

Midnapore: Left & BJP protest over substandard saline issue

Allegations of corruption and negligence have fueled public anger in Midnapore

BISWABRATA GOSWAMI
MIDNAPORE, 12 JANUARY

The controversy over the use of substandard saline at Midnapore Medical College has sparked widespread protests by political organisations, with both the Left and BJP intensifying their agitation against the state government and health authorities.

Allegations of corruption and negligence have fueled public anger, with leaders from both camps leading demonstrations in Midnapore town over the weekend.

The Left's youth and student wings, including the Democratic Youth Federation of India (DYFI) and the Students' Federation of India (SFI), have launched a robust protest campaign.

On Sunday, DYFI activists locked the office of the hospital superintendent and staged a demonstration outside, accusing the administration of turning a blind eye to corruption in the health sector. Key leaders, including Minakshi Mukherjee and Mayukh Biswas, spearheaded the agitation.

The protest began with a



march through the streets of Midnapore town, culminating at the hospital superintendent's office. Demonstrators carried an effigy symbolizing alleged corruption and attempted to enter the premises, later securing the gate with their own lock.

Although tensions ran high, the activists refrained from burning the effigy on hospital grounds. Instead, the protest shifted to the local police station, where the leaders continued their demonstration.

Minakshi Mukherjee, a prominent Left leader, accused the state health department and police of

collusion in allowing fake medicines to infiltrate medical institutions. "The infiltration of substandard saline into hospitals points to deep-rooted corruption. Why are the police failing to act? Are senior officials obstructing investigations?" she questioned.

The protest coincided with the CPM's district conference in Kharagpur, which faced a momentary disruption due to the arrest of interim CPM district secretary Vijay Pal during Saturday's demonstrations. However, Pal was released on bail to ensure the conference proceeded as planned. The CPM lead-

ership, keen to address past criticisms of sidelining protests during organisational events, ensured simultaneous participation in both.

CPM state secretary Mohammed Salim lauded the party's approach, stating, "We must multitask effectively. Our movements and organisational processes must go hand in hand."

Adding to the turmoil, BJP workers staged a separate protest in Midnapore town on Sunday. Led by district vice-president Shankar Guchhait and Youth Morcha district president Ashirbad Bhowmik, BJP activists burned tires and effigies while demanding

accountability from Chief Minister and Health Minister Mamata Banerjee. Clashes erupted as plainclothes police tried to confiscate the effigy, but protesters persisted, even setting fire to a photo of the Chief Minister.

The protests stem from reports that substandard saline, specifically 'Ringer Lactate' from a blacklisted company, was administered to pregnant women at Midnapore Medical College and Hospital. Despite a prior suspension of the product, it was allegedly used on five patients, prompting a 13-member health department inquiry. While the supplier has been blacklisted, public outrage continues over perceived negligence and corruption.

With both the Left and BJP ramping up their protests, the controversy shows no signs of abating. The Left has vowed to sustain its movement, with leaders like Mukherjee and SFI state secretary Debanjan Dey prioritizing the issue over pre-scheduled engagements. Meanwhile, BJP leaders have warned of escalated demonstrations if accountability is not ensured.

Palamau tiger enters Bengal

KANCHAN SIDDIQUI
DURGAPUR, 12 JANUARY

The fugitive Palamau tiger has finally sneaked into the Bengal forests, crossing the Subarnarekha River in the early hours of today, in a similar manner to tigress Zeenat – an escapee from Simlipal Tiger Reserve, Odisha – who intruded on 20 December last.

Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, just five days ago, expressed her concern over repeated incidents of tiger ingress into Bengal – once from Odisha and the other from Jharkhand.

Senior Forest officials confirmed its presence in the Kakrajhore jungles of Belpahari in the Jhargram-Purulia bordering stretch. Pugmarks of the renegade tiger were visible this morning at Mainakdiha in Belpahari and Jamunagara near Purulia's Bandwan. Dr S Kulandaivel, Chief Conservator of Forests (Central), told The Statesman: "We have already started placing our resources at strategic locations for close monitoring." Dr Kulandaivel's office in Durgapur has begun 24/7 surveillance of the tiger's possible movements.

The signals transmitted by the radio collar of tigress Zeenat incidentally helped locate her in Belpahari. The Palamau tiger, as the senior officials explained, "comes from the wild and for that is not equipped with any such device like Zeenat who had escaped soon after



her soft release into captivity." On 23 December, Zeenat's presence was felt at the Raika hillock in Purulia's Bandwan. The officials apprehend: "This tiger is suspected to follow the same route to Bandwan in a day or two." The officials estimate that this tiger would also take shelter at the same Raika hillock in Bandwan. Zeenat was finally tranquillised in Rani-bandh in Bankura and on 1 January, she was deported back to the Simlipal Tiger Reserve.

On 2 January, the paw impressions of the Palamau tiger were visible at Gangudih near Chandil in Jharkhand, which triggered panic in at least 18 villages under the Chowka PS area there. The tiger then continued moving between Chandil and Dalma Forest areas.

"On Friday, we detected its pugmarks in East Dalma patches," said Saba Alam Ansari, Divisional Forest Officer, Jamshedpur, today. He is also

handling the role of Field Director, Dalma Elephant Project. He added: "It is assumed that the tiger might have followed the elephant corridor route." Regarding its presence in Jhargram's Belpahari today, Ansari said late this afternoon: "We have gathered some information like that from unverified sources, but the Bengal Forest officials were yet to inform us." On last Tuesday, the tiger's footprints were visible in Chandil areas – about 16 to 20 km from Barabazar in Purulia, however. Earlier, it had taken temporary shelter in Balidih jungles – far from Dalma and about 24 km from Purulia – for about three consecutive days. Sumit Mahato – a boy from Balidih, while supervising the grazing of cattle sitting on a treetop, witnessed how the full-grown tiger had preyed on a cow. Another resident, Mongal Singh Mun-da – who had arrived at the place a few minutes later – also claimed to be a witness to the predation.

DM of West Burdwan district says all stone crusher workers will be screened after four workers were detected with silicosis recently

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
ASANSOL, 12 JANUARY

The District Magistrate of West Burdwan, S. Ponnambalam, has directed the health screening of all workers in the district's stone-crushing industries after four labourers were recently detected with silicosis.

There are several stone-crushing units in West Burdwan district, and workers from only one factory have been screened so far.

After health screening, suspected patients will be required to appear before

the special silicosis detection board of the district health department.

A committee will be set up at Salanpur block for silicosis, and the first meeting will be held on 14 January. After which, the members of the committee will be finalized.

It should be mentioned that two persons from Barabhui village in Salanpur Block have already died due to silicosis. The families of the victims will receive compensation according to government announcements. They have been directed to

submit all the necessary documents to receive the compensation.

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has already directed the District Magistrate of West Burdwan to investigate and submit a report within eight weeks. The NHRC has already lodged two separate cases.

Meanwhile, the ADM (General) of West Burdwan, Subhasini E, has also directed the Chief Medical Officer of Health (CMOH) to send a medical team to Barabhui village and submit a report.

Subsequently, the CMOH of West Burdwan sent a special medical team for investigations to the affected village and later formed a medical board for screening at Asansol District Hospital.

These workers are exposed to the dangerous quartz dust in stone-crushing units, most of which do not adhere to safety protocols and violate Pollution Control Board norms. Long-term exposure of these workers is affecting their normal lung function, ultimately leading to the deadly silicosis disease.

Railway Board Member (Finance) visits Chittaranjan Locomotive Works

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
CHITTARANJAN, 12 JANUARY

Ms. Roopa Srinivasan, Member (Finance) of the Railway Board/New Delhi & ex-officio Secretary to Government of India, visited Chittaranjan Locomotive Works (CLW) today.

During her visit, Ms. Srinivasan began at Ganapati Hut and inspected Shop Nos. 16 and 19. A significant highlight of her visit was the flagging off of the 500th locomotive produced by CLW in the current financial

year (2024-25).

She then toured Deshbandhu Loco Park, expressing appreciation for CLW's rich heritage. Ms. Srinivasan subsequently inspected the Kasturba Gandhi Hospital in the railway township and visited the Administrative Office, where she toured the Heritage Museum Gallery.

Later, Ms. Srinivasan chaired a meeting with all Principal Heads of Departments (PHODs) and Chief Heads of Departments (CHODs) in the Adminis-

trative Meeting Hall, in the gracious presence of Vijay Kumar, General Manager. During the session, CLW's technical advancements and major projects were presented, which Ms. Srinivasan highly commended.

In the afternoon, Ms. Srinivasan attended a meeting with railway union and association members in the Administrative Meeting Hall. She also held detailed discussions with Vijay Kumar, General Manager. Mr Kumar, Angshuman



Sarkar, Principal Finance Adviser, Principal Heads of Departments, and Senior officers accompanied Ms. Roopa Srinivasan during her visit to CLW.

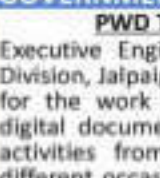


WEST BENGAL STATE ELECTRICITY DISTRIBUTION COMPANY LIMITED
(A Govt. of West Bengal Enterprise)
Regd. Office : Vidyut Bhawan, Block-D, Sector-II, Bidhannagar, Kolkata - 700 091
CN : U40109WB200756C13473, www.wbsecl.in

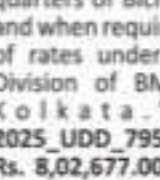
WBSECL invites Tender as follows:
NIT No.: WBSECL/CSC/SC/Travel/989, **Dt.:** 08.01.2025 of the Addl. General Manager (HR&A) Common Service Cell, WBSECL. **Estimated Cost: ₹ 6.7 crore** for *Rate Contract with Travel Agencies for arrangement of tours of officials of WBSECL-PAN India Basis*.
ICA:TB4031/2025
For details, visit www.wbsecl.in



GOVERNMENT OF WEST BENGAL
NOTICE INVITING TENDER
The Executive Engineer BMS Division invites on percentage rate basis online TENDER, vide **WBUDS&M/BMS/NIT-171(e)/2024-25** of Executive Engineer/Bidhannagar Municipal Services Division for the work : **Sl No:1** "Annual M/R to sanitary and plumbing works including renovation of newly allotted sites at di erent quarters of Bichitra Abasan, as and when required as per PWD schedule of rates of Salt Lake Roads Sub-Division of BMS Division, Salt Lake, Kolkata: 700091." (Tender Id: 2025_UDD_795334_1) Tender Amount: **Rs. 8,22,342.00** Date of publication is on: **13/01/2025** at **11:00 A.M.** Bid submission end date is on **22/01/2025**, upto **17:00 Hrs.** **Sl No: 2** "Maintenance and repair of building work at di erent quarters of Bichitra Abasan, Sector-I as and when required as per PWD schedule of rates under Salt Lake Roads Sub-Division of BMS Division, Salt Lake, Kolkata: 700091." (Tender Id: 2025_UDD_795334_2) Tender Amount: **Rs. 8,02,677.00** Date of publication is on: **13/01/2025** at **11:00 A.M.** Bid submission end date is on **22/01/2025**, upto **17:00 Hrs.** All documents can be seen/obtained from the website: <https://wbtdenders.gov.in> In Detailed information can also be seen in the website: www.wburbanservices.gov.in and office Notice Board of Bidhannagar Municipal services Division, Nirman Bhawan, Salt Lake, Kolkata 700091. Sd/- Executive Engineer, Bidhannagar Municipal Services Division.
ICA:TB8202/2025



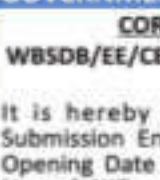
GOVERNMENT OF WEST BENGAL
NOTICE INVITING TENDER
Executive Engineer (PWD), Jalpaiguri Division, Jalpaiguri invites online tender for the work of "Preparation of HD digital documentary for construction activities from time presentation in different occasions during progress of work of construction of Circuit Bench of Kolkata High Court at Jalpaiguri West Bengal (Phase-II)." Tender Id: 2025_PWD_798497_1. NITd No 03 of 2024-25 (13 call) Bid submission closing date(online):21-01-2025 upto 12.30 Hrs Technical Opening date (online) : 24.01.2025 at 13.00 Hrs. Corrigendum if any will be published in website only. Details of NIT documents may be downloaded from: <http://wbtdenders.gov.in> Sd/-EE, JALPAIGURI DIVISION, PWD.
ICA:TB8202/2025




GOVERNMENT OF WEST BENGAL
CORRIGENDUM-2
WB508/EE/CED-I/NIT-161(e)/2024-25, Sl-06.
It is hereby notified that the Bid Submission End Date & Technical Bid Opening Date of above mentioned SI. No. of NIT as published have been changed due to non-receive of minimum nos. of bidder are as follows:-

Particulars	Changed Date & Time
Bid submission End Date	17.01.2025 at 15.00 hrs.
Technical Bid Opening Date	20.01.2025 at 11.00 hrs.


Sd/-
Executive Engineer
Civil Engineering Division No-1
Sunderban Development Board
ICA:TB4621/2025



GOVERNMENT OF WEST BENGAL
NOTICE INVITING TENDER
The Executive Engineer BMS Division invites on percentage rate basis online TENDER, vide **WBUDS&M/BMS/NIT-171(e)/2024-25** of Executive Engineer/Bidhannagar Municipal Services Division for the work : **Sl No:1** "Annual M/R to sanitary and plumbing works including renovation of newly allotted sites at di erent quarters of Bichitra Abasan, Sector-I as and when required as per PWD schedule of rates under Salt Lake Roads Sub-Division of BMS Division, Salt Lake, Kolkata: 700091." (Tender Id: 2025_UDD_795334_1) Tender Amount: **Rs. 8,22,342.00** Date of publication is on: **13/01/2025** at **11:00 A.M.** Bid submission end date is on **22/01/2025**, upto **17:00 Hrs.** All documents can be seen/obtained from the website: <https://wbtdenders.gov.in> In Detailed information can also be seen in the website: www.wburbanservices.gov.in and office Notice Board of Bidhannagar Municipal services Division, Nirman Bhawan, Salt Lake, Kolkata 700091. Sd/- Executive Engineer, Bidhannagar Municipal Services Division.
ICA:TB8202/2025



The West Bengal Power Development Corporation Limited
(A Govt. of West Bengal Enterprise)
Corporate Identity No. U40104WB1985SGC039154
Santalidih Thermal Power Station
P.O. Santalidih Thermal Plant, Dist. - Purulia, Pin - 723146
Notice Inviting E-Tender
Ref. No.: WBPDC/L/Tend-Adv/24-25/STPS/CC-2953 **Dated:** 03.01.2025
NIT No.: WBPDC/L/STPS/NIT/E3834/24-25
E-Tenders in prescribed format are invited at <https://wbtdenders.gov.in> by the General Manager, STPS, WBPDC from eligible Agencies/Companies in 2 Part bid system for "Procurement of Ceiling fan with Electronic Regulator, Pedestal Fan, Wall-mounted Fan under EM-OPH Dept., Santalidih T.P.S., the WBPDC". Tender Document Download Start Date: 10.01.2025 at 15:00 hrs. Bid Submission End Date: 20.01.2025 at 15:00 hrs. Contact Person: Mr. D. Biswas, Dy. General Manager (Purchase), STPS. Tel. No.: 08336904045. E-mail: cbiswas@wbpdcl.co.in For details please visit: <https://wbtdenders.gov.in>




The West Bengal Power Development Corporation Limited
(A Govt. of West Bengal Enterprise)
Corporate Identity No. U40104WB1985SGC039154
Bandel Thermal Power Station
P.O. Tribeni, Dist. - Hooghly, Pin - 712503
Notice Inviting E-Tender
Ref. No.: WBPDC/L/Tend-Adv/24-25/BT/PS/CC-2954 **Date:** 03.01.2025
NIT No.: WBPDC/L/BT/PS/NIT/E2511/24-25
E-Tenders in prescribed format are invited at <https://wbtdenders.gov.in> by the General Manager, BT/PS, WBPDC from eligible Agencies/Companies in 02 (two) Part bid system for "Procurement of various types of Metallic Expansion bellows for Overhauling of Unit# 2, BT/PS". Tender Document Download Start Date: 13.01.2025 at 15:00 hrs. Bid Submission End Date: 05.02.2025 at 16:00 hrs. Contact Person: Mrs. Ranjana Bhaduri, AGM (M&C), Phone: 033 26812311. E-mail: purchase_bts@wbpdcl.co.in For details please visit: <https://wbtdenders.gov.in>




GOVERNMENT OF WEST BENGAL
HALDIA DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
City Centre, P.O. Debhog, Haldia
Dist. Purba Medinipur, PIN-721657
Toll Free No. 1800-345-3224
NOTICE INVITING TENDER
NIT No. 11/HDA/EE/2024-2025 (2nd call)
Online (E-Tender) tender in a two bid system is hereby invited for "CONSTRUCTION OF CONCRETE ROAD FROM CHANDI JANA'S HOUSE TO UTTAM BERA'S HOUSE AT CHAKSOMULIA GRAM PANCHAYET, MOZA PANDABASAN AND CHAKDURGABASAN UNDER NANDAKUMAR PANCHAYET SAMITY". Estimated Cost of work: Rs. 1,70,20,188/- (Including GST and Labour Welfare Cess). Document downloading date: 14.1.25 to 4.2.25 upto 3:30 p.m. Starting date of bid submission: 24.1.25 at 10:00 a.m. Last date of online bid submission : 4.2.25 up to 4:00 p.m. Information in details is available in the office and in the website of HDA, www.hda.gov.in. E-Tender can be submitted through: wbtdenders.gov.in Sd/- Chief Executive Officer, HDA. ICA:TB8213/2025



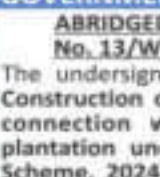
GOVERNMENT OF WEST BENGAL
Biswa Bangla Marketing Corporation Limited
Karigari Bhawan, Ground Floor, Room No 009,
Action Area III, New Town, Rajarhat,
Kolkata - 700160
CN - US2100WB201456C204751
SHORT TENDER NOTICE
e-Tenders are hereby invited by Managing Director, Biswa Bangla Marketing Corporation Ltd. (BBMC) from bonafide printers for printing of about 2.25 Crore logos on polyester-viscose fabric. Technical & Financial bids are to be submitted Online only at <https://wbtdenders.gov.in> For details, please visit www.biswaBangla.in **NIT No.:** BBMC/5CH-LOGO/2024-25/NIT0131(e) (Tender Id: 2025_BBMC1_796456_1). Date of publication of NIT 11.01.2025. Start Date & Time for submitting e-Tenders 11.01.2025, 11:00 A.M. Date & Time for Online Pre-bid Meeting 14.01.2025, 3 P.M. Last date for submission of e-Tenders 18.01.2025, 6:00 P.M. Sd/- Managing Director, Biswa Bangla Marketing Corporation Limited.
ICA:TB8401/2025




The West Bengal Power Development Corporation Limited
(A Govt. of West Bengal Enterprise)
Corporate Identity No. U40104WB1985SGC039154
Bakreswar Thermal Power Project
P.O. BKTPP, Dist. - Birbhum, Pin - 721104
NOTICE INVITING E-TENDER
Ref. No.: WBPDC/L/Tend-Adv/24-25/BKTPP/CC-2959 **Dated:** 08.01.2025
NIT No.: WBPDC/L/BKTPP/NIT/E3509/24-25
E-Tenders in prescribed format are invited at <https://wbtdenders.gov.in> by the General Manager - BKTPP, WBPDC from eligible Agencies/Companies in 2 Part bid system for "Development of Green Belt at Reclaimed Portion i.e. RHS of Ash Pond-I, BKTPPS". Tender Document Download Start Date: 06.01.2025 at 10:00 AM. Bid Submission End Date: 22.01.2025 at 04:00 PM. Contact Person: Mr. Indrani Chakraborty, Dy. General Manager - CC, BKTPP, WBPDC. Mobile : 8373055604. E-mail: cc_bktps@wbpdcl.co.in/cc_bktps@gmail.com For details please visit: <https://wbtdenders.gov.in>
ICA:TB8901/2025



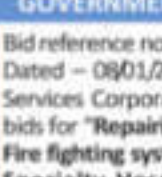
The West Bengal Power Development Corporation Limited
(A Govt. of West Bengal Enterprise)
Corporate Identity No. U40104WB1985SGC039154
Santalidih Thermal Power Station
P.O. Santalidih Thermal Plant, Dist. - Purulia, Pin - 723146
Notice Inviting E-Tender
Ref. No.: WBPDC/L/Tend-Adv/24-25/STPS/CC-2950 **Dated:** 03.01.2025
NIT No.: WBPDC/L/STPS/NIT/E3836/24-25
E-Tenders in prescribed format are invited at <https://wbtdenders.gov.in> by the General Manager, STPS, WBPDC from eligible Agencies/Companies in 2 Part bid system for "Service Contract for Round the Clock Operation of 01 no. in Motion Weigh Bridge under CHP (O), STPS, WBPDC for two years". Tender Document Download Start Date: 07.01.2025 from 11:00 hrs. Bid Submission End Date: 03.02.2025 within 16:00 hrs. Contact Person: Mr. G. C. Maji, Mobile : 8336903939. E-mail: cc_stps@wbpdcl.co.in/gmail@wbpdcl.co.in For details please visit: <https://wbtdenders.gov.in>
ICA:TB4801/2025




GOVERNMENT OF WEST BENGAL
ABRIDGED e-TENDER NOTICE
NIT No. 13/WB/FOF/KSD/2024-25
The undersigned invites e-Tender for Construction of Vegetative Fencing in bid for "Repairing & Renovation of entire Fire fighting system of M.R. Bangur Super Speciality Hospital, District - Paschim Medinipur - FPS & FDA System". Last date of submission of bid (online) – 28.01.2025 upto 03.00 PM. or as per available slot of WB tender start date: 21.01.2025. Bid Submission end date: 21.01.2025. Bid Submission end date: 04.02.2025 upto 17:00 Hrs. Tender ID: 2025_IWD_797045_1. Detailed information regarding the e-NIT will be available in the Website: www.wbtdenders.gov.in and www.wb.b.i.d.a.gov.in Sd/- Superintending Engineer, Mechanical & Electrical Circle, Irrigation & Waterways ICA:TB8303/2025



GOVERNMENT OF WEST BENGAL
Biswa Bangla Marketing Corporation Limited
Karigari Bhawan, Ground Floor, Room No 009,
Action Area III, New Town, Rajarhat,
Kolkata - 700160
CN - US2100WB201456C204751
SHORT TENDER NOTICE
e-Tenders are hereby invited by Managing Director, Biswa Bangla Marketing Corporation Ltd. (BBMC) from bonafide printers for printing of about 2.25 Crore logos on polyester-viscose fabric. Technical & Financial bids are to be submitted Online only at <https://wbtdenders.gov.in> For details, please visit www.biswaBangla.in **NIT No.:** BBMC/5CH-LOGO/2024-25/NIT0131(e) (Tender Id: 2025_BBMC1_796456_1). Date of publication of NIT 11.01.2025. Start Date & Time for submitting e-Tenders 11.01.2025, 11:00 A.M. Date & Time for Online Pre-bid Meeting 14.01.2025, 3 P.M. Last date for submission of e-Tenders 18.01.2025, 6:00 P.M. Sd/- Managing Director, Biswa Bangla Marketing Corporation Limited.
ICA:TB8401/2025




GOVERNMENT OF WEST BENGAL
Bid reference no. - WBMSCL/NIT-02/2025, Dated – 09/01/2025 West Bengal Medical Services Corporation Ltd. is inviting online bids for "Repairing & Renovation of entire Fire fighting system of M.R. Bangur Super Speciality Hospital, District - Paschim Medinipur - FPS & FDA System". Last date of submission of bid (online) – 28.01.2025 upto 03.00 PM. or as per available slot of WB tender start date: 21.01.2025. Bid Submission end date: 21.01.2025. Bid Submission end date: 04.02.2025 upto 17:00 Hrs. Tender ID: 2025_IWD_797045_1. Detailed information regarding the e-NIT will be available in the Website: www.wbtdenders.gov.in and www.wb.b.i.d.a.gov.in Sd/- Superintending Engineer, Mechanical & Electrical Circle, Irrigation & Waterways ICA:TB8303/2025




GOVERNMENT OF WEST BENGAL
Biswa Bangla Marketing Corporation Limited
Karigari Bhawan, Ground Floor, Room No 009,
Action Area III, New Town, Rajarhat,
Kolkata - 700160
CN - US2100WB201456C204751
SHORT TENDER NOTICE
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ICA:TB8401/2025



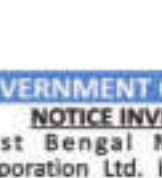
The West Bengal Power Development Corporation Limited
(A Govt. of West Bengal Enterprise)
Corporate Identity No. U40104WB1985SGC039154
Kolkata Thermal Power Station
P.O. Mecheda, Dist. Purba Medinipur, Pin - 721137
Notice Inviting E-Tender
Ref. No.: WBPDC/L/Tend-Adv/24-25/KTPS/CC-2948 **Dated:** 03.01.2025
NIT No.: WBPDC/L/KTPS/NIT/E3205/24-25
E-Tenders in prescribed format are invited at <https://wbtdenders.gov.in> by the General Manager, KTPS, WBPDC from eligible Agencies/Companies in 2 Part bid system for "Biennial Service Contract for Operation of Chlorination Plants, Acidulation Plant and Ammonia Dosing under Operation Department". Tender Document Download Start Date: 10.01.2025 at 14:00 hrs. Bid Submission End Date: 10.02.2025 at 14:00 hrs. Contact Person: Mr. Kisanu Gupta, Senior Manager (PS)/Contract Cell, KTPS. Mobile No.: 8336909047. E-mail: kgupta@wbpdcl.co.in For details please visit: <https://wbtdenders.gov.in>
ICA:TB8901/2025



The West Bengal Power Development Corporation Limited
(A Govt. of West Bengal Enterprise)
Corporate Identity No. U40104WB1985SGC039154
Registered & Corporate Office : Bidyut Umanayin Bhavan
Plot No. 3/C, LA - Block, Sector-III, Bidhannagar, Kd-700108
Notice Inviting Tender- Cum-Forward E-Auction
Ref. No.: WBPDC/L/Tend-Adv/24-25/CORP/CC-2984 **Date:** 10.01.2025
NIT No.: WBPDC/L/CORP/NIT/E1983/24-25 **Dated:** 09.01.2025
"Sale of 3 Lac cum Settled Ash from Ash Pond of BkTPP, WBPDC".
Tender Document Download Start Date / Auction Date: 09.01.2025 from 17:00 hrs. / 21.01.2025 at 12:00 hrs. Contact Person: Smt. Ipsita Chaudhuri, Senior Manager (M&C). Contact No.: 033 26813625/9830616477. E-mail: ichauchuri@wbpdcl.co.in For details please visit: <https://wbtdenders.gov.in>
ICA:TB4621/2025



GOVERNMENT OF WEST BENGAL
Department of Youth Services & Sports
32/1, B.B.D. Bag (South) Standard Buildings
(1st Floor) Kolkata-700001
E-TENDER NOTICE
NIT No.: 10-YS/O/1M-34/17, Kolkata, Dated 17th December, 2024
E-Quotation invited from reliable, resourceful, bonafide registered agency/registered firm/company having at least 3 years of experience as on 01.01.2025 in the field of catering service or supply of food or running canteen under the Government premises on operational contract on rental basis at the premises within Nababrajannya State Youth Hostel, Vivekananda Yuba Bharati Kirangan, Salt Lake. Details are available in website: <https://wbtdenders.gov.in> Last date of submission of bid is 07.02.2025. Sd/- Secretary & E.O. Director, Department of Youth Services & Sports. ICA:TB8201/2025



GOVERNMENT OF WEST BENGAL
NOTICE INVITING TENDER

THUMBNAILS

Cattle thief lynched in Memari: A youth was lynched to death on suspicion that he was a cattle lifter at a village in Memari in East Burdwan today. The villages of Merua, Amadpur, Bijur and Gangur have recorded a number of thefts of livestock in recent times. Tanmoy Sar, a Merua resident, alleged that police remained indifferent to the matter despite repeated complaints of theft. At around 2:30 am today, some miscreants had entered the cattle-shed of a house at Merua village but the night guards chased them and caught one. The detained youth was heavily roughed up and he died before the police could rescue him. Police said that the identity of the deceased has not been determined as yet. **SNS**

Malda's silk industry revives with record prices and farmer optimism

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
SILIGURI, 12 JANUARY

The silk industry in Malda, which had suffered significantly during the Covid-19 pandemic, has shown remarkable recovery with the latest Aghrayani crop, a popular commercial variety. Farmers have expressed satisfaction with the production and record-breaking prices, according to official sources.

This revival is attributed to the efforts of the state sericulture department, guided by Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee. She has tasked her Cabinet colleague Sabina Yeasmin with closely monitoring the silk industry's development in Malda.

Ms. Yeasmin attended a meeting of Registered Seed Producers (RSP) in Kaliachak today, where she distributed benefits to sericulture farmers. To support marginal farmers, the department has provided rearing trays (dalas) and silk worm spinning trays (chandrakis), with each farmer receiving 10-20 dalas and 10 chandrakis.

Speaking to the media, Ms. Yeasmin said: "The silk industry and its market were struggling, but the cocoon market has recently bounced back, with both cocoon and yarn prices seeing satisfactory growth. Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has entrusted me with three departments, but I give special attention to sericulture because it is the pride of Malda, renowned for its mangoes and silk. We must uphold this legacy."

Deputy Director of Sericulture in Malda, Surajit Chaudhuri, highlighted the record prices achieved in the last crop season, stating, "Farmers earned Rs 24,000 for 40 kg of cocoons, while quality silk yarn fetched over Rs 4,000 per kg."

Gangasagar Mela 2025 to be a grand pilgrimage with unmatched security

The district administration expects around 50 lakh devotees to attend this year's Gangasagar Mela

RAJIB CHAKRABORTY
GANGASAGAR, 12 JANUARY

The South 24 Parganas district administration expects around 50 lakh devotees to attend this year's Gangasagar Mela. The fair officially commenced on Friday. The residents of Sagar Island are ready to welcome the pilgrims. Traders have already set up their stalls at the fairground, and the crowd is gradually increasing. This year, arrangements have been made to check the quality of food sold at the temporary stalls in Gangasagar.

According to administrative sources, 2,250 government buses and 500 private buses will be operational for the occasion. Additionally, six barges, 32 vessels, and 100

launches will operate on waterways. Around 12,000 police personnel have been deployed for security. Ten temporary fire stations have been set up with 25 fire engines on standby.

From Kolkata's Babughat to Gangasagar, 1,150 CCTV cameras have been installed. Surveillance will also be conducted using drones and speed boats. District Magistrate Sumit Gupta stated that the fair has officially started on Friday, and all necessary services will be available for the pilgrims. A Rs 5 lakh insurance policy is also provided for pilgrims. Fire brigade services are in place, and a mega control room has been set up to ensure complete security for the entire Gangasagar Mela. The mega control room will monitor every



At the Gangasagar Mela ahead of Makar Sankranti. ■ BISWAJIT GHOSHAL

point of the fair 24 hours a day through around 1,200 CCTV cameras during the festival. Coastal guard personnel with speed boats are

keeping a close watch on the Gangasagar seashore, especially when the sages and saints take their holy dip. Helicopter surveillance has

also been arranged along the Gangasagar coastal area. In light of recent incidents in Bangladesh, special security measures have been strengthened across the Bay of Bengal coast and the Gangasagar region. The state government has taken significant steps for this year's fair, including the operation of special trains. The state police and administration are working diligently to ensure that tourists and pilgrims from other states do not face any difficulties during their visit to Gangasagar.

Several rest camps have been set up near Kolkata's Babughat, particularly at Outram Ghat, for the saints and sages. These camps are equipped with facilities such as drinking water, medical booths, and assistance centers.

The entire area is monitored with CCTV cameras for security purposes, ensuring that the saints and sages do not face any inconvenience. Security guards have also been deployed for their safety.

To ensure a smooth experience for the pilgrims and tourists coming from across the country and abroad, special surveillance arrangements have been made by the administration. Every year, millions of people gather at Gangasagar for this holy event. Help and check-up camps have been set up in various places by the state government to provide assistance to devotees. For the safety and convenience of pilgrims, strict surveillance is being maintained by the police.

NDRF deploys five specialised teams for Gangasagar Mela

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, 12 JANUARY

In a significant move to ensure the safety and well-being of lakhs of pilgrims attending the iconic Gangasagar Mela, the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) has deployed five specialized search and rescue teams. The teams, drawn from the 2nd Battalion of the NDRF, have been stationed at key locations within the Mela area, including Mela Ground, Lot-8, Kachuberia, Namkhana, and Benuban.

The teams, drawn from the 2nd Battalion of the NDRF, have been stationed at key locations within the Mela area, including Mela Ground, Lot-8, Kachuberia, Namkhana, and Benuban.

the teams' operational readiness.

An NDRF commander expressed confidence in the preparedness of their personnel today. "Our teams are well-trained, highly motivated, and ready to address any emergencies that may arise during the Gangasagar Mela. We are committed to working closely with the administration to ensure the safety and security of all pilgrims," they stated.

The strategic deployment, which includes the canine squad for search operations, reflects the NDRF's dedication to minimizing risks and ensuring a smooth experience for attendees. The Gangasagar Mela, held annually in West Bengal, is one of the largest religious gatherings in the country, drawing millions of devotees from across the nation and beyond.

vide swift responses to emergencies, enhancing safety measures at the Mela, which runs from 10 January to 18 January.

The NDRF teams are equipped with state-of-the-art gear to handle a wide array of emergencies, including aquatic search and rescue operations, structural collapse incidents, and potential chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear (CBRN) threats. The inclusion of female rescuers and medical first responders is a critical element of the deployment, strengthening

YOUTH ICON



Children observed Swami Vivekananda's birth anniversary at his house on Sunday. ■ SNS

Pilgrim passes away before holy dip at Gangasagar; two critically patients airlifted to Kolkata

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
GANGASAGAR, 12 JANUARY

Abhadesh Tiwari, aged 59, a resident of Uttar Pradesh, passed away today while visiting Gangasagar. The district administration said he fell ill suddenly before taking the holy dip.

So far, two critically ill pilgrims have been airlifted to Kolkata's M.R. Bangur Hospital on an emergency basis through chopper.

Aroop Biswas, Minister of Sports and Youth Welfare, stated that devotees started taking the holy dip from 1 January.

He said: "Around 45 lakhs devotees have completed their pilgrimage, holy dip and left so far. We respect the Mahakumbh Mela, but the central government has remained silent regarding Gangasagar."

Forty-one ailing pilgrims have been shifted to Calcutta Medical College Hospital. Among them are Thakur Das (70), from Uttar Pradesh, suffering from cardiac issues; Maharani Mondal (85), from Canning, West Bengal; and Rajkumar Mondal (20), from Uttar Pradesh, who fell ill.

So far, 22 cases of pickpocketing have been reported, out of which stolen items have been recovered in 18 cases, and 15 individuals have been arrested for various criminal activities.

Among 106 missing pilgrims reported, 103 have been reunited with their families with the help of the administration and volunteers.

Tension escalates at India-B'desh border over fencing near Teen Bigha Corridor

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
SILIGURI, 12 JANUARY

Even as top BSF and BGB officials jointly witnessed the Retreat Ceremony at the Zero Point of the Land and Customs Station (LCS) in Fulbari near Siliguri, tensions are brewing near the Teen Bigha Corridor in Cooch Behar today.

The objective of the Retreat Ceremony, attended by Inspector General of the Border Security Force (BSF) Soorya Kant Sharma and Additional Director General of the Bangladesh Border Guard (BGB) North West Region, Rangpur, Brigadier General S.M. Zahidur Rahman (*in photo*), was to strengthen and sustain the longstanding bond of friendship between the two nations.

On the other hand, unrest



continues on the India-Bangladesh border, stemming from makeshift fencing erected by Indian villagers near the zero line, intended to protect standing crops from cattle and human intrusion from the Bangladesh side near the enclaves of Dahagram and Angarpota.

However, Bangladeshi residents have aggressively resisted these efforts following remarks by Lt. General Jahangir Ahmed, Advisor of Home Affairs in Bangladesh.

Speaking to the media in Dhaka, Lt. General Ahmed today condemned the fencing, blaming the latest bilat-

eral agreements between the two nations. His statement has reportedly fuelled resistance from Bangladeshi residents, further escalating tensions.

"Construction has been halted in three locations," Lt. General Ahmed claimed. He also acknowledged that as a signatory to the agreements, the BGB cannot legally object to the construction. Nonetheless, he criticised India's restrictions on the movement through the Teen Bigha Corridor, which Bangladesh uses to access the enclaves of Dahagram and Angarpota.

"Bangladesh gave up Berubari to India for uninterrupted 24-hour access to the Teen Bigha Corridor. However, India has imposed restricted movement hours, and now the fencing con-

struction poses another issue. We do not accept this decision," Lt. General Ahmed said.

India had earlier agreed to implement the Land Boundary Agreement (LBA), handing over Indian enclaves to Bangladesh and allowing 24-hour access to the Teen Bigha Corridor. An agreement was also signed permitting India to erect fencing directly along the zero line near Dahagram and Angarpota, exempting the standard 150-yard distance rule for international border fences.

However, since the change of government in Bangladesh, tensions along the Indo-Bangladesh border have increased. BSF officials fear the latest developments may further complicate the already volatile situation.

Kamarpukur Ramakrishna Mission Math celebrates Swami Vivekananda birth anniversary



STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
HOOGHLY, 12 JANUARY

Kamarpukur Ramakrishna Mission Math today celebrated the birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda as National Youth Day. Monks, school students, Arambagh MP Mitali Bag, members of non-political and political organisations, and other dignitaries participated in a colourful rally. Banners, placards, and tableaux upheld the ideology and teachings of Swami Vivekananda.

Swami Lokottaranda, on the occasion, said that after the rally, a Youth Sammelan, discourse, and lectures on the teachings of Swami Vivekananda were held. He emphasised that these teachings are still highly relevant for the youth of the present generation. Self-introspection, character building, and building sound health play a vital



role in nation-building. Swami Ji stressed the importance of spiritual upliftment to move ahead on the path of righteousness, with respect for all faiths and beliefs, and to serve society with a sense of brotherhood.

The Arambagh MP, Mitali Bag, said that Swami Vivekananda is our guiding star. Swami Ji's teachings have shown the world the importance and essence of human life, and the role and responsibilities of every individual towards their family, society, and the nation. Our state Chief Minister, Mamata Banerjee, following the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna Paramhansa, Swami Vivekananda, and Maa Sarada, has set the aim and objective to serve the needy and the deprived irrespective of religion, caste, and creed.

Prasad was provided to everyone.

India's sixth and eastern india's first astronomical observatory inaugurated at Garpanchkot Hills in Purulia

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
PURULIA, 12 JANUARY

The first astronomical observatory in Eastern India has been inaugurated in Garpanchkot Hills in Purulia district by the Satyendra Nath Bose National Centre for Basic Sciences.

Vishvajit Sahay, Additional Secretary of the Union Science and Technology Department, Professor of Physics at IIT Mumbai, B. N. Jagtap, Vice-Chancellor of Sidho Kanho Birs University, Pabitra Kumar Chakraborty, and others were present during the inauguration event.

This is the sixth such astronomical observatory centre in the country and has been named after Satyendra Nath Bose.

Tanushree Saha Dasgupta, Director, said that this project work commenced in 2012 on 4.9 acres of land. Two telescopes have been installed.



The seeing value of this place is 1.3 arc seconds, which is at par with the other five centres in the country.

The best time for observation will be from November to April, when the sky will be clear.

An automatic weather forecast centre has also been opened above the hilltop, which will be helpful for measuring rainfall, temperatures, and wind speed. Scientist Ramkrishna Das

said that initially two places were considered: Susunia Hills in Bankura and Garpanchkot Hills in Purulia. The centre has been set up 600 metres above sea level as the centre needs to be established in a non-polluted area.

One more long-range telescope will be installed shortly. The varsity students will be able to conduct research in astrophysics from this centre.



The other centres are in Ladakh, Nainital, Mount Abu, Girbani Hills in Pune, and Kavalur in Tamil Nadu.

"At an elevation of 600 metres above ground level, nestled away from city lights and surrounded by the serene beauty of nature, the S.N. Bose National Centre for Basic Sciences (SNBNCBS) has proudly unveiled its first-ever astronomical observatory – a cutting-edge facility for groundbreaking research in

astronomy and astrophysics in Eastern India.

The observatory is equipped with a 14-inch diameter telescope, with plans underway to install a 1-metre diameter telescope soon. Additionally, a research scholar from Sidhu Kanu Birs University tracks the night sky daily, collecting valuable data on atmospheric turbulence.

The S.N. Bose Centre has also signed an MoU with SKB

GOVERNMENT OF WEST BENGAL

2025

IN THE HIGH COURT AT CALCUTTA

(ORIGINAL SIDE)

EMPLOYMENT NOTICE

Notification No. 01-R/OS/HV/2025

Dated, Calcutta, 10th January, 2025

Employment Notice bearing Ref. No.- 01-HCOS/TSL/2025 dated 10th January, 2025, inviting applications from eligible candidates for filling up the 02 (two) vacancies in the post of Translator on the Original Side establishment of the High Court at Calcutta has been uploaded in the official website of the Calcutta High Court. Applications for such post must reach the office of the undersigned within 4:30 P.M. on or before 5th February, 2025.

For details, visit Calcutta High Court website - <http://www.calcuttahighcourt.nic.in>

BY ORDER
Sd/-
Registrar
High Court, Original Side, Calcutta

HCA - N 19CB/2025

TN Governor responds to Stalin's 'childish' jibe, says CM's 'arrogance' not good

Stalin alleged that Ravi's actions stemmed from his inability to 'digest' Tamil Nadu's progress

AGENCIES
CHENNAI, 12 JANUARY

Tamil Nadu Governor R.N. Ravi (*photo right*) on Sunday criticised Chief Minister M.K. Stalin (*photo far right*) over his 'childish' jibe, saying the latter's arrogance was not appropriate.

The Tamil Nadu Raj Bhavan, in a post on the social media platform X, said: "Stalin asserts that insisting on due respect for the National Anthem and performing the fundamental duties enshrined in the Constitution is 'absurd' and 'childish.' Thanks for betraying the true intentions of the coalition of interests and ideologies to which he is a leader that does not accept or respect Bharat as a nation and Her Constitution."



"Such arrogance is not good. Please do not forget that Bharat is the supreme Mother, and the Constitution is the supreme faith for her children. They will not like or tolerate such brazen insults," Governor R.N. Ravi added.

The Governor's response came a day after Chief Minister Stalin criticised him, calling



his decision to skip the customary Assembly address "childish." The controversy began on 6 January when Governor R.N. Ravi walked out of the Tamil Nadu Assembly without delivering the customary inaugural address.

According to the Raj Bhavan, the Governor left "in deep anguish" because the National Anthem was not

played. In his rebuttal during the debate on the motion of thanks to the Governor's address, Stalin alleged that Ravi's actions stemmed from his inability to "digest" Tamil Nadu's progress.

He remarked: "The Tamil Nadu Assembly has been witnessing strange scenes ever since Ravi assumed office as Governor. In 2022, he delivered his address without altering the speech, but in the following years, he avoided the customary address, citing absurd reasons."

Stalin further stated: "I may be an ordinary person, but this Legislative Assembly came into existence because of the aspirations of crores of people. I believe the Governor cannot tolerate the state's development."

Six more arrested for sexual abuse of Dalit girl in Kerala's Pathanamthitta; NCW directs swift action

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, 12 JANUARY

Kerala police on Sunday arrested six more persons in connection with the alleged sexual abuse of an 18-year-old Dalit girl by more than 60 people over the past five years in Pathanamthitta. With this, the total number of arrested people has now gone up to 26. Among those arrested on Sunday in the case, three are minors.

A total of nine cases have been registered in two police stations in the Pathanamthitta district. Since the complainant was a minor when the incidents occurred, those arrested have been charged under various sections of the POCSO Act and then the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act. It has been reported that the police have identified 62 people who had allegedly sexually harassed the girl.

Police collected the details of 40 individuals from her father's phone, which she used for communication with the abusers. Her parents were reportedly completely unaware of this abuse. An investigation is underway to locate the remaining accused. Although they are from the same area,

they moved to different locations for work over the span of five years.

The perpetrators allegedly used explicit photos and videos of the child, recorded and shared among themselves, to coerce her into continued submission. The case came to light earlier this week, triggering widespread outrage and prompting a swift police investigation.

It is learnt that the persons outside Pathanamthitta district might be involved in the case.

Taking serious note of the case, the National Commission for Women (NCW) has instructed the state police to file a report within three days in connection with the incident. NCW Chairperson Vijaya Rahatkar condemned the heinous crime and directed authorities to take immediate action to ensure the swift apprehension of all individuals allegedly involved in the case.

A special team has been formed to investigate the rape case. A 25-member team of officers, including the Pathanamthitta SP and DySP, will investigate the case under the supervision of DIG Ajitha Begum. The investigation was handed over to the DIG Ajitha Begum after the National Commission for Women,

Kerala police book eight for gang rape of woman in Malappuram

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, 12 JANUARY

Kerala police on Sunday booked eight persons at Areakode in Malappuram district on charges of gang rape of a 35-year-old woman with mental disabilities. The incident came to light when the survivor attempted suicide and revealed the ordeal to her brother when subsequently questioned.

The abuse reportedly began in 2023 when the main accused, a 36-year-old distant relative, allegedly lured the survivor with promises of a tour. He took her to multiple locations across Manjeri, Areakode, and Wayanad, where she was repeatedly assaulted by him, other distant relatives and the woman's neighbours.

The suspects allegedly used threats and deceit to coerce the survivor into sexual acts. The accused also stole 15 sovereigns of gold jewellery from the survivor and allegedly

attempted to intimidate the family into withdrawing their complaint. However, the family has resolved to proceed with legal action despite the pressure.

Areakode police have registered three FIRs in connection with the case. A special investigation team led by Kondotty Deputy Superintendent of Police will investigate the case. According to the FIRs, the abuse occurred at multiple locations in Malappuram and Wayanad. The first incident took place in February 2023 when the primary accused and another individual took the woman on a trip to Manjeri, Malappuram. She was then taken to a lodge in Areakode, where she was assaulted. Two months later, the woman was taken to another lodge in Mananthavady, Wayanad, and abused. Subsequently, the primary accused allegedly handed her over to other individuals at a lodge in Valluvambram, Malappuram, leading to further exploitation.

demanding strict action. The Kerala Women's Commission also took up a suo motu case

on the incident and asked the Pathanamthitta District Police Chief for a report.

BJP, NDA opt out of TN bypoll, blame DMK

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
CHENNAI, 12 JANUARY

Close on the heels of the principal opposition AIADMK and its ally, DMKD, announcing boycott of the 5 February, bypoll to the Erode East assembly constituency, the BJP-led NDA too followed suit, staying away from the electoral contest on the pretext that the ruling DMK will not allow a fair and free poll.

Belying expectation that the saffron party will enter the hustings against the DMK, which has named its candidate, BJP state president K Annamalai on Sunday said the NDA is not contesting the election. In a statement released on behalf of the NDA in the state, he said: "In 2023 bypoll, the constituency witnessed the electorate being confined to shelters like cattle and everyone encountered the DMK, intoxicated by power, violating election rules. Now, the NDA is not prepared to allow the DMK to once again confine the public in shelters like cattle."

The NDA is focused on unseating the DMK from power and is working towards that goal, he said adding that this decision to boycott the bypoll was arrived at after consultations with the constituents of the NDA in Tamil Nadu. Earlier in the day, BJP functionaries held a brainstorming in the city on whether to contest the bypoll or not.

Besides the BJP, the NDA comprises smaller parties like the OBC Vanniyar-dominant Pattali Makkal Katchi (PMK), the Tamil Maanila Congress (TMC) of GK Vasan, Amma Makkal Munnetra Kazhagam (AMMK) of TTV Dhinakaran. The bypoll is being held due to the death of Congress veteran and former Union Minister EVKS Elangovan last month.

INDIA bloc unbroken, stands strong: Akhilesh Yadav

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
LUCKNOW, 12 JANUARY

Defending the INDIA bloc amid rift among the alliance partners, Samajwadi Party President Akhilesh Yadav, said on Sunday that it is "unbroken and stands strong."

"Keep this in your mind, the INDI alliance is strong and will remain strong. In the state where the regional party, which is strong against BJP, should be supported," he said.

Addressing a press conference here, Akhilesh Yadav claimed that the BJP would lose in the Milkipur assembly by-election. "They (the BJP) looted to win seven assembly bypolls. The matter also reached the Supreme Court," he said, adding that policemen acting on behalf of the ruling party repeatedly pressed the



button of the EVM machine. "If there is a forensic investigation, it will become clear that the same person voted multiple times. The officials who were dishonest in the elections were themselves saying - what to do, there is compulsion," the SP president alleged.

Asked what they would do if women in Milkipur were stopped at gunpoint like in Kundarki and Rampur, Akhilesh Yadav said: "This question is big. I want to tell the workers to keep these things in their mind. Whatever decision has

to be taken at that time, take it immediately."

On the question of going to Kumbh, the SP president said: "I have always gone to Kumbh. If you want, I can share the picture. Those people should also share their pictures who ask others to take a dip in the Ganga. Some people go to Kumbh for charity while others wash away their sins."

Commenting on the incident at Kannauj railway station yesterday, he said: "The accident that happened at Kannauj railway station is unfortunate. The stations built during the British era still remain intact. It would have been better if they had been restored. By the grace of God, no one lost his life, it is a matter of great relief. There should be a complete investigation into this incident."

TENDER

NORTH WESTERN RAILWAY	NORTH WESTERN RAILWAY	उत्तर पश्चिम रेलवे
E-TENDER NOTICE SIGNAL & TELECOMMUNICATION DEPARTMENT (CONSTRUCTION) For and on behalf of the President of India Dy. Chief Signal & Telecom Engineer (C) North Western Railway, Jaipur invites E-Tenders against tender no. 5&T/110 (Double packet system) . 1. Name of work with its location : Design, manufacture, supply, installation, testing and commissioning of Microprocessor based Electronic Interlocking (EI) system in "Hot Stand By Mode" at Durgapura (DPA), Sangarner (SNGN) and Shivdaspura Padampur (SAS) stations including alteration work in existing Medha Make EI at Jaipur (JP) with provision of Automatic Block Signalling (ABS for JP-SAS) and at Devpura (DPZ), Chauh Ka Barwara (CKB), Isarda (ISA), Siras (SRAS), Banastwali Niwari (BNLW), Channani (CHNN), Chaksu (CKS) and Sawai Madhopur (SWM) with provision of Absolute block signalling with double distant (SAS-SWM section), and Mid-Section Interlocked LC Gates for execution of indoor and outdoor Signalling and Telecom works, which includes excavation of trench, laying of cables, casting of foundations of MACLS Signals & apparatus cases, erection/installation of MACLS signals, fixing & wiring of track circuits & point machines, centralized operation of points & signals, HASSDAC, Block, installation of Telecom Equipments as per RE standard in connection with Doubling work in phased manner of Jaipur-Sawai Madhopur section of Jaipur division on North Western Railway. 2. Approximate cost of the work : Rs. 76,13,08,465.49 3. Earnest Money (Rs.): Rs. 39,56,600.00 4. Date & Time for submission up to on www.irops.gov.in : 04.02.2025 up to 15.00 hrs. 5. Website particulars and notice board location : www.irops.gov.in and Dy. Chief Signal & Telecom Engineer (Const./J), office, 1st Floor, Rail Nirman Bhawan, Ganga Marg, Jagpura, Jaipur-302017. 46-CR/25	NOTICE OF INVITING E-TENDER No. 34245417A Date : 10.01.2025 Sr.DMM, DRM Office, Bikaner, acting for and on behalf of The President of India invites E-Tender No. 34245417A Closing date 31.01.2025 at 14.25 hrs. Bidders will be able to submit their original/revised bids up to closing date and time only. Manual offers are not allowed against this tender and any such manual offer received shall be ignored. 1. Description of Work: Scotch Block Assembly for BWTB/BOBN type wagons 2. Quantity : 4600 Nos. 3. Date and time for submission of tender: Submission of E-Tender up to 31.01.2025 at 14.25 hrs. 4. Website Particular: www.irops.gov.in 45-CR/25	निविदा सूचना सूचना: 34245409A दिनांक: 10.01.2025 वरिष्ठ, मण्डल सखरी प्रबंधक, मण्डल रेल प्रबंधक कार्यालय, बीकानेर, भारत के राष्ट्रपति को निवेदन एवं उनकी ओर से ई-निविदा सूचना-34245409A निविदा बन्ध दाने की तारीख 31.01.2025 को 14.25 बजे तक रखनी, जमागिन कर रहे है। निविदाकार निविदा बन्ध देने की तारीख एवं समय तक की अपनी मूल/सहायित निविदा प्रस्तुत कर पावेंगे। निवेदन (ई-निविदा के अन्तर्गत) प्रस्तुत दाने निविदा के निवेदन समय नहीं होने। दाने वरत के संयोजन प्रस्तावों पर स्थान नहीं दिया जावेगा। 1. आवृत्ति का विवरण : Secondary Lashing Chain 2. मात्रा : 3674 Nos. 3. निविदा प्रस्तुत करने की तिथि का रकम : ई-निविदा को निवेदन 31.01.2025 को 14.25 बजे तक प्रस्तुत किया जा सकता है। 4. वेबसाइट निवेदन : www.irops.gov.in 44-CR/25

NORTH CENTRAL RAILWAY
E-Tendering Tender Notice
Divisional Railway Manager (Works) N.C. Railway, Jhansi for and behalf of President of India invites sealed "Open Tender" through on Line (E-Tendering) for the following work :- E-Tender No.: JHS-ENGG-C-2024-204 Description of work : Annual Zonal contract for repair and maintenance work of level crossings under jurisdiction of ADEN/CNB Sub division from PRN (Incl.) to GOY (Excl.) for one year. Approx Cost : 10500000.00 Earnest Money : 202500.00 E-Tender No.: JHS-ENGG-C-2025-02 Description of work : Dailwara & Jakhaura station: Construction of 11 units type II & 2 units type III quarters on replacement account in Bina - Jhansi section. Approx Cost : 22215430.80 Earnest Money : 261100.00 Date of closing Tender : 10.02.2025 at 15:00 hrs., Date of completion/period from issue acceptance letter : 12 Months, *Tender on line can be submitted up to 15:00 hrs on 10.02.2025. *For full details and submission of bid please see the Indian Railways website www.irops.gov.in 65/25 (D) f North central railways @ CPONCR www.ncr.indianrailways.gov.in

NORTH CENTRAL RAILWAY
No.: JHS/Commercial-Auction/25/83 Date: 10.01.2025
NOTICE INVITING E-AUCTION
On Behalf of The President Of India, The Divisional Railway Manager, (Commercial) Jhansi invites e-auction as per categories given as under:- Category: Advertisement Catalogue No.: JHS-OOH-01 Asset Details: Advertisement right through on RAILWAY OVER BRIDGE under Out of home POLICY of CHITRAKOOTDHAM KARVI (CKTD), ORAI(ORAI), Bhimsen (BZM) & Khajuraho(KURJ) railway stations. Auction Start: 27.01.2025 at 11:00 hrs Auction End: 27.01.2025 at 12:00 hrs Note:- Prospective bidders are requested to visit e-Auction Leasing module on IREPS website (www.irops.gov.in). The Lot-wise details are available therein under the above mentioned Catalogue Number. 70/25(A) f North central railways @ CPONCR www.ncr.indianrailways.gov.in

INTEGRAL COACH FACTORY				
Chennai - 600 038				
The following e-tender is published in IREPS website. Firms are requested to login to www.irops.gov.in and quote against the tender. Manual Quotation will not be entertained for the tender :				
Open Tender No.	Short Description of the Item	Units per Day	Cont ract Period	Tender value Rs.
2025409211658	Supply of 3 Ton capacity FLT with Driver, Fuel and 4 Associated Staff (i.e.1 Unit)	10	290 working days	2, 58,63,243.30/-
	Supply of 5 Ton capacity FLT with Driver, Fuel and 4 Associated Staff (i.e.1 Unit)	2		
Date of Tender Closing		05.02.2025 at 14.45 hrs		
Date of Tender Opening		05.02.2025 at 15.00 hrs.		
Hindi Version of the above advertisement is available in https://icf.indianrailways.gov.in				
Chief Safety Officer / Fur				

KOLKATA MUNICIPAL CORPORATION e - TENDER	
ABRIDGED NIT	
The Director General (Bustee), KMC invites e-tender online percentage rate two bid system for the following works: 1. NIT No.: KMC/DG(B)/BR-VIII/068/21/2024-2025/BUSTEE Name of Work : Rehabilitation of affected people due to fire hazards at Kankulia Bustee (near Paddasree Club) in Ward No. 68; Estimated Cost (including GST & CESS) : Rs. 9,92,645.20; Earnest Money : Rs. 20,000.00; Period of Completion : 45 Days; Last Date and Time of submission of bid : 22.01.2025 - 12 noon; Date of opening of tender : 25.01.2025 - 12 noon; The bid forms and other details are available on and from 14.01.2025 (5 p.m.) 2. NIT No.: KMC/DG(BS)/Br-VII/056/46/2024-2025/BUSTEE Name of Work : Construction of new sewer line at 1/5, Motihill Lane and its surroundings of bustee portion in Ward No. 56; Estimated Cost (including GST & CESS) : Rs. 9,68,615.18; Earnest Money : Rs. 19,400.00; Period of Completion : 60 Days; Last Date and Time of submission of bid : 21.01.2025 - 2.30 p.m.; Tender will be opened on : 24.01.2025 - 2.30 p.m.; The bid forms and other details are available on and from 11.01.2025 (2.30 p.m.); The website https://etender.wb.nic.in (for SI. no. 1 & 2) 1214/24-25	

NORTH WESTERN RAILWAY	EAST CENTRAL RAILWAY
E-TENDER NOTICE (Survey & Construction) Dy. Chief Engineer (Construction)-II, North-Western Railway, Jodhpur through for and on behalf of the President of India, invites e-tenders (Open Tender-Two packet system) for the following work :- 1. Tender No. : DY-CE-C-II-JU-T-09-B-LUNI-SMR-BLDI 2. Name of the work with its location : Laying and linking of Broad Gauge main Line, including points and crossings, spreading of Ballast, tamping of track, transportation of P-Way Materials and other ancillary works from Marwar Kori (Excluding) Km 133/0 to Bhildi (Including) Km 223/4-5 in connection with LUNI-SMR-BLDI doubling project of North Western Railway. 3. Approx. cost of work : Rs. 37,31,59,493.23 4. Earnest Money to be deposited : Rs. 20,15,800.00 5. Tender Closing date & time : 06.02.2025 upto 15.00 hrs 6. Detail of particular, where e-tender can be seen & filled up : www.irops.gov.in 7. Official email address : dycec2jodhpur@gmail.com 41-CR/25 Follow us on @ NWRailways @ NWRailways	E-TENDER NOTICE E-Tenders is invited for execution of the following work by Divisional Railway Manager (Commercial), E.C. Railway, Dhanbad:- Tender No. C-710- RKJE- B - GCT 1. Name of the work with its location & completion period : Development of Gati Shakti Multi-Modal Cargo Terminal (GCT) at Rakhitpur-B(RKJE) Station Entirely on Railway land for the period of thirty five years (35 years) i.e 420 months. 2. Approx. cost of development of Gati Shakti Multi-Modal Cargo Terminal (GCT) at Rakhitpur-B(RKJE): Rs. 31,93,44,822 /-. 3. Earnest Money: Rs. 3,19,34,500/- 4. Date & Time for closing and opening of Tender: Date of closing of e-tender at 15:00 hours on 04.02.2025 and date of opening of e-tender after 15:30 hrs. on 04.02.2025. 5. Website particulars: http://www.irops.gov.in . No manual tender will be accepted against e-tendering. Railway Administration reserves the right to reject any or all the tenders without assigning any reason what so ever. for Divisional Railway Manager (Commercial), East Central Railway Dhanbad. PR/01903/DHN/COM/1724-25/36

INTEGRAL COACH FACTORY				
Chennai - 600 038				
INDIAN RAILWAYS				
TENDER Notice No. ICF/EL/Cons/2024-25 Dt : 13.01.2025 For and on behalf of The President of India. The Dy. Chief Electrical Engineer / Maintenance / Shell, Integral Coach Factory, invites E-Tender for the following works.				
Tender No	Name of the work	Approx Value in Lakhs Rs.	EMD (Rs.)	Tender Closing Date and time
20242452 11592R	EL-AMC-2024-25-105 Annual Maintenance Contract for 25 kV OHE system in ICF for the period of three years	104.19	2,02,100/-	03.02.2025 at 15.30 Hrs.
Web site for submission of offer : www.irops.gov.in Hindi version of the above tender notification is available in https://icf.indianrailways.gov.in				

The Statesman

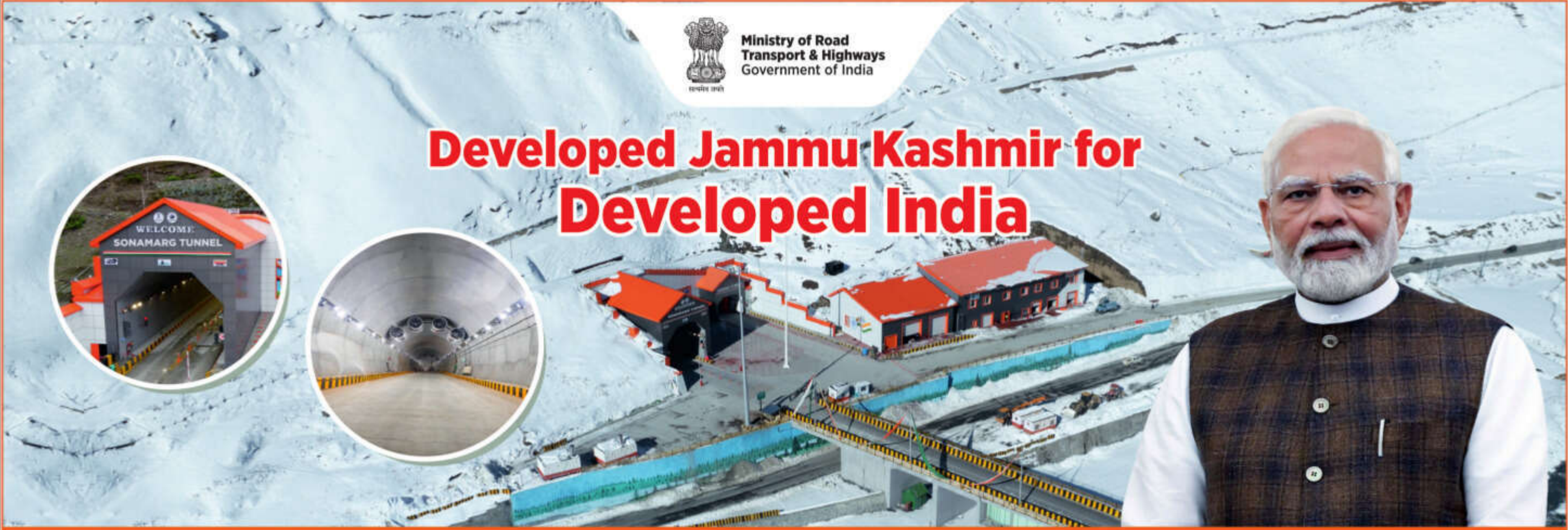
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Ministry of Road Transport & Highways
Government of India

Developed Jammu Kashmir for Developed India

Inauguration of 6.4 km long Sonamarg Tunnel with an investment of over ₹2700 crore

BENEFITS OF THE PROJECTS



All weather connectivity between Srinagar and Ladakh, simplifying life for millions of people



1.5 hour journey can now be completed in just 40 minutes, saving time, fuel and logistics costs



Promoting all season tourism with safe connectivity to Sonamarg and other destinations and opening up opportunities for local businesses like hotels, transportation and restaurants



Enhanced market access for local agricultural produce, like saffron, apples, walnuts, cherries, Kahwa, etc



Improved availability of essential items and access to better healthcare services for local residents



Improved connectivity will attract investment, create new employment opportunities and stimulate economic growth



Seamless access to border areas in all seasons, thereby enhancing national security



Along with the 6.4 km long tunnel, the project includes a 6 km long approach road and a 4 km long creeper lane dedicated to the movement of heavy vehicles

by

Narendra Modi
Prime Minister

Monday, Date: 13th January, 2025 | Time: 11:30 AM
Venue: Village Shutkadi, (Sonamarg), Distt. Ganderbal, Jammu & Kashmir

in the august presence of

Nitin Gadkari

Union Minister for Road Transport & Highways

Dr. Jitendra Singh

Union Minister of State
(Independent Charge)

Ajay Tamta

Union MoS for Road Transport & Highways

Harsh Malhotra

Union MoS for Corporate Affairs and Road Transport & Highways

Manoj Sinha

Lt. Governor,
U.T. of Jammu & Kashmir

Omar Abdullah

Chief Minister,
U.T. of Jammu & Kashmir

Surinder Kumar Choudhary

Dy. Chief Minister,
U.T. of Jammu & Kashmir

Sunil Sharma

Leader of Opposition,
J&K Legislative Assembly

Aga Syed Ruhullah Mehdi

Member of Parliament, Lok Sabha, Srinagar

Gulam Ali

Member of Parliament, Rajya Sabha



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Trump's Impact

As President-elect Donald Trump prepares for his second term in office, the global economy braces for a wave of uncertainty. His return to the White House on January 20 comes amid an already challenging economic environment shaped by inflationary pressures, uneven growth, and fragile geopolitical dynamics. The implications of Mr Trump's protectionist policies, particularly his threats of new tariffs on China, Canada, and Mexico, signal a turbulent year ahead for international trade and economic stability. At the core of Mr Trump's economic agenda lies an inward-looking approach that prioritises US manufacturing through tariffs and deregulation. While these measures may stimulate certain domestic industries in the short term, they risk fracturing global supply chains that have been decades in the making. The automobile industry, for instance, relies heavily on cross-border cooperation among the US, Canada, and Mexico. Imposing higher tariffs on these partners could disrupt production, inflate costs, and suppress consumer demand, creating ripple effects that harm all three economies. China, already grappling with domestic challenges such as weak consumer spending and a struggling property sector, stands to lose further ground under heightened US trade barriers. Though Beijing has expressed optimism about its economic trajectory, any additional tariffs could exacerbate its reliance on domestic demand, limiting its ability to drive global growth. Notably, the World Bank has highlighted the need for China to address its internal vulnerabilities, such as improving local government finances and social safety nets, to sustain recovery. Europe, too, finds itself on uncertain footing. The euro-zone's growth remains tepid, hindered by political instability in key economies like Germany and France. With inflationary pressures persisting and wage growth driving up costs, the European Central Bank has limited room to manoeuvre. Any escalation in US-China trade tensions could further strain Europe's export-driven industries, particularly in sectors like electric vehicles, which are already entangled in tariff disputes with both the US and China. For the US, Mr Trump's economic policies could yield mixed results. His proposed tax cuts and deregulation might provide a temporary boost to growth, but the inflationary consequences of tariffs and disrupted supply chains could offset these gains. Moreover, his isolationist stance risks alienating key allies and undermining the multilateral frameworks that have historically supported global economic stability. As Mr Trump's inauguration approaches, the international community must prepare for a potential reordering of economic priorities. The risks of recession, prolonged inflation, and geopolitical tensions loom large. While Mr Trump's policies may reinforce US exceptionalism in the short term, they carry the potential to destabilise the interconnected global economy. Navigating this uncertain landscape will require unprecedented levels of cooperation and adaptability among nations, even as they contend with the challenges of a more fragmented and unpredictable world order. Beyond the immediate economic shifts, Mr Trump's policies could further strain international relations, forcing allies and rivals alike to reassess their trade and diplomatic strategies in an increasingly protectionist global landscape.

Liquidity Woes

India's banking sector is grappling with a significant liquidity crunch, one that threatens not only financial stability but also the broader economy. The liquidity deficit, which has persisted since mid-December, is forcing banks to borrow more from the central bank, driving up borrowing rates. If left unaddressed, this could worsen the slowdown in India's economic growth. In early January, the average daily deficit stood at around Rs 1,50,000 crore, reflecting a growing shortfall in liquidity. Meanwhile, core daily liquidity, a more stable measure of liquidity, dropped sharply from Rs 4,60,000 crore in September to just Rs 30,000 crore in early January. This decline has been largely driven by the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) interventions in the foreign exchange market, where it has been selling dollars to manage rupee depreciation. While these interventions are crucial for stabilising the rupee, they have drained liquidity needed for domestic economic activity. As a result, banks have less capital to lend, raising borrowing costs. Elevated rates are already starting to impact lending and could further strain sectors that are already struggling. The banking sector's concerns are valid. In a recent meeting with Reserve Bank of India (RBI) officials, bankers called for measures like longer-term variable rate repos, FX swaps, and open market bond purchases. A temporary reduction in the cash reserve ratio (CRR) could also ease pressure on banks and help maintain lending levels. These measures would provide some relief, but each comes with trade-offs, such as the risk of inflationary pressures or market distortions.

There is also a broader concern about the longer-term implications of these liquidity measures. While short-term interventions may stabilise the system, excessive reliance on such measures could distort market signals and lead to an unhealthy dependence on the central bank. It's essential to focus on structural solutions, such as boosting domestic savings, attracting stable foreign investments, and improving market efficiencies, to reduce the banking system's dependence on RBI interventions. Additionally, the ongoing depreciation of the rupee is a concern for businesses with unhedged exposures. The currency's volatility is not only negatively affecting importers but also contributing to uncertainty in the market. As the rupee hits new lows, businesses face higher costs, potentially squeezing margins and affecting investment. The RBI's challenge is balancing the need for currency stability with maintaining sufficient liquidity in the banking system. Its interventions are essential but must be managed carefully to avoid exacerbating liquidity pressures or causing inflation. The central bank must take swift action to address these issues, but it must do so in a way that doesn't undermine India's fragile economic recovery. While stabilising the rupee is critical, the RBI must also ensure that liquidity pressures are alleviated to keep the economy moving forward. A careful, balanced approach is necessary to support both currency stability and economic growth.

German divide~ I

The rise of the far-right political outfit, AfD with a plank of anti-immigration was considered to be a fringe element reflecting continued economic disparity but was not in a position to threaten the national consensus. However, capturing power in two important provinces defies economic logic when with growing prosperity, many are moving from western to the eastern parts. The difference in unemployment between the two regions is insignificant as faster economic growth has attracted massive investments from reputed brands like Tesla and Intel. The level of immigration in eastern Germany is lowest



Elon Musk, the US tech billionaire in an op-ed page article published in the *Welt am Sonntag* newspaper on 29 December extended his support to Germany's far-right political outfit Alternative für Deutschland (AfD). This came after his post on his social network X that "only the AfD can save Germany".

He regarded the AfD as "the last spark of hope for the country experiencing 'economic and cultural collapse', for reviving the German economy and preventing a loss of identity through a "controlled immigration policy".

In the article written in German, he praised AfD's approach to reducing government regulation, lowering taxes and deregulating the market. The AfD is polling at 19 per cent, second to the centre-right alliance of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and Bavaria's Christian Social Union (CSU), at about 30 per cent. The AfD is in a position to frustrate Germany's mainstream political alliances, be that of centre-right or centre-left. The latter have vowed not to seek support from AfD at the national level.

The German media was outraged by Musk's comments perceiving it as unprecedented interference. Friedrich Merz, the CDU leader and a candidate for chancellor in Germany's legislative election slated on 23 February 2025 remarked "I can't remember a comparable case of interference in the election campaign of a friendly country in the history of the Western democracies". He described Musk's comments as "intrusive and pretentious".

Lars Klingbeil, chairman of the Social Democrats (SPD) blamed Musk for wanting to "plunge Germany into chaos" and compared him to Vladimir Putin, the Russian President. Saskia Esken, co-leader of Scholz's Social Democrats (SPD) commented, "In Elon Musk's world, democracy and workers' rights are obstacles to more profit. We say quite clearly: Our democracy is defensible and it cannot be bought". Mika Beuster, the chairman of the Deutscher Journalisten Verband (DJV) cautioned editorial offices not to become spokespersons for autocrats and their friends.

Musk justified the expression of his views about Germany because of his sizable investments there. In 2024, he praised Giorgia Meloni, the Italian prime minister. He has promised support and donation to Nigel Farage's anti-immigrant and right-wing populist Reform UK party.

He gave US \$250 million for Donald Trump's election in the US and is named the co-head of a department that would cut down government spending and the federal workforce. Musk's role in extending support to AfD raises some important ethical points as it reminds us of the notorious doctrine of

limited sovereignty invented by Leonid Brezhnev to justify the Soviet era interventions in the satellite communist countries of Eastern Europe.

In the aftermath of the Second World War, Germany and Japan emerged as stable democracies combining political stability



with consensual politics and impressive economic achievements. In Germany there were pockets of resentment at Konrad Adenauer's pronounced Western tilt but the subsequent happenings intensified the Cold War in which Germany became a key area of conflict and his popularity skyrocketed. Ever since that period Germany earned the respect of being Europe's one of the stables democracies and an economic powerhouse accentuated further by German reunification in 1989.

However, in the September 2024 elections some important provinces, Saxony and Thuringia of erstwhile East Germany exhibited a deep fault line between the eastern and the western regions bringing out deep cleavages in their political cultures. Mistrust and differences manifested, raising serious concerns about its destabilising effect on the entire German political process and a faulting economy. More importantly it threatens the prediction of Willy Brandt, former West German Chancellor and the main architect of the 1974 Helsinki agreement of a détente between the two blocs. Brandt hoped that reunification would culminate in a situation of "what belongs together to grow together".

In 1989, the wide differences and economic gap between the two were as deep as between a developed North and an undeveloped South. It was magnificently dealt with by Helmut Kohl's planning, declaring parity between the two Deutsche Marks. The basic assumption was that with an East German take off both the economies would achieve rough parity leading to the emergence of a unifying civic culture.

The rise of the far-right political outfit, AfD with a plank of anti-immigration was considered to be a fringe element reflecting

continued economic disparity but was not in a position to threaten the national consensus. However, capturing power in two important provinces defies economic logic when with growing prosperity, many are moving from western to the eastern parts. The difference in unemployment between the two regions is insignificant as faster economic growth has attracted massive investments from reputed brands like Tesla and Intel. The level of immigration in eastern Germany is lowest. Despite this, there is significant alienation with one-fifth of the population feeling that they are left behind in comparison to those in the western region. A pronounced sub-cultural difference between the western and eastern regions is evident.

The number is still small and by itself is not in a position to disturb the present political equilibrium but the election result confirms that in the five eastern states a significant number supports these fringe elements ensuring a comfortable majority for the AfD. In an extremely insightful analysis of this phenomenon sociologist, Steffen Mau suggests in his book *Ungleich vereint: Warum der Osten anders bleibt* (Unequally Different: Why the East Remains Different) published in 2019 that this is not merely a quest for catching up which it has by and large already achieved but an assertion of its own distinct identity, a pronounced urban-rural divide, which is a decisive one in eastern Germany. The latter is monolithic, lacking "the lattice of civil society groups found across western Germany, from Churches to unions to clubs".

"The AfD called for a second "Wende", according to David Border, "another go at the revolution of 1989-90 – which shows how little this has to do with nostalgia for the socialist era. It is instead shaped by a feeling of being "second class citizens" – in AfD rhetoric framed as all the more unjust because of what it called the favourable treatment of immigrants. "Left-behind" resentment is further heightened by Germans' own migration patterns, as the pull of the cities thins out the younger population in small eastern towns".

With a massive grass roots organizational structure focusing on anti-immigration and espousing a more parochial culture which is at variance with the Western Germans, the AfD proclaims a secluded and racial identity like Viktor Orbán's attempt in Hungary. It is a severe critique of multiculturalism proclaiming cultural and racial authenticity. Incidentally this is side-tracking the larger economic issues and rise of China and East Asia making serious inroads into Germany's traditional automobile and chemical industries.

(To Be Concluded).

Race against 'China tech'

China stands as one of South Korea's most significant trading partners while also emerging as a formidable rival in domains where Korean firms have traditionally excelled in technological prowess and market competitiveness. This rivalry is vividly on display at this year's CES technology trade show, running from Tuesday to Friday in Las Vegas, where Chinese companies are showcasing their rapid strides in the global technology landscape.

CES, an annual gathering of innovators, is not merely a showcase for Korea's top tech giants such as Samsung Electronics and LG Electronics, it is also a barometer for policymakers, whose inertia in fostering cutting-edge industries risks leaving South Korea behind.

This year, the spotlight falls on artificial intelligence – a transformative force driving productivity, reshaping customer experiences and unlocking new technological breakthroughs.

The AI-focused theme of CES 2025, "Dive In," is set to highlight the progress of China's technology sector, often dubbed "China tech," in comparison to over 160 other participating nations. The scale of China's presence at the exhibition is telling: Over 1,300 Chinese firms, including exhibitors from Hong Kong, have registered, second only to the contingent of 1,500 from the host nation, the United States. In recent years, Chinese companies have commanded significant attention at CES, unveiling innovations

The Korea Herald

across a broad spectrum – from AI and robotics to digital health and smart home technologies. This year is no different, as reports suggest their offerings will again underscore their growing technological acumen.

South Korean firms, meanwhile, face mounting pressure. Analysts in Seoul caution that the pace of Chinese advancements – despite US export restrictions and other geopolitical hurdles – continues to exceed expectations. The stronger presence of Chinese firms at CES suggests that the paradigm has shifted.

In the past, China depended largely on its price competitiveness even for technology products to expand its global market share. Now, China is also expanding its share in the premium technology market.

CES also underscores escalating tensions between the US and China. Amid reports about some Chinese exhibitors invited to the trade show being denied US visas, ByteDance was absent from the exhibitor list. Its subsidiary TikTok has joined the show, but the operator of the globally popular short-video app confronts the looming threat of a US ban unless it severs the Chinese ownership by Jan. 19. Other Chinese companies notably absent at CES include Baidu, Huawei Technologies and DJI.

Despite such obstacles, China's influence at CES and in the broader technological arena continues to expand. Chinese firms are poised to unveil AI-powered innovations at this year's exhibition, while South Korean companies like Samsung Electronics and LG Electronics will also debut AI-integrated solutions for the smart home.

The Korean government, long reliant on the technological edge of its export-driven economy, must rethink its strategy in light of the growing gap with China.

A recent report by Boston Consulting Group classified South Korea as an "AI steady contender," ranking it below "AI pioneers" such as the US, Britain, Canada, Singapore and China. This second-tier status is a stark reminder that South Korea risks falling further behind in an arena critical to future economic and technological competitiveness, especially given the huge potential of AI innovation for a wide array of industries.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

editor@thestatesman.com

Recall Governor

SIR, This is with reference to the news item, "TN Governor Ravi boycotts Assembly, leaves House in a huff", published in *The Statesman* on 7 January. It will be apt if one calls the Tamil Nadu governor R.N. Ravi as "Mr. Con-



troversy", for he is habituated to create ruckuses with the DMK-ruled TN government.

The latest incident ~ his 'walk out' from the state assembly without reading his customary address ~ after the flare-up of the 'national anthem' row is yet another instance of his cantankerous nature towards the TN chief minister and the state government.

It is the established norm of the TN Legislative Assembly to play the State's invocation to Tamil before the address and the national anthem at the end of Governor's speech, and this has been clearly conveyed to the

Governor's office in advance.

The governor, therefore, has no right to alter the practice followed in the assembly according to his desire.

In fact Mr. Ravi's sole aim was to avoid reading out the address and he found a way out to do so by creating the 'anthem' wrangle.

It is high time that Mr. Ravi is called back by the president as he has long been a deterrent to the smooth functioning of the TN government.

The government at the Centre has been doing its best to subvert the democratic process by using governors as political weapons in non-BJP ruled States.

Yours, etc.,
Ranganathan Sivakumar,
Chennai, 9 January.

BOOST GROWTH

SIR, I refer to your editorial "Reigniting Growth". It is not surprising to learn that the Indian economy will go from fourth gear to second gear in the current financial year as all pointers are indicating this.

Public capex is way short of target, the private sector is dragging its feet on new capex.

The RBI's tough monetary stand is making the task tougher. Services sector is doing reasonably well, but it is the manufacturing sector which has hit a roadblock and we all know that it is crucial for not only job and income growth but the economy too.

It should not be forgotten that the Union government has provided relief in terms of corporate tax as well as PLI schemes to attract investment in manufacturing and boost this sector. Providing income tax rate cuts in the forthcoming budget may boost consumption and in turn force the private sector to invest in capex.

Yours, etc., Bal Govind,
Noida, 10 January.



Fanaticism in the name of science

BASAB DASGUPTA

My first industrial job after graduating with a PhD in theoretical physics was that of an R&D engineer at RCA, which at the time was a major conglomerate in the US. They manufactured TV sets among many other products which used cathode ray tubes (CRTs) as display devices.

The charter of my group was developing magnetic deflection coils for CRTs which could deflect electron beams inside the tube to their desired positions. These coils had been traditionally designed by veteran engineers using their experience and intuitive skill following empirical trial and error methods - a time consuming and expensive process. Our goal was to develop a CAD method using sophisticated computer programs so that design could be done faster and more accurately, even by less experienced engineers.

The staff members at the Research Laboratory, consisting mostly of PhDs in physics and mathematics, had already developed a program which they hoped would serve the purpose. Our job in the R&D group was to confirm its accuracy and give the research guys feedback so that they could continue to improve the software.

The CRTs used in colour TVs used not one but three electron beams, one for each of the three "primary" colours, red, green and blue; colours were generated by phosphor stripes corresponding to each color, deposited on the inside of the TV screen. The desired performance was convergence of all three beams at every point on the TV screen. Our first task was to model an existing coil system to see how close its computer-predicted convergence characteristics came to its experimentally measured performance.

While the computer model correctly predicted general trends such as geometric distortions, change in performance by incremental changes in design parameters, ideal location of the coils on the CRT, it never gave us a satisfactory number for "misconvergence error" - the separation between the red and blue beams, the most significant performance parameter. The largest error allowed in specifications was at the corners and typically of the order of 1-1.5 mm. Much to our frustration,

the discrepancy between experimental value and computer prediction was 3 mm or more at corners, even after many enhancements of the software. As a result, neither RCA nor any other TV manufacturer succeeded in designing deflecting coils entirely using computer software.

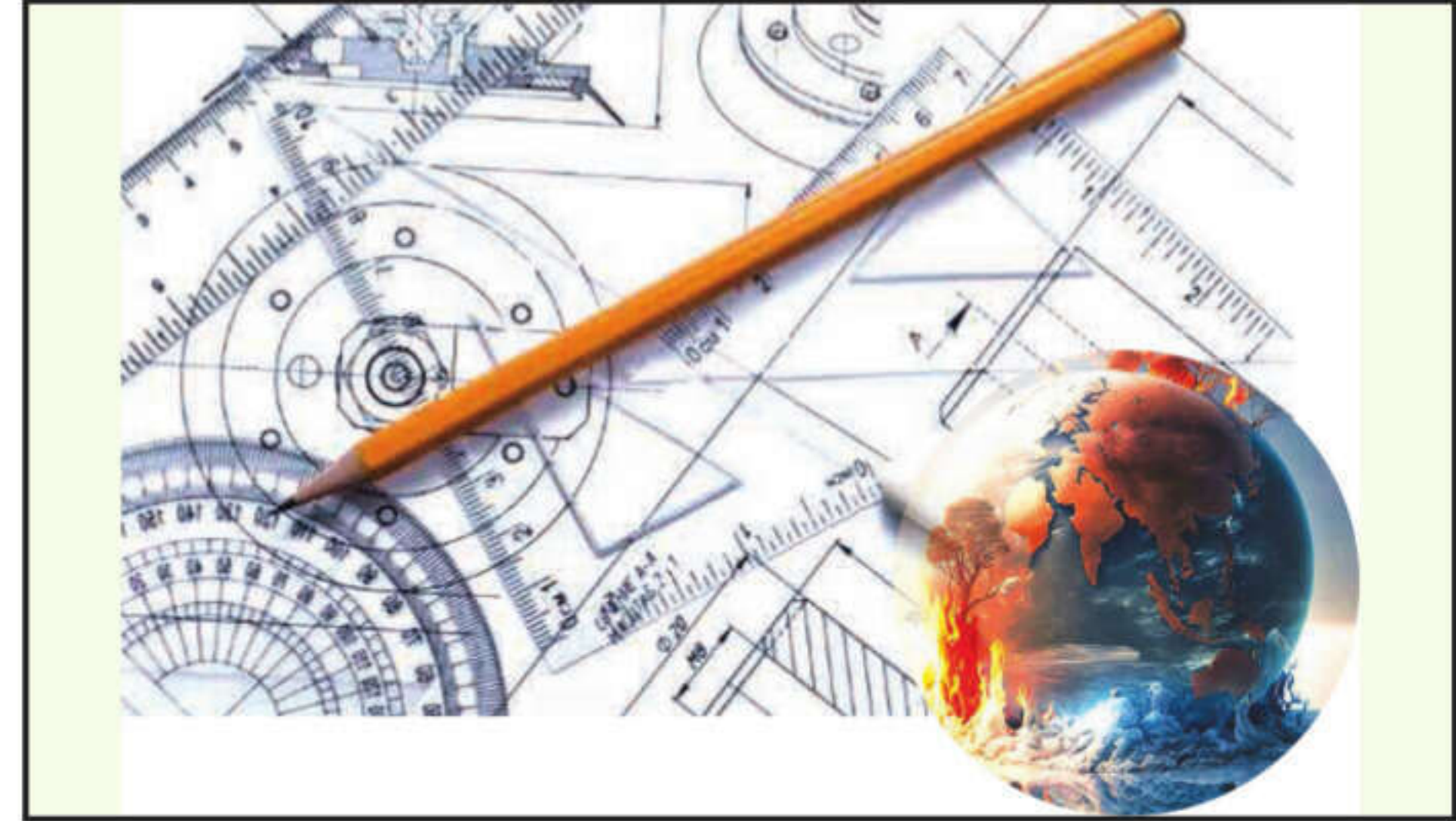
The reasons for this discrepancy were understandable. In any physics-based computer modeling there are two key components: a) construction of a "model" and b) actual mathematical computations. It is the second part that got more and more sophisticated with the introduction of faster computers and more innovative algorithms.

Construction of a model is a different story. A model is absolutely necessary because we cannot convert everything we see into mathematical equations which the computer can crunch. A model inherently consists of a series of simplifying assumptions. For example, the earth can be modeled as a sphere but one must use a bunch of straight lines and triangles to model a tree.

In modeling deflection coils, two major assumptions were: a) coils were assumed to be smooth two-dimensional surfaces which ignored discreteness and thicknesses of copper wires in the winding and b) electron beams were represented by rays without finite width. This resulted in uncertainties in computed values.

This experience shaped my views about climate change predictions. I am certainly not a climate change denier. As a physicist, I do believe endless carbon dioxide emission into the atmosphere is detrimental. Any effort to reduce such emissions is good. However, I draw the line at fanaticism in the name of science. I cringe when I hear predictions such as rise of ocean level by X ft by a certain year, flooding entire countries.

Different models are used by scientists around the world and not surprisingly, their predictions do not all agree. Instead of electrons moving in a CRT we must now study the motion of earth dragging its atmosphere under the influence of the sun. Physics involved is much more complicated and often unknown; one must take into account an array of different interactions; the ones between sun, earth, moon, gas molecules, oceans, rotation of the orbs, exhaust from fossil



fuel, deforestation and the list goes on. I am sure that these phenomena are taken into account in all models but my main point is that descriptions fed into software are oversimplifications of the real situation.

Yes, the models will predict gradual warming, rising ocean levels and changes in many atmospheric phenomena, but they cannot possibly predict the timeframe and severity of their occurrence. This has nothing to do with denying science or questioning the mathematical rigour involved in the computation. To make the predictions even trickier, we have no way of knowing the occurrence of natural phenomena like volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, underground lava flow and forest fires over upcoming decades and how different countries will attempt to reduce carbon dioxide emission or melting of ice caps. The weathermen on TV cannot even accurately predict weather for the next seven days!

The real question is what we should collectively do at the present time. We must certainly do things that common scientific sense dictates: plant more trees, use solar energy, reduce use of fossil fuel etc. and formulate plans to deal with possible flooding of lowland areas and invent

cost-effective ways to keep ourselves cooler during summer. It does not make sense to shut down coal mines and take away centuries-old livelihoods of miners nor force people to buy electric cars they cannot afford. Throwing soup at the painting of Mona Lisa or blocking traffic or giving up beef to raise the awareness of climate change are absurd ideas. I am not in favour of pouring millions of dollars in aid to other countries without any accountability to help them fight climate change and holding glitzy international conferences.

I am disappointed to see that almost every adverse atmospheric phenomenon is now blamed on climate change and the narrative has become political. Part of the reason is that governments are generously doling out grants to support research on climate change; naturally, scientists find it easier to get grants if they can somehow correlate their work with climate change; of course, they are all in agreement about the need to be proactive.

I can perhaps explain my views with an analogy. Ever since I moved to Southern California 35 years ago, I have been hearing about a major earthquake (the "big one") coming. In fact, we experience minor earthquakes almost weekly. There are theoretical

models and predictions about how and when this big earthquake would take place affecting a metropolis of more than ten million people causing unthinkable damage. However, the models cannot predict the event with any precision. So even though everyone knows that it can happen anytime we do not worry about it and have left ourselves at the mercy of Mother Nature.

Reasonable precautions have been taken such as structural reinforcements of existing buildings and bridges, new building codes and designation of earthquake shelters; but I do not see efforts like national conferences, reduction of fracking and drilling, proposals of major geoengineering projects or millions of dollars being poured into earthquake research. There is no ban on living close to the fault lines either.

My belief is that Mother Nature will do whatever Mother Nature wants to do. We cannot control her but only learn to adapt ourselves to her activities without preemptively sacrificing our lives, based on some computer models in the name of science.

(The writer, a physicist who worked in academia and industry, is a Bengali settled in America.)

IT CAME TO MIND | MANISH NANDY

How to win

Reina sprang a surprise. Reina is the wife of Julio, a cartographer who lives on my block, and the mother of three small children. She is diligent in getting me a steaming cup of espresso every time I visit the family. She seems equally diligent in taking her children to school and bringing them back, fixing dinner for the family and taking punctilious care of the plants in her front yard. I have always thought of her as a homemaker par excellence.

She surprised me and, judging by his bemused look, her husband too, by declaring that she would be running in the year's marathon in Virginia. Marathon? Running 26 miles at a stretch? Besides running a few yards after her dog, I had never seen her jogging on the trail near our home.

I expressed my astonishment and asked if she had ever done any running. Rather shyly, she explained that she had won a medal for running in school and never run after that. I wanted to but did not ask what made her decide to run a marathon after so many years. Instead, politely, I offered encouragement and even promised to be at the event.

So there I was, in a crowd of hundreds, at the starting point, shaking the hand of a visibly nervous Reina and telling her how I admired her courage and sense of adventure.

There were her husband and daughters and a retinue of eager friends, all braving the cold drizzle to express confidence in her venture.

The pistol went off. The large throng of runners shot off spiritedly along the track, Reina among them. I could see her bobbed hair flying behind her. I drove off to a library nearby to spend some time with books before heading for the ending point. Most of Reina's friends went to key points on the route, where they would wait for Reina with water, napkins, vaseline and even spare pairs of shoes if needed.

I arrived at the finishing line just as the three top contenders breasted the tape in quick succession. They were the winners and dutifully received fulsome applause. But the vast majority of the crowd was waiting for a brother, son, cousin, colleague or friend to finish the race in time. In a marathon, the real winners are the persons who complete the race, whatever the time they take. With several of Reina's retinue, I waited for her.

Finally, she appeared, visibly exhausted, her shirt streaked with sweat, her hair awry, her face shadowed with fatigue and pain but also lit with resolution and relief. She passed the finishing line and then collapsed on the grass. We clapped enthusiastically and passed her a bottle

of her favorite electrolyte drink. She had done what she had set out to do.

That weekend, as I sat sipping coffee in her home, I asked Reina how she had accomplished what had seemed a tough challenge to all her friends. She smiled.

"I had no idea I could do it. I had doubts. But I wanted to do something hard, to prove to myself that I could do what I had done in school. I still had it in me to exert and to accomplish. I practiced every day, I ran longer and harder. I changed what I ate, how much I ate. Preparation was an important part.

"Still with all that I had done to prepare myself, I had to steel myself to perform. The pain, the discomfort, the temptation to stop. I vowed to perform the best I could."

She stopped, then added mysteriously, "I did not run alone. I felt all of you, my friends, were with me, supporting me, hoping with me. I prized that feeling. I wanted all of us to win."

It occurred to me then that what Reina was saying had a rather bigger import. In a sense, we are all running, willy-nilly, in a long race, the marathon of life. A few business tycoons might see themselves as competing with other tycoons, but most of us are competing against ourselves, trying to do a little better today than



Illustration by : Debabrata Chakrabarty

yesterday. That race seems occasionally grueling and sometimes exhilarating. What matters is finishing it in our own way, with grit and resolve.

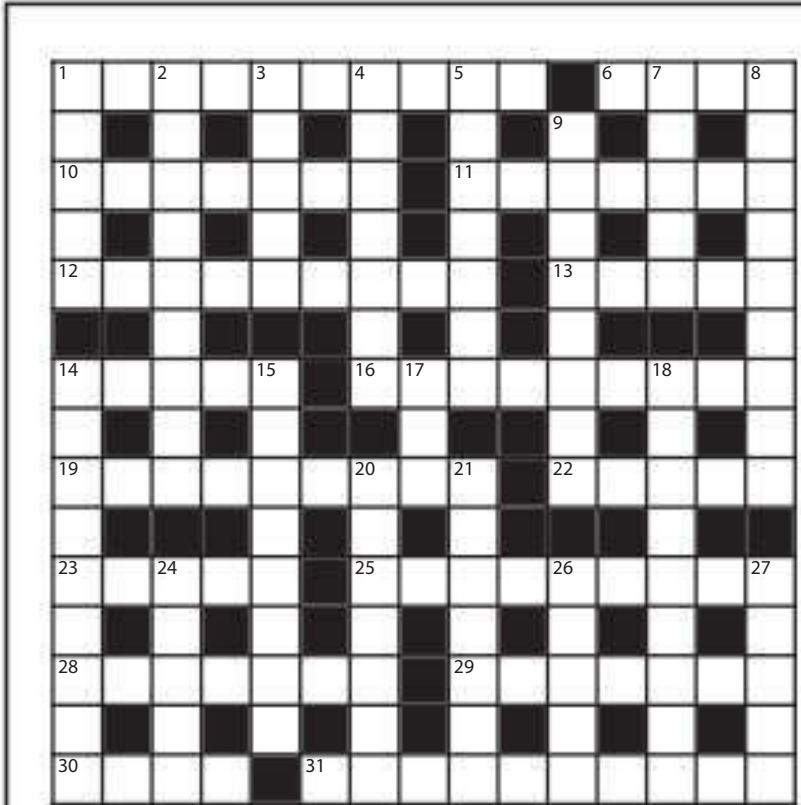
That entails the three things Reina did. It does not matter where one stands; the first step is to prepare - knowing the odds and arming oneself to counter those. The second is to perform, for oneself, none else, to do

the best one can do, no matter what else goes wrong. And the last is to prize whatever help one gets from whomever, however small or marginal, for it all adds to the lambent crescendo of success.

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



CROSSWORD



Saturday's Solution



ACROSS

- 1 Actor reflected on the subject of food - plant-based food (10)
- 6 Factory is initially removed to make way for a shopping centre (4)
- 10 Expression of frustration about a ring road somewhere in Hertfordshire (7)
- 11 President taking time with good shots on the green (7)
- 12 Going back, headed for an exit (9)
- 13 Doctor tries another examination (5)

- 14 Sounds beginning at the left part of the mouth (5)
- 16 Completely and remarkably weird niche trousers (5,4)
- 19 Criticise players in front of international fans who've paid to watch (9)
- 22 Uncover extremes of in-fighting hidden by party (3,2)
- 23 Tobacco in tin used up (5)
- 25 Vehicle travelling east (not south) or west (3-6)
- 28 Advances in marketing of Japanese medical

- kit? (7)
- 29 On retirement, give a speech that's hated (7)
- 30 The crux of marrying is trust (4)
- 31 Broadcast on iPlayer buffers at the start, with no means of being fixed (10)

DOWN

- 1 London district heralding extremely inventive musician (5)
- 2 Video game created by American on drugs (9)
- 3 Healthcare provider's customers centrally held in automated

- systems (5)
- 4 Labour policy is something that won't be compromised (3,4)
- 5 Old sheet covering small area (7)
- 7 Nice Friends succeeded? Wrong! (5)
- 8 Navigational craft easily performed last of tasks with it (9)
- 9 Multi-level shop looked to have a late opening? (8)
- 14 Action on course to promote change in voting habits (9)
- 15 Satirical, lively Scotsman (8)

- 17 Storage facility set up outside back of arena (3)
- 18 Heads of campus halls worked with uni and LGBT music venue (9)
- 20 One skilled amateur trains frantically (7)
- 21 Bloke got ripped, partly as a morale booster (3,4)
- 24 Leader ousted from one-time car plant (5)
- 26 Little fish always grabs line (5)
- 27 Former New York official smuggling diamonds? Damn! (5)

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

100 YEARS AGO

OCCASIONAL NOTE

THE late Lord Pentland was sufficiently successful as Governor of Madras to justify an extension of two years in that office. For the most part his Governorship was useful rather than spectacular; but it contained one purple patch when, some nine years ago, he came into conflict with Mrs. Besant. There can be no question that Lord Pentland was strictly justified in internment Mrs. Besant at a pleasant hill station in the Nilgiris, but whether he acted wisely is more doubtful. At all events Mrs. Besant profited so much by the advertisement that she was soon afterwards elected President of the National Congress. When Lord Pentland was constrained to release her, universal belief pointed naturally to the intervention of the Government of India. The incident did not make for tranquillity in the Madras Presidency. In his earlier years Lord Pentland was better known as Captain Sinclair, a soldier, social worker and Liberal politician, who sat in the House of Commons for Dumbarton and Forfarshire, was Private Secretary to Lord Aberdeen in Canada, and married his chief's only daughter, Lady Marjorie Gordon. He was Secretary for Scotland in the Liberal Government for several years. Lord Pentland's personal popularity in Parliament was very great, and at one time he was for this reason a Liberal Whip. He carried to India the same consideration for others which had led to his rapid promotion at Home.

NEWS ITEMS

NAVAL HOSPITALITY

DANCE ON BOARD H.M.S. "COLOMBO"

IF Calcutta people have done their best to give the naval men from H. M. S. Chatham and Colombo a good time during their visit to the city, the sailors, both officers and men, have been no less ready to return the compliment.

The last of a short series of dances was held on board the Colombo last night, the captain and officers entertaining, with true naval hospitality, a company of well over 100 guests, including a party from Government House, Government officials and military officers from the Fort. The quarter-deck, polished to a high degree made an ideal dance floor, and the ship's jazz band provided the remainder of the inspiration to dance. Hung with coloured lamps and Chinese lanterns the improvised ballroom presented a pretty scene. Refreshments were served on board His Excellency the Viceroy's houseboat, the Rhotas, which was moored alongside.

The Colombo leaves for Akyab and Chittagong to-morrow.

LABOUR PARTY & INDIA

NEW CONCEPTION OF EMPIRE

OPTIMISM regarding the prospects of the Labour Party at Home and a brief reference to the Party's attitude in respect to India were given by Mr. Oswald Mosley in an interview with a representative of the Statesman yesterday. Mr. Mosley and his wife. Lady Cynthia Mosley (second daughter of the Marquess Curzon) are staying with H. E. the Governor and the Countess of Lytton at Government House, Calcutta.

Dealing first with the question of Home politics, Mr. Mosley said: "We are all optimistic about the prospects of the Labour Party for a variety of reasons. In the first place, Labour is now the only possible alternative to Conservative Government. Before the last election there was still a possibility of a revival of the Liberal Party. Their tactics in the last Parliament, followed by the verdict of the country at the last election, have finally decided against any prospect of a Liberal revival. Thus Labour becomes the only alternative to the Conservatives and in the ordinary course of events will succeed them in office. Furthermore, it is not sufficiently realized that Labour immensely increased its voting strength at the last election. If my recollection be correct, Labour polled five million votes at the last election as against seven million of the Conservatives. Thus a comparatively slight swing in public opinion would reverse the present position."

SOCIAL WELFARE

MEETING OF THE BENGAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION

A PRELIMINARY meeting of the Bengal Health Association was held in December, but owing to the very short notice given, only a small number of rate-payers attended. It has, therefore, been decided to hold another meeting on Tuesday, January 13, at 6-30 P.M. at the European Association (Stephen Court), Park Street. Miss L. I. Lloyd, Councillor, Calcutta Corporation, will preside.

The main purpose of the meeting is the formation of a Ward Health Association in Ward No. 16.

J&K: Unprecedented security ahead of PM Modi's visit to inaugurate Sonamarg Tunnel


All vehicles entering Ganderbal district are thoroughly checked, occupants frisked, and electronic equipment used to scan the boots of vehicles and the underbelly

AGENCIES
SRINAGAR, 12 JANUARY

Extraordinary security arrangements were in place on Sunday throughout the Kashmir Valley as areas around Sonamarg and Gagangir in Ganderbal district were literally security-sealed to keep miscreants and anti-national elements at bay ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's arrival on Monday.
PM Modi will inaugurate the Z-Morh tunnel on Monday to make Srinagar-Sonamarg an all-weather road. Authorities ordered that all government offices would function in Gan-

derbal district on Sunday so that officials remain available to furnish the information sought by the security forces and the administration.
Vehicular movement and passage of pedestrians are monitored and checked by the police and the security forces at various places in all the 10 districts of the Kashmir Valley. Srinagar, Bandipora and Baramulla districts, congruous to Ganderbal district are more in security focus than other districts.
All vehicles entering Ganderbal district are thoroughly checked, occupants frisked, and electronic equipment used to scan the boots of vehi-

cles and the underbelly. Traffic ahead of Kangan town in Ganderbal district remained out of bounds unless one carried special passes issued by the security officials. Gagangir and Sonamarg are 45 km ahead of Kangan town on the Srinagar-Leh national highway.
All hotels, restaurants, shops, Dhabas and other establishments are being checked and the antecedents of the occupants checked and cross-checked. Villages, hamlets, forests and mountain peaks in 20 km radius of Gagangir and Sonamarg have been dominated by the Army and the security forces.
Round-the-clock patrolling



Prime Minister's security is managed by the special protection group (SPG) that remains deployed exclusively for the security of the PM.
The second and third layers are guarded by the security forces and the police while the Army looks after the outermost layer that extends up to 20 km from the venue of the Prime Minister's public rally at Sonamarg and the Z-Morh tunnel.
PM Modi will inaugurate the Z-Morh tunnel that bypasses the stretch of road from Gagangir to Sonamarg.
This stretch is prone to avalanches and heavy snowfall during the winter months.

After inaugurating the tunnel in the presence of Union Minister for Surface Transport and Highways, Nitin Gadkari, Jammu and Kashmir Lt Governor, Manoj Sinha, Chief Minister, Omar Abdullah and other dignitaries, the PM is scheduled to address a public rally in Sonamarg.
The National Highways and Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited (NHIDCL) oversees the Z-Morh tunnel constructed by APCO Infotech Private Limited at a cost of Rs 2,400 crore. The construction of the tunnel was started in 2018. This tunnel will make Sonamarg an all-weather tourist destination, thereby helping employment for local youth, boost trade, tourism, traffic to Ladakh region, Amarnath Yatra and businesses.
The Z-Morh Tunnel is a 6.5 km long 2-lane road tunnel between Gagangir and Sonamarg in Ganderbal of Jammu and Kashmir.
It is named after the Z-shaped stretch of road that the tunnel has replaced (Z-Morh translates to "Z-turn" in English). The road used before was avalanche-prone and used to get blocked for several months, but the Z-Morh tunnel provides all-weather connectivity to the Sonamarg tourist town.

Chhattisgarh: Five Maoists killed in encounter with security forces in Bijapur

AGENCIES
BIJAPUR, 12 JANUARY

Five Maoists were killed in an encounter with security forces on Sunday in Chhattisgarh's Bijapur district, police said.
According to the Superintendent of Police, Bijapur, Jitendra Yadav, "5 Naxalites were killed in an encounter with security forces. The bodies of two female Naxals and three male Naxals have been recovered. The identification of the deceased is yet to be done." Additionally, the SP said that several automatic and other weapons and explosives were found in the forests under the National Park area of Bijapur district. "1 SLR rifle, 12 bore rifle, single shot rifle, BGL launcher and other arms and ammunition have been recovered," said the official.
Sharing details from the encounter, SP Jitendra Yadav said: "Based on the intelligence about the presence of Naxals in the Bandepara-Korenjed forests under Madded police station area of the national park area of Bijapur district on January 11, a security force team had gone on an anti-



Maoist operation."
"During the operation, today Sunday morning, an exchange of fire began between the security forces and the Naxalites in the Bandepara-Korenjed forest, which continued till 3-4 pm," said the SP.
Following the encounter, the search operation led to the recovery of five bodies of the killed Maoists, including two women, all in uniforms.
The recovered weapons included one SLR rifle, one 12-bore rifle, two single-shot rifles, one BGL launcher, and one locally made Bharmar gun, along with explosives, Maoist literature, and other extremist materials.
The official said that detailed information will be released after the completion of the operation.
The search operation is still underway.
Earlier on Saturday, a Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) jawan was injured as an improvised explosive device (IED) laid down by the Maoists exploded in Chhattisgarh's Bijapur district, officials said.
This happened after a team of CRPF from 196 Battalion Mahadev Ghat had left for the forest to carry out area domination in the morning.

challenging the recent amendments to the Conduct of Election Rules, 1961. The Election Commission, a Constitutional body, charged with the conduct of free and fair elections cannot be allowed to unilaterally, and without public consultation, amend such a vital law in such a brazen manner," said Ramesh, in a post on social media platform X.
Ramesh, the Rajya Sabha MP, added that the amendment, introduced on 21 December following recommendations from the ECI, does away with "public access to essential information that makes the electoral process more transparent and accountable."
"The integrity of the electoral process is fast eroding. Hopefully the Supreme Court will help restore it," he asserted.
The amendment was apparently seen as a reaction to a Punjab and Haryana High Court directive to provide CCTV footage of an election booth.

Bihar bandh in support of job aspirants evokes mixed response

IMRAN MOJIB
PATNA, 12 JANUARY

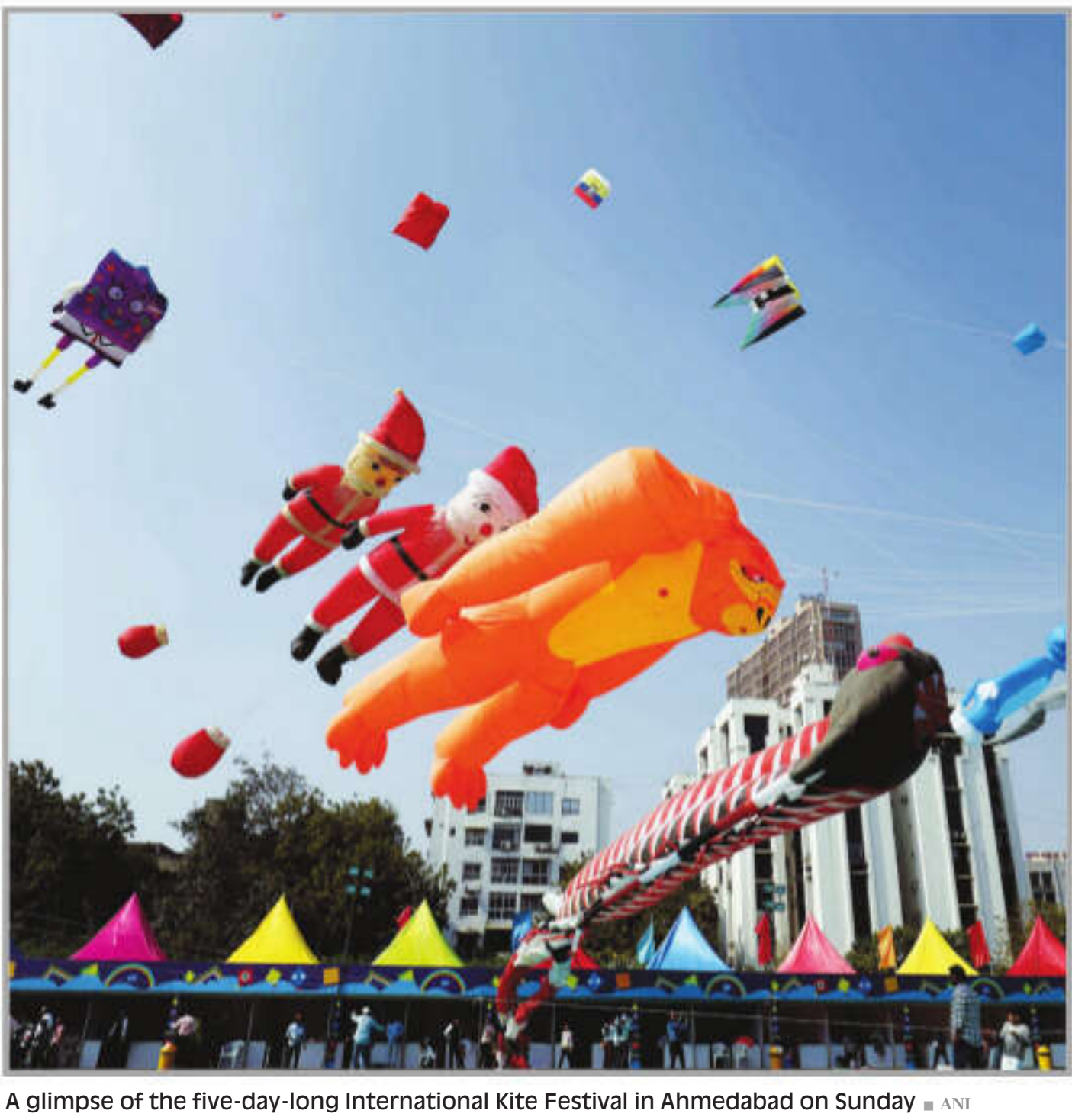
The day-long state-wide strike on Sunday over alleged irregularities in the 70th Combined Competitive Exams (preliminary) conducted by the BPSC on 13 December 2024, evoked mixed response.
It led to partial disruption in rail and road services across the state. However, major impact of the bandh was witnessed in Patna, Hajipur, Darbhanga, Samastipur, Katihar, Purnea and Madhepura districts.
The strike was called by independent MP Rajesh Ranjan, alias Pappu Yadav, and supported by various political outfits including Bhim Army led by Chandra Shekhar Azad and Asaduddin Owaisi's AIMIM, besides various students' organisations in support of the BPSC aspirants seeking cancellation of the exam.
Patna witnessed major disruption as Yadav's supporters staged demonstrations across the city. They gathered near the historic Patna Science College in the morning and



moved through Ashok Rajpath and Kargil Chowk to reach the Dak Bunglow Crossing, a major commercial intersection in the central section of the capital city.
The demonstrators attempted to disrupt the movement of vehicles, forced businessmen to shut their shops and also burnt effigies of top officials of the BPSC.
Yadav, draped in a shroud, addressed the demonstrators near the Dak Bunglow Crossing. Speaking about his decision to protest with a shroud, Yadav said that it reflects that Bihar youth have no future.
He said that students and youth in the state are plagued by apathy of the political establishments. They have no hope for their future as all political parties, whether

in the government or in opposition, have left them to struggle for their future.
On the eve of the Bihar Bandh, Yadav had said that the state-wide strike was not limited to register protest over the alleged irregularities in the BPSC exam. This was part of a long-drawn struggle to help all students and job aspirants get justice.
He stressed that students have been frequently complaining about irregularities in various recruitment exams and admission tests. "But the government never listened to them. That's quite natural because incidents like paper leaks cannot occur without the involvement of government officials and powerful political figures," he alleged.

KITE IN THE SKY



A glimpse of the five-day-long International Kite Festival in Ahmedabad on Sunday ■ ANI

Jaishankar to visit Spain on 13-14 January, his first as Foreign Minister

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, 12 JANUARY

External Affairs Minister, S Jaishankar, is set to embark on a diplomatic visit to Spain on 13-14 January.
This will mark his first visit to Spain, as the Foreign Minister, the Ministry of External Affairs said on Sunday.
During the visit, EAM will meet the leadership of Spain and hold discussions with his counterpart, Foreign Minister Manuel Albares, on the entire gamut of bilateral relations and regional and global matters of mutual interest.
He will also address the 9th Annual Conference of Spanish Ambassadors and meet the Indian community.
Spanish President Pedro Sanchez paid an official visit to India in October last year at the invitation of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.
According to MEA, this was President Sanchez's first visit to India and the first visit by a President of the Government of Spain to India




after 18 years.
The two leaders noted that this visit has renewed the bilateral relationship, infusing it with fresh momentum and setting the stage for a new era of enhanced cooperation between the two countries across various sectors. They also expressed satisfaction at the progress of bilateral relations since Prime Minister Modi's visit to Spain in 2017.
During his visit, President Sanchez and Prime Minister Modi jointly inaugurated the Final Assembly Line Plant of C-295 aircraft co-produced by Airbus Spain and Tata Advanced Systems Ltd. at Vadodra. This plant will roll out the first 'Made in India' C295 aircraft in 2026, out of

a total of 40 aircraft to be manufactured in India. Airbus Spain is also delivering 16 aircraft in 'fly-away' condition to India, out of which 6 have already been delivered to the Indian Air Force.
They noted that the ongoing bilateral cooperation between the foreign, economy and commerce and defence ministries is working well, and stressed the importance of holding regular dialogues between the concerned ministries/agencies of the two sides with a view to strengthening and diversifying bilateral cooperation in key areas of defence, security including cyber security, trade and economic issues, culture, tourism, education and people-to-people ties.

SC ruling a landmark decision in protecting rights of genuine railway passengers: RPF

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 12 JANUARY

The recent judgment by the Supreme Court is a landmark decision in protecting the rights of genuine railway passengers, according to Director General of the Railway Protection Force Manoj Yadava.
"By addressing the misuse of ticketing systems by unscrupulous elements, this judgment reaffirms our commitment to maintaining the transparency and fairness of the Indian Railways' ticketing process," he said.
The RPF, Mr Yadava said, remains steadfast in its mission to ensure that tickets are accessible to all legitimate travelers and will continue to act firmly against those attempting to misuse the system for personal gain.
"We urge the public to report any irregularities and join us in safeguarding the integrity of the railway system. The helpline number 139 is common for all complaints. Alternatively, irregularities can also be reported through the RailMadad portal. RPF assures passengers of its continued vigilance and dedication to upholding the integrity of the railway system, ensuring a fair and efficient travel experience for all," he added.
The Supreme Court delivered a landmark judgment on 9 January, addressing the misuse of ticketing systems and ensuring fair access to railway tickets for genuine passengers. Describing bulk booking of railway tickets as a social crime, the apex court held that the provision criminalises un-authorised procurement and supply of railway tickets, irrespective of the mode of procurement and supply.
This judgment is delivered




by the apex court on connected matters of Special Leave Petitions filed by the Ministry of Railways challenging the judgements of High Courts of Kerala and Madras. The judgment ensures that railway tickets, particularly for high-demand services such as Tatkal and reserved accommodations, are not hoarded and then sold at a premium by fraudulent unauthorised operators, making the criminal act punishable under Section 143 of Railways Act 1989.
The judgment has also extended the ambit of the Railways Act to explicitly include the procurement and supply of e-tickets booked online. Genuine passengers will benefit as the system becomes better safeguarded against misuse.
The effects of this judgment are far-reaching, as it sets a precedent to curb illegal activities in ticket procurement and restore confidence in the railway ticketing system. It ensures that authorised agents and individuals operate within the framework of established rules, promoting fairness and accessibility for all. Additionally, it sends a strong message to potential violators that misuse of the system will not be tolerated, thereby fostering a more equitable travel experience for millions of railway passengers across the nation.

Maha voters buried politics of betrayal played by Sharad Pawar and Uddhav Thackeray: Amit Shah

AGENCIES
SHIRDI, 12 JANUARY

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday claimed that Maharashtra's grand victory of BJP-led MahaYuti has brought the country's politics back on track as it buried the politics of betrayal played by Sharad Pawar and Uddhav Thackeray.
Maharashtra witnessed instability during 1978 and 2024 but the BJP workers did the work of giving a stable government at this time, the Home Minister added.
"You taught a lesson to those who opposed Hindutva and Prime Minister Narendra



Modi's development politics. You made the real Shiv Sena and the real nationalist win the Assembly elections. You rejected those who did dynasty politics," he said while addressing the state party meeting organised to celebrate the landslide victory of the BJP-led MahaYuti in the Assembly election.
At the beginning of his speech, HM Shah targeted Sharad Pawar and Uddhav Thackeray. "Sharad Pawar had rebelled in 1978. The people of Maharashtra have taught him a lesson for the politics of betrayal that he had practised at that time. After that Uddhav Thackeray

also betrayed us in 2019. He abandoned the thoughts of Balasaheb Thackeray. You did the work of teaching Uddhav Thackeray a lesson. You showed him his place in the Assembly elections," he said.
The Home Minister heaped praise over the party karyakartas for their work and contribution in the BJP's thumping win. "The architects of this great victory are the workers of BJP. I salute all of you. I also thank the people of Maharashtra on behalf of BJP workers. All of you have given a hard slap on the face of those who do dynasty politics and play politics of betrayal and deception and sent them home. The people of Maharashtra have decided

that Eknath Shinde's Shiv Sena is Balasaheb Thackeray's Shiv Sena and Ajit Pawar's NCP is the real NCP," he remarked.
"We all know that the basis of our party's work is organisation. The foundation of our winning elections is our strong organisation. Our warrior at the booth is our commander. I want to tell my workers that the chain of development is possible only when you unfurl the saffron flag from the Panchayat to the Parliament -- BJP from the Panchayat to the Parliament, BJP in Maharashtra and BJP in the country. It is the tradition of BJP that

we do what we say," Shah thundered.
He praised the state unit chief Chandrashekhar Bawankule for leading the party during election and its stellar performance.
HM Shah exhorted the party workers to work hard and with same dedication to continue the victory march of BJP-led MahaYuti in the upcoming local and civic body elections defeating the Maha Vikas Aghadi. "BJP from Panchayat to Parliament, is our goal and for that the BJP-led MahaYuti should be in each and every seat for the crushing defeat of the Maha Vikas Aghadi," he said.



Los Angeles wildfires: Death toll rises amid fierce winds

Five of the deaths were attributed to the Palisades Fire and 11 resulted from the Eaton Fire

ASSOCIATED PRESS
LOS ANGELES, 12 JANUARY

The death toll from the wildfires ravaging the Los Angeles area rose to 16 as crews battled to cut off the spreading blazes before potentially strong winds return that could push the flames toward some of the city's most famous landmarks. Five of the deaths were attributed to the Palisades Fire and 11 resulted from the Eaton Fire, the Los Angeles County coroner's office said in a statement Saturday evening. The previous number of confirmed fatalities before Saturday was 11, but officials said they expected that figure to rise as teams with cadaver dogs conduct systematic grid searches in leveled neighborhoods. Authorities have established a centre where people

can report the missing. There were fears that winds could move the fires toward the J. Paul Getty Museum and the University of California, Los Angeles, while new evacuation warnings left more homeowners on edge. By Saturday evening, Cal Fire reported the Palisades, Eaton, Kenneth and Hurst fires had consumed about 62 square miles (160 square kilometres), an area larger than San Francisco. The Palisades and Eaton fires accounted for 59 square miles (nearly 153 square kilometres). In a briefing posted online Saturday evening, Michael Traum of the California Office of Emergency Services said 150,000 people in Los Angeles County were under evacuation orders, with more than 700 people taking refuge in nine shelters.



Crews from California and nine other states are part of the ongoing response that includes 1,354 fire engines, 84 aircraft and more than 14,000 personnel, including newly arrived firefighters from Mexico, he said. With Cal Fire reporting containment of the Palisades Fire at 11 per cent and the Eaton Fire at 15 per cent on

Saturday night, the fight is set to continue. "Weather conditions are still critical and another round of strong winds is expected starting Monday," Traum said. A fierce battle occurred Saturday in Mandeville Canyon, home to Arnold Schwarzenegger and other celebrities not far from the Pacific coast, where swooping helicopters

dumped water as the blaze charged downhill. Firefighters on the ground used hoses in an attempt to beat back leaping flames as thick smoke blanketed the chaparral-covered hillside. Cal Fire Operations Chief Christian Litz said Saturday that a main focus was the Palisades Fire burning in the canyon area, not far from the UCLA campus. New evacuations were ordered Friday evening after a flare up on the eastern side of the Palisades Fire. The National Weather Service warned that strong Santa Ana winds could soon return. Those winds have been largely blamed for turning the wildfires into infernos that leveled entire neighborhoods around to city where there has been no significant rainfall in more than eight months.

Israeli delegation to travel to Qatar for hostage deal with Hamas

AGENCIES
JERUSALEM, 12 JANUARY

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has instructed a senior delegation has to depart to the Qatari capital, Doha, to continue advancing a deal with Hamas to release the Israeli hostages held in the Gaza Strip. A statement from the Prime Minister's Office on Saturday said the directive followed a situation assessment Netanyahu held Saturday evening with Defence Minister Israel Katz and US negotiators from "both the outgoing and incoming administrations." The Israeli delegation includes David Barnea, head of the Israeli Mossad intelligence agency, and Ronen Bar, chief of the Shin Bet internal security service, reports Xinhua news agency. Meanwhile, Israel Katz, on 10 January, has instructed the military to prepare a plan for the "total defeat" of Hamas if a hostage release deal is



not signed by January 20. Katz said if Hamas does not release the hostages by the time US President-elect Donald Trump takes office, a "plan for the total defeat of Hamas in Gaza" would be implemented. He directed the military to "identify potential obstacles to implementing the plan, including humanitarian concerns and other issues," so the political leadership could make the "necessary decisions." Katz made the instruction during a security assessment meeting on Thursday with Israel Defense Forces Chief of Staff Herzi Halevi. He called for delivering a stronger blow to Hamas rather than engaging in a "war of attrition."

Katz stated that the "complete defeat" of Hamas should be pursued independently of Gaza's reconstruction plans after the war. "Any political resolution is irrelevant to the current plan and required actions, as no Arab or other entities would take responsibility for managing civilian life in Gaza until Hamas is completely dismantled," he added. Israel and Hamas have been engaged in a deadly conflict after Hamas launched an attack on southern Israel on 7 October, 2023, during which about 1,200 people were killed and about 250 taken hostages. Indirect peace talks between Israel and Hamas have been on and off in the past months, with Qatar, Egypt, and the United States as the main mediators. In recent weeks, the indirect negotiations on a ceasefire in Gaza and a prisoner swap deal have gained momentum.

Croatia's President Milanović overwhelming favourite to win reelection in a runoff vote

AGENCIES
ZAGREB, 12 JANUARY

Croatia's incumbent President Zoran Milanović was the overwhelming favourite to win reelection as he faced a candidate from the ruling conservative party in a runoff presidential vote on Sunday. The left-leaning Milanović comfortably won the first round of voting on Dec. 29, leaving his main challenger, Dragan Primorac, a forensic scientist who had unsuccessfully run for presidency previously, and six other candidates far behind. The runoff between the top two contenders was nec-

essary because Milanović fell short of securing 50 per cent of the vote by just 5,000 votes, while Primorac trailed far behind with 19 per cent. The election comes as the European Union and NATO member country of 3.8 million people struggles with biting inflation, corruption scandals and a labor shortage. Milanović, 58, is an outspoken critic of Western military support for Ukraine in its war against Russia. He is the most popular politician in Croatia, and is sometimes compared to U.S. President-elect Donald Trump for his combative style of communication with political oppo-

nents. Milanović served as prime minister in the past with a mixed record. He has been a fierce critic of current Prime Minister Andrej Plenković and the pair have long sparred with each other. Milanović regularly accuses Plenković and his conservative Croatian Democratic Union party of systemic corruption, calling the premier a "serious threat to Croatia's democracy." Plenković has sought to portray Sunday's vote as one about Croatia's future in the EU and NATO. He has labelled Milanović "pro-Russian" and a threat to Croatia's international standing.

Indian-origin MP bows out of Canada PM race, won't seek re-election

AGENCIES
OTTAWA, 12 JANUARY

Anita Anand has bowed out of Canada's prime ministerial race and announced that she won't seek re-election to parliament either. Transport Minister Anand said on Saturday afternoon that she was following Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's example and will start her career's next chapter by returning to academia. With the Liberal Party leadership and the prime ministership heading to a dead end in an election that favours the opposition Conservative Party and its leader Pierre Marcel Poilievre, two other prominent politicians, Foreign Minister Melanie Joly and Finance Min-

ister Dominic LeBlanc, have also quit the race to succeed Trudeau, who announced last week his decision to resign. In the announcement on X, Anand, who has previously held the powerful defence portfolio, said: "Now that the Prime Minister has made his decision to move to his next chapter, I have determined the time is right for me to do the same, and to return to my prior professional life of teaching, research, and public policy analyses." An expert in business and finance law, she was a tenured law professor at the University of Toronto. She did stints as a visiting lecturer at Yale University in the US before plunging into politics and becoming the MP from Oakville in Ontario



in 2019. Speaking of her origin, she said: "During my first campaign, many people told me that a woman of Indian descent would not get elected in Oakville, Ontario. Yet, Oakville rallied behind me not once but twice since 2019, an honour that I will hold in my heart forever." Her father, S.V. Anand was

the son of a freedom fighter from Tamil Nadu, V.A. Sundaram, and her mother Saroj Ram was from Punjab, and both were doctors who immigrated to Canada. Joining the Trudeau cabinet in 2019 as the public services and procurement minister, she made her mark ensuring Canada had enough medical equipment and vaccines during the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2021, she received the high-profile defence portfolio and moved in a cabinet reshuffle to be the president of the Treasury Board, a ministerial-level post, overseeing government operations broadly. Last year, she became the transport minister and added the internal trade portfolio. Taking stock of her rapid

rise in government, she wrote: "Back in 2019, I could never have imagined that such work would mean navigating supply chains to overcome a global pandemic, addressing sexual assault in the Canadian Armed Forces, ensuring military aid reached Ukraine, overseeing the Treasury Board Secretariat or reinforcing Canada's transportation systems." With his popularity cratering, Trudeau has said that he will quit when a new Liberal Party leader, who will automatically become the prime minister, is elected under the supervision of party President Sachit Mehra. The party said the election will be completed by March 9, ahead of parliament resuming its sessions on March 24.

North Korean troops in Ukraine gain battlefield experience, cementing alliance with Russia

AGENCIES
KYIV, 12 JANUARY

For weeks, Ukrainian troops braced for an unfamiliar enemy: North Korean soldiers sent to bolster Moscow's forces after Ukraine launched a lightning-fast incursion and seized territory in Russia's Kursk region over the summer. Their arrival marked a new and alarming phase in the war. And while initially inexperienced on the battlefield, North Korean troops have adapted quickly — a development that could have far-reaching consequences as they gain combat knowledge in the

war against Ukraine. Unlike the Russian troops Ukraine has been battling for nearly three years, Kyiv's forces were uncertain about what to expect from this new adversary, drawn into the war after Moscow and Pyongyang signed an agreement pledging military assistance using "all means" if either were attacked. One Ukrainian soldier who has witnessed North Koreans in battle described them as disciplined and highly methodical, saying they were more professional than their Russian counterparts. The soldier spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because



he was not authorized to discuss the sensitive military issue. However, other soldiers, including Ukrainian special forces, have shared battlefield drone footage on the Telegram messaging app mocking their

tactics as outdated. Nevertheless, there is consensus among Ukrainian soldiers, military intelligence and others monitoring developments on the ground: While Pyongyang's troops lacked battlefield experience when they arrived, that has been changing quickly.

With 1.2 million troops, North Korea's military ranks among the largest standing armies globally. But its post-Korean War foreign engagements have been limited, leaving them inexperienced with modern warfare technologies like drones. "For the first time in decades, the North Korean army is gaining real military experience," said Andrii Yusov, spokesperson for Ukraine's military intelligence agency. "This is a global challenge — not just for Ukraine and Europe, but for the entire world."

Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) unveils new underground missile base: Report

AGENCIES
TEHRAN, 12 JANUARY

Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) has unveiled a new underground missile base, local media reported. Footage broadcast by state-run IIRB TV on Friday night showed the facility, described as a "missile city," being unveiled in the presence of IRGC Commander Hossein Salami and Amir-Ali Hajizadeh, head of the IRGC's Aerospace Force. The base houses advanced Iranian missiles, including the "Emad, Qadr and Qiam," all liquid-fueled,

the state TV narrator said. The subterranean facility is one of hundreds of such bases belonging to the IRGC's Aerospace Force, reports Xinhua news agency, quoting IIRB. The footage indicated missiles from the base were used in Iran's second retaliatory military operation against Israel in October last year. Salami, during a visit to the base, praised its forces for their involvement in the 14 April, 2024, and subsequent October operations against Israel. He said Iran's defence systems and missiles were "increasing on a daily

basis in different parts of the country." He dismissed "enemy" claims that Iran's missile production capacity had been disrupted, asserting that the country's missiles were "increasing and improving every day in terms of quantity as well as quality, efficiency and design."

Poojarati Biswas, D/o Mr. Chittaranjan Biswas and W/o Mr. Laxminarayan Bose, aged about 41 years, residing at Southwinds, Block-7, Flat No. 132, Ghosal Para Road, Manikpur, P.O. Harinavi, Dist. 24 Parganas, Pin 700148, has changed my name from Poojarati Biswas to Poojarati Bose as declared before the Ld. Judicial Magistrate, Kolkata (W.B.) vide Affidavit No. 1245 dt 9.1.2025. POOJARATI BISWAS and POOJARATI BOSE both are same and identical person.

LEISURE

10 MINUTE CROSSWORD

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ACROSS

1 Nuclear reaction (7)

5 Vessels (5)

8 Grub (5)

9 Lorry driver (7)

10 Blue dye (6)

11 Observed (4)

15 Enquiries (4)

17 Pang (6)

20 Upstart (7)

22 Beginning (5)

23 Colourless gas (5)

24 Foot pedal (7)

DOWN

1 People (4)

2 Taxing (9)

3 European language (7)

4 Conservation charity (8,5)

5 Potatoes (Informal) (5)

6 Type (3)

7 Certain (4)

12 Invigorated (9)

14 Foul (7)

16 Lustre (5)

18 Highest point (4)

19 Eyelid inflammation (4)

21 Manage (3)

SOLUTIONS TO YESTERDAY'S CROSSWORD

ACROSS

1 Beast,

4 Wrong (Be strong),

8 Guava,

9 Carrion,

10 Stern,

11 Denounce,

12 Trepidation,

16 Euphoria,

18 Step,

21 Obscene,

22 Chaos,

23 Deals,

24 Arrangement.

DOWN

1 Bogus,

2 Amateur,

3 Team,

4 Worn-out,

5 Onion,

6 Gander,

7 Screwdriver,

13 Process,

14 Outlast,

15 Record,

17 Pasta,

19 Pushy,

20 Acme.

By arrangement with The Independent

Figures in parentheses denote the number of letters in the words required

BEETLE BAILEY/Mort Walker

THIS BIG MEN'S CATALOG IS PERFECT FOR SOMEONE OF YOUR GIRTH

WHAT'S "GIRTH"? "BLUBBERY"... "BIG BELLY"... "BIG..."

"WIDE"... "FAT"... "I SHOULD'A STUCK WITH 'GIRTH'"

RED EYE/Bill Yates & Mel Casson

MY SQUAW AND I ARE MOVING ON, CHIEF

I WISH YOU LUCK, BUT DON'T TELL ME WHERE YOU'RE MOVING TO

WHY NOT?

WHEN THE BILL COLLECTORS COME AND ASK WHERE YOU ARE, I DON'T WANT TO BE A LIAR!

DADDY DAZE/John Kovalleski

BA! DON'T WORRY. THAT NICE DOGGIE IS JUST SAYING HELLO.

SHEESH. THAT DOG LOOKS VICIOUS. I HOPE THAT FENCE HOLDS. IT HAS TEETH LIKE A BEAR TRAP

OKAY. STAY CALM. THEY CAN SMELL FEAR.

BA. UH...WHAT SMELL?

THERE'S NOTHING WRONG WITH MY DEODORANT.

NEED TO KNOW

Ambulance

FD Block Association (Amb) 9830452536, 9830181286

Happy Calcuttans 24400160

City Point Nurses Centre 2567-4113, 9831142623

People's Relief Committee 2280-4943/9444

24 hrs Medical Oxygen Delivery

BOC India Ltd. 9831277777

Blood Banks

Ashok Laboratory 24720333

Central Blood Bank 23510619

Life Care 2284-6940

Peoples Blood Bank 2455-5164/ 5557

RK Mission Seva Pratishan 2475-3636/39

Police/Fire

Laibazar (Police Control Room) 22143230

S. P. (North 24-Pgns) 25423005

S.P. (South 24-Pgns) 2479-3333/1311

Bhawan Bhawan 24791761/9, 24791933

Fire Service Station Salt Lake: 2357-5293;

Howrah 2666-8111; Behala 2497-6285

Civic Services

Kolkata Municipal Corporation: 2286-1000

Water: 2543-1602

Calcutta Telephones

Changed Number Announcement 1951,1952,1953

Taxi Refusal

SMS 575756: Complaint and registration

Police Toll Free No. 1073

Transport Deptt. No. 6451-6718

CESC Fault Reporting

1912 and 4403-1912

Trains

Howrah Station Old Complex 1331/1332 (Auto Telephone Numbers), 1310, 2638

7412/3542/2581 (manual).

Sealdah: 2350-3535/3537

Shalimar Station: 2668-1121,

Eastern Railway and South-Eastern Railway: 139.

SCRABBLE® (G R A M S) BRAND

R S E E T N R

I U R E M E Q

R E D V I O P

O E M D S R R

PAR SCORE 190-200

by JUDD

FOUR RACK TOTAL TIME LIMIT: 20 MIN

SCRABBLE®

WELFARE

LEAVEN

HAVE

PAR SCORE 130-140

JUDD'S TOTAL: 199

Instructions Make a 2 to 7 letter word from the letters in each rack. Add points of each word, using scoring directions at right. Letter words get 50-point bonus. "Double" used as any letter. Words with 4 or more letters are in the Official Scrabble® Dictionary (Merriam-Webster) and Official Scrabble® Words (Chamberlain). Judd's solution: 10-25-23

SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku

By Dave Green

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Difficulty Level ★★

Answer to previous puzzle

answer to previous puzzle

epaper.thestatesman.com

THUMBNAILS

Adani Group commits ₹60,000 crore investment plan to enhance Chhattisgarh's power generation: The Adani Group has announced a planned investment of Rs 60,000 crore to expand the group's power plants in Raipur, Korba, and Raigarh in Chhattisgarh. The Chief Minister's Office on Sunday posted on X the details of the meeting and the planned investment. The CMO also posted pictures of the meeting. "In a meeting with the Honourable Chief Minister of Chhattisgarh, Shri Vishnu Deo Sai, Gautam Adani, Chairman of the Adani Group, announced a planned investment of 60,000 crore to expand the group's power plants in Raipur, Korba, and Raigarh," the CMO's post said. The expansion will enhance Chhattisgarh's total power generation capacity by an additional 6,120 MW. Additionally, the Adani Group Chairman committed Rs 5,000 crore for the development and expansion of the group's cement plants in the state. The X post further said that on the advice of Chief Minister Sai, Gautam Adani assured the state government of a Rs 10,000 crore impetus over the next four years to support initiatives in education, healthcare, skill development, and tourism under CSR and beyond from the Adani Group.

India stock outlook: Inflation data, Q3 earnings on investors radar

Last Friday, Nifty fell 573 points or 2.39 per cent to close at 23,431, and Sensex fell 1,844 points or 2.33 per cent to close at 77,378

AGENCIES
MUMBAI, 12 JANUARY

The market outlook for next week will be guided by FY25 Q3 results, inflation data, crude oil prices, and domestic and global cues. Next week, Infosys, HCL Technologies, HDFC AMC, HDFC Life Insurance Company, CEAT, SBI Life, Tech Mahindra, Wipro, and Axis Bank will release their quarterly results for the October to December period. Retail inflation data will be released on 13 January. The Indian stock market witnessed a sharp decline in the trading session from 6 January to 10 January. During this period, Nifty fell



573 points or 2.39 per cent to close at 23,431, and Sensex fell 1,844 points or 2.33 per cent to close at 77,378. Bank Nifty was under heavy pressure during this period and

closed at 48,734, down 2,254 points or 4.42 per cent. Puneet Singhania, Director at Master Trust Group said: "All major indices are now trading below their cru-

cial 200-day EMA, highlighting persistent bearish momentum. The sharp decline in the market is attributed to multiple factors, including sustained foreign investor outflows, subdued expectations for Q3 earnings, continued weakness in the Indian rupee against the US dollar, and rising US 10-year bond yields, which have driven FII's towards the US bond market."

The sentiment of foreign institutional investors (FIIs) continues to remain negative and last week FIIs sold shares worth Rs 16,854 crore in the stock market. At the same time, Domestic Institutional Investors (DIIs) invested Rs 21,682 crore in the cash market.

Pravesh Gour, Senior Technical Analyst at Swastika Investmart said: "The market structure remains very weak, with 23,263 and 22,800 as important support levels. On the upside, 23,660, 23,770, and 23,900 will act as key resistance levels during any pullback. A meaningful relief rally is expected only if Nifty sustains above the 23,900 level."

"Bank Nifty is trading below key support levels, with 48,600 as an immediate support. If it slips below 48,600, the next support will be at 47,200. On the upside, 49,200 is an immediate and critical hurdle, and above this, 49,800/50,350 will be the next resistance, he added.

Foreign investors withdrew over ₹22,000 crore from Indian equities



STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 12 JANUARY:

In January so far, foreign investors have withdrawn Rs 22,194 crore from Indian equities. The move was driven by expectations of a weak earnings season, a steady rise in the US dollar, and concerns over tariff war during Donald Trump's presidency. Notably in December, foreign investors had invested Rs 15,446 crore.

Data with the depositories showed that the Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) offloaded shares worth Rs 22,194 crore from Indian equities so far this month (till 10 January). FPIs have been sellers on all trading days except 2 January.

Foreign investors have scaled back their investments in Indian equities significantly

amid global and domestic headwinds.

Record low level of Indian rupee, surge in US bond yields coupled with rich valuation of Indian markets also makes Indian equities relatively unattractive for foreign investors.

In 2024, the overall trend indicated a cautious approach by foreign investors. They scaled back investments in Indian equities significantly with net inflows of just Rs 427 crore.

The foreign portfolio investors' investment in equities has surpassed the Rs 1 lakh crore mark in 2024 for the first time in September.

This contrasts sharply with the massive Rs 1.71 lakh crore net inflows in 2023, driven by optimism over India's strong economic fundamentals.

CII puts forward 10-point suggestion for Union Budget 2025

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 12 JANUARY

Ahead of the Union Budget, the industry body Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) has put forward a 10-point specific suggestion before the central government to increase Ease of Doing Business.

It has suggested that all regulatory approvals - central, state and local levels - must mandatorily be provided only through the National Single Window System (NSWS), which they believe will help bring about transparency and speed in the processes. It should be completed for all central ministries within the next six months, followed by bringing on the platform, states, in a phased manner.

Secondly, the CII said an Act, imposing statutory obligation on all public authorities for time-bound delivery of services and redressal of grievances, could be passed, with



provision of deemed approval beyond the prescribed timeline.

Further as its third point, it called for expediting the process of dispute resolution through both improving the capacity of courts and placing greater reliance on Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) mechanism.

The expansion of scope of the National Judicial Grid (NJDG) was the fourth point of the CII. NJDG has been set up to identify, manage and reduce pendency of cases across the courts.

The CII suggested that for streamlining environmental compliances, a unified frame-

work could be introduced, which consolidates all requirements into a single document.

In its suggestion list, CII believed that the easy access to land is important to facilitate new or expanding businesses. It suggested that states may be incentivised to develop an Online Integrated Land Authority with an objective to streamline land banks, digitise and integrate land records, and provide information on disputed land, among others.

The CII's other key suggestions involve reducing labour compliances, improving trade facilitation, and minimising tax-related litigation.

The upcoming 2025-26 Budget will mark Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's eighth one coming against 1 February. The budget is coming in the backdrop of weak GDP numbers and relatively weak consumption in the economy.

after the US, China and Japan. Benchmark indices Nifty and Sensex hit all-time highs of 26,277.35 and 85,978.25, respectively, last year.

"APAC markets ended 2024 on a cautious note as optimism for the new year diminished amid the rising trade risks from Donald Trump's presidency and China's faltering economic recovery," said

Murthy Grandhi, company profiles analyst at GlobalData.

Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company (TSMC) retains its position as APAC's largest company, boasting a remarkable market cap of \$850.3 billion, a 69.7 per cent year-on-year (YoY) growth.

According to the report,

the global demand for semiconductors and Taiwan's critical role in chip production has fuelled TSMC's growth.

Samsung Electronics, despite ranking seventh, experienced a sharp 40.5 per cent decline in market cap, as it faced headwinds in the high-bandwidth memory (HBM) chips segment, a vital component for AI processors.

Market valuation of 5 of top 10 most-valued firms tumble over ₹1.85 trillion

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 12 JANUARY

The combined market valuation of five of the top-10 most-valued firms tumbled Rs 1,85,952.31 crore last week.

HDFC Bank took the biggest hit, in-line with a weak trend in domestic equities.

The rank-wise performance of the top 10 firms, in terms of market valuation, were Reliance Industries followed by TCS, HDFC Bank, Bharti Airtel, ICICI Bank, Infosys, State Bank of India, Hindustan Unilever, ITC and HCL Tech.

Reliance Industries, HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank, State Bank of India and ITC faced erosion from their market valuations while Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), Bharti Airtel, Infosys, Hindustan Unilever and



HCL Technologies, were the gainers.

HCL Technologies was the latest entrant in the top-10 pack.

The market capitalisation (mcap) of HDFC Bank

dropped by Rs 70,479.23 crore to Rs 12,67,440.61 crore while ICICI Bank's valuation declined by Rs 11,877.49 crore to Rs 8,81,501.01 crore.

IT giant TCS added Rs 60,168.79 crore taking its

mcap to Rs 15,43,313.32 crore while HCL Tech jumped Rs 13,120.58 crore to Rs 5,41,539.01 crore.

The valuation of Infosys surged Rs 11,792.44 crore to Rs 8,16,626.78 crore.

Notably on Friday, the Nifty IT index jumped 3.44 per cent due to a healthy Q3 result of heavyweight TCS.

The mcap of State Bank of India slumped Rs 44,935.46 crore to Rs 6,63,233.14 crore.

Reliance Industries eroded by Rs 12,179.13 crore to Rs 16,81,194.35 crore while the mcap of Hindustan Unilever rallied Rs 8,564.26 crore to Rs 5,73,758.44 crore.

Further in the week, telecom giant, Bharti Airtel, climbed Rs 8,999.41 crore to Rs 9,19,933.99 crore.

On Friday, the market ended lower during a highly volatile session with Nifty falling below 23,350. This was led by selling across the sectors, barring IT stocks.

At close, the Sensex was down 241.30 points or 0.31 per cent at 77,378.91, and the Nifty was down 95 points or 0.40% percent at 23,431.50.

Mega 'Entrepreneurship Development Conclave' in Pune on Monday



STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 12 JANUARY

The Centre is organising an Entrepreneurship Development Conclave, themed "Empowering Entrepreneurs: Transforming Livestock Economies" on Monday in Pune.

The conclave will be graced by Union Minister for Fisheries, Animal Husbandry & Dairying (FAHD) and Panchayati Rajiv Ranjan Singh alias Lalan Singh as Chief Guest. Other central and state ministers will also be present.

The objective of the Entrepreneurship Development Conclave is to unite policymakers, federations, cooperatives, industry associations, entrepreneurs and financial institutions to unlock the potential of the livestock sector.

It provides a platform to the stakeholders to discuss challenges, share solutions, promote entrepreneurship, provide value addition and sustainable practices to catalyze growth for the sector.

The Government of India is implementing flagship schemes such as the Animal Husbandry Infrastructure Development Fund (AHIDF) with an outlay of Rs 29,110.25 crore and National Livestock Mission (NLM) with an outlay of Rs 2,300 crore. By showcasing opportunities under NLM and AHIDF, the conclave seeks to drive inclusive growth and empower rural farmers and small enterprises.

The Entrepreneurship Development Conclave will entail the inauguration of the National Livestock Mission - Entrepreneurship Develop-

ment Programme (NLM - EDP) Dashboard that provides an organised summary of key information of the entire project to the public, inauguration of 40 projects assisted under AHIDF and NLM-EDP worth Rs 545.04 Crore, release of National Livestock Mission Operational Guidelines 2.0 and Success Story Booklets.

The Conclave will also have panel discussions on the themes "Catalyzing Growth in Livestock Sector: Entrepreneurship, Processing and Opportunities" and "Role of Banks and MSMEs in Livestock Sector & Credit Facilitation" that will witness participation from government, industry leaders along with financial institutions, banks, cooperatives, and representatives from federations and industry associations.

Finance Ministry to meet heads of banks on Wednesday

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 12 JANUARY:

The Finance Ministry is set to review the progress of various financial inclusion schemes as it has called a meeting of the heads of Public Sector Banks (PSBs) on Wednesday.

The meeting is scheduled to be chaired by Financial Services Secretary M Nagaraju and review various schemes, including Jan Suraksha and Mudra Yojana, and PM SVANidhi Schemes, Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana, Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana among others.

PMSBY provides insurance cover of Rs 2 lakh for



accidental death or total permanent disability and Rs 1 lakh for partial permanent disability to people in the age group of 18-70 years.

The PMJJBY offers life insurance cover of Rs 2 lakh, in case of death due to any reason, to people in the age group of 18-50 years having a bank or post office account, who give their consent to join or enable auto-debit of

premium. PM SVANidhi Scheme was launched in June 2020 by the government as a micro-credit facility with an aim to empower street vendors to recover losses incurred as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The meeting would be crucial as it is coming near the presentation of the Union Budget 2025.

Renewable energy capacity addition in India increases by 113 pc in 2024: Centre

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, 12 JANUARY

India added about 30 GW (Gigawatt) of new renewable energy capacity last year, 113 per cent higher compared to 13.75 GW added in 2023, according to the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy.

With the expansion, India's total renewable energy capacity has reached 218 GW.

India has set a target of developing 500 GW of renewable energy capacity by 2030. To achieve this target, the

country will have to install at least 50 GW of new renewable energy capacity every year in the next six years.

In a post on the social media platform 'X', New and Renewable Energy Minister Pralhad Joshi said: "Exponential growth from 13.75 GW in 2023 to around 30 GW in 2024, resulting in achieving nearly 218 GW now underscores India's growing commitment to clean energy and its progress in building a greener future."

According to the ministry's data, India had a renewable

energy capacity of 35.84 GW as of 31 March, 2014.

Since the financial year (FY) 2014-15, India recorded the highest renewable capacity addition of 18.48 GW in 2023-24.

According to JMK Research, India installed 4.59 GW of new rooftop solar capacity in the calendar year 2024 (January to December), 53 per cent higher than in 2023. This growth is mainly attributed to the PM Surya Ghar Free Bijli Yojana, which was launched earlier this year.

MahaKumbh likely to generate over Rs 4 lakh crore in trade, boost India's economy

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, 12 JANUARY

As MahaKumbh sets to begin in Prayagraj at the holy confluence of the revered Ganga, Yamuna and Saraswati rivers from Monday, the largest religious congregation on Earth is anticipated to generate more than Rs 4 lakh crore in trade in a significant boost to India's economy.

As per industry estimates, MahaKumbh is expected to boost both nominal and real GDP by over 1 per cent.

The Uttar Pradesh government expects approximately 40 crore visitors, both



domestic and international, to attend the event.

According to the government estimates, MahaKumbh may generate Rs 2 lakh crore in trade if each of 40 crore visitors spends an average of Rs 5,000.

Industry estimates further say that the average expen-

diture per person could rise to even Rs 10,000 at the mega event, and the total economic impact could reach Rs 4 lakh crore.

Meanwhile, companies from India as well as abroad are fighting for space to showcase their presence during the 45-day event.

From fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) to pharma sectors, from mobility providers to digital payments platforms, companies have loosened their marketing purse strings, and are set to spend more than Rs 3,000 crore on branding and marketing at MahaKumbh, according to industry experts.

Public sector giant Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL) has supplied approximately 45,000 tonnes of steel for the construction of various structures at the MahaKumbh Mela 2025.

The steel supplied by the company includes chequered

plates, hot strip mill plates, mild steel plates, angles and joists, according to a statement issued by the Maharatna company.

Prayagraj has undergone a major makeover ahead of the biggest congregation of the followers of Sanatan Dharma. More than 200 roads have been constructed and upgraded, ensuring seamless connectivity for millions of devotees likely to attend the grand spiritual gathering. The roads have been beautified by placing over 3 lakh plants and 1 lakh horticultural samplings, enhancing their visual appeal.



When Paradise comes closer

NAVA THAKURIA

During our village school days, while we used to graze our cattle on the vast rice field, we often witnessed a glowing series of hills on the northern horizon illuminated by the evening sunlight; it was the Land of the Thunder Dragon, officially known as the Bhutan Kingdom at the eastern Himalayan foothills. We also encountered a group of Bhutanese traders, who came every year to participate in Makhibaha Sabha (an important rural socio-religious fair in western Assam) to sell their domestic products till the Eighties. An endless curiosity developed among us about the mystical place (then we had no idea that it was a neighbouring country to our north named Druk Yul in the Bhutanese language Zongkha). Later, whenever I visited the land of Buddhist Gompas with less than one million cheerful Bhutanese nationals nurtured by a series of dark green mountains, fertile hills with vegetation, clean river streams, picturesque valleys, and the paradise on earth unfolded astonishing experiences every time for me. When I arrived in Thimphu soon after our marriage, my wife was mesmerised with the eternal beauty of the land and proclaimed, if we have a daughter, she would be named Shangri-La.

Now the Himalayan kingdom comes absolutely closer to us in socio-cultural and economic fronts, as Assam chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma recently paid a four-day visit to Thimphu following an official invitation from the Royal Bhutan government, where he discussed a series of bilateral issues with King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck, who serves as head (locally known as Druk Gyalpo) of the South Asian country, and the democratically elected Prime Minister Dashedo Tshering Tobgay, serving as the head of the government in Thimphu. Being the first chief minister of Assam to receive such an invitation and subsequent greetings from Bhutan's monarchical democracy, Sarma also attended a number of programs, including their 117th national day celebrations, during his stay from 16 to 19 December 2024 in the capital city.

Accompanied by his spouse, Riniki Bhuyan, and a few senior officials, Sarma pursued different issues focusing on trades, regional security, and mutual collaboration with the friendly regime in Thimphu. The high-level delegation from Assam, after arriving at Paro International Airport by a Drukair flight, was welcomed by Bhutanese Foreign Minister DN Dhunghyel, along with Indian Ambassador (to Bhutan) Sudhakar Dalela and others. Later the state government chief accompanied PM Tobgay

to attend a business event hosted by the Assam government in Thimphu as a prelude to Advantage Assam 2.0, an investment summit scheduled for 25



and 26 February in Guwahati. Assam and Bhutan share an enduring bond, a relationship nurtured over centuries through cultural, historical, and economic exchanges, commented Sarma, adding that the ancient trade routes connecting the two geographical territories were not merely conduits for goods like tea, silk and other commodities but were lifelines of mutual understanding and interdependence.

Assam plans to host Advantage Assam 2.0: Investment and Infrastructure Summit 2025 to foster investments and partnerships across the South Asian region, where the crucial event is expected to be inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Expressing his gratitude to PM Tobgay for his presence at the last edition of Advantage Assam, Sarma extended an invitation to him once again to grace the forthcoming summit and a mega cultural event. Collaborative tourism circuits linking Bhutan's pristine landscapes with Assam's iconic sites, such as Kaziranga and Manas forest reserves as well as Majuli, would enhance ecotourism and promote conservation initiatives in the region, observed Sarma, adding that joint efforts in wildlife tourism and preservation in border areas would further enrich this partnership. He also mentioned Assam's extensive cancer-care network, one of the largest in South Asia, which can serve the Bhutanese patients with timely & quality medical care.

In a separate meeting with PM Tobgay, along with his wife, Tashi Doma, Sarma noted that Assam and Bhutan had historically maintained connectivity through seven established trade routes, underscoring the enduring nature of their economic ties. In the course of the discussions, Sarma assured that the Assam government remains com-

mitted to bolstering trade infrastructures along the Assam-Bhutan border. He emphasised creating more trade routes to facilitate trade and commerce in line



with the needs of Bhutanese traders. The energetic leader also highlighted Assam's efforts under the Asom Mala initiative to strengthen road connectivity, particularly between Kokrajhar and Gelephu. PM Tobgay was offered some exquisite gifts, including Muga clothes, tea items, and rice wine by Sarma, when he stated that a close neighbour is more important than a distant relative.

Bhutan King Jigme Khesar and Queen Jetsun Pema also gave an audience to Sarma along with his wife at the Golden Throne Room in Tashichhodzong. They discussed various ways to strengthen the age-old cultural, historical, and economic ties between Assam and Bhutan. In the coming days, they lay emphasis on enhancing energy cooperation, tourism, healthcare, education, skill development, water resources management, etc. Later, Sarma met India's revered spiritual preacher, Sadhguru, at India House in Thimphu, where PM Tobgay and other dignitaries were also present. He also congratulated educationist Arun Kapur, who was honoured during Bhutan's national day observations for his decades of exemplary services in the global sphere of public & private education. The saffron leader also visited the Indian embassy in Thimphu, Bhutan's iconic spiritual centre, Simtokha Dzong, and Kuenrey Hall, where he prayed, lighting a lamp in front of the majestic statue of Gautam Buddha.

Mentionable is that Bhutan celebrates its National Day every year on 17 December to commemorate the coronation



of their first Gongsar Ugyen Wangchuck in 1907. It marked the beginning of the Wangchuck dynasty that now rules Bhutan, and the current king, Jigme Khesar, became the fifth ruler, who was crowned at a sacred ceremony in 2008. The country adopted the status of a constitutional monarchy in 2008 and conducted its first general election. The 117th statehood celebrations honoured their ancestors, enriched with cultural heritage, and reaffirmed commitment for enduring peace, prosperity, and happiness in the Himalayan nation. Nearly 200 international guests witnessed the auspicious celebration this year, which was organised at Changlimithang Stadium in Thimphu.

Addressing the annual celebrations, His Majesty Jigme Khesar revealed that the sacred occasion means for Bhutanese nationals to pay tribute to the visionary monarchs and forefathers for their sacrifices in building this precious nation and maintaining its sovereignty. It's also a moment for deep reflection—an opportunity for all the proud denizens of the Pelden Drukpa to look back at the extraordinary journey traversed under the enlightened leadership of the Wangchuck dynasty, he stated, adding that from a small, poor, landlocked kingdom, Bhutan has transformed now into a modern, peaceful, and prosperous nation. Asserting that the nation has leapfrogged from the mediaeval to the modern era, the young monarch put his vision to augment the tiny nation with a well-educated and skilled pop-

ulation. Thimphu is presently working on an ambitious project with international standards, but maintaining the sanctity of its environment, tradition and obviously sustained peace & tranquility. The urban venture named Gelephu Mindfulness City (adjacent to the Assam border) was introduced to Sarma by the concerned officials. The national project is expected to comprise world-class infrastructure, including an airport, office premises, recreational facilities, educational institutions, healthcare services, residential complexes, etc., at Gelephu.

The proposed city, spanning over 1,000 square kilometres (250,000 acres) with all basic amenities, is expected to be completed in the next few years and function like Singapore to Southeast Asia and Dubai to the Middle East. Sarma opined that Bhutan's expertise on hydropower & clean energy will be beneficial for Assam as well as north-eastern states. He also welcomed the Bhutanese students to exploit reservation benefits (5 seats) in the government medical colleges of Assam along with specialised programmes in auxiliary and general nursing courses.

Bhutan, which promotes Gross National Happiness (rather than emphasising Gross Domestic Products by other nations in the globe), shares an international border (around 699 kilometres) with four northeast states, namely Sikkim, West Bengal, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh. Assam has the highest 266 km land boundary with

Bhutan, having settlements on both sides. Even centuries back, both regions maintained connectivity when the far eastern part of India was known as Kamrup and later emerged as present-day Assam. For some days, Assam's separatist armed militants started operating from its southern territory, which were later flushed out with 'Operation All Clear' in December 2003 by the Bhutanese armed forces. Recently, an immigration check post was inaugurated at Darranga, adjacent to Bhutan's Samdrup-Jongkhar locality, through which the international tourists can now enter & exit both the neighbouring countries as it's done through the integrated checkpoints like Phuentsholing or Paro.

Mentionable is that the constitutional monarch visited Assam (prior to his departure to New Delhi and Mumbai) in November 2023 and raced a number of meetings with CM Sarma and the then Governor Gulab Chand Kataria. The Bhutan king, who came to Assam for the first time after being crowned, paid a visit to Shaktipeeth Kamakhya Devalaya atop the Nilachal hills and prayed to Mother Goddess Kamakhya. He also enjoyed the charming beauty of the world-famous Kaziranga National Park & Tiger Reserve in eastern Assam. Very recently, both the king and his queen arrived in New Delhi and met PM Modi and foreign minister S. Jaishankar. Their discussions covered various issues, including the Gelephu project. Earlier, Modi visited Bhutan in March 2024 to receive Bhutan's highest civilian award, the Order of the Druk Gyalpo.

As Bhutan shares an ecological proximity with the Brahmaputra River basin, the surface water running from the hilly nation needs to be gauged for both drinking & irrigation purposes as well as preempting a disaster in the rainy season. The people of lower Assam on the northern bank of the Brahmaputra often face unusual floods due to the swollen Kurichhu River in southeastern Bhutan. The sudden rise of water in the Kurichhu hydropower plant may directly overflow a number of rivers in lower riparian localities, including Beki, Manah, Pahumara, Kaldia, Palla, Nakhanda, Burhadia, etc. We were brought up on the bank of Burhadia that keeps rolling since time immemorial, breaking the dream of farmers in every flood season, but also nourishing them with abundant rice, vegetables, and fish. Probably it's also time for a comprehensive and sustainable development initiative encompassing the entire region that remains resourceful but ecologically fragile in nature.

The writer is a Guwahati-based special representative of The Statesman

Has the Meitei community been let down by those who speak for them?

YENGKHOM RONALD

The Meitei tribal community likely admires individuals who consistently represent them in various media spaces. While I may not know the specific individuals being referred to, they should be able to represent Meiteis on issues honestly and fearlessly, especially in sensitive or controversial contexts. Media speakers should be the ones who can clearly and persuasively communicate complex cultural, historical or political narratives. Speakers, who prioritise the welfare and unity of the Meitei people above personal or political agendas. Advocates who uplift and celebrate Meitei culture, language and traditions while addressing contemporary challenges. Those with a strong understanding of the issues at hand and the ability to present factual, well-researched arguments.

The Meitei public might admire speakers who consistently appear in the media due to their visibility. The Meitei media speakers and their followers are failing to bring meaningful changes or contribute to the progress of the community. When media speakers and their followers seem unwilling to accept their shortcomings, especially if their long-standing presence in public discourse has not led to tangible benefits for the society they claim to represent. If their speeches are repetitive and lack actionable content, and if the public continues to follow them without critical evaluation, it raises valid concerns about the direction of discourse and leadership in Meitei society. Followers who blindly support these speakers without questioning their relevance or substance can perpetuate mundaneness. This cycle of perpetuating ineffective narratives hinders progress for the Meitei community. If they truly care for the community, they should be open to stepping aside if their leadership has not been fruitful. Repeating the same narratives and refusing to adapt or challenge outdated ideas indeed hinders progress.

Tangible actions with better paradigm narrative discussions are needed. Mundane discussions hit a dead end because people resort to repetitive arguments or dismissive statements instead of addressing the issue at hand. When they rely on the same defensive responses and pseudo-logical theories, it not only stifles progress but also discourages those who genuinely want to contribute to meaningful change.

A society led by repetitive and unproductive narratives cannot advance meaningfully. Leaders, whether in media or politics, significantly shape public understanding. If followers lack direction or make poor choices, it often reflects the quality of leadership and guidance. Promoting ideas rooted in hopelessness and victimhood cultivates a culture of inaction and dependence, making the community vulnerable to repeated failures. The feeling of failure to nurture and uphold cultural pride and values can indeed result in younger generations, including women and youth, losing touch with their heritage. This disconnection can foster negativity, self-hatred and alienation. When youth face unemployment and girls feel compelled to seek opportunities or relationships outside their community, it reflects systemic challenges that require urgent attention. It's natural to question the role of leadership, educators and society as a whole in addressing these problems. It reflects the genuine pain and disillusionment many feel when they observe stagnation, backwardness and repeated failures in leadership, guidance and community progress. The lack of a clear and unified political vision allows external forces to dominate, manipulate or marginalise the community. Failure to preserve and modernise cultural identity leads to disconnection, especially among the youth, weakening the community's sense of pride and belonging. It's high time to acknowledge what hasn't worked and actively seek new strategies. Shift the focus from individual power and control to collective upliftment.

Train leaders who understand the political landscape and can advocate effectively. Modernise and celebrate cultural practices to make them relevant to the younger generation.

Hold media speakers, leaders and influencers accountable for their contributions or lack thereof over the years. Public platforms should demand evidence of impact and outcomes. People need to critically evaluate the messages they receive from leaders and media. Certain ideologies might not fit a smaller population like the Meitei Tribe. Ideologies should be adapted to fit the unique realities of the community, rather than blindly following global models that may not be applicable. Strategies should leverage the strengths and resilience of the Meitei people, rather than relying on external or generalised ideas. Leaders, media speakers, and the public must reflect on their roles in the community's stagnation. Celebrate individuals or groups who take concrete steps to uplift the community. Recognition can inspire others to act. People must see active change-makers, join the movement and abandon lazy habits that bring harm and negative growth, be it in population or as whole development in the society. Shift from unproductive debates to problem-solving sessions where every discussion leads to actionable outcomes. Instead of waiting for large-scale changes, start community-driven projects that address immediate needs, like skill-building workshops, cultural events, or clean-up drives. Leaders and speakers must be held accountable for their words and actions. If promises are made, follow up to ensure they're kept. Focus on quality education and career paths that enable them to see a future in their region.

Have leaders adequately educated youth about the importance of contributing to their region? Have leaders provided a clear roadmap for economic and social development that retains talent and instills pride in the community? The role and contributions of individuals in positions of power and influence, be



they officers, politicians or holders of advanced degrees, fail to serve the interests of their community or motherland. This disconnect raises critical questions about the purpose and quality of the education and values they have received. The failure of highly educated individuals to contribute meaningfully does raise questions about the kind of education they receive over the years. They failed to contribute to such activities and events that help youth connect and build meaningful relationships within the region. Showcase successful women who have chosen to remain rooted while achieving progress. This can inspire others to view their roots positively. Create programmes to educate and economically empower girls so they see value in contributing to their region's growth. Bridge the gap between generations by encouraging open conversations about culture, identity and modernisation. Promote cultural programmes, workshops and storytelling sessions to teach history, traditions and values. Celebrate local festivals and traditions with modern,

youth-friendly interpretations. Without a strong connection to their heritage, people may feel adrift and undervalue their culture. Political, social, or economic struggles can overshadow cultural preservation efforts, making it difficult for people to focus on their roots.

The question of the Meitei people's religious identity is indeed a complex and sensitive topic, rooted in history, culture and socio-political dynamics. It's a significant issue because religion often plays a central role in shaping cultural identity, unity, and societal values. If this question remains unresolved or ambiguous, it can lead to confusion, division, and a weakened sense of belonging. Inequality within the Meitei tribal community is both valid and deeply rooted in societal structures. The issue of entrenched social hierarchies where high-status individuals remain in power while others struggle to advance is a critical challenge that calls for systemic change. If media speakers and leaders fail to address or challenge these hierarchies, their contribution to society

is indeed questionable.

Change often begins with introspection and recognising what hasn't worked. A shift in mindset and strategy can lead to breakthroughs in addressing challenges, be it in education, representation, or community development. Meditation with such a positive and unifying intention is a beautiful way to bring healing and harmony. When practiced collectively or individually, focusing on the inherent goodness and loving nature of all people in the Meitei community can create a ripple effect of compassion and understanding. Begin by clearly stating or visualising your purpose to awaken the belief that every Meitei soul is good, loving, and caring. Spend a few minutes being thankful for the shared history, culture, and heritage of the Meitei people. Picture a bright, warm light representing love and care enveloping the entire Meitei tribal community. Dedicate a few minutes every day to this meditation.

The writer is an independent contributor. Views expressed are personal.



‘WOULD LIKE TO PLAY IN THE OLYMPICS...’
Australian batting icon Steve Smith has no plans of retiring anytime soon, with the veteran setting his sights on representing the nation in the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics in the shortest format of the game. In a statement to FOX Sports, Smith said, "I would like to play in the Olympics; I reckon that would be cool."

For more updates www.thestatesman.com

THUMBNAILED

First-ever Kho Kho World Cup 2025 From today: The Indira Gandhi Indoor Stadium to witness the first-ever Kho Kho World Cup from January 13 to 19, 2025. The stadium has witnessed 23 participating nations on Sunday, who gathered for the pre-tournament press conference of the Kho Kho World Cup 2025. The event offered a spectacular preview of the cultural diversity the tournament promises to bring to the sport with the first-ever Kho Kho World Cup 2025, from January 13 to 19, 2025. Mr Sudhanshu Mittal, president of the Kho Kho Federation of India, said: "This gathering of 23 nations at this press conference fills me with immense pride. Seeing representatives from across the globe, each bringing their national identity while embracing our indigenous sport, demonstrates Kho Kho's universal appeal and potential for international growth."

Ice Hockey League: In a thrilling women's final of the Royal Enfield Ice Hockey League Season 2, Maryul Spamo defended their crown with a sensational 3-2 comeback win against Changla Lamos. Led by captain Padma Chorol's hat-trick, the champions overturned a 0-2 deficit to retain the women's category title. The Spamo proudly lifted the winner's trophy, while the valiant runners-up Changla Lamos were presented with the runner-up trophy.

2nd ODI: Jemimah's maiden ton seals series for India

Jemimah Rodrigues' maiden century, alongside half-centuries from Smriti Mandhana, Pratika Rawal and Harleen Deol powered India to 370/5, their highest-ever total in the format

AGENCIES
RAJKOT, 12 JANUARY

India asserted dominance over Ireland with a massive 116-run victory in the second women's ODI at the Saurashtra Cricket Association Stadium on Sunday. The hosts took an unassailable 2-0 lead in the three-match series.

Jemimah Rodrigues' (102) maiden international century, alongside half-centuries from Smriti Mandhana (73), Pratika Rawal (67) and Harleen Deol (89) powered India to 370/5, their highest-ever total in the format.

Openers Smriti and Pratika gave India a blistering start with the former scoring an impressive strike rate of 135.18. The duo stitched up a 150-run partnership before the skipper was dismissed in the 19th over. A short ball outside off saw Smriti try and clear the mid-wicket fielder but ended up being caught by Georgina Dempsey off Orla Prendergast's bowling.

Pratika soon followed back to the dugout after being caught LBW on the first ball of the very next over by Georgina Dempsey.

With two new batters at the crease Ireland were hoping to trigger a collapse but Harleen and Jemimah stood resilient and went on to stitch a 183-run partnership for the third



wicket. The latter ramped things up after reaching her half-century as she scored the next 50 runs in just 28 balls. Harleen fell just 11 runs short of her second ODI century in the 48th over while Jemimah was bowled out in the last over of the innings by Arlene Kelly.

For visitors, Arlene Kelly and Orla Prendergast shared two wickets each but leaked over eight runs per over.

Chasing a daunting 371, Ireland's all-time ODI top scorer Gaby Lewis (12) was the first to be dismissed by Sayali Satghare in the eighth over. An attempted drive saw her get a faint edge, which was confirmed by the DRS. Sarah Forbes (38) and Christina Coulter Reilly (80) put up a 55-run partnership before the former was bowled by spinner Deepti Sharma in the 21st over. Orla Prendergast

(3) did not spend too much time at the crease and was caught by Sayali off Priya Mishra's bowling. Laura Delany (37) and Christina's 73-run partnership attempted to rescue the game for the visitors but their attempts were foiled by Titas Sadhu as she castled the latter's stumps. Wickets fell at regular intervals from thereon as Ireland managed to creep to 254/7 at the end of the 50 overs. For India, Deepti Sharma was the standout bowler as she returned with the figures of 3-37 in her 10 overs. Jemimah was named Player of the Match for her outstanding century knock.

"I am relieved. I have scored a lot of runs in domestic cricket. The roles usually have been different in the side. I have played more T20 cricket. I tried to play how I used to play in

the domestic circuit," Jemimah said after the match.

"I thought I haven't played enough in this format. It took me a while. I usually bat at 5. You keep being patient. You keep hitting the gaps. We had a chat we need to keep batting till the 40th. When I was taking my time, she took the charge. We have played a lot of cricket together if not batting together but that helped," she added.

The third ODI between the two teams will be played on January 15 with visitors eyeing a consolation win in the series finale.

Brief scores: India 370/5 in 50 overs (Jemimah Rodrigues 102, Harleen Deol 89; Orla Prendergast 75-2) defeat Ireland 254/7 in 50 overs (Christina Coulter Reilly 80, Sarah Forbes 38; Deepti Sharma 37-3) by 116 runs.

Aus Open: Sumit Nagal suffers early exit after losing to Tomas Machac



AGENCIES
MELBOURNE, 12 JANUARY

India's Sumit Nagal bowed out of the Australian Open after losing to Czechia's Tomas Machac in the first round of the men's singles event at Melbourne Park on Sunday.

Sumit Nagal, ranked 91st in the ATP singles rankings, fell to world No. 25 Machac 6-3, 6-1, 7-5 in two hours and five minutes. The 27-year-old was the only Indian competing in the singles draw.

Nagal started well, dropping just two points in his first three service games. However, Machac broke him in the seventh game to take a 4-3 lead and closed out the first set with a commanding finish.

In the second set, Nagal had an early chance to break but Machac saved the breakpoint in the opening game. Nagal's performance dipped as the set progressed, losing his next two service games at

40-0 and 40-15. Although he challenged Machac's serves in the fifth and seventh games, he couldn't capitalise.

Nagal made a strong start in the third set, breaking Machac in the second game and surging to a 3-0 lead. However, Machac rallied to break Nagal in the seventh and ninth games, sealing the match in straight sets.

Last year, Nagal reached the main draw through qualifying rounds and stunned Kazakhstan's World No. 27 Alexander Bublik in the first round, becoming the first Indian man to beat a seeded player in a Grand Slam since Ramesh Krishnan in 1989. He exited in the second round, losing to China's Juncheng Shang. In doubles, Indian interest continues with matches starting on Tuesday. Rohan Bopanna, the 2024 Grand Slam champion alongside Australia's Matthew Ebden, will partner Colombia's Nicolas Barrientos this year.

I-League: Delhi FC snatch point against Rajasthan United

AGENCIES
MAHILPUR, 12 JANUARY

A 10-man resilient Delhi FC staged a brilliant comeback to secure a 1-1 draw against Rajasthan United FC in the I-League 2024-25 match at the Coach Ali Hassan Stadium in Mahilpur, Punjab on Sunday.

Alain Oyarzun's penalty gave Rajasthan United the lead in the 70th minute but Nigerian Nelson Esor-Bulunwo Okwa's late header in the 83rd minute ensured the points were shared. Delhi FC's Thokchom James Singh was sent off in the 68th minute. Rajasthan United, who climbed to third in the table with 11 points from eight games, extended their unbeaten run to four matches. Delhi FC sit seventh with nine points from the same number of matches.

The small gap of two points between the teams added an extra layer of tension to the encounter, which was evident as both sides started cautiously, with few chances created in the first half. Rajasthan United gradually found their rhythm, creating a few opportunities that, due to a lack of finishing precision, remained unconverted.

The most notable came in the 15th minute when Gerard Artigas intercepted a loose ball and broke through on goal, only to sky his effort over the crossbar. The second half mirrored the first in its cautious approach until the match's complexion changed within two minutes which saw Delhi FC lose their composure.

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