

## labourers die after falling deep inside drain at Kolkata Leather complex

Three labourers found dead after falling deep inside a drain while clearing the manhole at the Kolkata Leather complex on Sunday, police said. A police officer said one labourer tripped and fell over 20 feet down while clearing the manhole clogged with effluents of the leather units at the Kolkata Leather complex in the Bantala area. Two others behind him also fell inside. Personnel of the disaster management force and fire brigade were trying to rescue them, he said. The three were identified as Farzan Sheikh, Hasi Sheikh and Suman Sardar. It was not known whether the three were wearing masks to work under manhole cover. **PG 3**



**Rs. 3**  
**KOLKATA**  
MONDAY, 3 FEBRUARY, 2025  
PG-8, YEAR-11, ISSUE-244  
(RNI NO.: WBENG / 2014 / 56803)  
WEBSITE: WWW.LIVE7TV.COM

# Morning India

## Karnataka first state to allow 'right to die'

**MI News Service, Bengaluru:** The Karnataka government has issued an order to set up medical boards in hospitals across the state to facilitate requests for a dignified death. The move follows a 2023 Supreme Court ruling that interpreted the Right to Life under Article 21 of the Constitution to include the right to die with dignity.

State health minister Dinesh Gundu Rao announced the decision on January 31, calling it 'a historic order' that aligns with the Supreme Court's directive.

"This will immensely benefit those who are terminally ill with no hope of recovery, or are in a persistent vegetative state, and where the patient no longer benefits from life-sustaining treatment," he said.

The directive applies to patients in such conditions, allowing them to seek relief through a legal and medical framework. The order is expected to provide clarity on end-of-life care and ensuring decisions are made within ethical and legal boundaries.

## Indo-Russia tie: Volodin seeks 'important' talks with India

**MI News Service, New Delhi/Moscow:** Vyacheslav Volodin, the chairman of Russia's State Duma, the lower house of parliament and a very close ally of Vladimir Putin, said that he is going to hold a series of 'important' talks with India.

"We will be in New Delhi for important meetings and negotiations that have been planned," said Volodin, a close ally of President Vladimir Putin.

"India is a strategic partner. We have long-standing relations of trust and mutually beneficial cooperation with it. It is necessary to develop contacts in all areas," he added.

## Volkswagen sues Indian authorities over \$1.4 billion tax demand



**MI News Service, New Delhi/Berlin:** Volkswagen has sued Indian authorities to quash an "impossibly enormous" tax demand of \$1.4 billion, arguing the ask is contradictory to New Delhi's import taxation rules for car parts and will hamper the company's business plans, court papers show.

Volkswagen's unit, Skoda Auto Volkswagen India, also told the High Court in Mumbai the tax dispute puts at risk its investments of \$1.5 billion in India, and is detrimental to the

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Students from junior classes seen deeply engrossed in Pujo rituals during Swaraswati Pujo celebration in Kolkata on Sunday.

## BJP will form govt in Delhi: Modi

**MI News Service, New Delhi:** Asserting that the Union Budget has filled every family with happiness, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Sunday that this is the most middle class friendly Budget in India's history.

Addressing a rally here ahead of the Delhi assembly polls on February 5, Modi spoke about various beneficial provisions of the Budget for the middle class to claim that never since India's Independence those earning up to Rs 12 lakh have received such a relief.

The middle class is saying that this is the most friendly Budget for them in India's history, he said.

Slamming the Aam Aadmi Party government in the capital for its alleged false promises and corruption, he said its policies have led to closing of factories, adding that those who have looted people will have to account for it.

While on the one hand is 'AAP-da' which stands for false promises, on the other is 'Modi's guarantees', the prime minister said.

Greeting people on Basant Panchami on Sunday, he said the festival marks the change in the season, adding that people of Delhi have made up their mind to elect a BJP government.

The prime minister said the "AAP-da" has destroyed 11 years of the national capital, and a double engine government dedicated to its development and growth will now be elected.

His government at the Centre, he asserted, has stood for strengthening



four pillars of poor, farmers, youth and women, and the Budget is the guarantee of fulfilling Modi's guarantees.

The Budget's focus on employment generating sectors like tourism and manufacturing will benefit the youth, he said.

He spoke of welfare promises made in the BJP manifesto, including for senior citizens and women, to highlight the benefits a BJP government in the national capital will bring to them.

When Modi gives a guarantee, he puts his heart, mind and soul into fulfilling it, the prime minister said.

With the middle class, including

salaried employees, making up for a significant section of voters, the prime minister said his government takes decisions which meet their dreams and aspirations.

Taking on the Aam Aadmi Party's claims, the prime minister told people that no jhuggi will be demolished in Delhi and no welfare scheme shut in the case of the BJP coming to power. Reaching out to people from Purvanchal, Modi noted that he is an MP from the region, a reference to Varanasi. He added that the National Democratic Alliance government is working day and night to

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## Amrit Snan at Maha Kumbh: Yogi advocates 'zero errors' in arrangements

**MI News Service, Prayagraj:** Ahead of Amrit Snan at the Maha Kumbh on Basant Panchami, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has instructed officials to ensure "zero errors" in arrangements. During a review meeting in Prayagraj on Saturday, he said the traditional 'shobha yatra' of 'akharas' should be conducted with grandeur and all necessary preparations completed on time, according to a statement.

The chief minister highlighted the importance of security and said the safety and convenience of everyone should be ensured. He also directed the officials to increase parking space and ensure that devotees had to walk as little as possible.

Senior police officers should be assigned to manage traffic at key locations, he said. Adityanath stressed that Sunday and Monday would be critical and said no VIP protocol would be in place before, during or after major bathing days. The directions came after at least 30 people died and 60 were injured in a stampede that broke out on Wednesday when the area close to the Sangam -- the confluence of the Ganga, Yamuna and the mythical Saraswati rivers -- was bursting at the seams because of a heavy rush of pilgrims who had gathered for a holy dip on the auspicious occasion of Mauni Amavasya.

Highlighting the significance of the Amrit Snan on Basant Panchami on

Monday, the chief minister said it must be executed smoothly.

He instructed the officials to install sturdy barriers, place signages at elevated positions, and ensure proper lighting.

He emphasized the use of satellite phones for better communication and ordered the deployment of additional police forces at sensitive locations.

The chief minister also ordered police verification of suspicious individuals in the Jhansi area and the removal of encroachments.

"Street vendors should not occupy roads and must be relocated to designated areas. Regular police patrolling, along with crane and ambulance services, must be ensured," Adityanath said.

## Tharoor supports Sitharaman on spending more in defence

**MI News Service, New Delhi:** Congress leader Shashi Tharoor on Sunday said he supports the centre's decision to dedicate the largest portion of the union budget to defence, as it would send out a message that India is not a weak country and cannot be trifled with.

Speaking to the media on the sidelines of the Jaipur Literature Festival, Tharoor said that what happened on the India-China border should not be repeated, and to ensure that it is important to spend money on defence.

"I think it's very important to spend money on India's defences. We don't spend on the defence budget to wage a war, we do it to discourage other countries from feeling that we are weak and they can engage in an adventure against us," the Thiruvananthapuram MP said.

"What happened on the Chinese border that should never happen again. We have to be very strong and it should be clear to them that we are



strong and cannot be trifled with. That's why it's important to spend on the defence budget. I am not against this," he added.

"In fact I have been saying this for quite some time now that we need to increase our defence budget, especially since we have such a huge coastline. We should make a

stronger navy," he said. The leader also suggested that there is a shortage of officers in the Army. "According to my understanding, there is a dearth of officers in our country who fight from the front. We lost so many officers because of this in

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## Delhi Polls: Kejriwal urges EC to appoint independent observers

**MI News Service, New Delhi:** AAP supremo Arvind Kejriwal has alleged attack on his party workers ahead of the Delhi assembly polls and demanded that the Election Commission appoint independent observers in his New Delhi constituency.

In a letter to the Election Commission,

Kejriwal has also demanded arrest of BJP workers allegedly involved in such incidents and suspension of police officers concerned.

No immediate reaction was available from the BJP and the Delhi Police over Kejriwal's claims. In the letter, the former Delhi chief minister also cited

some alleged incidents of attack on AAP workers in his New Delhi constituency.

AAP MLA Mohinder Goyal was allegedly assaulted during a public rally in Rohini area here on Saturday.

The incident took place when Goyal, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP)

candidate from the Rithala Assembly segment, was interacting with the local residents of Pocket H in Sector 11.

Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Singh on Saturday wrote a letter to the Election Commission, alleging that the BJP workers assaulted AAP workers and tried to stop them from campaigning in

the New Delhi constituency. Kejriwal is pitted against BJP's Parvesh Verma and Sandeep Dikshit of the Congress in a triangular contest in the New Delhi constituency. Voting for the 70-member Delhi Assembly will be held on February 5. Results will be declared after counting of votes on February 8.

## NGT seeks Centre's response on use of fish species as mosquito control agents

**MI News Service, New Delhi:** The National Green Tribunal has sought a response from the Centre on two highly-invasive and alien fish species being used as biological agents for controlling mosquitoes.

The tribunal was hearing a plea about two fish species -- Gambusia Affinis (Mosquitofish) and Poecilia Reticulata (Guppy) -- being released in water bodies to control mosquitoes in various states.

The states which stored and released Mosquitofish were Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Gujarat, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Rajasthan,

Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, Odisha, Punjab and Andhra Pradesh, while Guppy species had been released in Maharashtra, Karnataka, Punjab and Odisha, the plea said.

It said the National Biodiversity Authority declared these two fish species as "invasive and alien" as they adversely impacted the local aquatic ecosystems by causing food scarcity for the indigenous fish species.

It also referred to the ban imposed on Mosquitofish by countries such as Australia and New Zealand.

The plea referred to a report by

the Invasive Species Specialist Group, as per which Mosquitofish was among the 100 world's "worst invasive alien species".

"Issue notice to the respondents for filing their response/reply," a bench comprising National Green Tribunal (NGT) chairperson Justice Prakash Shrivastava and expert member A Senthil Vel said in an order dated January 24.

The respondents in the matter include the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, the National Biodiversity Authority, and the National Centre for Vector Borne Diseases Control.



## Netanyahu to discuss 'victory over Hamas' with Trump

**MI News Service, Tel Aviv/Washington:** Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Sunday he will discuss "victory over Hamas," countering Iran and expanding diplomatic relations with Arab countries in his meeting with US President Donald Trump.

Tuesday's meeting at the White House will be Trump's first with a foreign leader since returning to office.



It comes as US and Arab mediators begin the daunting work of brokering the next phase of an agreement to wind down the war in the Gaza Strip and release dozens of militant-held hostages.

Hamas, which has quickly reasserted its control over Gaza since the ceasefire took hold last month, has said it will not release the hostages slated to go free in the sec-

ond phase without an end to the war and the full withdrawal of Israeli forces. Netanyahu, who is under mounting pressure from far-right governing partners to resume the war after the first phase ends in early March, has said Israel is still committed to victory over Hamas and the return of all the hostages captured in the militants' Oct. 7, 2023 attack that triggered the war.

It's unclear where Trump stands in all this. He has been a staunch supporter of Israel, but has also pledged to end wars in the Middle East and took credit for helping to broker the ceasefire agreement. The deal has halted the fighting and led to the release of 18 hostages who had been held for over 15 months, as well

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## Kolkata Celebrates the Birth Anniversary of Imam Hussain with Decorated Trams and Sweet Distribution



**MI News Service, Kolkata:** The birth anniversary of Imam Hussain, the grandson of Prophet Muhammad and a symbol of sacrifice, justice, and truth, is being celebrated with great enthusiasm

across the world. In Kolkata, the occasion is being marked with special decorations on trams, as well as the distribution of sweets to the public. This event is organized by the Mohaifz-e-Aman Founda-

tion, with active participation from its members, including Md Feroz, Zeeshan Akhter, Md Nadim, Wasi Ahmed, Md Guddu, and Md Majid. Their efforts aim to spread the message of love, unity,

and justice, which Imam Hussain stood for. Imam Hussain is revered by millions for his unwavering stand against oppression during the Battle of Karbala in 680 AD. His sacrifice, along with that of his

family and companions, remains a powerful symbol of resilience and moral integrity. His legacy is not only honored in Islamic traditions but also serves as an inspiration for all those who fight against injustice worldwide. As Kolkata joins the global celebration, people from various communities are coming together to commemorate Imam Hussain's values and teachings. The decorated trams, a unique initiative, add a special charm to the city's tribute, while the distribution of sweets fosters a spirit of togetherness and harmony. The Mohaifz-e-Aman Foundation and its members have expressed their gratitude to the people of Kolkata for their participation and support in making the event a grand success.

## Release of novel "Du-Sahaser Ijara"

Nurul Islam Khan



The joint novel of Gautam Bhattacharya and Debarati Mukherjee "Dushahser Ijara" was officially released at the SBI Auditorium on Saturday. It is an investigative thriller, full of suspense, thrills and mixed fear of socio-economic helplessness! This police investigation-based thriller written in the context of a state-owned bank in India reveals surprises, deception and thrills! There was a discussion and a reader's gathering on the occasion of this book release. The topic of discussion was: Are private detectives only stories? The distinguished guests present included prominent folk culture researcher and DIG (Security) Sukhendu Hira, singer Anindya Chatterjee, Techno Group Chairman Satyam Roychowdhury, Sudhanshu Shekhar Dey, Tridiv Chatterjee, film director Aniruddha Roychowdhury, actor Vishwanath Basu and film director Pratim D

Gupta and many others. On the other hand, Anya vraman Anya Vakar' by top state police officer Sukhendu Hira has been released at the book fair by Karna Prakashani. The price is only Rs. 200. This important book is available at stall number 196 near gate number 5. The author has dedicated the book to his teacher Dr. Rathindranath Mitra. It is said that Sukhendu Hira entered the world of writing under his personal inspiration. Several important research books by the author have already

been published, that will be useful for various researchers and have received a huge response from the readership. The authorities have said that this travel book will greatly inspire travel lovers. The entire book covers the regional history, culture, geographical location and identity of several important places. The book has been enriched by the touch of the lost golden history of the area. It can be said that the exceptional and rare species of scenes have been revealed in the folk culture research book.

## 2 Malda women return from Kumbh unhurt

**MI News Service, Malda:** Two elderly women who went missing around the time of the Mahakumbh stampede in Allahabad on January 29 that left at least 30 persons dead, have returned to their homes in Malda safe and sound, much to the relief of their families.

Anita Ghosh, a 65-year-old woman from Buraburitala of Malda town, had gone to attend the Mahakumbh with some others. "I was near the Sangam early on January 29. Suddenly, there was an abnormal rush of people all around me and I fell on the ground. The crowd kept swelling and I could not get up to my feet unaided. I lost consciousness," recalled Anita on Saturday from her home.

She added that she lost her cell phone amid the commotion. However, she was lucky as some people from Howrah spotted her and picked her up. Two elderly women who went missing around the time of the Mahakumbh stampede in Allahabad on January 29 that left at least 30 persons dead, have returned to their homes in Malda safe and sound, much to the relief of their families.

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"They took me to a medical camp. I could not remember the phone numbers of my son and others and thus could not communicate with them," she added. The group from Howrah, who had been to Allahabad on a bus, brought her to Howrah in the same vehicle. From there, they arranged the ticket for a Malda-bound train and on Friday night, Anita reached home.

"We were here, panicking as we watched the news of the stampede on television. I called her up on her cell phone but she didn't respond. Frankly, I was really scared thinking what could have befallen her. I thank those who helped her return home from my heart," said Samir, Anita's son.



Minister and MLA of Tollygunge Aroop Biswas at the Saraswati Puja organized by the party office in Vijaygarh, Tollygunge. Municipal representative Ananya Banerjee, Municipal representative Sandeep Nandi Majumder, Municipal representative Prosenjit Das, Municipal representative Gopal Roy and Municipal representative Moushumi Das are present.

## Nadia XI beats Media XI in a friendly Cricket match



**MI News Service, Krishnagar:** In a friendly cricket match between Nadia XI and Media XI, Nadia XI won the match at last over. It took place at Krishnagar Stadium in Nadia on Saturday.

The match was of 12 over. The DM, Nadia S Arun Prasad won the toss and decided to field. Initiating batting, Media XI scored 65 runs in 12 overs.

Nadia XI came to bat with a target of 66 runs. But the bowlers of Media XI showed a splendid performance which led the match to a hard competition. However, at the last over the DM team kissed the target run.

While there were the last three balls to deliver, which team would laugh at last, was uncertain. But the batsman of the DM team hit two consecutive boundaries and the match came to an end when one ball was due to deliver and DM team won.

However, players of both teams were handed over mementos in addition to winners and runners trophy to both team.

While many police and administrative officials were present in the ground, the DICO, Nadia, Subhamay Mitra too was present.

There were the officials from Nadia Administration and Police in Nadia XI and DM, Nadia S. Arun Prasad was the captain of the team.

## World Martial Artists Council



**MI News Service, Kolkata:** Indian Team Felicitated at Kolkata Press Club for Achievements at World Meet 2025 in Indonesia. Thirteen members of the Indian contingent who participated in the prestigious 6th World Meet 2025 in Jakarta, Indonesia, were felicitated today at the Kolkata Press Club. The event, directed by HRH Prince M.A. Ali, honored the outstanding achievements of Indian participants on the global stage. Among the honorees was Erum Seraj, who secured her fourth gold medal for India. Coming from a humble background, Erum faced financial struggles before traveling to Indonesia. Despite seeking support, she had to take a loan of 50,000 from Bandhan Bank to participate in the World Meet. Her perseverance and determination have once again made the country proud. Another remarkable achiever, Md. Ali Waris from St. Augustine School, also won his fourth consecutive gold medal at the championship. At just

12 years old, his exceptional talent and dedication have made him a rising star in Indian martial arts. Additionally, Md. Farooque of Kolkata was honored with a prestigious 5th-degree black belt in Indonesia at the World Meet, marking a significant milestone in his martial arts journey. Several other Indian participants were also recognized with International Awards for their contributions in various fields. Among them were Rajeev Rajbhar from Uttar Pradesh, Babul Gomasta from Maharashtra, Jayashree Sengupta, Mritunjay De, Rina De, Sanaka Biswas, Tandra Banerjee, Soma Mukherjee, and Shahjaha Nur. Their achievements were celebrated for bringing pride to the nation and showcasing India's excellence on an international platform. The World Meet 2025 witnessed participation from numerous countries, including Holland, the USA, the UK, India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Argentina, Italy, Singapore,

and Malaysia. The event was also graced by kings, queens, princes, and princesses from several Indonesian provinces. Cultural performances captivated the audience, featuring Indian classical dance by Jayashree Sengupta, a cultural dance from Sri Lanka, and a traditional Indonesian performance. Following the championship, the King's birthday celebrations were held at the Royal Palace in Cirebon, Indonesia, where M.A. Ali was honored with the title "Prince" by the King. This prestigious title was accompanied by a certificate, symbolizing a deep bond of respect and recognition. The grand celebration concluded with Tony Taylor singing the World Meet theme song, bringing all attendees together in a moment of joy and unity. The felicitation ceremony at the Kolkata Press Club recognized the Indian team's dedication and achievements, ensuring that their success continues to inspire future generations in the field of martial arts and beyond.

## Forest entry fee waiver hits earnings of villagers: Self-help groups of artistes and traders affected

**MI News Service, Siliguri:** The forest department's waiver of fees collected from tourists and vehicles entering reserve forests has cast a shadow over the earnings of over 550 self-help groups (SHGs) in north Bengal. While a section of SHG members would sell handicrafts to tourists, others would sing and dance to entertain the visitors. "The forest department would include the charge of our performance in the entry fees, which would be paid to us after the performance. It was a regular source of earnings for us. Now that the entry fee has been done away with, most of us are left with no other option but to work as day wage labourers," said Ram Oraon, a folk artist associated with a SHG at Murti on the fringes of the Gorumara National Park in Jalpaiguri district. After the abolition of the entry

fees, the forest department is just issuing passes to stop unrestricted access to the forests. North Bengal has around 560 SHGs which have people dwelling near the forests as members. "At least 5,000 people used to earn a living by selling handicrafts or through cultural performances," said a forest department officer. Pampa Sen, who is based in Lataguri and makes handicrafts, is also concerned over the waiver of the entry fees. Pampa, like many others, used to sell handicrafts near the ticket counters and at the venues where the cultural troupes would perform. "Sale of entry tickets has stopped and the troupes are no longer performing at the designated locations. We have to scout for buyers. These locations were beneficial for us and we used to make decent earnings. Many like are scouting for

alternative options now," she said. Some others like Munita Oraon, who used to sing traditional songs to entertain tourists during the forest safaris, have already started working as a day wage labourer. "I will have to earn money to run my family. These days, I am working at a construction site as I have no inkling when we will be able to perform again," she said. Dwijapratim Sen, the divisional forest officer of the Gorumara Wildlife Division, said the higher echelons were informed about the plight of the SHG members. "We have informed our senior officers about the problems faced by SHG members and sought suggestions as to how alternative arrangements can be made so that they continue to earn by selling handicrafts or through cultural performances," said Sen.

To escape the attacks, the elephant went into a tea plantation, but got injured by blade-wire fences and returned to the field again. Seeing the elephant returning, some people climbed onto a watchtower.



175th Saraswati Puja at Bethune Collegiate School.

## Headmaster of New Farakka High School 'hit' by teacher in Murshidabad

**MI News Service, Farakka:** The headmaster of New Farakka High School, Monirul Islam, was allegedly beaten up allegedly by a teacher of the school who is also a Trinamool leader, and some other colleagues at Farakka in Murshidabad on Friday evening. The attackers left him with a fractured leg and other injuries following a dispute over the class routine. Islam, who lost consciousness after the attack, was rushed to Farakka block hospital for treatment. As his injuries were severe, he was later transferred to the Malda Medical College and Hospital. The incident happened on Friday evening at the New Farakka High School, co-educational institution with classes from V to XII with 3,000 students. Sources said that three assistant teachers, allegedly led by assistant teacher and state vice-president of the Trinamool education cell, Tarif Hossain, had been holding a meeting with Islam in his chamber over the class routine when the talks became heated. Islam, from the hospital bed, said an altercation ensued between him and the teachers, ending with

him getting severely beaten up by Hossain and others. "Around 4pm (on Friday), Hossain and three other teachers came to my office, along with the school's managing committee president Arunmoy Das, to discuss academic matters. During the discussion on class routine, there was an altercation. Hossain knocked me off my seat and hit my left leg with a chair. They (the teachers) also punched me in the face and used a sharp object to attack me in the back. I fell unconscious," Islam said from the hospital. According to a teacher of the school, Islam was not on good terms with Hossain since 2019 when the former was appointed as the headmaster. "Hossain used to take undue favours using his political clout, but after Islam became the headmaster of the school, he stopped all that and tried to impose discipline. Hossain and his group had tried to heckle the headmaster in the past as well. But what happened on Friday was beyond anybody's expectations," an assistant teacher said.

## High on hooch, tusker goes wild in Damdim village of Jalpaiguri's Mal subdivision

**MI News Service, Jalpaiguri:** A tusker, intoxicated after drinking hooch, went on a rampage in Damdim village of Jalpaiguri's Mal subdivision on Saturday. Sources said that around 5am, it walked into Mechpara locality in Damdim

from nearby Apalchand forest. There, it found a drum with hooch in a betel nut plantation. The tusker drank the hooch, kicked away the drum and reached Senpara locality. "It was tottering in a field. I

have never seen an elephant in such a state," said a resident. As people understood that the elephant was drunk, they started harassing and attacking it. While some tugged at its tail, others beat it with sticks or threw bricks at it.

To escape the attacks, the elephant went into a tea plantation, but got injured by blade-wire fences and returned to the field again. Seeing the elephant returning, some people climbed onto a watchtower.



## BJP will form govt in Delhi...

**From PG 1** Those who live in develop Bihar and mentioned several state-specific proposals in the Budget. Expressing confidence about the BJP's win, Modi said, "You can note it down the BJP government will be formed in Delhi on February 8, and by March 8, International Women's Day, women will start receiving Rs 2,500." Women, he said, have worked as his protective shield and have made a big contribution in ensuring the third term of his government at the Centre.

Delhi, he said, has paid a heavy price due to the AAP government and has decided to get rid of it, he said.

## Tharoor supports Sitharaman..

**From PG 1** He was also asked about the assembly polls in the national capital where INDIA bloc allies Congress and Aam Aadmi Party leaders have been exchanging barbs. Responding to a question about the future of the INDIA bloc, Tharoor said that at the inception of the alliance there was an understanding that it would not work in every state.

"In Tamil Nadu, you have the Congress, CPI, CPM, DMK all together in an alliance in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections and in my constituency and through-out Kerala I am fighting with the communists, who are my allies in the INDIA

alliance. So it was always understood it would work that way," Tharoor said.

He added it was hard to imagine the left front and the Congress-led United Democratic Front in Kerala could ever come together.

"In Delhi, we managed to be on the same page with the AAP in the Lok Sabha election, but other contradictions have come to the fore in the assembly election. So, I think the reality would vary from state to state," he said.

He added it is possible that all parties come together in next elections and again part ways.

"I don't think that there is any need to either write an overall obituary or write a note of celebration that we are all coming together again," he said.

## Netanyahu to discuss 'victory'...

**From PG 1** through strength." Trump's Mideast envoy, Steve Witkoff, joined the yearlong ceasefire negotiations in their final weeks last month and helped push the agreement over the finish line. He met with Netanyahu in Israel last week and the two were expected to formally begin talks on the second phase in Washington on Monday. Trump, who brokered normalization agreements between Israel and four Arab countries in his first term, is believed to be seeking a wider and potentially historic agreement in which Israel would forge ties with Saudi Arabia.

## Volkswagen sues Indian...

**From PG 1** investors would desire to have in the actions and assurances" of the administration, the Jan. 29 court filing states. The Indian finance ministry and the customs official who issued the demand order did not respond to requests for comment outside regular business hours. Volkswagen's India unit said in a statement it is using all legal remedies as it cooperates with authorities and remains committed to ensuring "full compliance" with all global and local laws.

A Volkswagen spokesperson in Germany did not respond to a request for a comment.

The German carmaker is a tiny player in India's 4 million units a year car market, the world's third biggest, where its Audi brand also lags competitors in the luxury segment like Mercedes and BMW.

A government source earlier told Reuters that with penalties, Volkswagen India may have to pay about \$2.8 billion if it loses the dispute. In 2023-24, VW India reported sales of \$2.19 billion, and a net profit of \$11 million.



Students in 'selfie-mode' during Swaraswati Pujo celebration in Kolkata on Sunday.

## City hosts 'Basanta Ese Gache' celebration

**MI News Service, Kolkata:** The city of Kolkata hosted the 'Basanta Ese Gache' with love, food and music in a typical Bengali fashion. Five & Dime hosted a lively celebration of spring, 'Basanta Ese Gache,' highlighting the season of new beginnings and love. The event brought together music, traditions, and a warm sense of togetherness, capturing the essence of Basanta and the spirit of Saraswati Puja which is also known as Bengali's Valentine's Day. Renowned actress Koneenica Banerjee and Apeskha Lahiri along with other dignitaries were present to grace the occasion.

## KMC envisage declaring certain neighbourhoods in city heritage precincts

**MI News Service, Kolkata:** The Kolkata Municipal Corporation is willing to declare certain neighbourhoods in Kolkata heritage precincts but it does not want to rush through the process and roll out a plan that fails eventually. How to compensate the owners of the properties in a heritage precinct since their "personal rights" will be restricted when the neighbourhood is declared a heritage precinct is yet to be worked out, said Dhaval Jain, the municipal commissioner, during a discussion on the city's built heritage at The Bengal Club recently. Jain highlighted the need to strike a balance between "community rights" of conserving heritage and the "personal rights" of the owner of a building in a heritage precinct. A heritage precinct is different from a heritage building. While an individual house can be tagged as a heritage structure, a precinct is a collection of houses on a road that together tell the story of a time, place or culture. "Our intention is never to deny the idea of heritage precincts. We are very keen to protect the neighbourhoods as we know them. But we do not want to jump to conclusions without following baby steps to reach the destination, which is what will the adequate compensation be," Jain said at the panel discussion.

## labourers die after falling deep inside drain at Kolkata Leather complex



3 workers died in an accident at Bantala Leather Complex in Kolkata on Sunday.

**MI News Service, Kolkata:** Three labourers found dead after falling deep inside a drain while clearing the man-

hole at the Kolkata Leather complex on Sunday, police said.

A police officer said one labourer tripped and fell over 20 feet down while clearing the manhole clogged with effluents of the leather units at the Kolkata Leather complex in the Bantala area.

Two others behind him also fell inside. Personnel of the disaster management force and fire brigade were trying to rescue them, he said.

The three were identified as Farzan Sheikh, Hasi Sheikh and Suman Sardar.

It was not known whether the three were wearing masks to work under manhole cover.

A Kolkata Municipal Corporation official said the three labourers were not part of the corporation's team.

"They must be part of the team of the industrial unit management," he said.

## British Council hosts seminar regarding global partnerships grants

**MI News Service, Kolkata:** The British Council, UK's international organisation for educational opportunities and cultural exchange, hosted a seminar on Online, Distance and Digitally delivered Learning to shed light on the current, rapidly changing landscape of opportunities and challenges in online learning segment. The seminar explored the best practices of universities for online courses. Taking a step further and to deep dive into the quality and effectiveness of Online, Distance, and Digitally Delivered Learning (ODDL), the organisation announced a Going Global Partnerships grants. The Going Global Partnerships programme promotes collaboration and innovation in teaching and learning and transnational education in higher education institutions between India and the UK.

The grant will support collaborative efforts to enhance mutual understanding of UK-India educational systems, identify areas for further collaboration, and harness technology to improve the learning experience. Special attention will be given to improving student engagement, developing innovative teaching practices, and addressing the challenges of assessment quality and course completion rates.

Lord Jo Johnson, Former Universities Minister of the UK, offered a look into the future trends of online and digitally delivered education. Meanwhile, Prof. Nirmaljeet Singh Kalsi, Former Member of the National Council for Vocational Education and Training, provided an overview of the regulatory landscape for education in India. A thought-provoking panel discussion moderated by Ritika Chanda Parruck MBE, Director of Education-India, British Council, was organised during the seminar which delved into the ideal framework for distance education. Esteemed panelists, including Prof. Uma Kanjilal, Vice-Chancellor of IGNOU, and Joshua Fleming, Director Strategy Office for Students UK, shared their perspectives on creating scalable, accessible, and high-quality online learning systems.

At the event, Ritika Chanda Parruck MBE, Director of Education-India, British Council, said, "The Going Global Partnerships grant represents a significant step towards fostering collaboration between India and the UK, aiming to enhance the learning experience through innovative teaching practices and technology."

## Bengal glows in the fervour & divinity of Swaraswati Pujo

**MI News Service, Kolkata:** Bengali lives and Swaraswati Pujo are two inseparable entities as it forms the part and parcel of the Bengali culture. The Goddess of Education and music is so very near to our hearts and souls that Bengalis wait throughout the year for that single day, the day of Swaraswati Pujo. For aeons, Bengali's respect, love, affection and affinity towards the 'Goddess Swaraswati' are well known. Swaraswati Pujo is celebrated throughout West Bengal with lots of enthusiasm every year. Not only West Bengal alone, Bengalis living across India and globe celebrate it with full zest. This year Swaraswati Pujo eventually started from February 2 and it remains till February 3. Like every year, each and every Bengali household is hosting Pujo in their houses including innumerable

community Swaraswati Pujo at different locations throughout Kolkata and Bengal. The festival highlights women's role in embodying wisdom, education, arts and element of enlightenment. Swaraswati Pujo is quite certainly integral to Bengal's progressive and synergetic culture. Saraswati Pujo is a beloved festival celebrated primarily among students and young people. In Kolkata, it is often humorously called "Bengali Valentine's Day." On this day, romance fills the air as young people enjoy pandal hopping, dining at various eateries around the city, and spending time at malls or by the riverside—all while dressed in traditional attire. Many usually shy adolescents find the courage to express their feelings on this day, encouraged by the benevolent gaze of the goddess.

## Book lovers throng at Book Fair as Swaraswati Pujo & week-end coincide

**MI News Service, Kolkata:** As Swaraswati Pujo and week end coincide, Kolkataans flock at the International Kolkata Book Fair (IKBF) in huge number, adding lots of colour and grandeur the fair deserve by itself. Eventually the 48th edition of the International Kolkata Book Fair in Salt Lake's Karunamoyee has the highest number of stalls till now, a little above 1,000.

The fair organisers — Publishers and Booksellers Guild — say it is the highest they can accommodate at the venue, now christened Boi Mela Prangan.

Two hangars, totalling nearly 4,000 square feet have been done away with this time. Instead, independent stalls have been allowed, even in smaller sizes.

Officials of the Publishers and Booksellers Guild said the hangars — and the air-conditioning units attached to them — would eat up a significant part of the fairground.

The space that has been made available has helped create slightly wider walkways between the stalls — an increase of roughly a metre and a half.

The pathways no longer look cramped like before.

"This was a deliberate move to accommodate more stalls at the fairground, whose area is fixed. Smaller stalls, measuring less than 100 square feet, have come up this time giving publishers and booksellers an independent space they often look for," said Sudhangshu Sekhar Dey, the guild's general secretary.

Display boards with state-run buses for different directions have been hung prominently across the fairground, outside the gates and on roads skirting the Boi Mela Prangan venue. This year, the availability of the bus services has been extended by an hour till 9pm — beginning 1pm — and counters have been set up with state officials to help visitors. The biggest has come up at the Karunamoyee bus stand, adjoining the fairground. Smaller counters have been set up along the pavements to help visitors spot the bus on those routes they want to take for their return journey.

"Several shuttle buses are being operated on special routes catering to the demands of the book

lovers who had complained about the availability of state buses at night," a senior official of the transport department said.

"The buses are available at 9pm, an hour after the fair shuts officially and the routes cover almost all parts of the city and its suburbs, including Barasat, Barrackpore, Baruipur, Joka, Howrah, Bally and Santragachi," he added.

If you want to breathe safely, use masks at the fairground. The dust keeps swirling around as the footfall increases from late afternoon. With scant green patches across the fairground and almost the entire space concretised with paver blocks, the dust hangs heavy in the air.

No water sprinklers are put to use at the fairground.

A water body at the rear end of the fairground has little or no impact. Several book lovers, including a few senior citizens, said they missed their face masks.

"We need water sprinklers to contain the dust. But if we could plant more trees around the fairground it would be nice," Dey, who is also responsible for preparing the layout of stalls at the book fair, said.

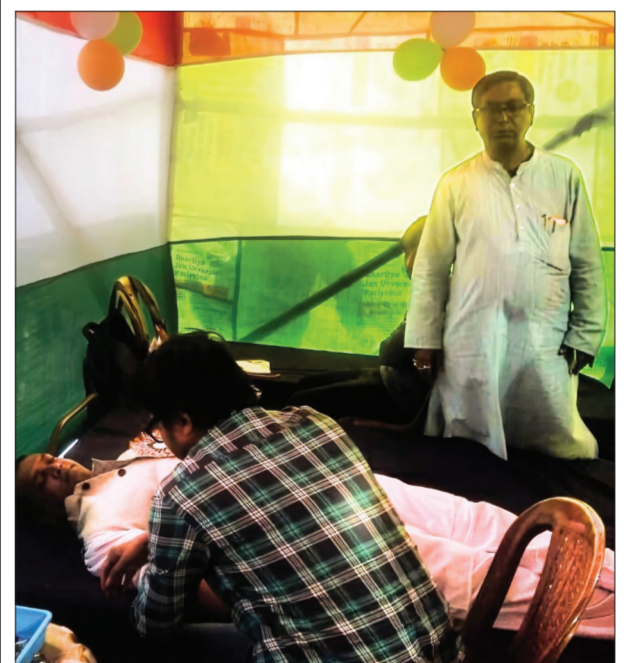
"Even if the perimeter is covered with trees, it can make a difference," he said.

The southwest corner of the fairground is mostly about food stalls. From noodles, puffs, fries and fritters to cha (tea) in earthen cups, the stalls serve almost everything you need to satiate your hunger. But the floor here is uneven and poses risks, particularly if someone is trying to walk carrying plates and looking for a chair to settle down.

The garbage bins are getting filled up faster than they are being cleaned. The guild has made arrangements where book lovers can scan code to find the layout of the stalls.

Many visitors complained about the lack of physical maps printed on paper and distributed free at the fairground. A few said more space to sit around and examine physical maps would have made the fair better.

Unlike in previous years, mobile connectivity has improved. Lesser call drops have made it easier to call up someone and locate a bookstall of choice.



A blood donation drive was recently organized by the Ward No. 126 Trinamool Congress. Among those present were Tarak Singh, Ghanashree Bag, Subhasish Chakraborty, Abhijit Mukherjee, Partha Sarkar, Malabika Baidya, Sudip Polle, Shefali Pramanik, Chhanda Sarkar, Dr. Sougata Banerjee, Sudip Roy (Rana), along with other party officials.

## Mayor marks 2 'sensitive' boroughs with illegal buildings

**MI News Service, Kolkata:** The mayor of Kolkata identified two boroughs as "sensitive" that had many illegal buildings and engineers frequently faced resistance in acting on them. The two boroughs are XV (Garden Reach) and VII (Park Street-Topsia-Tiljala).

The municipal commissioner, who was also present in the meeting, offered to "coordinate" with police in case any engineer faced trouble in pulling down a building.

"Boroughs XV and VII are sensitive areas. I know you work with a lot of difficulty," mayor Firhad Hakim told engineers of the building department of the Kolkata Municipal Corporation.

The mayor was meeting all engineers of the KMC's building department, across all ranks, at the council chamber in the KMC headquarters. An illegal under-construction building collapsed in Garden Reach's Azhar

Mollah Bagan — part of Borough XV — in March last year, killing 13 people. The neighbourhood had multiple illegal buildings, KMC engineers and residents of the area had said then. On Thursday, a demolition squad of the KMC had to come back from Tangra's Christopher Road — part of Borough VII — when residents of the area and people who had booked flats in an under-construction "illegal" building resisted its demolition.

Hakim raised the topic and lauded the engineers for going back again on Friday. "I watched on TV how you were abused and harassed, but you went back again the next day and started the demolition work. I am proud of you," he told the engineers. Two buildings on Christopher Road in Tangra have tilted towards each other. One of them, a five-storey light green structure, has tilted more. The other, an under-construction

six-storey white building, is fairly erect.

A structural engineer hired by the KMC has suggested that the structure under construction be pulled down first to determine whether the other can be retained.

Hakim told the engineers that he knew how they were attacked with bamboo poles in at least one place, yet they did not budge. "Keep visiting the roads and make entries in the e-logbook," he said.



India 8th largest tourism market for Western Aus

MI News Service, New Delhi/Canberra: India has emerged as the eighth largest international tourism market for Western Australia...

Defence modernization: FM allocates Rs 6.81 lakh Cr



MI News Service, New Delhi: Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced an allocation of ₹6.81 lakh crore for the defence sector for 2025-26...

More than 9.89 Lakh Android and 53300 iOS users downloaded 'Metro Ride Kolkata' app

MI News Service, Kolkata: 'Metro Ride Kolkata App' has touched another milestone with its increasing popularity! More than 9.89 lakh Android and more than 53300 iOS users have downloaded this App so far...



downloaded this App from Google Play Store and more than 53300 iOS users have also downloaded this App from Apple Store. These figures signify the acceptability and popularity of this App among the Metro users...

Ongoing Works on Provision of Foot Over Bridges at Several Stations over Howrah Division

MI News Service, Kolkata: As part of its ongoing commitment to improving passenger safety and comfort, Eastern Railway is undertaking significant infrastructure upgrades across its Howrah Division. One of the key developments in this effort is the provision of Foot Over Bridges (FOBs) at numerous stations throughout the division...

Name Change

I, Sk Ohidul Islam S/o Abdul Karim residing at Vill Kulipukur, P.O - Pandua, P.S- Pandua, Dist - Hooghly, Pin - 712149 declare that in my son, Abu Hussain's Admit Card and Pass Certificate of High Madrasah Examination issued by WBBME, my name has been recorded as Ahidul Islam instead of my actual name Sk Ohidul Islam as mentioned in my son's Adhaar Card, PAN Card and Voter Card...

Coal India reports 17.5% drop in net profit for 3rd Qtr

MI News Service, New Delhi: Coal India reported a consolidated net profit of ₹8,491.22 crore for the third quarter ended December 31, down 17.5 per cent from ₹10,291.71 crore in the corresponding quarter of the previous year.

Name Change

I, Sanat Kumar Mukherjee (old name), S/o- late Sudhir Mukherjee, R/o-Sishu Bagan, P.N maliya road, Raniganj, Dist-paschim burdwan, pin-713347, West Bengal, have changed my name and shall henceforth be known as Sanat Mukherjee (new name) vide an affidavit sworn before notary public Kolkata on 31/01/2025...

The bottom line was impacted by lower realisation from the sale of coal through fuel supply agreements and e-auction. The result, however, was better than market expectations, which were concerned with the rising availability of coal from commercial sources significantly displacing e-auction off take.

Name Change

I, (Old Name) TASIRUDDIN S/O-SAMAYON, Residing at, Vill- Rangsanj, Post- Rangsanj, P.S-Ratua, Dist- Malda, Pin-732139, West Bengal. Do hereby declare that I have changed my name from TASIRUDDIN To TOSIR (New name) and hence forth I shall be known as (New name) TOSIR in all purpose Vide an affidavit Sworn before the notary public at Berhampore Murshidabad On 29 January 2025, TOSIR and TASIRUDDIN both are Same and one identical person.

Consolidated net profit for the quarter ended September was ₹6,274.80 crore, representing a sequential growth of 35.32 per cent quarter-over-quarter. Revenues from operations during the third quarter was ₹35,779.78 crore, down 1.03 per cent from ₹36,153.97 crore in the corresponding period of the previous year.

Name Change

I, (Old Name) LALUDDIN SEKH S/O- TORIKOT SK, Residing at, Vill- Gopalnagar, Post- Natungram, P.S- Kandi, Dist- Murshidabad, Pin- 742140, West Bengal. Do hereby declare that I have changed my name from LALUDDIN SK (New name) and hence forth I shall be known as (New name) ALAUDDIN SK in all purpose Vide an affidavit Sworn before the notary public at Berhampore Murshidabad On 29 January 2025, ALAUDDIN SK and LALUDDIN SEKH both are Same and one identical person.



realisation from coal sales through the fuel supply agreement (FSA) was ₹1,514 per tonne compared with ₹1,532 per tonne, on the back of a reduction in FSA supplies during the quarter to 170.77 tonnes from 172.30 tonnes in the corresponding period of the previous year.

Name Change

I, Md. Kadir (Old Name) son of Late Abdul Shakur Chowdhury, residing at P-90, Mudiali Road, P.O.- Garden Reach, P.S.- Metiabruz, Kolkata- 700024, West Bengal, INDIA, have changed my name and shall henceforth be known as Md. Qadir (New Name) as declared before the Notary Public at Kolkata, dated 31/01/2025. Md. Qadir (New Name) and Md. Kadir (Old Name) both are same and identical person.

The realisation from e-auction was ₹2,671 per tonne compared with ₹3,321 per tonne in the corresponding quarter of the previous year. E-auction volume during the quarter was 19.24 tonnes compared with 15.76 tonnes in the year-ago period. There was also a 3 per cent reduction in employee benefit expenses during the quarter to ₹11,222 crore from ₹11,574 crore in the year-ago period on account of a decline in manpower to 2,23,886 as of December 31, 2024, from 2,31,058 as of December 31, 2023. The Coal India board on Monday approved a second interim dividend of ₹5.60 per share of face value ₹10 each. Earlier, on October 25, 2024, the board announced the first interim dividend of ₹15.75 per share. Coal India scrips at ₹375.40 were down 2.04 per cent over the previous close at the Bombay Stock Exchange.

Name Change

I, Mousumi Das Mitra (Old Name), Wife Of Sudip Mitra, Residing At 424 R.N.C Road, Po - Subhasgram, South24parganas - 700147, West Bengal, Shall Henceforth Be Known As Mousumi Mitra (New Name) Vide An Affidavit Sworn Before The Notary Public Kolkata On 31/01/2025. That Mousumi Das Mitra And Mousumi Mitra Both Are The Same And One Identical Person.

The public sector miner could see a 4 per cent growth in 2024-25 ending the year with a production of around 806-810 million tonnes (mt). This is below the initial estimate of 838mt and the revised estimate of 823mt for the fiscal. In 2023-24, Coal India produced 773.65mt, with a year-on-year growth of around 10 per cent. The mining major is bullish on its growth prospects in 2025-26 with an estimated production of around 900mt.

Name Change

I, Dina Hurema (Old Name), W/O Shaikh Abed Ali, R/O Barasahapur, Jenkapur, West Medinipur, 721435, West Bengal, Shall Henceforth Be Known As Huronisa Bibi (New Name). Vide An Affidavit Sworn Before The Notary Public At Kolkata On 31/01/2025. That Dina Hurema And Huronisa Bibi All Are The Same And One Identical Person.

Name Change

I, Sahin Parveen (Old Name) wife of Mohammed Shahid Hussain (father) & Rizwana Begum (mother), residing at 7C/1A, Moti Jheel Enally, Kolkata- 700015, West Bengal, INDIA, have changed my name and shall henceforth be known as Rizwana Begum (New Name) as declared before the Notary Public at Kolkata, dated 31/01/2025. Rizwana Begum (New Name) and Sahin Parveen (Old Name) both are same and identical person.

Name Change

I, Preeti Prasad (Old Name) W/o Suraj Prasad, Resident of D002, Magnolia Sky View Kishinathpur North 24 Parganas, Pin - 700135, West Bengal, India, have changed my name and shall henceforth be known as Preeti Verma (new name) vide an Affidavit sworn before the notary Public Kolkata on Dated 31/01/2025. Preeti Verma (new name) and Preeti Prasad (old name) both are same and identical person.

Centre sets disinvestment & asset monetisation target at Rs 47K Cr

MI News Service, New Delhi: India aims to generate ₹47,000 crore from disinvestment and asset monetisation in the financial year 2025-26, lower than the ₹50,000 crore targeted for FY25, according to Budget documents. The latest estimate, categorised under 'miscellaneous capital receipts,' surpasses the revised FY25 estimate of ₹33,000 crore. The government has maintained its stance of not setting a separate disinvestment target, a strategy it first adopted in the February 2024 Union Budget. 'The general elections last year delayed the process. Asset monetisation is expected to gain momentum as the government moves into the second phase,' said Madan Sabnavis, chief economist at Bank of Baroda. The Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM) is advancing the strategic disinvestment of IDBI Bank, which is likely to spill over into FY26 as financial bidders undergo regulatory approval. Other stake sales in BEML, Shipping Corporation of India, HLL Lifecare Ltd, and Project & Development India Ltd are ongoing but face slow progress. The government has scrapped the divestments of Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL) and Pawan Hans, while the stake sales in Container Corporation of India remain pending. Officials said the administration would consider disinvestment and dividends collectively as proceeds from public-sector dividends would contribute to overall receipts. Public sector dividends are projected to rise to ₹69,000 crore in FY26, surpassing the FY25 budgeted ₹56,260 crore and the revised ₹55,000 crore. The estimate also exceeds the ₹65,381 crore collected in FY24. Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced the second phase of the Asset Monetisation Plan, aiming to unlock ₹10 trillion in value from underutilised public assets over 2025-30. 'Building-in on the success of the first plan announced in 2021, we will reinvest proceeds into new infrastructure,' she said. The government has trimmed its fertiliser subsidy allocation to ₹1.68 lakh crore for FY26, down from the revised ₹1.71 lakh crore for the current fiscal.

ER to Augment Sleeper Class and Air-Conditioned Coaches in three Express Trains

MI News Service, Kolkata: The augmentation of Sleeper Class coaches and Air - Conditioned class coaches in Popular Mail/Express trains is an ongoing initiative aimed at improving overall travel experience for passengers. Accordingly, in response to the overwhelming demand for tickets, Eastern Railway has decided to augment air-conditioned and Sleeper Class Coaches by replacing general second class coaches in following Express trains on temporary basis: T w o Additional Sleeper Class Coaches will be augmented with 13147/13148 Sealdah - Bamanhat - Sealdah Uttaranga Express by replacing of Two General Second class coaches leaving Sealdah with effect from 02.02.2025 to 15.02.2025 & leaving Bamanhat with effect from 03.02.2025 to 16.02.2025. One Additional Sleeper Class Coach will be augmented with 13149/13150 Sealdah - Alipur Duar - Sealdah Kanchankanya Express by replacing of One General Second class coach leaving Sealdah with effect from 02.02.2025 to 15.02.2025 & leaving Alipur Duar with effect from 03.02.2025 to 16.02.2025. One Additional Sleeper Class Coach and One Additional Air Conditioned (AC 3 tier) Coach will be augmented with 13189/13190 Sealdah - Balurghat - Sealdah Express by replacing of Two General Second class coaches leaving Sealdah with effect from 02.02.2025 to 15.02.2025 & leaving Balurghat with effect from 03.02.2025 to 16.02.2025.

Modi govt raises investment & turnover limits for MSMEs

MI News Service, New Delhi: India has raised investment and turnover limits for Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in a bid to enhance their scale, technological capabilities and access to capital, finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced in the Union Budget 2025-26. The revised classification criteria increase the investment limit by 2.5 times and the turnover limit by twice the existing threshold. Under the new framework, enterprises with investments up to ₹2.5 crore and turnover under ₹10 crore will qualify as micro businesses. Small enterprises can have investments up to ₹25 crore and turnover up to ₹100 crore, while medium-sized firms are capped at ₹125 crore in investment and ₹500 crore in turnover. The move is expected to encourage MSMEs to expand operations and create employment, Sitharaman said, noting that over one crore MSMEs employ 7.5 crore people and contribute 36 per cent of India's manufacturing output. The sector also accounts for 45 per cent of the country's exports. A key highlight of the budget is the expansion of credit guarantee cover for micro and small enterprises from ₹5 crore to ₹10 crore, which is expected to unlock ₹1.5 trillion in additional credit over the next five years. Start-ups will also benefit, with their credit guarantee limits increasing from ₹10 crore to ₹20 crore, alongside a reduction in guarantee fees. In a further effort to improve financial access, the government has introduced a new customised credit card with a ₹5 lakh limit, targeting 10 lakh MSMEs registered on the Udyam Portal in its first year. The initiative aims to streamline credit access, reduce paperwork and improve transparency. The budget also prioritises labour-intensive industries such as footwear, leather and food processing, offering sector-specific incentives to drive employment and productivity. Additionally, it strengthens measures to address delayed payments, expand credit facilities, and enhance MSMEs' participation in global markets. With increased infrastructure spending and the establishment of e-commerce export hubs, the government aims to provide MSMEs with greater access to business opportunities domestically and internationally. Industry leaders welcomed the announcements, highlighting their potential to strengthen the MSME sector.

Authorities order immediate closure of 81 illegal schools



MI News Service, Thane (Maharashtra): The Thane Municipal Corporation (TMC) in Maharashtra has declared 81 schools in the city as operating illegally and asked their managements to shut the institutions immediately. These comprise 79 English medium schools, including some managed by renowned business houses, as per the list published by the TMC's education department. Most of these unauthorised schools are located in Mumbai and Diva areas of Thane, according to the list. The civic body has asked people not to enrol their wards in those schools. It has also warned of action against the school managements if they fail to comply with the orders.

Centre announces new Fund of Funds Scheme with Rs 10K Cr corpus for start-ups

MI News Service, New Delhi: The government on Saturday announced a host of measures for the start-up sector such as setting up of a new Fund of Funds Scheme (FFS) with ₹10,000 crore corpus and extension of the period of incorporation by five years. In 2016, the government had launched a similar scheme, with a corpus of ₹10,000 crore. It is operationalised by Sidbi, which provides capital to Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi)-registered AIFs, which in turn invest in start-ups. The credit guarantee cover will be enhanced from ₹10 crore to ₹20 crore. Besides, a Deep Tech Fund of Funds will be explored. 'Given that deeptech is being seen as an area for growth at the national level, with a China+1 macro and creation of the PLI/DLI schemes of the government, this is a great step,' said Bhaskar Majumdar, managing partner, Unicorn India Ventures. 'The increase in credit guarantee will not only enable start-ups to have access to debt capital it will also help them scale faster with less equity dilution. Hence, it will lead to a virtuous cycle of higher top line, less equity dilution, better valuation and better fundraising,' said Mayuresh Raut, managing partner, Seafund.

আমার মঙ্গল শ্রী তরুন কুমার সরকার, পিতা-মহিলা শ্রী শ্যাম সর্কার মহেশ্বর ইং ১২.০৮.১৯৯২ তারিখে বুক নং IV, জন্ম নং-০৮, পাতা নং-৩৩ হইতে ৩৮, বিয়িং নং-৩৫-৩৫ নং আমদান্যকারী দলিল বলে শ্রী সন্তোষ কুমার জৈনিক, পিতা-বিশ্বনাথ জৈনিক-এর নিকট হইতে চক্রপাতা মৌজার জে.এল. নং-১১১, সাবেক ১২৬২ নং বক্তিসনাক্ত ১৫৫৮ নং দাগে ৪৪ শতক সাবেক ৭৭ নং বক্তিসনাক্ত ১৫৭৯ নং দাগে ১৯ ১/৩ শতক এবং ১৫৪৭ নং বক্তিসনাক্ত ১৫৭১ নং দাগে ৩৭ শতক শালি জমি বিক্রয় করিবার জন্য ক্ষমতাপ্রাপ্ত হইয়াছেন। উক্ত বিক্রয় কার্যের কোনও আপত্তি থাকিলে বালি-জগদা হা.এল. এ্যান্ড এল.আর. এ. অফিসে যোগাযোগ করিবেন।

আমার মঙ্গল ১) শ্রী সুমন মজুমদার, পিতা-শ্রী সুশীল রজন মজুমদার, ২) শ্রী উৎকল জৈনিক, পিতা-শ্রী প্রশান্ত জৈনিক মহাশয় ইং ইং ২৭.০৮.২০০৪ তারিখে হাওড়া A.D.S.R. অফিসে বুক নং IV, জন্ম নং-০৮, পাতা নং-২৫৪ হইতে ২৫৮, বিয়িং নং-৫২২ নং আমদান্যকারী দলিল বলে শ্রী গদাধর কর্মকার, পিতা-অক্ষয় কুমার কর্মকার-এর নিকট হইতে চক্রপাতা মৌজার জে.এল. নং-১১১, সাবেক ৮৪৭ নং বক্তিসনাক্ত ৭৯৭ নং দাগের ৬ কাঠা ০৫ হেক্টর শালি জমি বিক্রয় করিবার জন্য ক্ষমতাপ্রাপ্ত হইয়াছেন। উক্ত বিক্রয় কার্যের কোনও আপত্তি থাকিলে বালি-জগদা হা.এল. এ্যান্ড এল.আর. এ. অফিসে যোগাযোগ করিবেন।

E-Tender e-tenders are invited by Prodhon, Vedia Gram Panchayat under Aushgram-II Dev. Block, Dist-Purba Bardhaman, from resourceful/bonafide contractors with experience and requisite credential from 15th FC fund vide id 2025\_ZPHD-809528-1 TO 7 & 2025\_ZPHD-809620-1 TO 2. Date of closing for submission of Technical Bid & Financial Bid on 10/02/2025 up to 5.00 PM. For Details Visit the website: http://wb.tenders.gov.in



### Triple Talaq: SC seeks details of FIRs, charge sheets against men involved

**MI News Service, New Delhi:** The Supreme Court directed the Centre to furnish data on FIRs and charge sheets against men who invoked instant triple talaq to divorce their wives in violation of the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights in Marriage) Act, 2019. A bench comprising Chief Justice Sanjiv Khanna and Justice Sanjay Kumar was hearing about 12 petitions filed by various Muslim individuals and organisations challenging the constitutional validity of the 2019 Act that criminalises the practice of instant triple talaq. "The respondent (Centre) shall file the total number of FIRs and chargesheets pending under Section 3 and 4 of the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights in Marriage) Act 2019. The parties to also file written submissions not exceeding three pages in support of their contention," the bench said.

It asked the Centre and other parties to file written submissions to the pleas while the posting the matter for final hearing in the week commencing March 17. Referring to the legal position, the bench said as triple talaq was held invalid, there was no dissolution of marriage and the point now was the criminalisation of the pronouncement.

"If the divorce itself is not recognised, the relationship then continues and no separation. But now you have penalised the very act of pronouncing it we want the list of cases all over India where FIRs are led, now in all states FIRs are centralised, just give us a list of that," the CJ said. The list was directed to include data from rural areas.

"In no civilised section, such a practice is there," said solicitor general Tushar Mehta. The bench said the petitioners were not arguing for making triple talaq valid but opposed its criminalisation.

"I am sure none of the lawyers here are saying that the practice is correct, but what they are saying is whether it can be criminalised when the practice is banned and no divorce can take place by uttering talaq three times at once," the CJ said. The bench said as triple talaq was legally void, the law effectively penalised mere pronouncement of the words "talaq" thrice -- the bone of contention in the ongoing legal challenge. Mehta defended the legislation saying penalising an activity fell within the domain of legislative policy. He opposed the argument that the Act imposed disproportionate punishment, saying the maximum sentence under the law was three years, lower than penalties in other laws protecting women's rights.

The law officer quoted eminent poetess Parveen Shakir from Pakistan to highlight the bane of instant triple talaq as saying, "Talaq to de rahe ho itab-o-kehar ke saath, meri jawani bhi lauta do meri mehr ke saath" (You are pronouncing talaq in a fit of rage, please return my youth along with mehr)." Petitioner's counsel Nizam Pasha said the law unjustly criminalised the mere utterance of words, talaq, equating it with punishable offenses. He said no other community faced similar legal consequences for marital abandonment.

Senior advocate M R Shamshad said existing domestic violence laws sufficiently addressed issues arising out of marital disputes, making the separate criminal law unnecessary. "In matrimonial cases, even if a wife is physically assaulted, it takes months to register an FIR. Here, an FIR is lodged for mere pronouncement," he said.

## 100 Years of Electric Railways in India A Milestone for Indian Railways

**MI News Service, New Delhi:** Rail enthusiasts often remember September 1825 as the month when the first-ever train operated in the world, while April 16, 1853, is etched in Indian Railway history as the day the first train ran in India. However, February 3, 1925, marked another milestone -- the first electric-powered train journey in India, from Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus (CSMT) to Kurla in Mumbai. As 2025 marks the 100th anniversary of electric traction in India, the country is also on the brink of achieving 100% electrification of its broad gauge network. This achievement, just as monumental as the first rail operation in India, signifies a century of progress in railway electrification.

### The Road to Electrification: A Century-Long Journey

The introduction of Railways in India took just 28 years after the world's first train, but the adoption of electric traction was a slower process. While the world witnessed its first electric passenger train in Germany in 1879, it took India 46 more years to introduce this technology. Werner von Siemens is credited with presenting the world's first electric train in 1879, but India saw its first electric train only in 1925. Electric traction quickly demonstrated clear advantages over steam engines, particularly in terms of power, acceleration, and efficiency. Electric locomotives required less maintenance, produced no pollution, and were capable of hauling longer, heavier trains over steep inclines. The initial high costs of electrification were a barrier, but the benefits -- particularly for suburban commuter traffic -- soon became evident. The technology was particularly suited for routes with heavy traffic and steep gradients, making it ideal for the urban areas of Bombay, now Mumbai.

### The Electrification of Mumbai: The First Step

In the early 20th century, Mumbai's rapidly growing population needed a solution for its increasing commuter traffic. Steam locomotives struggled to manage the steep inclines of routes to-



wards Pune and Nashik, further emphasizing the need for electrification. In 1904, W.H. White, the Chief Engineer of the Bombay Presidency government, proposed electrifying the two primary rail networks serving the city: the Great Indian Peninsula Railway (GIP) and the Bombay Baroda and Central India Railway (BB&CI), now known as the Central and Western Railways. World War I delayed the project, but by 1920, electrification plans for the Bombay-Pune/Igatpuri/Vasai lines were approved.

The first electric train in India ran on February 3, 1925, using 1500 Volts (V) Direct Current (DC) between CSMT (then Victoria Terminus) and Kurla, a distance of 16 kilometers. This marked the beginning of clean electric transport in India, and India became the 24th country worldwide to operate electric railways and the third in Asia. The Electrification of Southern India Alongside Mumbai, the South Indian Railway (SIR) began electrifying its suburban network, with the Madras Beach (now Chennai) to Tambaram line using the same 1500 V DC system. Electrification was completed by 1931, and this section remains one of the few Meter Gauge lines ever electrified in India.

By the time India gained inde-

pendence in 1947, only about 388 kilometers of rail lines were electrified, primarily around Mumbai and Madras.

### Electrification Takes Root in Eastern India

While Mumbai led the way, electrification in Eastern India faced delays, partly due to the disruptions of the World Wars and the Great Depression. It wasn't until the 1950s that electrification in Calcutta (now Kolkata) began to take shape. After a 1954 report from a railway team studying European electrification models, the 3000 V DC system was adopted for the region. The first section of electrified track in Eastern India was inaugurated between Howrah and Sheoraphuli in December 1957. During the same period, France's SNCF developed a new 25,000 V AC system, which was initially met with resistance. However, by 1959, India trialed the system on the Rajkharawan-Dangoosi section, with remarkable success. By November 1957, Indian Railways decided to adopt the 25 kV AC system as the standard for electrification, making India only the second country after the Soviet Union to do so. With increase in traffic density, now Indian Railways is further advancing to use 2x25 kV AC traction for its routes.

A New Era: Electrification Across India By 1966, electric traction accounted for more than half of the freight traffic in Eastern and South Eastern Railway zones. Electrification also expanded rapidly in suburban networks, notably in Howrah, Sealdah, and Kharagpur divisions. The advantages of electric trains -- reduced diesel dependency, improved efficiency, and a cleaner environment -- fueled continued growth.

The electrification of Indian Railways accelerated in the following decades. From just 388 kilometers in 1951, the network expanded rapidly to present day nearly 100%.

### A Global Leader in Electrification

India's railway electrification success is unparalleled, with the country now home to the world's most electrified rail network. The only remaining non-electrified lines are some heritage and mountain routes. As India celebrates the centenary of electric traction in 2025, Indian Railways is poised to reach new heights in efficiency, sustainability, and connectivity, offering a cleaner and more reliable future for millions of passengers across the country. Article by Dr. Jaideep Gupta, Additional Member (RE), Railway Board

## Want secular laws & not Shariat; pleas Muslim woman at SC

**MI News Service, New Delhi/Kochi:** The Supreme Court asked for the Centre's stand on a Muslim woman's plea seeking to be governed by the Indian succession law instead of Shariat. The plea of Safiya P M, general secretary of 'Ex-Muslims of Kerala', and hailing from Alappuzha, came up before a bench comprising Chief Justice Sanjiv Khanna and Justices Sanjay Kumar and K V Viswanathan. Solicitor general Tushar Mehta, representing the Centre, said the plea raised an interesting question. "The petitioner lady is a born Muslim. She says she does not believe in Shariat and she thinks it is a regressive law," he said. "This will," observed the bench, "run across faith. You will have to file a counter affidavit." Mehta sought three weeks to take instructions and place on record a counter affidavit. The bench granted four weeks and said the matter would be heard in week beginning May 5. On April 29 last year, the apex court sought responses from the Centre and the Kerala government on the plea.

The petitioner said though she has not officially left Islam, she was a non-believer and wanted enforcement of her fundamental right to religion under Article 25, saying it must include "the right not to believe" as well. She also sought a declaration that the persons who didn't wish to be governed by the Muslim personal law must be allowed to be governed by the "secular law of the country" -- the Indian Succession Act, 1925 -- both in the case of intestate and testamentary succession. Safiya's plea, filed through

advocate Prashant Padmnabhan, said Muslim women were entitled to one-third share in the property under the Shariat laws.

The lawyer said the declaration that the petitioner was not governed by the Muslim personal law had to come from the court, or else her father would not be able to give more than one-third of the property. The top court had permitted Safiya to amend the petition suitably to challenge the Indian succession law and other provisions for excluding Muslims. "Fundamental right to religion under Article 25 of the Constitution must include the right to believe or not to believe, as per the judgment of this in Indian Young Lawyers Association v. state of Kerala (Sabarimala case)... To have meaning for that right, the person who leaves her faith should not incur any disability or a disqualification in matters of inheritance or other important civil rights," the plea said. Pointing out wide ramifications across the country, the plea urged the bench for an intervention. It said the pending case in the Supreme Court was for all Muslim women but the present plea was for those who were born Muslim and wanted to leave the religion. "As per Sharia law, the person who leaves her faith in Islam, will be ousted from her community and thereafter she is not entitled for any inheritance right in her parental property," the plea argued. The petitioner expressed apprehension over the application of the law in the case of her lineal descendant, her only daughter, if she officially left her religion.

## SC asks Centre to set up panel to safeguard domestic workers' rights

**MI News Service, New Delhi:** The Supreme Court directed the Centre to provide a legal framework to provide a safeguard to domestic workers observing their exploitation and a "legal vacuum" over the protection of their rights. In the opinion of a bench of Justices Surya Kant and Ujjal Bhuyan, for now, there seemed no effective legislative or executive action to enact a statute, which could provide solace to millions of vulnerable domestic workers across the country. "The simple reason for this harassment and rampant abuse, which seems to be prevalent throughout the country, is the legal vacuum which exists vis-à-vis the rights and protection of domestic workers," the court said. Indeed, domestic workers in India remain largely unprotected and without any comprehensive legal recognition. As a result, they frequently endure low wages, unsafe environments, and extended hours without effective recourse, it added. The court directed the Ministry of Labour and Employment along with the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, the Ministry of Women and Child Development, and the Ministry of Law and Justice, to jointly constitute a committee comprising area experts for a legal framework meant for the benefit, protection and regulation of the rights of domestic workers. The composition of the expert committee, said the bench, was left to the wisdom of the Centre and its ministries concerned. "It will be appreciated if the committee submits a report within a period of six months, whereupon the Government of India may consider the necessity of introducing a legal framework which may effectively address the cause and concern of domestic workers," it added.



After the verdict was pronounced, Justice Surya Kant said the court planned to monitor the progress once the panel filed its report.

The top court passed the order while quashing a criminal case against former DRDO scientist Ajay Malik for the alleged wrongful confinement and trafficking of his domestic help. It also upheld the quashing of a case against his neighbour Ashok Kumar. In his plea filed through advocate Rajeev Kumar Dubey, Malik challenged the Uttarakhand High Court decision refusing to compound and quash the FIR despite the complainant's domestic help reportedly saying she was not wrongly confined or trafficked by the scientist, a senior citizen. The bench said it was an incontrovertible fact that the demand for domestic workers was mounting in India, given the rapid urbanisation and development.

"While any avenues for employment being opened to marginalised women merit celebration, we are at pains to note that despite their growing demand, this indispensable workforce has also been the most vulnerable to exploitation and abuse," it said. In its opinion, domestic workers often belonged to the marginalised communities, such as SC, ST, OBC, and EWS and were compelled to un-

dertake domestic work due to financial hardship or displacement, further reinforcing their vulnerability.

For the bench, it was abundantly evident from the present appeals, the torture and exploitation of the complainant for several years by individuals who forcibly trafficked her to differing cities, promising a better life that never materialised.

The purported placement agency which employed the complainant "continually leached her salaries", leaving her utterly destitute and helpless, it added. The bench referred to various international norms and standards on the issue.

Justice Surya Kant, who authored the verdict, said the court not only acknowledged the vulnerability of domestic workers but also strove to provide them extensive protection and parity with other labourers. The verdict pointed to a "degree of lacunae" in legislative frameworks, safeguarding and protecting the rights of domestic workers. It said aside from the absence of any legislation protecting their interests, domestic workers were excluded from existing labour laws.

"These, inter alia, include statutes such as the Payment of Wages Act 1936, Equal Remuneration Act 1976, Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013, Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015, etc," the court said.

Given the lack of specific protection covering domestic workers in India, the court said it was a solemn duty and responsibility to intervene, exercise the doctrine of parens patriae and forge the path leading to their proper welfare.

## No evidence of paper leak in UGC-NET, CBI files closure report

**MI News Service, New Delhi:** The CBI has filed a closure report in the case pertaining to the 2024 UGC-NET, which was cancelled following inputs suggesting that its question paper was leaked on the darknet and was being sold on Telegram, officials said. In its closure report filed before a special court, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) said there was no evidence of paper leak in the case. The agency also sent a report to the Union education ministry. The court will now decide whether to accept the report and close the case or direct the agency to further probe it.

The central probe agency found that a "doctored" screenshot of the "leaked" question paper for the June 18, 2024, exam was being circulated by a student to make some money, the officials said. On the exam day, the paper was found doing the rounds on Telegram channels in the afternoon, before the second shift of UGC-NET, giving an impression that it was leaked and the person circulating it had access to it, they said. The investigation found that the person who circulated the screenshot had doctored the image and its date and time stamp to show that he ac-

cessed the paper before the exam started, the officials said.

More than 11 lakh candidates had registered for the exam which determines eligibility for junior research fellowship, appointment as assistant professors and PhD admissions in Indian universities and colleges. The examination was cancelled by the education ministry on June 19 following an alert from the National Cyber Crime Threat Analytics Unit of the Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C). "The UGC received certain inputs from the National Cyber Crime Threat Analytics Unit of the Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre under the Ministry of Home Affairs on the examination. These inputs prima facie indicate that the integrity of the aforesaid examination may have been compromised," the Ministry of Education had said after the cancellation of the examination. The investigation was handed over to the CBI, which found that the purported screenshot of the paper was created by a school student using an app.

The agency consulted forensic experts who said that the screenshot was doctored, according to the officials.

## India eyeing integrated satellite communication grid: Defence sources

**MI News Service, New Delhi:** India's defence forces are planning to build an integrated satellite communication grid comprising spacecraft in different orbits and data relay systems as space emerges as a new domain of warfare, a senior officer said. Addressing the DefSat Conference here, Defence Space Agency Director General Air Vice Marshal Pawan Kumar

said the defence forces were also looking at collaborating with the industry to meet its requirements to get an edge over its rivals in the domain. "When you talk of communication, I think the technology that we are focusing on is integrated satellite communication grid. We don't want any service to be over dependent on a particular satellite," Kumar said in the inaugural address at the DefSat conference organised by Satcom Industry Association-India here.

Kumar said the defence forces were looking at a mix of constellations, either Medium Earth Orbit (MEO)-Geostationary Orbit (GEO) or Low Earth Orbit (LEO)-MEO-GEO, and a lot of studies have happened on that. "We are also looking at tracking and data relay satellite systems primarily because it reduces demand to delivery time as far as OODA loop is concerned," he said. Kumar said the defence forces were also exploring quantum communications because of the obvious advantages of secrecy.

"We are looking for space and ground-based sensors which include telescopes and radars, along with the complete network so that the commanders can make appropriate decisions, whether it is military level, operational level, or tactical level," he said.

## 'Anti-India' posts: Delhi court orders FIR against Rana Ayyub



**MI News Service, New Delhi:** A Delhi court ordered the registration of a police case against journalist Rana Ayyub over a lawyer's complaint alleging that Ayyub's social media posts insulted Hindu deities and spread "anti-India sentiment," legal news website Live Law reported. The court reportedly said that prima facie, cognizable offences were made out against the journalist. Ayyub reposted a tweet on X that said: "The said tweets of journalist @RanaAyyub date back to 2013, 2014, 2015 and 2016. 8-9 years have passed and the

tweets didn't create any law & order situation. The judge should have dismissed this case."

Ayyub is best known for her book, Gujarat Files, based on her reportage investigating the 2002 communal riots. She has often been targeted by the Right-wing ecosystem. In November last year, the Washington Post Press Freedom Partnership had highlighted one such attack. "November 16 is National Press Day in India, a day meant to recognize the critical role of a free and independent press in the world's largest democracy. Yet, the escalated targeting of Washington Post opinion contributor Rana Ayyub -- through the leaking of her personal information including her government issued identity documents, her phone number, intrusive surveillance, and creation of AI generated sexual content exploiting her likeness -- underscores the deteriorating state of press freedom in India," the post said.



## Indians in the US need to think over their reality

ADITYA VASHISHT

The Trump administration's inclusion of Indian-origin/Hindus in its cabinet has been an intriguing step, which has created quite a stir among its loyal fanbase. Kash Patel's and Tuls Gabbard's explicit display of pride in their faith has been a talking point among many of the MAGA supporters, who might not appreciate the inclusion of non-Christians in the cabinet of the one who is considered by them as a favourite for White Christian nationalism in America. Such a situation has created a paradox, with the Trump cabinet balancing administrative priorities with the need to cater to its loyal audience.

But the inclusion of Hindus in the Trump cabinet comes at a very important moment, when racial hate towards Indians/Hindus is seeing a rise in the US and other parts of the Anglosphere. This undoubtedly forms part of the broad pushback against immigration and increasing racial diversity which is being increasingly perceived as a threat by many among the White population. The polarization of US politics has in a large measure emanated from these concerns.

One can find that popular social media spots like X, 4Chan etc. are rife with posts and threads which specifically target Indians and the Hindu faith. Hindu gods and goddesses are ridiculed, which has long been a favourite activity of radical white Christians since centuries, and Indians are labeled with terms of 'smelly', 'pajeet' or a population which does not know how to defecate properly. Memes and handles are popular where Indians are shown in a disgusting, bad light.

Popular Indian-origin figures have been a special target. Ranging from current Vice-president's wife Usha Vance to Vivek Ramaswamy, from Indian-origin IT bosses to other political leaders, all have come under light because of their different culture and skin colour. This comes despite Indians/Hindus being a largely peaceful and a prosperous minority which has contributed and still continues to contribute to the development of the USA.

And one must not consider that anti-Indian sentiment is prevalent solely among the MAGA Trump supporters. It is not confined to any specific political party or an individual. A prominent example is of the ridiculing of the Mars Mangalyaan mission by the New York Times (NYT) through a cartoon, where a man with a cow is standing at the doorsteps of a house in which live other space powers. This comes despite the fact that the India's Mars mission was accomplished in its very first attempt and was achieved at a cost which can be considered low in terms of the average price which these missions take. Nor it had anything to do with domestic politics in India. The NYT has often come in the crosshairs of Trump and its base.

Thus this brings to light a serious question, which is concerned with the future of the Indian/Hindu population in the USA. Obviously there are many whites who are not concerned with their presence nor might lend support to the hateful rhetoric

against Indians. But as polarization grows and the non-Indian population in the US feels exhaustion, and if Trump's domestic and foreign policies bring greater distress and problems, then it would not be entirely wrong to say that Hindus in the US could well become the latest 'Jews'. Prosperous minorities have often been special target throughout history, as they are the first to be highlighted because of their wealth and affluence. Be it the Jews in European states to the Chinese in Indonesia, all have been subjected to persecution when a significant portion of the majority feels frustrated.

An additional problem with Indians/Hindus in general has been their 'soft image', by which it is to be meant that they have failed to cultivate a very vocal strength in terms of their identity and faith. This obviously makes them lag behind other racial and religious minorities such as Blacks, Latinos, Muslims and Jews. In popular US culture, if one takes a very close look one can find films or other popular media which narrates the growth and success of other non-white populations. Such a medium is very important in carving out a separate space in society for a community. Indians/Hindus in general, have been slow, since in the popular culture their identity does not come out as strongly as say, that of Blacks, Latinos or the Chinese.

The expression of one's identity is very much important, especially in a country like US where race is considered a very important factor in the society, similar to what caste is in India. In terms of any particular crisis, the cultivation of a strong identity plays a very big role in securing support. The killing of a Black man, George Floyd, in the US triggered such an outpour of political agitation that created widespread disturbance, which also spread across the Atlantic to European states too. Speaking out against the Jews could lead one to lose his/her job. Expression of Islamophobia can also create significant trouble for the one who expresses it.

This brings into spotlight the political capital which Indians/Hindus have been able to generate, since without it, all wealth earned and houses built would ultimately be meaningless. The Indian/Hindu community in the US needs to introspect well and should make concerted efforts to carve out a unique identity which gives them enough strength to pushback against any hateful rhetoric and tendencies displayed. Films should be made which show the success story of many Indian immigrants, more role models should arise who wear their faith on their sleeves and focus should be laid to the cultivation of a strong Indian identity which not just be explicitly confined to food, dance and religious philosophy, but displays other aspects of the country too. Every Indian/Hindu is an ambassador and they should act fast, since the US and the Anglosphere in reality is, ultimately, a white man's world which shall work according to him.

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Candidates wait in queues before entering the examination centre to appear in the Rajasthan Administrative Services (RAS) 2025 prelims exam, in Bikaner on Sunday. (ANI Photo)

## 23% INDIAN BIZ IMPLEMENTED AI, 73% TO ADOPT NEW TECH IN 2025

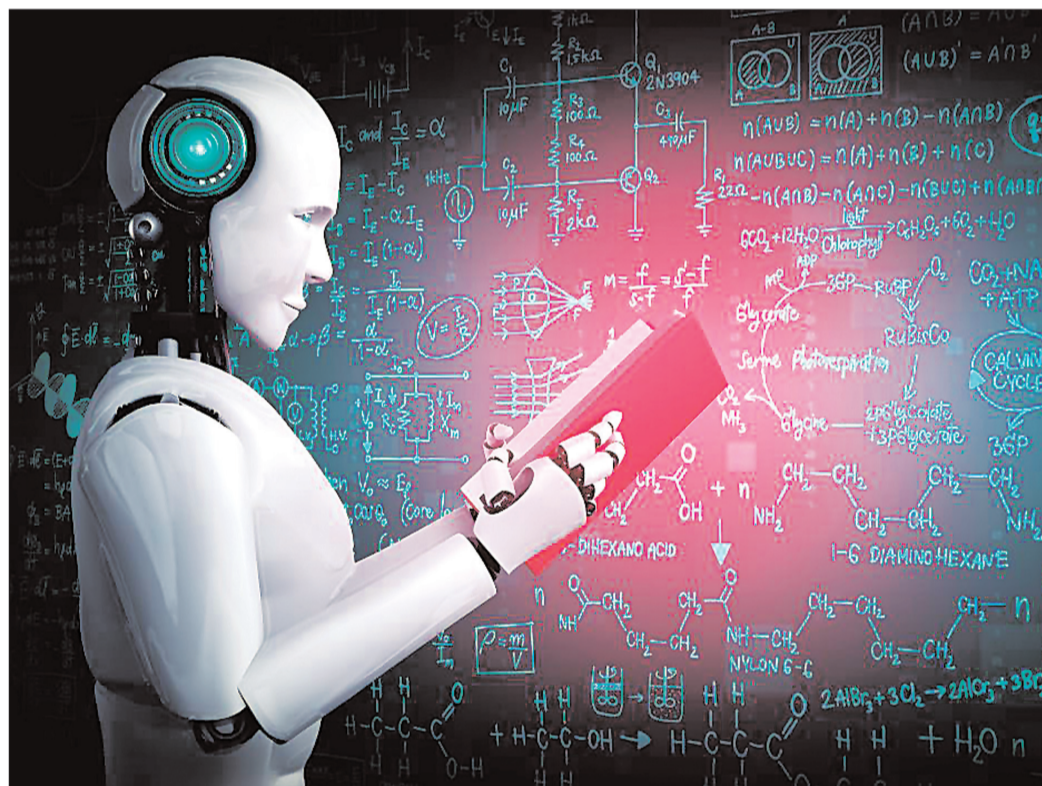
NEW DELHI: Twenty-three per cent of Indian businesses have already implemented AI, surpassing other survey markets, while 73 per cent expect to expand AI use in 2025, well above the survey average of 52 per cent, according to CPA Australia's Business Technology Report 2024, in collaboration with the Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM).

The Business Technology Report 2024, is highlighted that 60 per cent of surveyed Indian businesses plan to strengthen cybersecurity, outpacing the survey's average of 47 per cent. Prof. Dale Pinto FCPA (Aust.), Global President & Chair of the Board, CPA Australia, emphasized the deep-rooted ties between India and Australia beyond trade and diplomacy.

He stated, "Australia and India share a partnership that goes beyond trade and diplomacy. It is a bond rooted in shared values, deep connections, and mutual aspirations. Considering this strong relationship, India plays a critical role in CPA Australia's global strategy." He added, "By forging strategic partnerships with key Indian bodies like ASSOCHAM and the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI), we seek to drive knowledge sharing and support business professionals in India to equip them for addressing emerging market needs."

In line with this vision, CPA Australia and ASSOCHAM signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to foster collaboration, enhance professional skills, and promote global best practices.

Chris Freeland AM, CEO, CPA Australia, stated, "As the third-



oldest professional accounting body in the world, CPA Australia is committed to empowering professionals with the tools, knowledge, and global perspectives they need to navigate today's complex business environment. With this partnership with ASSOCHAM, we aim to foster innovation, build capabilities, and create opportunities for the next generation of talent."

Highlighting the report's findings, Prof. Dale Pinto remarked, "India's rapid adoption of AI and technology highlights the growing need for continuous professional development to build contemporary and

interdisciplinary skills for the AI era."

The discussions between CPA Australia and ASSOCHAM is also aligned to India's long-term economic goals, including its vision to become a developed nation by 2047, with a strong focus on digital transformation and infrastructure investment.

Taiwan's Ministry of Digital Affairs (MODA) announced on Friday that government employees will be prohibited from using DeepSeek, a newly launched artificial intelligence model from China, due to concerns that it could expose sensitive data to Beijing, according to

a report by Focus Taiwan.

In an official statement, MODA classified DeepSeek AI as a Chinese information and communications technology (ICT) product and cautioned that any data leaks could threaten national security.

The restriction applies to personnel across central and local government agencies, public schools, state-owned businesses, and other affiliated institutions. However, MODA did not provide further details on how the policy would be enforced. The ban also extends to individuals involved in critical infrastructure projects and those employed by government-

funded foundations.

MODA cited the 2019 Executive Yuan regulation, "Principles on Restricting the Use of Products That Endanger National Cyber Security," which prohibits government agencies from using ICT products and services that may pose a national security risk, Focus Taiwan reported.

Notably, human rights activists and international experts have strongly criticised China's newly developed AI platform, DeepSeek, after concerns arose regarding its role in spreading state propaganda, censoring sensitive subjects, and gathering personal data. While marketed as a technological advancement, the platform has come under fire for significant ethical and security issues.

The Campaign for Uyghur on January 28 highlighted that DeepSeek aggressively collects and stores personal information, such as IP addresses and conversation histories, on servers located in China. This has raised concerns about potential abuse by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), a regime known for its history of human rights violations.

DeepSeek was also accused of silencing dissenting opinions, particularly on topics related to Xinjiang, fueling fears that it is being used as a tool for state-sponsored digital surveillance.

Taiwan's decision follows similar actions by other governments. Italy's data protection authority announced on Thursday that it had blocked the Chinese AI model DeepSeek due to a lack of transparency regarding its use of personal data. US and Australian officials have also raised privacy concerns, Focus Taiwan reported.

## GENDER BUDGET ALLOCATION IN THE UNION BUDGET HIKED TO 8.86% IN FY 2025-26 FROM 6.8% IN 2024-25

Union Minister of Finance and Corporate Affairs Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman presented the Union Budget 2025-26 in Parliament on 1st February, 2025. The share of Gender Budget allocation in the total Union Budget has increased to 8.86% in FY 2025-26 from 6.8% in FY 2024-25.

An allocation of Rs. 4.49 lakh crore has been reported for welfare of women and girls in the gender budget statement of FY 2025-26. This is an increase of Rs. 37.25% over the GBS allocation of Rs. 3.27 lakh crore in FY 2024-25.

This year a total of 49 Ministries/Departments and 5 UTs have reported allocations as

against 38 Ministries/Departments and 5 UTs in FY 2024-25. This is the highest number of reporting by the Ministries/Departments in the GBS since its inception. Twelve new Ministries/Departments have reported allocations in the GBS 2025-26 are Department of Animal Husbandry & Dairying, Department of Biotechnology, Department of Food & Public Distribution, Department of Financial Services, Department of Fisheries, Department of Land Resources, Department of Pharmaceuticals, Department of Water Resources, RD & GR, Ministry of Food Processing Industries, Ministry of Panchayati

Raj, Ministry of Ports, Shipping & Waterways, and Ministry of Railways. These 49 Ministries/Departments and 5 UTs have reported allocations in Part A, Part B and Part C of the Gender Budget Statement. Rs. 1,05,535.40 crore (23.50% of total GBS allocation) have been reported by 17 Ministries/Departments and 5 UTs in Part A (100% women specific schemes); Rs. 3,26,672.00 crore (72.75%) have been reported by 37 Ministries/Departments and 4 UTs in Part B (30-99% allocation for women) and Rs. 16,821.28 crore (3.75%) have been reported by 22 Ministries/Departments in Part C

**AN ALLOCATION OF RS. 4.49 LAKH CRORE HAS BEEN REPORTED FOR WELFARE OF WOMEN AND GIRLS IN THE GENDER BUDGET STATEMENT OF FY 2025-26. THIS IS AN INCREASE OF RS. 37.25% OVER THE GBS ALLOCATION OF RS. 3.27 LAKH CRORE IN FY 2024-25.**

(below 30% allocation for women). Top 10 Ministries/Departments that have

reported more than 30% of their allocations in the Gender Budget for FY 2025-26 are Ministry of Women & Child Development (81.79%), Department of Rural Development (65.76%), Department of Food & Public Distribution (50.92%), Department of Health & Family Welfare (41.10%), Ministry of New & Renewable Energy (40.89%), Department of Social Justice & Empowerment (39.01%), Department of Higher Education (33.94%), Department of School Education & Literacy (33.67%), Ministry of Home Affairs (33.47%) and Department of Drinking Water & Sanitation (31.50%).



### Gangster Joginder Gyong deported to India from Philippines

**MI News Service, New Delhi:** Dreaded gangster Joginder Gyong wanted by Haryana Police for criminal conspiracy and murder was deported from Philippines through Bangkok to Delhi, Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) said. The Global Operations Centre of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has closely coordinated and succeeded in bringing back Gyong, an Interpol Red Notice Subject, the agency said in a statement. Gyong, who was brought in from the Philippines on February 1, was detained in Delhi where he is also wanted by Delhi Police, the CBI said in a statement. He was handed over to Special Cell, Southern Range, Delhi Police for further action, it said. Gyong is wanted by Haryana Police in criminal case Registered vide FIR No. 1337 dated 30.12.2017 at Police Station City Panipat, Haryana on the allegations of criminal conspiracy and murder. The gangster is wanted by the Haryana Police in the murder of a victim whom the subject suspected of disclosing real identity and location of his gangster brother Surender Gyong, to the Haryana Police and who died later on in exchange of fire with Police, according to the CBI statement.

According to the statement, the Red Notice subject, to avenge the death of his brother, planned and murdered the deceased. The subject has been allegedly involved in criminal cases in various States and Union Territories of India, including Delhi for the offences of robbery, murder, attempt to murder, putting person in fear of death or of grievous hurt in order to commit extortion and kidnapping for ransom. On the request of Haryana Police, the CBI had got a Red Notice issued against the subject from Interpol on 25.10.2024 and was circulated to all the law enforcement agencies across the world for tracking of the wanted criminal. On the strength of Red Notice, Joginder Gyong, was deported from Philippines through Bangkok to Delhi.

### Every day, Russia attacks Ukraine...: Zelenskyy urges international community to help end "unprovoked aggression"

**MI News Service, Kyiv:** Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy condemned Russian strikes claiming that a barrage of 50 missiles, 660 attack drones, and 760 guided aerial bombs targeted Ukrainian cities and communities this week. Saying that Russia will "not stop on its own", Zelenskyy urged the international community to step up and help end Moscow's "brutal and unprovoked aggression."

Sharing a post on X, Zelenskyy wrote, "Every day, Russia attacks Ukraine with drones, missiles, and aerial bombs. This week alone, there have been hundreds of strikes on our cities and communities - nearly 50 missiles, around 660 attack drones, and more than 760 guided aerial bombs launched by the enemy against our people." "Russia will not stop on its own. The world must force it to end this brutal and unprovoked aggression. Strengthening our defense is absolutely necessary. We need better protection - air defence systems, long-range weapons, and sanctions pressure," the post added.

## Imran Khan's party blames Shehbaz Sharif-led govt for economic, political turmoil

**MI News Service, Islamabad:** Pakistan's former Prime Minister Imran Khan's party, the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has accused the country's current government for economic and political turmoil in Pakistan, stressing that Shehbaz Sharif-led regime was unbothered about the interests of the state but instead focused on having its grip on power while paying no attention to the global warnings, Dawn reported.

In a statement, PTI Central Information Secretary Sheikh Waqqas Akram criticised the government for its 300 per cent increase in the salaries of parliamentarians to protect them from inflation while burdening ordinary people through relentless rise in gas prices and petroleum products. He called the rise in POL and LPG as the sequel to the gov-



ernment's anti-poor policies that would further exacerbate their miseries. He accused Pakistan government of making tall claims of economic turnaround while middle class and the poor were struggling to make ends meet, rejecting the claims of economic recovery. He said that Pakistani lawmakers were compensated through unprecedented rise in the salaries at the expense of the poor, according to Dawn report.

Sheikh Waqqas Akram slammed the Pakistan government for its continued policies, acts, political vendettas against leaders of PTI and the anti-press freedom controversial constitutional tweaks. He claimed that the government sought to continue its rule through anti-poor policies along with reign of terror despite the European Union's warning about Pakistan's

GSP plus status. He accused the government of ignoring EU's warning to Pakistan telling it not to take its GSP plus status for granted. He recalled that EU envoy Olof Skoog asked the Pakistani government that military courts should not be used to pursue cases against civilians, in addition to opposing the amendments to the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (Peca) to restrict press freedom, Dawn reported. Sheikh Waqqas Akram called on the Pakistan government to immediately halt the "ongoing human rights violations", as the EU team was scheduled to visit Pakistan in June for the upcoming GSP plus monitoring mission. He said that Skoog told Pakistan that the next round of the scheme was solely based upon Pakistan's compliance with the various international obligations.

## Israel releases 183 Palestinian prisoners in latest swap with Hamas



**MI News Service, Gaza:** Israel released 183 Palestinian prisoners on Saturday in the fourth prisoner-for-hostage swap under the ongoing truce deal with Hamas, according to Palestinian sources. Abdullah Zaghari, head of the Palestinian Prisoners Club, told Xinhua news agency that Israeli authorities handed the released prisoners over to the International Committee of the Red Cross.

Of the freed prisoners, 150 were from the Gaza Strip, 32 from the West Bank, and the remaining one, who holds Egyptian citizenship, will be returned to Egypt. Prisoners from the West Bank were released from Ofer

Prison near Ramallah, while prisoners from Gaza, released from Ketziot Prison in southern Israel, would be transported to southern Gaza through the Israeli-controlled Kerem Shalom crossing, Zaghari added. Local witnesses reported that buses carrying Palestinians released by Israel have arrived in southern Gaza's Khan Younis. The Palestinian Liberation Organisation's commission for prisoners' affairs said in a press statement that among the 183 released on Saturday, seven prisoners will be deported, without specifying which countries will receive them. The release of Palestinian prisoners follows

Hamas' release of three Israeli hostages earlier in the day, marking the fourth such exchange during the first phase of a ceasefire deal between Israel and Hamas. The deal was enforced on January 19 and its first phase will last for six weeks. 54-year-old Israeli-French citizen Ofer Calderon, 35-year-old Israeli civilian Yarden Bibas and 65-year-old Israeli-American hostage Keith Siegel were freed by Hamas on Saturday after 484 days in captivity. Following their release, all three hostages were taken to the IDF's Reim base near the Gaza border, where they reunited with their families before being flown to hospitals in central Israel for further medical assessments. Emotional videos of these reunions were shared by the IDF. The latest releases follow the return of three other hostages — Agam Berger, Arbel Yehud, and Gadi Moses — on Thursday. Earlier in the day, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu welcomed them home and credited Israel's military efforts and firm stance in negotiations for their safe return.

"This release was achieved, first of all, thanks to our heroic soldiers, and it was also achieved thanks to the steadfast and determined stand that we took during the negotiations," Netanyahu stated.

### King Charles "profoundly shocked, saddened" by dreadful Washington DC air accident



**MI News Service, London:** Britain's King Charles III on Sunday expressed his profound sadness and stated "profoundly shocked and saddened by the dreadful news" of the recent air accident in Washington, DC, which claimed the lives of 64 people. Sharing a message on X, he wrote, "My family and I have been profoundly shocked and saddened by the dreadful news of the tragic air accident in Washington, DC, which has led to such a devastating loss of life." The King's message of sympathy was directed not only to the victims' families but also to the first responders who quickly rushed to assist in the aftermath of the incident.

"Our hearts, and our special thoughts, are with the people of the United States and our deepest possible sympathy goes to the families and loved ones of all the victims. I would also like to pay a particular tribute to the emergency responders who acted so quickly to this horrendous event," he said.

Sixty-four people, including four crew, aboard a commercial airliner of American Airlines died Wednesday night after it collided with a military Black Hawk helicopter in midair near Reagan Washington National Airport. It crashed into the Potomac River. Three Russian nationals also died in the plane crash, the Russian Embassy in the US said in a statement, the Russian state media reported on Saturday. The statement was based on a confirmation from the US Department of State according to TASS. The Russian nationals "lived permanently in the USA and worked as coaches in American figure skating clubs," the Russian Mission said. The American Eagle Flight 5342 was travelling from Wichita to Reagan National Airport in Arlington, Virginia, just over the Washington line, according to American Airlines.

Remains of 41 victims have been recovered, the DC fire chief said Friday as per CBC News. US Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth said the crew of the military aircraft were from the Bravo Company 12th Aviation Battalion at Fort Belvoir, an army base in Virginia that's about 14 miles away from the airport.

### Allegations of defilement at Newtown Hajj House

Nurul Islam Khan

Recently, arrangements have been done for Police to stay at the Hajj House of the State Hajj Committee, Madinatul Hujjaj Newtown. Muslim leaders have alleged that there are liquor bottles in the holy ablutio room and toilet because of the presence of the police who have come to the Kolkata Book Fair. They also alleged that a section of the police urinated in the ablutio room. There has been strong objection from the public. In fact, the pilgrims of hajj stay there. If alcohol is consumed in that place the holy place for prayer will be defiled, and it will definitely hurt religious sentiments, said Minority Youth Federation



leader Mohammad Kamruzzaman, Pirzada Naushad Siddiqui of Furfura Sharif, Pirzada Safiri

Siddiqui, Maulana Abdul Qayyum and many other leaders and activists. When the reporter called the Bidhan Nagar Commissioner's office, they said they were looking into it. On the other hand, when the matter came to the public, police officers from the Bidhan Nagar Police Commissioner's office came to Madinatul Hujjaj for investigation. They said that an investigation is underway. On the other hand, an official of the State Hajj Committee said that a team of DCP visited here and said that cooking cannot be done here. And they ordered to urinate in the bathroom instead of in the holy places including the ablutio room. It has been informed through sources that adequate measures are being

### Pakistan: Baloch rights group condemns attack on principal Sharif Zakir's residence



**MI News Service, Balochistan:** Paank, the human rights department of the Baloch National Movement has strongly condemned the recent attack on the residence of Principal Sharif Zakir Baloch in Turbat, Balochistan, describing it as a troubling example of the growing violence in the region. In a post X, Paank stated that the assault, which involved indiscriminate gunfire and a grenade attack, highlights the precarious situation faced by civilians in Balochistan, who regularly endure acts of violence and intimidation. Paank stated, "Principal Sharif Zakir, a respected educator affiliated with Sachan Grammar School and Model High School Turbat, has been targeted in a grievous act that appears to be part of a broader pattern of repression against educated and progressive voices in the region. Such acts are not isolated incidents but are indicative of systemic human rights violations in Balochistan, where state-affiliated armed personnel have been repeatedly accused of employing intimidation tactics to silence dissent." It further pointed that the timing of the attack is "particularly alarming," as it follows the tragic October 2020 enforced disappearance and extrajudicial killing of Principal Zakir's brother, Hanif. These events paint a "chilling picture of the climate of impunity in Balochistan", where security forces operate with "little fear of accountability for their actions," Paank highlighted. Paank emphasized that targeting civilians, particularly educators, is a "severe violation" of international human rights law, which protects the rights to life, freedom of expression, and personal security. The "deliberate targeting" of educators undermines the right to education and threatens the cultural and intellectual growth of society.

The organization has called for immediate action to hold perpetrators accountable and ensure the protection of fundamental rights in Balochistan. The rights body urged the Pakistan government to conduct a "thorough and unbiased investigation" into the attack on Principal Sharif Zakir's residence, ensuring that those responsible are held accountable.

## Release of Paygam's "Maha Nabir Mahajiban"



Nurul Islam Khan

The Seerat-un-Nabi issue of "Notun Paygam" magazine "Maha Nabir Mahajiban" was officially launched at the Kolkata Book Fair. Salim Reza, Sheikh Golam Mostafa, Wasif Ali, Nur Islam, Badruddoza Sahib, Shamsul Alam and Editor of Notun Paygam magazine Mudassir Niaz were present at the event.

Thanking all the authors of this collection, the editor said that there are many books on the Seerat of the Prophet (PBUH) but there were no such thematic books. Notun Paygam magazine has tried to fill that gap. In addition to the biography of the Holy Prophet (PBUH), it contains the thoughts of the Prophet (PBUH) on about 80 aspects and categories,

including his communist politics, interest-free economy, balanced foreign policy, defense policy, balanced education policy, humane labor policy, welfare health policy, rights of relatives and neighbors, dress code and his modern thinking, birth control and family planning, human rights, charity, zakat collection and distribution system, nature and environmental awareness, scientific thinking, women's rights, dignity and empowerment, women's freedom, eradicating corruption, effective policies to prevent extremism and terrorism, etc. About 90 people have written about opinions and policies. The exchange price of the 472-page gel binding book is Rs. 450 and the selling price is Rs. 350. Publisher of the magazine is Srijan.

## Israel expands Jenin-Area counterterror operations, airstrike thwarts 'imminent attack'



**MI News Service, Tel Aviv:** Israel expanded a northern Samaria counterterror operation now on its 13th day, with three airstrikes overnight on terrorists and raids in the Palestinian village of Tamun the Israel Defense Forces said on Sunday morning. One of the strikes, in the village of Qabatiya, hit a vehicle carrying several terrorists on their way to carry out what the IDF said was an "imminent terrorist attack." Of the two terrorists killed, one was identified as Abd al-Hadi Kamil, who had been released from prison during a temporary ceasefire in November 2023. Aerial surveillance footage of the strike showed secondary explosions indicating the presence of explosives. Two other airstrikes eliminated terror cells in Jenin which the IDF did not elaborate on. Soldiers in Tamun seized weapons, including an M-16 rifle and cartridges.

On Saturday evening, Israeli Defense Minister Israel Katz issued a stark warning on Saturday night to Zakaria Zubeidi, a high profile Palestinian terrorist released on Thursday. "Zakaria Zubeidi, you were released in an agreement for the release of Israeli hostages - one mistake and you're going to meet old friends," Katz tweeted. "We will not accept support for terrorism." Zubeidi, now 49, was the commander of Fatah's Al-Aqsa Martyr's Brigades in Jenin during the Second Intifada. He ordered an attack on a Likud polling

center in Beit Shean in 2002 in which six people were killed while voting in a party primary. He also claimed responsibility for a 2004 bombing in Tel Aviv that killed one and injured 30 and carried out or attempted several shooting attacks on Israeli buses. Zubeidi was one of 110 terrorists released on Thursday for hostages Gadi Moses, Arbel Yehud and Agam Berger.

Zubeidi was one of six prisoners who briefly escaped from Gilboa prison in 2021 before being recaptured. Zubeidi is especially popular among Palestinians because he managed to escape several Israeli assassination attempts during the Second Intifada.

Many of the 1,027 terrorists freed in the Gilad Shalit exchange of 2011 returned to terror, including Yahya Sinwar, who masterminded the October 7 attacks. Ronen Bar, head of the Israel Security Agency (Shin Bet), reportedly told government ministers in January that 82% of the prisoners released for Shalit returned to terror.

The army's Jenin raid, dubbed "Operation Iron Wall," launched on January 21, comes on the heels of the Palestinian Authority's failed crackdown in the Jenin refugee camp. Raids expanded to Tulkarim. Security forces have arrested dozens of wanted Palestinian terrorists, seized weapons, and uncovered a bomb-making laboratory.





**"Our belief carried us to the title...": Shrachhi Rarh Bengal Tigers captain Rupinder after HIL win**

**NEW DELHI** : The thrilling Men's Hockey India League 2024-25 season concluded in spectacular fashion as Shrachhi Rarh Bengal Tigers edged out Hyderabad Toofans 4-3 in a gripping final at a packed Birsa Munda International Hockey Stadium in Rourkela on Saturday.

Jugraj Singh (25', 32', 35') delivered for the Tigers when it mattered the most as he netted a scintillating hat-trick in the final. However, the title-deciding match lived up to its billing as it went down to the wire with the score-line level at 3-3 till the very last quarter. However, Sam Lane (54') converted a penalty corner with just six minutes remaining on the clock to seal the deal for the Tiger.

With the victory, Shrachhi Rarh Bengal Tigers also claimed Rs 3 crore prize money.

Talking about his team's roller-coaster journey in the tournament, Shrachhi Rarh Bengal Tigers Captain Rupinder Pal Singh said as per a HIL press release, "It has been an incredible journey for us, especially with the return of the Hockey India League after a seven-year hiatus. We owe a big thanks to Hockey India for organising the tournament so flawlessly. Our path as a team had its share of ups and downs, but in the end, everything came together perfectly. It was our belief that carried us to the title, and I am immensely proud of my team for their hard work and resilience throughout the tournament."

Further talking about his strategy for the final, Rupinder said, "We were determined to execute our penalty corner strategies more effectively, especially after missing key opportunities in the semifinals. In the final, it was crucial for us to make the most of those chances, and we did. Additionally, we concentrated on tightening our defensive structure and maintaining maximum possession. All of these efforts helped us bounce back in the match and ultimately secure the title." Notably, the Shrachhi Rarh Bengal Tigers had topped the group stage as well with 19 points from 10 games, having secured 6 wins, 3 losses in regular time, and 1 shootout defeat. In the semifinals, they defeated Tamil Nadu Dragons 2-2 (6-5 on shootouts). Jugraj Singh turned out to be the standout performer for the Tigers as he emerged as the tournament's top scorer with 12 goals.



India's Abhishek Sharma and Tilak Verma celebrate their partnership during the 5th T20I match against England, at Wankhede Stadium, in Mumbai on Sunday. (ANI Photo)

## Sunil Gavaskar, Madhusudan Sai unveil 2025 One World One Family Cup

**MUMBAI** : Indian cricketing legend Sunil Gavaskar and humanitarian Madhusudan Sai unveiled the 2025 One World One Family Cup, a cricket event promoting unity and humanitarian causes, as per a release by One World One Family Cup.

The cup is engraved with the message - 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' - the World is one Family.

In honour of the two renowned cricket players, Sadguru Madhusudan Sai will be establishing a residential cricket academy for boys at the Sathya Sai Grama, Muddenahalli campus in Karnataka, India, the release said.

Their selection criteria will be entirely based on merit, and the deserving candidates will be provided free of cost training and stay. Renowned retired international cricket players of India and Sri Lanka will be playing for the 'One World One Family Cup' at the Sai Krishnan Cricket Stadium, Muddenahalli in the Chikkaballapur district of Karnataka on February 8.

"Madhusudan Sai, who has dedicated his life for the service of humanity is the dynamic founder of this mission. As a young humanitarian, he is spearheading from the front on multiple causes, primarily for the rural audience across the country."

"Madhusudan Sai Global



Humanitarian Mission has created records with many firsts and has attracted the attention and presence of national and global leaders including the Prime Minister - Shri Narendra Modi and the President - Droupadi Murmu. The aim is to make education, health and nutrition easily accessible to rural India," the release stated.

"The mission has spread its presence to 80 countries in the last 12 years. It has provided for the needs of children, women, men and the elderly in the fields of Nutrition, Education, and Healthcare by establishing institutes of excellence, and commissioning programmes and high-quality services that are completely free of charge," it added.

In January 2024, when the first edition of the One World One

Cup press release, "To put our best foot forward at every step of life, and to do what it takes, is the way to go. Then, we needed to bat for the country, and now it is time we bat for a greater cause, beyond the confines of just a country. The glory of a country lies not in its achievements, but also in its ideals. The 'One World One Family' mission of Madhusudan Sai stands for an ideal that is larger than life itself. The mission is working for the cause uplifting every child and citizen of this world, and bringing hope, happiness and love to their lives. The cricket match this year is yet another step to awaken humanity to the possibility of a glorious future for all."

Madhusudan Sai, the Founder, remarked as quoted by the release, "The buzz of cricket is translating into a cause for humanity through the One World One Family Cup 2025. This is a game that will be played by renowned cricketers from India and Sri Lanka, not for their countries, but for the whole of humanity. This time, the game of cricket will declare the message of unity, compassion and concern, collective responsibility and camaraderie, beyond the borders. It is time we blur the borders and merge into one sea of humanity, where each one's welfare matters to every other person."

## "Serious problems with shot selection...": SL coach Jayasuriya after loss to Australia



**GALLE** : Following his side's loss to Australia in the first Test at Galle, Sri Lankan coach Sanath Jayasuriya expressed disappointment with his team's shot selection and their inability to convert promising starts into big scores.

Australia delivered a strong all-round performance, filled with record-breaking efforts from Steve Smith, Usman Khawaja, Mitchell Starc and Nathan Lyon to defeat Sri Lanka by an innings and 242 runs to retain the Warner-Muralitharan Trophy and take a 1-0 lead in the two-match series.

Following the match, Jayasuriya said as quoted by ESPNCricinfo, "There was a serious problem with shot selections, as well as with handling situations. I do not think certain players have handled situations well. They are experienced players, and they have to be more mature."

The former all-rounder also remarked that the team has played a lot of cricket and "should know how to play."

"I have talked to them about this. But we have got to talk to them in detail about this now. Also, we cannot blame the wicket. Because we saw how the wicket behaved. This was a very good wicket. For a long time, we have not seen such a good wicket in Galle, on the third and fourth days," he added.

A crucial issue was Sri Lankan players not being able to convert their starts into big scores. During the first innings of Australia, six batters played 50 balls or more. But in Sri Lanka's innings, only Dinesh Chandimal played more than 50. In the second innings, Chandimal, Angelo Mathews, Kamindu Mendis and Kusal Mendis got off to solid starts but failed to hold down the fort for their team. Jayasuriya called for more consistency in converting starts into something impactful.

"The biggest problem is the batters who are taking a start but are not going to play a long innings. This is something I always mutter. We saw Usman Khawaja, Steve Smith and Josh Inglis, all three of them took a good start and they converted them to big hundreds. This conversion must be there. We are not

consistent in that. Our players should know that these are our conditions and we must make use of these conditions. There were lots of opportunities but we did not make use of them," the coach said.

Coming to the match, Australia won the toss and opted to bat first. Coming to the match, Australia won the toss and elected to bat first. A 92-run partnership between Usman Khawaja and Travis Head (57 in 40 balls, with 10 fours and a six) kickstarted things off for Australia. Steve Smith became the fourth Australian to touch the 10,000 mark in Tests and centuries from him and Khawaja marked Australia's day one end at 330/2.

On the next day, misery and runs from Australian batters continued to pile up for Sri Lanka and the spin bowling trio of Prabhath Jayasuriya (3/193), Jeffrey Vandersay (3/182) and Nishan Peiris (0/189) looked hopeless beyond repair. Smith fell to Vandersay (141 in 251 balls, with 12 fours and two sixes) after the team crossed the 400-run mark while Khawaja converted his century to a maiden double ton, making 232 in 352 balls, with 16 fours and a six.

Josh Inglis on his Test debut, also slammed a 94-ball 102 with 10 fours and a six, taking Australia beyond the 600-run mark. Contributions from Alex Carey (46\*), Beau Webster (23) and Mitchell Starc (19\*) helped Australia reach 654/6 declared, their highest-ever score in Asia, outdoing the 617 runs scored against Pakistan in Faisalabad in 1980.

If Australia had batted once in these two days, Sri Lanka was made to do it twice. In the first innings, SL ended day two at 44/3 but ended the innings at 165 thanks to Dinesh Chandimal, who played a valiant knock of 72 in 139 balls, with nine fours.

Matthew Kuhnemann (5/63) took his second Test fiver, while Nathan Lyon got three scalps. Mitchell Starc also got two to become the fourth Australian to complete 700 international wickets. Sri Lanka could not remove the 489-run deficit in the second innings, as by day four, they were bundled out for 247 runs, with Jeffrey Vandersay (53 in 47 balls, with seven fours and two sixes scoring maiden Test fifty and Dinesh Chandimal (31 in 49 balls, with three fours), Angelo Mathews (41 in 59 balls, with six fours), Kamindu Mendis (32 in 26 balls, with four boundaries and a six), skipper Dhananjaya de Silva (39 in 50 balls, with eight fours) and Kusal Mendis (34 in 47 balls, with four boundaries) throwing away their wickets after getting starts.



## 'Sundays on Cycle' emerging as a movement, says Union Sports Minister Mandaviya

**NEW DELHI** : Union Sports Minister Mansukh Mandaviya on Sunday participated in the 'Fit India Sundays on Cycle' event.

The event was themed this time on obesity and the need to combat it in India. Prime Minister Narendra Modi made the clarion call for the same at the opening ceremony of the 38th National Games in Dehradun. He called for a fight against obesity that is affecting all age groups both young and old.

The two-kilometre cycling ride in the national capital started and ended at Major Dhyanchand Stadium. Paralympics 2024 bronze medalist para-shooter Rubina Francis also took part in the event.

Speaking to ANI, Mandaviya said that the 'Sundays on Cycle' is emerging as a "movement" and a "festival".

"Today, I am seeing that 'Sunday on Cycle' is moving forward as a movement and festival. People are joining this event that is based on a different theme every Sunday. Doctors are also suggesting that citizens take action against the things that cause obesity. It is a big challenge affecting today's youth. PM Modi also talked about cures to prevent obesity, having a proper diet, lower oil consumption, doing exercises and cycling," said the minister.

Over 250 riders joined Dr Mandaviya and Rubina, including prominent doctors, nutritionists, students from Bharati College Delhi, members of the Soniya Vihar Water Sports Club, and social activist Mahesh Kumar.

## "Age is just a number": Smith throws weight behind Khawaja's Test future

**Galle** : Australia's stand-in skipper Steve Smith backed veteran opener Usman Khawaja to continue with the Test side as long as possible, saying that he is batting well and "age is just a number."

A dominant performance with the bat against Sri Lanka in Galle has left Australia with plenty of ponder ahead of the World Test Championship Final. Smith is backing in-form batter Usman Khawaja to prolong his international career and maintain his opening role for this year's ICC World Test Championship Final and the upcoming Ashes series.

Khawaja scored his highest Test score during Australia's crushing victory over Sri Lanka in the first Test in Galle, with the left-hander contributing a vital innings of 232 to move into the top five leading run-scorers for the current World Test Championship cycle. "This was his first-ever double hundred and has come in Asian conditions, which favour spin predominantly."

While Khawaja recently turned 38 and is facing a fresh battle from the likes of teenager Sam Konstas to maintain his place at the top of the batting order ahead of a busy upcoming Test period, Smith sees no reason why the veteran cannot continue in the role for as long as he wishes.

"He is still batting exceptionally well and age is only a number," Smith said of Khawaja as quoted by ICC after the game.

"He is still doing everything right, he is catching well in the slips, he is a senior figure. He is batting really well. I am not a selector, but I am sure as long as he wants to play then I am happy with him there for sure." Smith also defended batter's sub-par performances against India in the Border-Gavaskar Trophy, where he was troubled consistently by pace spearhead Jasprit

**Batting at the top of the order at the moment, particularly in Australia, is as hard as I have seen in my career. The amount of seam movement, and you throw into that he's facing Jasprit Bumrah throughout the summer with a brand new ball, fresh every time. There is probably not a much bigger threat in world cricket at the moment or almost ever," he said.**

Bumrah. He could score just 184 runs in 10 innings, averaging around 20 with one fifty to his name. He was dismissed by Bumrah five times out of nine.

"Batting at the top of the order at the moment, particularly in Australia, is as hard as I have seen in my career. The amount of seam movement, and you throw into that he's facing Jasprit Bumrah throughout the summer with a brand new ball, fresh every time. There is probably not a much bigger threat in world cricket at the moment or almost ever," he said.

"He is batting nicely, it is just tough at the moment. Fortunately here the last few times he has played on the sub-continent, he's come with such a clear method, a really effective method and stuck to it for long periods. He is tough to set a field when he is able to manipulate the field," he added.

While Khawaja's spot at the top of the order seemingly looks locked in for the World Test Championship Final in June against South Africa, Australia face a fresh selection headache as they try and squeeze all their best players into their XI for the one-off Test. Konstas shown enough during

the Border-Gavaskar Trophy series to put his hand up for selection, debutant Josh Inglis threw his hat into the ring with a century on debut against Sri Lanka, while star batter Travis Head looked in great touch in a relatively unfamiliar role alongside Khawaja as opener.

Injured all-rounder Cameron Green also returned to the batting crease at training in Australia and is in contention to take on the Proteas as a batter only should selectors opt to recall the highly-talented 25-year-old.

The conditions expected at Lord's for the one-off final will be vastly different to what the Aussies faced against Sri Lanka in Galle, but confidence is high within the Australian camp and Smith thinks his side can continue their winning run if they can maintain their excellent form. "To post 650 on what was a wicket that offered a fair amount of spin, was a very good effort," Smith noted.

"It was a near-flawless performance," he concluded. Coming to the match, Australia won the toss and opted to bat first. Coming to the match, Australia won the toss and elected to bat first. A 92-run partnership between Usman Khawaja and