the changing room with some of Australia's best players was awesome.



And yeah hopefully I can continue to get better and learn from my experiences and get back there," he said after the match.

"Marnus (Labuschagne) in particular, just said it's not where it starts, it's where it ends. I think a good story

always has its ups and downs and hopefully mine can. When I finish and I'm all done, I can look back on this and it was a great learning curve," McSweeney, who claimed the Player of the Match award, added.

McSweeney's omission fol-

lows a string of underwhelming performances since his debut last month, where he failed to surpass 10 runs in five out of six innings. While the 25-year-old showed promise, his inability to adapt to the challenges of opening at the Test level, particularly against the moving ball, proved costly.

McSweeney will be replaced by teenage Sam Konstas, who has made a blazing start to his first full summer in senior career cricket after starring at the U-19 World Cup in South Africa early this year.

The 19-year-old Konstas could become the second-youngest player and the youngest specialist batter to debut for Australia since former captain Ian Craig when he played against South Africa at the MCG in 1953 aged 17 years 239 days.

Pro Kabaddi League: Puneri Paltan aim to finish season on a high as tribute to fans

AGENCIES
PUNE, 22 DECEMBER

The defending champions of the Pro Kabaddi League (PKL) Puneri Paltan have not had the best season by their lofty standards. However, on home turf, in the third leg of season 11, they have entertained their fans and will be keen to do so once more when they take on Tamil Thalaivas in their final game on Monday.

Puneri Paltan fell out of the race for the playoff berth, when the Jaipur Pink Panthers defeated the Bengal Warriorz, just before their game against the Telugu Titans. Skipper Akash Shinde though is looking at the positives for the team. He said, "One of the positives for the Puneri Paltan this season is that the young players have performed well. And it is something that motivates the seniors as well."



Puneri Paltan understandably want to bid farewell to season on a high. When asked about the final game, Shinde said, "It is important for us to give the gift of the victory in

the final game for the fans of the Puneri Paltan. It is the love from the fans which motivates us on the mat. Our young players did well today, and we hope they can do the same

in the final game." Assistant coach Ajay Thakur was also clear in his message to the team for the final game. He said, "Our season in PKL ends with the league stage, and in our final game we will play for the Puneri Paltan and for the fans, and for everyone who has supported us so much through the season. We will not take the game lightly, and we will prepare for the game against Tamil Thalaivas with our full intensity and efforts. We want to finish the season on a high and we want to be able to go back with the good memories of the win." "The fans in Pune are fantastic and even though we haven't done that well, they have always come and filled the stadium to show their support for us. So, it feels good to see that the team is getting the support from the fans," the assistant coach signed off.

ISL: NorthEast United aim to regain form against struggling Hyderabad

AGENCIES
HYDERABAD, 22 DECEMBER

Hyderabad FC are hosting NorthEast United FC when the two sides face off in the Indian Super League (ISL) 2024-25 at the GMC Balayogi Athletic Stadium on Monday. Hyderabad FC are unbeaten in their last nine matches against the Highlanders (W6 D3), the longest such streak they hold against any team in the competition.

NorthEast United FC enters this match on the back of two victories and a draw in their last five matches. However, they have also faced two defeats on the bounce and head coach

Juan Pedro Benali will want to arrest this run with a positive result on the road. Currently, they are positioned eighth in the points table with 15 points from 11 matches.

Hyderabad FC are in 12th place after garnering seven points with two victories and a draw in 11 encounters. They parted ways with head coach Thangboi Singto and are targeting a better run for the remaining part of the campaign.

NorthEast United FC have dropped 12 points from winning positions this season, the most in the league. In contrast, Hyderabad are one of only three sides yet to lose

a point from a winning position. The visitors will have to be cautious of this tendency since they have conceded 18 goals in 11 clashes this season, though Hyderabad FC, too, have to regain their feet in offence—having netted seven times in ISL 2024-25, which is the second-least in the league after Mohammedan SC (5).

Hyderabad FC's interim head coach Shameel Chembakath praised the attitude of his players in the buildup to this match.

"We have had four training sessions. They have gone well. The players have responded in a good manner and they have a positive attitude and mindset," Chembakath said.

NorthEast United head coach Benali underlined the strengths of the home side in the pre-match press conference. "We have been preparing for a while. It's a very important game for us after two defeats. We should not take it easy as Hyderabad FC are a team that creates a lot of chances and is a very fast side too," Benali said.

In their head-to-head record, Hyderabad FC have secured six wins and NorthEast United FC have won once in the 10 matches the two teams played, while three matches ended up in draws.

G Trisha, spinners star as India win inaugural U19 Women's Asia Cup title

AGENCIES
KUALA LUMPUR, 22 DECEMBER

G Trisha stood tall to hit a fine 52 while spinners took seven wickets collectively as India beat Bangladesh by 41 runs to become first-ever winners of the inaugural U19 Women's Asia Cup at the Bayuemas Cricket Oval on Sunday.

Trisha, who was a member of the Indian team winning the first-ever U19 Women's T20 World Cup in South Africa in 2023, hit five fours and two sixes in her 47-ball knock on a challenging pitch as the side made 117/7.

In reply, left-arm spinner Aayushi Shukla picked 3-17 and became the leading wicket-taker of the competition, while fellow left-arm spin bowlers Parunika Sisodia and

Sonam Yadav took wickets each to dry the run flow of Bangladesh after the power play and dismiss them for 76 in 18.3 overs to win the title.

Pushed into batting first, Trisha became the key for leading India's charge once G Kamalini and Sanika Chalke fell early.

She struck a balance between playing elegant shots and rebuilding India's innings through a 41-run stand with captain Niki Prasad (12).

After the duo and Ishwari Awasare fell, a calm Mithila Vinod stepped up to hit a cameo of 17 and take India past the 110-mark, with Bangladesh's Farjana Easmin taking 4-30. In defence of the modest total, Joshitha VJ and Sonam Yadav struck to leave Bangladesh two down in the power play.

Sports Minister Mandaviya flags off 'Fit India Sundays on Cycle' initiative

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 22 DECEMBER

Keeping continuity with the Fit India Cycling Drive launched earlier this week, Union Minister of Youth Affairs and Sports Mansukh Mandaviya flagged off the 'Fit India Sundays on Cycle' initiative on Sunday morning at the Major Dhyan Chand National Stadium here.

The event saw the presence of over 500 riders, ranging from the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) and Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP), Sports Authority of India campers and young gymnasts from the IG Stadium, senior officials and various cycling clubs in the national capital.

Sunday's flag-off ceremony also saw the presence of former WWE star Shanky Singh, revered for being part of the tag team stable featuring former WWE champion Jinder Mahal. Padma Shri and Arjuna Awardee Table Tennis player Mouma Das, meanwhile, flagged off the Sundays on Cycle event in Sports Authority of India National Centre of Excellence (NCOE) Kolkata.

Mentioning the wide impact of the Cycling Drive, Dr Mandaviya said, "The Fit



India Sundays on Cycle initiative is being held simultaneously at over 1100+ locations in India. The launch of the cycling drive earlier this week has spread awareness of cycling exponentially.

"Cycling is the need today. The vision of Viksit Bharat needs a healthy individual, who in turn makes a healthy society and that ultimately results in a healthy nation. The benefits of cycling also uphold the message of the Fit India movement, launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2019," the minister added. The event in the national capital saw a lot of cyclists from the CRPF and ITBP, and they expressed happiness at being a part of the initiative that promotes fitness and environment protection both. Anish Dayal Singh, DG CRPF, mentioned,

"CRPF remains committed to maintaining peak physical fitness, as a fit Force only can serve our great nation best. Cycling is good for an individual's health and the environment. We are excited to be a part of the Fit India Sundays on Cycle campaign, spreading the message of fitness and sustainability nationwide through today's event."

Former WWE pro wrestler Shanky Singh, who is currently trying out in indie wrestling circuits across the globe, said, "Wherever I will go internationally from now on, I shall promote cycling, offline as well as on social media. I got a different type of energy being at the Fit India Sundays on Cycle event. I want more people to come forward to join this unique initiative started by the Prime Minister and Sports Minister."