

Shashi Tharoor Unveils Oxford Bookstore Book Cover Prize Longlist

Member of Parliament and acclaimed author Dr. Shashi Tharoor played a key role in the unveiling of the longlist for the 11th edition of the Oxford Bookstore Book Cover Prize at The Park, New Delhi. The event celebrated 23 exceptional book covers from across India, showcasing the creativity and innovation of Indian graphic designers. The announcement was made in the presence of Museum Curator Dr. Alka Pande, guest juror Samar Jodha, publishers, authors, designers, and literary enthusiasts, marking a vibrant celebration of design excellence in the country. Dr. Tharoor, known for his literary insight, helped curate the longlist from over 200 entries, alongside other jury members including Shobhaa De and Dr. Kunal Basu. The selected titles reflect a wide range of genres, themes, and artistic approaches, emphasizing the role of book covers in enhancing storytelling and reader engagement.

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Morning India

India to surpass Germany to be third-largest economy by 2027: Scindia



India was once known as the golden bird. About 2,000 years ago, India's share in the world's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was 20 per cent. Under the leadership of Prime Minister Modi, India will move forward with this vision and emerge as a star on the global stage

Jyotiraditya Scindia

MI News Service, Indore : Union Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia on Saturday expressed confidence that India will surpass Germany to become the world's third-largest economy by the end of 2027, lauding the Central government policies and institutional reforms under Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Scindia was addressing the 'YEF Bharat Summit 2025' organised by the Young Entrepreneurs Forum Bharat here.

He said, "India was once known as the golden bird. About 2,000 years ago, India's share in the world's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was 20 per cent. Under the leadership of Prime Minister Modi, India will move forward with this vision and emerge as a star on the global stage." India's economy has leapt from the 10th position 12 years ago to fourth, leaving behind Japan, he said. "By the end of 2027, we will surpass Germany to become the world's third-largest economy," asserted the minister. In the race for economic development, India has already surpassed the country that tried to rule it for 200 years, he said without naming Britain. Scindia stressed that India's perseverance defines the country. "This perseverance has transformed India from a country with a GDP of USD 2.3 trillion to a nation with a GDP of USD 4.5 trillion," he said. The Union minister said the country is moving towards becoming a major global manufacturing hub, powered by "the steady policies and deep institutional changes" brought in by the Modi government.

Scindia said, "In every cabinet meeting, the Prime minister instructs us ministers to throw colonial laws into the dustbin. He tells us to discuss with all stakeholders and resolve their difficulties to improve the ease of doing business." Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav, who also addressed the conference, said that MP has emerged as India's one of the fastest-growing states. Yadav urged the large number of new entrepreneurs present at the conference to move forward with innovation, clear thinking, and social responsibility and to invest more in the state. He said, "The state has a favourable environment,

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Dense fog blanketed the city on a winter afternoon around 2 pm, causing the iconic Shaheed Minar to disappear from plain sight at Maidan area in Kolkata on Saturday
Pic: Prabir Bhattacharya

After Bihar, now its turn of West Bengal : PM Modi jibes at TMC

MI News Service, Kolkata / Ranaghat : Prime Minister Narendra Modi took a sharp jibe at the ruling Trinamool Congress in West Bengal through his virtual rally from Kolkata Airport on Saturday, saying that people across the state want to see the BJP in power after the next year's Assembly elections. "In an attempt to get rid of the Bihar-like jungle raj perpetrated by the Mamata Banerjee government, the people in Bengal want a change of the present government here", the Prime minister said. In a roughly 15 minute long virtual address from the Airport lounge, he said "Today the country wants rapid development. Bihar once again gave the NDA government a massive mandate for development... Bihar has also paved the way for the BJP's victory in Bengal. Bihar has rejected the rule of the 'jungle raj' with one resounding voice. Even after 20 years, they have given the BJP-NDA more seats than before. Now it's the turn of West Bengal, and we have to



get rid of the 'maha jungle raj' in West Bengal," the PM said in his speech. He also promised rapid progress of Bengal

The people of West Bengal are benefiting from numerous pro-people initiatives of the central government. At the same time, they are suffering due to the TMC's misgovernance in every sector

Prime Minister Narendra Modi

if BJP comes to power and cited the example of the present BJP government Tripura which is on the path of rapid all round growth after ending the decade long rule of Left Front there

Prime Minister Modi's address to a massive public gathering at Taherpur Netaji Park in Ranaghat via video conferencing after poor visibility prevented

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7 elephants run over and killed on railway tracks in Assam



Bodies of elephants lie in between railway tracks after they were hit by a train in Hojai district in Assam,

MI News Service, Guwahati : In a most unfortunate incident at least seven elephants were run over and killed and another was injured when a herd of pachyderms was hit by the Sairang-New Delhi Rajdhani Express in Hojai district early on Saturday, an official said. According to official sources here today, the accident took place at around 2:17 a.m. when the New Delhi-bound Rajdhani Express struck a herd of elephants that was crossing the railway tracks. Forest department authorities later confirmed that seven elephants were killed in the collision, while one calf was rescued in an injured condition and provided medical attention.

Officials clarified that the accident did not occur in a designated elephant corridor. The loco pilot reportedly noticed the herd on the

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7 arrested over Hindu youth's lynching in Bangladesh

MI News Service, Dhaka / Mew Delhi : In all seven people have been arrested in connection with the lynching of a Hindu youth in Bangladesh, the interim government announced on Saturday. Dipu Chandra Das, 25, was lynched to death by a mob and his body set on fire over alleged blasphemy in Mymensingh city on Thursday. In a statement on X, the interim government led by Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus said that the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) has arrested seven individuals as suspects in the case. According to the statement, those arrested are Md. Limon Sarkar (19), Md. Tarek Hossain (19), Md. Manik Mia (20), Ershad Ali (39), Nijum Uddin (20), Alomgir Hossain (38) and Md. Miraj Hossain Akon (46). Yunus said the arrests followed coordinated

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World now perceives India much more positively for its talent: Jaishankar

MI News Service, Pune : The world today perceives India much more positively, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said on Saturday, adding that the evolution of the country's image is an undeniable reality. Addressing the 22nd convocation of the Symbiosis International (Deemed University) in Pune, Jaishankar also said the global economic and political pecking order has undergone a significant change. "A number of centres of power and influence have emerged. No country, however powerful, can impose its will on all issues," he said.

"How does the world perceive us currently? The short answer is very much more positively and very much more seriously than before, and the reasons for that is both our national brand and our individual reputations, which have improved considerably," Jaishankar said. The minister said Indians are regarded today by the world as people with a



strong work ethic, with an aptitude for technology, who espouse a family-centric culture. "In conversations

abroad, I largely hear words of praise for our diaspora. And increasingly, as ease of doing business and ease of living improve in India itself, for us as people, nation, and society,

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the old stereotypes about India are steadily being put behind," he said. "Of course, there is much more that we need to do in our journey of progress and modernization, but this evolution in our image is an undeniable reality," Jaishankar said. "Our figures vouch for this transformation. Among them, the growing number of global capability centres in India, the increasing demand for Indian talent and skills abroad, and the individual successes of people. And this extends equally to us as a

collective," he said. Perhaps more than others, India is today defined by its talent and by its skill, the minister said. All that has helped to shape our national brand, he added. "How do

we Indians approach the world? Again, I would say clearly, with more confidence and with more capability. "But there is a difference that is worth noting. Most nations have made their presence felt in the world through economic interactions, be it trade, investment, or services. "Naturally, that has been our pathway as well, and each of these metrics, each of these metrics has been increasing. But what distinguishes us, however,

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Mayawati flags Bihar 'naqab' row, says CM should express regret



The entire country was hoping for deliberations on the burning national problems that could have offered some ray of hope but that did not happen, which is unfortunate

Mayawati

MI News Service, Lucknow : Wading into the Nitish Kumar 'naqab' controversy, BSP supremo Mayawati on Saturday raised concerns over the Bihar Chief minister's recently pulling off the veil from a woman doctor's face, saying the JD-U chief should express regret and make effort to end the "bitterly growing controversy". The former Uttar Pradesh Chief minister also flagged concerns over a controversial police parade incident in Bahraich, which she described as a failure of legislative sessions in the state and Parliament.

In a long Hindi post on X, Mayawati said the 'naqab' controversy was "sad and unfortunate", which continued to escalate due to some statements made by ministers subsequently. A video clip of which has been circulated widely, took place on Monday at the Bihar Chief minister's secretariat in Patna, where Ayush doctors gathered to receive their letters of appointment. When the woman came up for her letter, Kumar saw her 'naqab', said "what is this" and then removed the veil, prompting the opposition parties to demand an unconditional apology from the Chief minister. Mayawati said the matter, which is linked to women's safety and dignity, should have been resolved through the Chief minister's direct intervention. "It would be better if the Chief minister views the incident in the right perspective, expresses regret and makes an effort to end this bitterly growing controversy," she said. Referring to Uttar Pradesh, Mayawati said the Bahraich district police, drawing criticism for deviating from the established rules by offering a salute to a religious preacher during a police parade, triggered a major controversy, putting

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CM Mamata hails geographical diversity at Christmas fest



CM Mamata Banerjee inaugurated the Kolkata Christmas Festival by lighting the lamp at Allen Park in Kolkata.

MI News Service, Kolkata : West Bengal Chief minister Mamata Banerjee has underlined the humanity and geographical diversity of the state and said it has everything — from the deep sea to forests and mountains — and is second to none in drawing tourists from across the globe. "We have many famous places. We are now the second largest in tourism. So many foreigners have come round the year and every year", she said. According to the India Tourism Data Compendium 2025 compiled by the Union tourism ministry, Maharashtra recorded the highest number of foreign tourists in 2024, followed by West Bengal. The Chief minister also underscored the prevalence of humanity among

There are so many examples in Bengal, from deep sea to deep forests to the Himalayas... We have everything. Especially the humanity, the unity, the love, the friendship.

CM Mamata Banerjee

the people here alongside its topographical advantage. "There are so many examples in Bengal, from deep sea to deep forests to the Himalayas... We have everything. Especially the humanity, the unity, the love, the friendship," she said.

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"Money won't work, voter will": Humayun Kabir sparks Babri row

MI News Service, Murshidabad: A fresh political storm has erupted in West Bengal after Bharatpur MLA Humayun Kabir openly projected the Babri Masjid issue as a device electoral tool, triggering his suspension from the TMC and paving the way for the launched of his own political outfit.

Addressing supporters at Beldanga, where he laid the foundation stone of a proposed Babri Masjid on December 6, Humayun Kabir made it clear that emotional support alone would not suffice. "People are donating generously- money, bricks, even online conditions. But donations are not enough. Votes are equally necessary," he said. Humayun Kabir warned that if either the BJP or the TMC returns to power with a single majority, "no one will allow the Babri Masjid to be built." Humayun Kabir went a step further, placing a specific numerical target before his supporters. According to him, winning 90 seats in the West Bengal Assembly is essential. "Give me 90 seats. Then the key to forming the government will be in my hands. Otherwise, despite all the money and bricks you are giving, I will not be able to use them," he asserted, directly accusing both BJP and TMC of blocking the project. Since the laying of foundation stone, the site at Beldanga has witness a steady flow of people, including a large congregation during Friday prayers. Humayun Kabir himself remained present at the location, claiming that December 22 would see a "record gathering," when he plans to formally announce his new party. Later the day, Humayun Kabir addressed another public meeting in the Trimohini area under Nwda police station, organized by the Bharatiya Sansthan Raksha Manch, where he demanded the withdrawal of Waqf Act. Reiterating his electoral ambition, he said his primary objective in the upcoming Assembly election is to secure 90 seats, while his proposed party plans to contest 135 constituencies. TMC has already taken disciplinary action, suspending Humayun Kabir for his statements and political activities.

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Fake karate training organizations are misleading students: Premjit Sen



MI News Service, Kharagpur: President of Karate Association of Bengal, Premjit Sen said that students are not getting any benefit from going to karate training institutes which have developed like a frog umbrella. International referee and coach Premjit, who came to participate in the Advanced Technical Karate Seminar organized by Paschim Medinipur District Karate Association on Saturday, made this comment. In a press conference held at Sersa Stadium, 8-time black belt winner Premjit Sen said, "Many karate training camps have opened across the state like an umbrella of frogs. Their quality is questionable. Parents are admitting their children there without any verification, but they are not getting the same success at the district or state level. Not a medal, but a certificate is coming. Actually, trainers do not have that ability. Although many institutions are approved by state karate associations, the quality of training of students there is not good. So he commented that karate should be learned at the right place under a suitably qualified instructor. Premjit talked about legal action later against the training camps spread in different districts. He claims that the camps of Seishinkai Shito-Ryu Karate du Association prepare children well.

By arranging their sponsorship. Good performance at district, state and national level along with proper training leads to job prospects. Premjit said that not only small children but people of any age can remain physically and mentally healthy by taking karate training. Rashbihari Pal, General Secretary of Paschim Medinipur District Seishinkai Shito-Ryu Karate du Association was present in the press conference.

Police Mega Health Camp



Nurul Islam Khan On Saturday, a large health check-up camp was organized at the West Midnapore Police Lines under the initiative of the West Bengal Police Welfare Committee, the management of the West Midnapore District Police Welfare Committee, and the inspiration of the West Midnapore District Health Department. The health check-up camp was inaugurated by the chief guest, Palash Chandra Dhali (IPS), Superintendent of Police, West Midnapore. Bijitashwa Raut, Convener of the West Bengal Police Welfare Committee, Shri Soumyashankar Sarangi, CMOH of West Midnapore district, and Pinaki Dutta, Additional SP (HQ) were present.

Other central leaders of the West Bengal Police Welfare Committee were also present. In this mega health check-up camp, numerous police personnel, retired police personnel and their family members underwent various health examinations, making the camp a great success.

Leopard captured from tea garden in Darjeeling's Naxalbari

MI News Service, Naxalbari: A leopard has been captured from the Jabra Division tea garden in the Naxalbari area of Darjeeling district, following complaints from local residents about losses of cattle.

Confirming the operation, Panigbata Forest Department Ranger Pranab Kumar Das on Saturday said that locals in the area had reported incidents of cattle being killed by a leopard.

"Based on the complaints received from the locals regarding cattle losses due to a leopard, a trap was laid, and the leopard has been successfully captured," Das said.

Forest department officials said the animal will be relocated in accordance with standard wildlife protocols.

Earlier, a leopard entered a residential area in Maharashtra's Mira Bhayandar in the early hours of Friday and triggered panic among residents has been captured by forest department officials, authorities confirmed.

The big cat had strayed into a densely populated locality and attacked seven people before being safely rescued.

The operation, conducted under tight security and crowd-control measures, drew the attention of residents, many of whom gathered at a safe distance as the rescue unfolded.

On Thursday, residents of Sahara City in Indore slept sound after the forest department successfully captured a five- to six-year-old male leopard that had been frequently sighted in the residential area for several days near the Devguradia forest area.

Officials confirmed that the leopard's presence, set a trap, and after meticulous monitoring in the residential area, captured it by installing a cage. Villagers told the officials that the leopard had been hunting local dogs and had not shown aggression toward any humans.



Congress activists participate in a 'Hundreds of thousands of voices to read the Constitution' called by West Bengal Pradesh Congress Committee, in Kolkata on Saturday.

Three killed, one injured in a train accident near Modi program spot at Taherpur rail station

MI News Service, Taherpur: Three persons were killed on the spot and one sustained serious injuries after being hit by a local train while crossing railway tracks near Taherpur railway station in Nadia district early on Saturday, Government Railway Police (GRP) sources said.

The deceased were identified as Ramprasad Ghosh (74) and Shaktipada Sutradhar (55), both residents of Sabaldaha village under Borea police station, and Gopinath Das (38) of Masadda village. All the victims were from Murshidabad district. The injured person was initially taken to Shaktinagar Hospital in Krishnanagar and later referred to Kalyani JNM Hospital.

According to GRP sources, the victims were part of a group that had arrived at Taherpur in a reserved bus early on Saturday to attend Prime Minister Narendra Modi's scheduled public meeting. It was scheduled to take place at Netaji Park ground in Taherpur.



After parking the bus at the designated spot, some members of the group dispersed in the area. Amid heavy mist and poor visibility, a few of them attempted to cross the railway tracks.

Police said the victims failed to notice the approaching Krishnanagar-Sealdah local train due to dense fog and were run over, leading to the deaths of three persons on the spot, while another was critically injured.

Later in the day, the Prime Minister's public meeting was cancelled as his helicopter could not land due to adverse weather conditions.

Leader of opposition, Shubhendu Adhikari subsequently visited Shaktinagar Hospital, met the relatives of the victims after autopsy, and paid floral tributes to the deceased.

BJP sources said the Prime Minister has assured that a public programme will be held at Taherpur in the near future.

Police have started an investigation into the incident.

"We all respect Lord Ram": TMC's Kunal Ghosh on Madan Mitra's remark on Ram

MI News Service, Kolkata: Trinamool Congress (TMC) leader Kunal Ghosh on Friday distanced himself from "Shri Ram was Muslim" remark made by party MLA Madan Mitra, asserting that there was no question of the party or its leaders not respecting Lord Ram.

Speaking to reporters, Ghosh said that he was unaware of what Madan Mitra had said or intended to convey. He stressed that Lord Ram is revered by all and accused the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) of politicising Lord Ram.

"I do not know what Madan Mitra said and what he wanted to say. We all respect Lord Ram.

The BJP markets Lord Ram politically, Lord Ram is our God. There is no question of not believing in him," Ghosh said.

His remarks came after Madan Mitra sparked a political row with a statement questioning Lord Ram's identity. In the speech, delivered in Bengali, Mitra said, "What was Ram's surname? Shri Ram was Muslim," triggering sharp reactions from the BJP, which accused the TMC of insulting Hindu beliefs and hurting religious sentiments.

Reacting strongly, BJP in West Bengal took to social media to criticise the ruling party. "@AitCOfficial leaders cannot help but insult Hindu Gods and Hindu

beliefs it seems. Now, TMC MLA Madan Mitra says Lord Ram was a Muslim, not Hindu. This continuous abuse of our culture and history is not a slip of tongue! Rather it is a not-so-subtle message to illegal Bangladeshis, that the TMC is the most Hindu Birodhi party, and therefore represents their beliefs. Thankfully, in a few more months, such anti-Hindu leaders will no longer be in power," BJP's West Bengal's X post read.

Meanwhile, in another incident, a sharp political debate erupted over Sanjay Singh's statement in Parliament on Friday that invoked the name of the Hindu God Ram.

Sanjay Singh defended his "Ram ke naam mein charitra hona chahiye, warna haram mein bhi Ram likha hua hai (There must be character in the name of 'Ram,' otherwise the word 'Ram' is also found within the word 'Haram' (forbidden/unethical))" statement by saying it was just a reiteration of a quote used by the late former PM Atal Bihari Vajpayee himself in response to Ram Vilas' claim that his name contained 'Ram'.

He took a jibe at the BJP, saying the party should hold a press conference and apologise for the "sin" committed by former PM Atal Bihari Vajpayee for making the statement in the first place.

"Soil of Bengal is not fertile for the divisive politics of the BJP," TMC's Tanmoy Ghosh hits out at PM Modi

MI News Service, Kolkata: Trinamool Congress (TMC) leader Tanmoy Ghosh expressed confidence that the Prime Minister's visit to West Bengal today would not alter the state's political landscape, asserting that "the soil of Bengal is not fertile for the divisive politics of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)."

"Narendra Modi is not only the Prime Minister of the BJP. He is the Prime Minister of the entire nation. We welcome his visit to Bengal at any time... But as far as the election is concerned, there is nothing to gain for the BJP. We saw in 2021 that Narendra Modi and Amit Shah visited Bengal many times. But nothing happened. Because the people of Bengal rely upon Trinamool

Congress... This time also there will be no change... The soil of Bengal is not fertile for the divisive politics of the BJP," he asserted.

PM Modi's visit comes amid an intensifying political battle between the BJP and the TMC in West Bengal ahead of the upcoming electoral contests.

PM Modi will address the public and inaugurate multiple development projects worth 3,200 crore.

The Key projects to be inaugurated include a 66.7 km 4-lane stretch of the Barajaguli-Krishnanagar section of NH-34 and the laying of the foundation stone for the 4-laning of the Barasat-Barajaguli section of NH-34, which aims to improve

connectivity between Kolkata and Siliguri.

The Prime Minister said in a post on X on Friday that while people in West Bengal are benefiting from the Centre's multifaceted development projects, they continue to suffer due to what he described as the "misrule of the Trinamool Congress in every sector."

Asserting that the BJP is now the "only hope and trust" of the people, Modi said the excesses of the ruling party had "crossed all limits."

"Tomorrow, on the 20th of December, at noon, I will deliver a speech at the BJP public meeting in Ranaghat. The people of West Bengal are receiving the benefits of the central government's multifaceted projects. However, at the same time, due to the misrule of the Trinamool Congress in every sector of the state, they are becoming victims of suffering. The looting and intimidation by the Trinamool have crossed all limits. That is why today, the BJP is the only hope and trust of the people," PM Modi tweeted on X.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will also visit Assam on December 20-21. He will reach Guwahati today around 3 pm. In Guwahati, he will inaugurate the new Bamboo Orchids terminal at the airport, unveil an 80-foot-tall statue of Lokpriya Gopinath Bordoloi, and lay the foundation stone for a new 12 lakh MT-capacity fertiliser unit in Namrup, Dibrugarh district.

FIR registered against Amit Malviya over alleged incendiary social media post

MI News Service, Baruipur: An FIR has been registered against BJP leader and National In-Charge of the party's IT Cell, Amit Malviya, at the Narendrapur Police Station under the Baruipur Police Station, alleging that his social media post threatened communal harmony and the sovereignty of India.

According to the complaint received on Friday by Narendrapur Police Station, All India Trinamool Congress leader and State General Secretary and Spokesperson Tanmoy Ghosh accused Malviya of posting an "incendiary statement" on the social media X platform on December 19. The complaint references a specific post, claiming it amounted to "formal instigation against communal harmony" and posed a "substantial threat" to the country's sovereignty.

The complainant further alleged that the post constituted a direct insult to West Bengal, the All India Trinamool Congress (AITC), and Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee. The letter urged the police to initiate strict legal action against the BJP leader under relevant sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) and any other applicable laws.

Police sources confirmed that the complaint had been received and acknowledged by Narendrapur Police Station. However, officials said no FIR has been registered to date and that the matter is under preliminary examination.

Further action, officials said, will be taken after the complaint and the social media post in question are reviewed.

In the X post against which the FIR was filed, Amit Malviya stated that the ongoing vandal-

ism in Dhaka, Bangladesh, was a "warning". He noted that this is "how societies unravel when extremism is appeased, and lawlessness is normalised." In reference to incident, he stated that, "It is also why the trajectory of West Bengal under Mamata Banerjee is deeply worrying." In the end, he said, "Culture, free expression, and democracy cannot survive where mobs rule, and the state looks away."

The X post stated, "Last night, Islamist mobs vandalised Chhayanaut Bhavan, a historic institution and a cornerstone of Bengali arts and culture in Dhaka. The pattern unfolding in Bangladesh is unmistakable: attacks on media houses, journalists, and cultural centres, carried out under Islamist pressure and intimidation. This is a warning. This is exactly how societies unravel when extremism is appeased, and lawlessness is normalised. It is also why the trajectory of West Bengal under Mamata Banerjee is deeply worrying. Years of political patronage, erosion of institutions, and selective silence have pushed Bengal onto a dangerous path. If Mamata Banerjee's decrepit regime continues beyond 2026, the consequences for Bengal will be irreversible. Culture, free expression, and democracy cannot survive where mobs rule, and the state looks away."

The development adds to the ongoing political tensions between the ruling Trinamool Congress in West Bengal and the Bharatiya Janata Party, with leaders from both sides frequently trading accusations over social media conduct and alleged attempts to disturb communal peace, as the West Bengal elections in 2026 approach.

Security tightened along India-Bangladesh border; farming beyond fence suspended

MI News Service, Tehatta: Security along the India-Bangladesh border in Tehatta subdivision of Nadia district has been significantly intensified following reports of renewed unrest in Bangladesh. The Border Security Force (BSF) has increased surveillance and patrols across the border stretch, while temporarily suspending civilian movement and farming activities beyond the barbed-wire fencing.

"The BSF personnel are our protectors. Because of them, we feel safe and can sleep peacefully at night," said a senior resident of Bhatupada village.

A college student from the border-adjacent area noted increased movement of BSF vehicles along border roads over the past few days, particularly since Thursday night, indicating stepped-up vigilance.

According to local sources, additional BSF patrols have been deployed since Thursday night across vulnerable points along the international border. Farmers have been strictly instructed not to cross the fence to access agricultural land situated on the other side until the situation stabilises.

Several villages, including Bhatupada and Nafar Chandrapur, lie close to the border, with many residents owning farmland beyond the fencing. Elderly villagers said there had been no major disturbances so far, but the heightened security measures were precautionary. A large BSF camp operates within the village area, providing a sense of security to residents.

However, the temporary ban on farming has triggered anxiety among local farmers, many of whom depend entirely on cultivation beyond the fence for their livelihood. Farmers said BSF officials informed them that access would remain restricted until the situation in Bangladesh returns to normal. "If we cannot go to our fields for a long time, crops will be destroyed and our livelihoods will be severely affected," said a farmer from Madhugari village, reflecting widespread concern among the agrarian community.

Local residents expressed hope that normalcy would return soon, allowing farming activities to resume while maintaining border security.

Griffins International School Campus celebrates Christmas



MI News Service, Kharagpur: Griffins International School campus, located in Khatranga area adjacent to Kharagpur city under Paschim Medinipur district, celebrated Christmas with great enthusiasm and devotion in the school campus amidst an atmosphere filled with joy, devotion and goodwill. Amidst the festive and holy spirit.

Christmas was celebrated with great enthusiasm and reverence in the school campus. On the occasion of this sacred religious and cultural festival of the Christian community, the school organized a heart-touching program which reflects the true spirit of Christmas. The entire campus was decorated with colorful lights, beautifully decorated. The event was lit up with decorated Christmas trees and festive decorations, creating an atmosphere of peace, hope and celebration.

happiness, gratitude and the joy of giving, leaving the audience spellbound.

The highlight of the program was a touching drama based on the birth of Lord Jesus Christ. The nativity scene, the divine message of the angel and the humble manger were portrayed with simplicity and emotion. The play beautifully conveyed the eternal message of Jesus Christ - love, sacrifice, forgiveness, peace and compassion for the entire humanity. The natural acting and emotionally rich performance of the students received hearty appreciation and serene reflection from the audience. When Santa came to the gathering disguised as Santa Claus, the entire prayer hall was filled with children's joy. To the melodious tune of Jingle Bells.

All the students started dancing happily. Santa Claus further added to the enthusiasm of the children by distributing chocolates. Chairman of Griffins International School, Abhishek Kumar Yadav said during the program about the deeper meaning of Christmas that "Christmas is not just a religious festival; it is a celebration of love, humility, forgiveness and humanity. The life and teachings of Jesus Christ inspire us to love each other, respect our parents and serve the society with kindness and compassion."

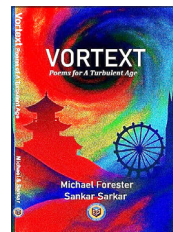
The event was graced by the gracious presence of the School Chairman, Abhishek Kumar Yadav, Principal, Pradeep Kumar Samal and Headmistress, Sonali Mahananda, along with other respected dignitaries, whose presence added to the grace and significance of the occasion.

The celebration began with the students singing melodious Christmas carols, filling the atmosphere with appreciation and joy. This was followed by an enchanting Dance performances were held which expressed

Vortex: Poems for a Turbulent Age

Nurul Islam Khan Vortex: Poems for a Turbulent Age is a compelling poetic collaboration between Michael Forester (UK) and Sankar Sarkar (India), a book that responds to contemporary unrest with urgency, ethical concern, and lyrical intelligence. At a time when poetry often retreats into private emotion, Vortex boldly confronts public crises-war, ecological decay, displacement, alienation, and the erosion of human values. Michael Forester's poems echo the tradition of British social and political poetry, recalling the moral seriousness of Wilfred Owen, the civic awareness of W.H. Auden, and at times the sharp irony of Tony Harrison. Forester writes with restraint and clarity, allowing images to carry political weight without rhetorical excess. His voice is measured, reflective, and often elegiac, capturing the psychological aftermath of violence rather than its spectacle. Like Ted Hughes, he frequently draws on nature imagery, but where Hughes's landscapes are primal, Forester's

are scarred by modern intervention. Sankar Sarkar's poetry, by contrast, is charged with metaphor, philosophical questioning, and post-colonial consciousness. His work resonates with poets such as Nissim Ezekiel, A.K. Ramanujan, and Mahmoud Darwish, blending local experience with universal anguish. Sarkar's language is intense and visionary; dust, fire, borders, and silence recur as symbols of both destruction and renewal. Unlike the ironic minimalism of some contemporary Indian English poets, Sarkar embraces a prophetic tone, closer to Pablo Neruda or Allen Ginsberg in its moral urgency. The Western analytical sensibility in Vortex intersects, producing a vortex of perspectives that mirrors the chaos of the present age. The book recalls collaborative or globally conscious projects like Seamus Heaney's political poems or the transnational humanism of Derek Walcott. Their poems remind readers that in turbulent times, poetry still has the power to question, to resist, and to humanize.



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Mayawati flags Bihar 'naqab' row, says CM should express regret

From PG 1
The state government "in the dock". "Police parades and salutes have their own traditions, discipline and sanctity, which should not be tampered with," she said, adding that it was a positive step that the state's police chief sought an explanation from the district police chief. "People are now waiting for action," she said, urging the state government to take the matter seriously to prevent a recurrence.

Mayawati also criticised the "brief" Winter Session of the Uttar Pradesh Assembly, which began on December 19, saying it had, like previous sessions, been "confined to debates between the ruling party and the opposition" instead of focusing on issues of public interest and welfare. She said the government should have responded more seriously to matters such as fertiliser shortages faced by the farmers and other public welfare concerns. The BSP chief also criticised the Winter Session of Parliament, which concluded on Friday, alleging that it ended without any meaningful discussions on the pressing national issues, including the severe air pollution in Delhi and its neighbourhood in Uttar Pradesh.

"The entire country was hoping for deliberations on the burning national problems that could have offered some ray of hope but that did not happen, which is unfortunate," she said. Mayawati also expressed concern over the rapidly deteriorating situation in Bangladesh and what she termed a rise in "anti-India activities", similar to Nepal. She urged the Centre to take cognisance of the developments and respond with a long-term policy approach. Bangladesh has been on the boil this week after the killing of Sharif Osman Hadi, a prominent youth leader of the July Uprising of 2024, sparking violent protests and arson in the neighbouring country.

CM Mamata hails geographical diversity at Christmas fest

From PG 1
"As a human being, we feel proud to see that everybody is happy. There is nothing bigger than this. Let there be peace all around."
Incidentally, the Kolkata Christmas Festival, which was inaugurated by Mamata Banerjee at the Allen Park in Prak Street on Thursday will continue till December 30, but the decorations and food stalls will remain open till January 5, she announced. Park Street will be closed to traffic on December 24 and 25, she announced. "People walk. Cars are not allowed, but walking is allowed," "I am very happy to see the joyous mood," she said.

India to surpass Germany to be third-largest economy by 2027: Scindia

From PG 1
resources, and facilities for industrial investment. The state government will provide all possible support to investors."

For the first time, the Chief minister said, the state government has given priority to the Industry Department directly at the Chief minister's level to ensure faster decision-making and strengthen investor confidence. Yadav said a new resolve has been taken in the state with a clear policy to improve lives through industries. "This policy will not only accelerate economic development but also create large-scale employment opportunities for the youth," he said. The CM also said at the Global Investors Summit held in Bhopal in February, agreements worth Rs 32 lakh crore were signed, of which the foundation stone for projects involving investments worth Rs 6 lakh crore has already been laid.

Bengali Language Blunders in PM Modi Ads Trigger TMC Criticism

MI News Service, Kolkata: The Trinamool Congress on Saturday launched a sharp attack on the BJP after a series of alleged spelling mistakes were found in advertisements released for Prime Minister Narendra Modi's programme in Nadia district, reigniting a political row over the Centre's handling of the Bengali language and culture.

The controversy comes close on the heels of recent incidents in Parliament, where Prime Minister Modi reportedly stumbled while referring to Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay, addressing him as "Bankim da", prompting Trinamool MPs to point out the error. Around the same time, a BJP minister had also drawn criticism for confusing "Vande Mataram" with "Vande Bharat", triggering backlash from the opposition. On Saturday, Modi was scheduled to attend an administrative and political programme in Ranaghat, a Matua-dominated area of Nadia. However, dense fog prevented his helicopter from landing, forcing him to address the meetings virtually. During the programme, the Prime Minister laid foundation stones for several government projects. The events were widely advertised through newspaper adver-



tisements, which, according to the Trinamool Congress, contained multiple spelling errors in Bengali. The ruling party wasted no time in flagging the issue. Trinamool leaders took to social media, posting images of the advertisements and highlighting what they described as "glaring spelling mistakes". The party mocked the BJP for spending heavily on what it called "self-congratulatory advertisements" while failing to ensure basic linguistic accuracy. In a strongly worded post on its official social media handle, the Trinamool Congress said the BJP never runs out of money when it comes to flooding newspapers with advertisements centred on Narendra Modi's programmes in Ben-

gal. "What irony! If even a small part of that money had been spent on learning the Bengali alphabet, at least these basic spelling mistakes could have been avoided," the post read. The party further remarked that it was hardly surprising, given what it described as the BJP's long-standing disregard for the Bengali language. Taking the attack further, the Trinamool accused BJP leaders of repeatedly insulting Bengali identity by questioning the legitimacy of the language and branding it as a "Bangladeshi language". It said such incidents expose the BJP's "distance from Bengal's culture and ethos".

"This is the same party whose leaders have shown utter ignorance by confusing 'Vande Mataram' with 'Vande Bharat'. Their ignorance stands exposed before everyone today," the Trinamool said in its statement.

The party also linked the issue to growing anxiety in Matua-dominated regions following the start of the SIR process, claiming that people are already uncertain about their citizenship and voting rights. Against this backdrop, Trinamool leaders alleged that the BJP's attempts to project itself as a governing alternative in Bengal lack credibility.

Kunal Ghosh Accuses Centre of Withholding Bengal's Dues



MI News Service, Kolkata: Trinamool Congress on Saturday launched a fierce counterattack against Prime Minister Narendra Modi over his claim that there would be no shortage of funds for West Bengal's development if the BJP is voted to power. Senior TMC leader and state general secretary Kunal Ghosh accused the Prime Minister of visiting Bengal "empty-handed" and holding back the state's rightful dues while making political promises. Reacting to Modi's audio message at a public meeting in Taherpur, Nadia, Ghosh said the Prime Minister deliberately avoided the core issue of pending central funds. "Prime Minister, you have come to Bengal with empty hands. The Centre has blocked Bengal's money. You may oppose Trinamool Congress, but do not oppose Bengal and its people," Ghosh said.

He alleged that the BJP-led central government has consistently deprived West Bengal of funds under multiple flagship schemes. According to Ghosh, money under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana, road development projects, the 100-day rural employment scheme (MGNREGA), and the Jal Jeevan Mission has been withheld for political reasons. "This is not an administrative issue, this is deliberate discrimination," he claimed. The TMC leader said that despite repeated efforts, including meetings between Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and the Prime Minister, Bengal's dues have not been released. "Delegations met central ministers, the Chief Minister met the Prime Minister himself, yet the money has not come. Why should Bengal's poor suffer because of BJP politics?" Ghosh asked. Referring specifically to MGNREGA, Ghosh claimed that around Rs 52,000 crore is pending under the scheme. He said thousands of rural workers have been affected due to the Centre's refusal to release funds. "The Prime Minister talks about development, but Bengal's people are being denied their daily bread," he added. Kunal Ghosh also questioned Modi's assertion that Bengal would see rapid development if the BJP is given a chance.

7 arrested over Hindu youth's lynching in Bangladesh

From PG 1
action by RAB units in the area. "RAB-14 conducted operations at various locations and arrested the aforementioned suspects," he said. The lynching occurred amid the widespread unrest that followed the death of youth leader Sharif Osman Hadi, a prominent figure of last year's student-led July Uprising and spokesperson of the Inqilab Mancha. Hadi died on Thursday at a hospital in Singapore, where he was undergoing treatment after being shot in the head by masked gunmen in Dhaka on December 12. Earlier on Friday, the Bangladesh's interim government had strongly condemned the alleged lynching of a Hindu man in Mymensingh and renewed its appeal for restraint. In a statement issued by the Yunus administration, the government said, "We express deep condemnation over the incident in Mymensingh in which a Hindu man was beaten to death. There is no place for such violence in the new Bangladesh. No one involved in this brutal crime will be spared."

7 elephants run over and killed on railway tracks in Assam

From PG 1
relief teams were immediately dispatched to the spot to manage rescue operations and assess the damage. Sources stated that rail services to Upper Assam and other parts of the Northeast were significantly disrupted due to the derailment and the presence of elephant carcasses on the tracks. As a precautionary measure, several trains passing through the affected section were diverted via alternative routes to minimise inconvenience to passengers. Passengers travelling in the derailed coaches were temporarily shifted to vacant berths available in other coaches of the same train. Railway authorities informed that once the train reaches Guwahati, additional coaches will be attached to accommodate all affected passengers, after which the train will resume its onward journey. Restoration work is currently underway to clear the tracks and normalise train operations at the earliest. Forest and railway authorities are working closely at the site to manage the situation and ensure safety. Senior railway officials, including the General Manager of Northeast Frontier Railway and the Divisional Railway Manager of Lumding, have also reached the accident location to oversee the restoration process. The incident has once again highlighted the growing concern over human-wildlife conflict in the Northeast, particularly the risks posed by railway lines passing through forested and fringe areas. Authorities emphasised the need for strengthened preventive measures to avoid such tragic incidents in the future.

World now perceives India much more positively for its talent: Jaishankar

From PG 1
is the relevance of human resources," he said. This often takes the form of a debate focusing on manufacturing versus services, he said, adding that in reality, the two are actually closely interlinked. "A large economy like ours must develop substantial and contemporary manufacturing if it is to keep abreast of technology, and if it is to imbibe and generate an industrial work culture. Only then, only then can we hone our capabilities even in the services sector." "As incomes rise and demands grow, a range of socio-economic requirements need to be addressed more effectively. We will need not just more engineers, doctors, and managers, or scientists, techies, and lawyers, but equally, teachers, researchers, historians, artists, and sportspersons. "Bear in mind that in the last decade alone, our higher education institutions have broadly doubled in number over what they had been before and there is room for more growth and restrictive improvement," he said. Globalisation has fundamentally altered the way we think and work, the minister said. "After decolonisation, many nations were able to progress and prosper because they now control their own destinies. The quality of choices and the wisdom of policy have made a crucial difference. "In India's own case, we have seen how leadership and governance have led to ups and downs in various phases in our economic growth and in our social transformation. The nation that has gained the most in this era is China. But we ourselves have done well, especially in the post-reform era, even more in the last decade. "In contrast, much of the Western world now feels that it has stagnated, a sentiment that has increasingly come to acquire a political meaning. Western elites consciously chose to shift production to maximize profits. Their competitiveness has eroded over the years, accelerated by their lifestyle, he said. Their demographic predicament has been an added factor, he added. The cumulative result of all these happenings is that the global economic and, thereafter, political pecking order has actually undergone a very significant change, Jaishankar said.

After Bihar, now its turn of West Bengal : PM Modi jibes at TMC

From PG 1
his helicopter from landing at the Taherpur helipad near the event venue, forcing it to return to Kolkata airport. Since early this morning, thousands of people gathered at Taherpur venue, waving national and BJP party flags chanting Prime Minister Modi's name, ahead of his public address and the inauguration of multiple development projects worth ₹3,200 crore. Key projects include a 66.7 km 4-lane stretch of the Barajaguli-Krishnanagar section of NH-34 and the foundation stone for the 4-laning of the Barasat-Barajaguli section of NH-34, which aims to improve connectivity between Kolkata and Siliguri. The Prime Minister said in a post on X on Friday that while people in West Bengal are benefiting from the Centre's multifaceted development projects, they continue to suffer due to what he described as the "misrule of the Trinamool Congress in every sector." Asserting that the BJP is now the "only hope and trust" of the people, PM Modi said the excesses of the ruling party had "crossed all limits."

The selection of Prime minister's rally at Taherpur assumed a special significance in the backdrop of heightened political tensions over the ongoing SIR exercise in the state where it was expected that he would ally fears among the members of the Matua community about their citizenship rights, post the publication of the draft electoral rolls. In fact in view of that today's rally was organised by the BJP at strategically located venue in the Matua dominated area of Ranaghat, and not far from the heartland of the Namasudra Hindu community in adjacent Bongaon. In the process, PM Modi also sounded the BJP's bugle for the assembly polls, which are due in the state early next year and finalised the roadmap for the party's big push for the crucial elections. "The people of West Bengal are benefiting from numerous pro-people initiatives of the central government. At the same time, they are suffering due to the TMC's misgovernance in every sector," PM Modi said in his brief address. "The loot and intimidation of the TMC have crossed all limits. That is why, BJP is the people's hope," he added. Earlier in the morning Prime Minister's helicopter failed to land at the Taherpur helipad owing to low visibility on account of dense fog in the area on Saturday, an official said.

The PM's chopper made a U-turn after hovering over the helipad ground for a while and returned to the Kolkata airport from where he made the virtual address after waiting for sometime. The PM's visit to West Bengal has come at a time when the Mamata Banerjee-led Trinamool Congress has mounted sustained opposition to the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls, alleging that the exercise is being carried out in "haste" and that a large number of genuine voters, particularly refugee Hindus, risk disenfranchisement on its account.

In the draft electoral rolls published after the enumeration phase, 58,20,899 names have been excluded, reducing the electorate to 7.08 crore. Around 1.36 crore entries have also been flagged for "logical discrepancies", while 30 lakh voters have been categorised as unmapped – a significant percentage of whom are likely to be called for verification hearings over the next 45 days. For Matuas, a Dalit Hindu community that migrated from Bangladesh over decades due to religious persecution, this exercise has revived anxieties over identity and documentation.



The Tata Steel World 25k Kolkata 2025 International event ambassador, Kenny Bednarek cooking pasta during an event, ahead of the Tata Steel World 25k Kolkata 2025, in Kolkata on Saturday.

Olympic champions, record holders and India's finest converge in Kolkata for TSW25K's perfect 10

MI News Service, Kolkata: The stage is set on the iconic Red Road for a spectacular celebration of distance running as the 10th edition of the Tata Steel World 25K Kolkata (TSW25K) gets underway tomorrow. Marking a historic milestone, the world's first and only World Athletics Gold Label 25K road race promises a riveting blend of global superstars, Indian champions, debutants, and record chasers on one of the fastest courses in the world. With over 23,000 runners across categories and a total prize purse of USD 142,214, the landmark edition underlines how far the race, and Indian distance running, has come over the past decade. From elite battles at the front to a sea of recreational runners behind them, Red Road will once again transform into a theatre of human endurance and aspiration. The men's elite race is headlined by Uganda's double Olympic champion Joshua Cheptegei, whose presence has electrified the build-up. For Cheptegei, India holds a special place in his journey. "India is like a second home to me, because my international journey truly began here. Coming back to race and see the sport grow in India is something I deeply celebrate," he said. Adding intrigue is the fact that several

top contenders are making their 25K debut, turning the race into a fascinating tactical contest. Reigning World Marathon Champion Alphonse Felix Simbu of Tanzania struck a calm and confident note ahead of his maiden run at this distance. "I don't feel pressure. I see running as joy and a responsibility to represent my country well. With a new generation rising, every race is about growth and preparing for bigger challenges ahead," Simbu remarked. Another debutant, Tobello Ramakongoana of Lesotho, believes the distance fits perfectly into his long-term marathon ambitions. "The 25K is the perfect bridge between the half-marathon and the marathon. Every race prepares me for bigger dreams ahead," said the national record holder. The men's field is further bolstered by a strong Ethiopian and Kenyan contingent, including Haymanot Alew, Collins Kipkorir, and Debebe Teka, ensuring relentless pace and tactical depth from the gun. In the women's elite race, all eyes will be on Suturem Asefa Kebede of Ethiopia, the two-time champion and current 25K world best holder, as she attempts an unprecedented hat-trick in Kolkata.

KMC Steps Up Cake Safety Checks Ahead of Christmas Festivities

MI News Service, Kolkata: As Kolkata gears up for Christmas celebrations on December 25, cake remains one of the most essential items on festive shopping lists. However, concerns are growing over whether the cakes that people stand in long queues to buy are actually safe for consumption. In response, the Kolkata Municipal Corporation (KMC) has intensified its surveillance, with its food testing department launching a large-scale drive to collect cake samples from bakeries and cake shops across the city. According to civic officials, the heightened vigilance follows reports of cake-related controversies and food safety violations in several other states. To prevent any such incidents in Kolkata during the festive season, the civic body has decided to adopt a zero-tolerance approach towards violations of food safety norms. Last Thursday, the KMC's health department convened a meeting at the Health Building, summoning all bakeries from Kolkata and two adjoining districts. An official from the food

testing department said that representatives from almost all well-known bakeries and cake manufacturers attended the meeting, including two iconic cake showrooms from Park Street and New Market. The civic body used the platform to issue a stern warning against unsafe practices in cake production.

During the meeting, bakery owners were told that the growing practice of using excessive preservatives to extend the shelf life of cakes can be harmful to health. Officials also cautioned against the use of excessive artificial colours, stating that such ingredients could pose serious health risks if consumed regularly. Bakers were instructed to strictly adhere to prescribed guidelines and exercise caution in the selection of ingredients, storage methods, and preparation processes. Civic sources said that food inspectors have already begun collecting samples from several cake shops and bakeries across the city. These samples are being tested at the KMC's food testing laboratory.



The Tata Steel World 25K Kolkata 2025 Get Active Expo was inaugurated by Debashish Kumar, Deputy Chief Whip, West Bengal Legislative Assembly & MMIC (Sports); Indian Chess Grandmaster Dibyendu Barua; Prashanta Saha, Regional Director, Procarn International; and Vivek Singh, Joint Managing Director, Procarn International, at the Netaji Indoor Stadium, in Kolkata.

Shashi Tharoor Unveils Oxford Bookstore Book Cover Prize Longlist

MI News Service, Kolkata/ New Delhi: Member of Parliament and acclaimed author Dr. Shashi Tharoor played a key role in the unveiling of the longlist for the 11th edition of the Oxford Bookstore Book Cover Prize at the Park, New Delhi. The event celebrated 28 exceptional book covers from across India, showcasing the creativity and innovation of Indian graphic designers. The announcement was made in the presence of Museum Curator Dr. Alka Pande, guest juror Samar Jodha, publishers, authors, designers, and literary enthusiasts, marking a vibrant celebration of design excellence in the country. Dr. Tharoor, known for his



literary insight, helped curate the longlist from over 200 entries, alongside other jury members including Shobha De and Dr. Kunal Basu. The selected titles reflect a wide range of genres, themes, and artistic approaches, emphasizing the role of book covers in enhancing storytelling and reader engagement. Following the longlist

announcement, Dr. Tharoor engaged in a discussion with columnist Vir Sanghvi on his latest book, Our Living Constitution (Aleph Book Company). The conversation explored the historical foundations of the Indian Constitution, its contemporary relevance, and the democratic principles it safeguards. The shortlist for the prize will be announced at the Apeejay Kolkata Literary Festival from 9 to 11 January 2026 at the Alipore Museum and Oxford Bookstore, Kolkata, with the winner set to be revealed in New Delhi in March 2026, further highlighting the importance of design in India's literary landscape.

Matua voter list doubts trigger sharp warning in Bengal

MI News Service, Kolkata: Even as the first phase of the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls comes to an end, uncertainty continues to loom large over the Matua community regarding the inclusion of their names in the voter list. Despite repeated assurances from election authorities, confusion and doubt persist at the grassroots level, intensifying political tension around one of West Bengal's most electorally significant communities.



Confusion and doubt persist at the grassroots level, intensifying political tension around one of West Bengal's most electorally significant communities. According to sources, expectations were high among Matua voters that the revision exercise would finally resolve long-standing concerns over voter registration. However, anx-

sections of the community. Matua organisations have argued that repeated administrative exercises have failed to provide clarity on voter inclusion, creating widespread fear of disenfranchisement ahead of crucial elections. They claim that the lack of transparent communication has left many community members anxious about whether they will be able to exercise their voting rights. This uncertainty has fueled anger and suspicion, turning the voter list issue into a highly sensitive political matter. The ruling Trinamool Congress has rejected the allegations, maintaining that due process is being followed by the authorities. The party has accused opposition forces of politicising the issue and spreading fear among Matua voters for electoral gains.

RPF/Eastern Railway Achieves Major Success Against Wildlife Trafficking; 790 Live Turtles/Tortoises Rescued In Malda Division

MI News Service, Kolkata, 20 Dec.25 : Maintaining a high level of vigilance to curb illegal activities and prevent wildlife crime through the rail network, the Railway Protection Force (RPF) of Eastern Railway achieved a major success under "Operation Wilep" by foiling an organized attempt at wildlife trafficking in Malda Division.



In another swift and coordinated action at Malda Railway Station, one female person was arrested from Train No. 13410 DN (Intercity Express) with 6 bags containing 128 live turtles/tortoises. All the arrested persons, along with the seized wildlife, were handed over to the concerned Forest Departments at Sahibganj and Malda, respectively, for further legal action as per law. This successful operation underscores the alertness, professionalism, and proactive role of RPF, Eastern Railway, not only in safeguarding passengers and railway property but also in supporting national efforts for wildlife conservation through close coordination with other enforcement agencies.

Victim lured by boyfriend, three friends imprisoned for life

MI News Service, Medinipur: In a landmark verdict, the First Additional District Sessions Court of Medinipur has sentenced three men to life imprisonment for the brutal gang rape of a 21-year-old woman in Garbeta forest on Independence Day, 2020. Each convict has also been fined Rs 1 lakh, while the court has directed the state government to provide Rs 10 lakh in compensation to the survivor.



The horrifying incident occurred during the Garbeta festival, when the victim was allegedly lured into the forest by her boyfriend, Suraj Soren, under the pretext of marriage. According to the prosecution, Soren called three of his friends—Dashrath Mandi, Kishan Mandi, and another accomplice—who, along with him, assaulted the young woman. Public Prosecutor Debashis Maiti stated, "On August 15, 2020, the victim was taken to a secluded area where she was subjected to a gang rape by Soren and his associates. Police acted promptly on the complaint, arresting four accused. Since one accused is a minor, his trial is being conducted in the Juvenile Court." During the trial, the court recorded testimonies from 13 witnesses before delivering its verdict under Section 376(D) of the Indian Penal Code. The ruling sends a strong message against sexual violence, reaffirming the judiciary's commitment to delivering justice for survivors. This verdict comes amid growing public outrage over crimes against women in secluded areas, underscoring the urgent need for vigilance and preventive measures during public gatherings and festivals.

IG-cum-PCSC/ER Inaugurates New RPF Post And Modern RPF Barrack At Jamtara

MI News Service, Kolkata, 20 Dec.25 : Reinforcing Eastern Railway's continued focus on strengthening security preparedness and enhancing the welfare of its frontline force, Shri Amiya Nandan Sinha, IG-cum-Principal Chief Security Commissioner (PCSC), Eastern Railway, Kolkata, inaugurated a new RPF Post along with a modern 30-bed RPF barrack at Jamtara station on Friday (19.12.25).



The newly constructed RPF barrack has been designed to provide a comfortable and efficient living environment for RPF personnel. It comprises eight well-appointed rooms and is equipped with modern amenities, including washing machines, electric shoe shiners, RO water filters, and other essential facilities. Simultaneously, the new RPF Post at Jamtara was commissioned, significantly enhancing the operational capabilities of the force in

the area. The post features separate lock-ups for male and female detainees, an investigation room, a store room, an Inspector's chamber, and a dedicated CCTV monitoring room, ensuring improved surveillance, investigation, and administrative efficiency. During his inspection, Shri Amiya Nandan Sinha interacted with RPF personnel and emphasized the importance of maintaining heightened vigilance in view of the forthcoming elections. He also directed the force to take firm measures to curb incidents of unauthorized chain pulling, which adversely impact train operations, passenger security, and travel comfort. The commissioning of these facilities at Jamtara marks another important step in modernizing RPF infrastructure under Eastern Railway, aimed at strengthening security arrangements while prioritizing the welfare of RPF personnel and the safety of passengers.

On December 19, 2025, alert on-duty RPF personnel of Malda Division conducted focused checks at Barharwa and Malda Railway Stations, leading to the apprehension of four wildlife traffickers (male/female) and the recovery of 24 bags containing 790 live turtles/tortoises. At Barharwa Railway Station, three persons were arrested from Train No. 15734 UP (Farakka Express) with 18 bags containing 662 live turtles/tortoises.

ED moves Delhi HC against Sonia, Rahul Gandhi

MI News Service, New Delhi: The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has moved the Delhi High Court, challenging a recent order of the Rouse Avenue Court that effectively dismissed money laundering charges against Congress leaders Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi, along with several other accused, in the long-running National Herald case. The agency's appeal marks a significant escalation in the legal battle and indicates its intent to continue pursuing the matter under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA).

In its petition before the High Court, the ED has sought a review of the trial court's refusal to take cognisance of its prosecution complaint, commonly referred to as a charge sheet. Earlier this week, the Rouse Avenue Court had declined to accept the ED's charge sheet against the Gandhis and five other accused, a decision that was widely interpreted as providing major legal and political relief to the senior Congress leaders. However, the ED's swift approach to the High Court suggests that the agency is unwilling to let the matter rest. The case has seen multiple procedural developments. Previously, Special Judge (PC Act) Vishal Gogne of the Rouse Avenue Court had set aside an earlier order passed by a magistrate court. In that ruling, the judge clarified that Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi, and the other accused were not entitled to receive copies of the First Information Report (FIR) registered by the Delhi Police in connection with the case. This clarification was viewed as an important procedural determination in the broader proceedings related to the alleged financial irregularities. The ED's latest move keeps the National Herald case firmly in focus, both legally and politically. As the matter now reaches the Delhi High Court, it is expected to attract close scrutiny, given the prominence of the accused and the broader implications for the interpretation and application of the PMLA. The outcome of the High Court's consideration could significantly shape the future course of the case and its impact on the political landscape.

Name Change I, Showheb Shakil, S/o- Md Shakil, R/o - 99, Jaya Bibi, Road, PO-Ghusuri, District- Howrah, West Bengal - 711107, stated that my father name written in my Madhyamik Admit Card & Registration Certificate as Md Shaheel and in all other documents as Md Shakil. I hereby declare that both are same and one identical person and shall be known as Md Shakil for all the purposes.

Name Change I, Md Sarfaraj Molla (Old Name), Son of Faruk Hossain Molla, residing at Purkait Gheri, P.O - Kumrapara, Dist - 24 Parganas (South), Pin - 743383, West Bengal, India, have changed my name and shall henceforth be known as Sarfaraj Molla (New Name), as declared before the Notary Public at Kolkata dated 16/12/2025. Md Sarfaraj Molla (Old Name) and Sarfaraj Molla (New Name) both are same and one identical person.

Name Change I, Pradip Chatterjee @ Pradip Chattopadhyay @ Chattopadhyay Pradip @ Pradeep Chatterjee @ Pradip Chatterjee (Old Name) Son Of Late Bimalendu Chattopadhyay (Father), W/O Champa Chatterjee (Wife), Residing At Bankra, Mishrapara, Domjur, Piyada Para, Howrah - 711403, Have Changed My Name And Shall Henceforth Be Known As Pradeep Chattopadhyay (New Name) As Declared Before The Notary Public At Kolkata, Dated 18/12/2025. Pradeep Chattopadhyay (New Name) And Pradip Chatterjee @ Pradip Chattopadhyay @ Chattopadhyay Pradip @ Pradeep Chatterjee @ Pradip Chatterjee (Old Name) Both Are Same And Identical Person.

Name Change I, Kanjilal Ray (old name) So Kartik Roy, residing at Sahapur, Talbanda, P.O - Jugguria, P.S.- New Barrackpore, Dist.- North 24 Parganas, Pin- 700110, West Bengal, India, have changed my name and shall henceforth be known as Kanjilal Roy (new name), as declared Before The Notary Public at Kolkata, vide an affidavit dated 19/12/2025. Kanjilal Roy (new name) and Kanjilal Ray (old name) both are same and one identical person.

Name Change I, Shiv Bhakarh (Old Name), Son Of Chhagan Lal Bhakarh, Residing At 14/17 Mackenzie Lane, Golabari, Howrah - 711101, West Bengal, Have Changed My Name And Shall Henceforth Be Known As Shiv Kumar Bhakarh (New Name) As Declared Before The Notary Public At Kolkata On 19/12/2025. Shiv Bhakarh And Shiv Kumar Bhakarh Both Are The Same And One Identical Person.

Parliament replaces MGNREGA With G RAM G bill

MI News Service, New Delhi: In a move that has ignited political uproar, the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha on Thursday passed the Developed India-Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajevika Mission Bill (Jiramji Bill), a proposed replacement for the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA). The new legislation has triggered sharp debates over its implications for rural employment, wages, and the symbolic legacy of Mahatma Gandhi.

Introduced by Union Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, the bill proposes to increase the guaranteed workdays for rural beneficiaries from 100 under MGNREGA to 125 days, with certain Scheduled Tribe communities receiving up to 150 days, particularly those in forest areas. The bill also allows a 60-day relaxation during peak harvesting periods, ensuring the guaranteed work is provided within 305 days. While the increase in

Name Change I, Sulata Rani Kower, Wife of No. 6468563X Rank Ex Hav Name Uttam Kumar Kower resident of Vill-Chakundi, P.O.- Nabashta Dist.-Purba Bardhaman (WB), Pin- 713407 have change my Name & Date of birth from Sulata Rani Kower & Age 36 years (as per discharge book) to Sulata Koner & 01 Jan 1965 vide Affidavit dated 07.11.25 before the 1st Class Judicial Magistrate at Purba Bardhaman.

Name Change I, Aujiir Ali Khan (old name) S/O Dafr Ali Khan, resident of Vill-Dera, P.O.- Kalandi, East Medinipur, Pin- 721455, West Bengal, India, have changed my name and shall henceforth be known as Ujir Ali Khan (new name), as declared Before the Notary Public at Kolkata, vide an affidavit dated 18/12/2025. Ujir Ali Khan (new name) and Aujiir Ali Khan (old name) both are same and one identical person.

Name Change I, Nasima Bibi (old name) W/O Sk Rabbul Hossen, resident of Dera, Kalandi Dera, East Medinipur, Pin- 721455, West Bengal, India, have changed my name and shall henceforth be known as Nasima Khatun (new name), as declared Before the Notary Public at Kolkata, vide an affidavit dated 17/12/2025. Nasima Bibi (old name) and Nasima Khatun (new name) both are same and one identical person.

Name Change I, Shiv Bhakarh (Old Name), Son Of Chhagan Lal Bhakarh, Residing At 14/17 Mackenzie Lane, Golabari, Howrah-711101, West Bengal, Have Changed My Name And Shall Henceforth Be Known As Shiv Kumar Bhakarh (New Name) As Declared Before The Notary Public At Kolkata On 19/12/2025. Shiv Bhakarh And Shiv Kumar Bhakarh Both Are The Same And One Identical Person.

workdays is aimed at enhancing rural income, opposition leaders, including Priyanka Gandhi, have criticized the move, arguing that wages have not been increased proportionally and that the bill may be more performative than substantive. The bill also seeks to streamline payments, promising weekly disbursements to workers, addressing longstanding complaints about delayed payments under MGNREGA, which in some states, including West Bengal, have reportedly accumulated to lakhs of crores of rupees in arrears. Beyond operational changes, the bill has sparked a fierce debate over nomenclature and symbolism. Critics allege that replacing "Mahatma Gandhi" with "Jiramji" diminishes the legacy of the Father of the Nation. Trinamool leaders have vocally opposed the move, linking it to cultural and historical sentiments, while the government maintains that the initiative con-

tributes to follow Gandhian principles. Another point of contention lies in the distribution of grants. The bill proposes a 90:10 central-to-state ratio for certain north-eastern and Himalayan states and 60:40 for other states, a shift from the earlier 100 percent central funding under MGNREGA. The opposition has accused the government of using this mechanism to exert pressure on state administrations and of potentially creating inequities in rural development funding. As the Bengal Assembly elections approach, political stakes around the Jiramji Bill are high.

MI News Service, Assam: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday inaugurated India's first nature-themed airport terminal at the Lokapriya Gopinath Bordoloi International Airport (LGBI) in Guwahati, marking a major milestone in sustainable and culturally inspired infrastructure development. The new terminal reflects a unique blend of modern aviation facilities with the rich natural and cultural heritage of Northeast India. Constructed at an estimated cost of ₹4,000 crore, the terminal has been named "Akashin Forest" and is set to become the largest airport terminal in the Northeast region. The design aims to offer passengers an immersive "sky forest" experience, integrating ecology with cutting-edge infrastructure. A standout feature of the terminal is the extensive use of sustainable materials, including 140 metric tonnes of locally sourced bamboo, which forms a striking bamboo vault across the structure. The terminal also houses more than one lakh indigenous plant species and prominently features the rare Kopu orchid, a symbol of Assam's biodiversity. With 2,000 plant species and 57 specially designed Kopu orchid pillars, the terminal showcases the region's ecological richness. Architectural and artistic elements draw inspiration from iconic landmarks such as Kaziranga National Park and Majuli Island, while motifs of the one-horned rhinoceros further highlight Assam's natural identity.

Name Change I, Madhu Kumari, W/o. Manish Bhushan, Resident- Ideal Grand Complex, Block-C, flat- 1E, Shibpur, Near Shibpur Tramdepo, 456, G. T. Road (S), P. O. Shibpur, District- Howrah, Pin - 711102, do hereby solemnly affirm and declare before the 1st Class Judicial Magistrate at Howrah, vide Affidavit number 10, Dated- 16/12/2025, That Madhu Kumari, Madhu Devi and Madhu Keshri are the same and one identical person. Henceforth I shall be known as Madhu Kumari for all purposes.

Name Change I, Sathi Das, wife of Ashish Kumar Sarkar, residing at 12/B, Dhirendranath Ghosh Road, Bhawanipur, S 24 Pargana-700025, do hereby solemnly affirm and declare that I am care giver guardian of my daughter Adishwara Sarkar and Ashish Kumar Sarkar and A K Sarkar is the same and one identical person, being her father as well as Dr. Sathi Das and Sathi Das is the same and one identical person, being her mother via affidavit before the 1st Class Judicial Magistrate at Alipore dated 15th December 2025.

Name Change I, Prasanta Kumar Dutta (Old Name), Son of Late Manindira Mohan Dutta, residing at 5, Kanta Mohan Mullick Road, P.O. & P.S. - Belguria, Dist- 24 Parganas (North), Pin 700056, West Bengal, India, have changed my name and shall henceforth be known as Prasanta Kumar Dutta (New Name), as declared before the 1st Class Judicial Magistrate at barrackpore Court dated 18/12/2025. Prasanta Kumar Dutta (Old Name) and Prasanta Kumar Dutta (New Name) both are same and one identical person.

thousands of people from nearby towns and villages gathered to pay their last respects. The atmosphere was charged with emotion as mourners lined the roads, offering floral tributes and saluting the brave jawan who had laid down his life in the line of duty. Vishwanath Sau's last rites were performed with full state honours, acknowledging his service, courage, and sacrifice for the nation. Representatives from the administration, security forces, and local leaders were present to honour him. Gaurav Singh, District Trinamool Youth President, said that soldiers like Vishwanath Sau are true sons of Mother India who risk their lives so that citizens can live in peace and security. He added that such sacrifices can never be forgotten. The death of Vishwanath Sau has left Purulia district in collective mourning. His sacrifice stands as a powerful reminder of the courage, dedication, and immense risks faced by Indian soldiers who guard the nation under the most extreme and unforgiving conditions.

MI News Service, Purulia: The mortal remains of Army jawan Vishwanath Sau, aged 34, reached his native Ghongha village in Purulia district on Saturday, plunging the entire region into deep mourning. Known affectionately in his village as Jiban Sau, he was the only son of his parents, and his untimely death has left an irreplaceable void in his family and community. According to police sources, Vishwanath Sau was on active duty in Himachal Pradesh when he was caught in an intense snowstorm amid extremely harsh weather conditions. He was rescued and admitted to a hospital in Chandigarh for treatment. Despite the efforts of doctors, his condition deteriorated due to the severity of the exposure, and he eventually succumbed, leading to widespread grief. The news of his death reached Ghongha village on Friday, casting a pall of sorrow over the entire area. From that moment, the village and surrounding regions began preparing to receive their fallen soldier. On Saturday, as the coffin arrived,

NAME CHANGE I, Arun Kumar, on behalf of my Daughter Joti Kumari, R/o: Vill- Repura Rampurishwanath, P.O.- Jaintpur, Dist- Muzaffarpur (Bihar)-843123 shall be known as Jyoti, sworn before 1st Class Judicial Magistrate, Sealadh Court vide affidavit (No:15582) Dated : 18.12.2025. Joti Kumari & Jyoti is the same & identical person.

Name Change I, Sathi Das, wife of Ashish Kumar Sarkar, residing at 12/B, Dhirendranath Ghosh Road, Bhawanipur, S 24 Pargana-700025, do hereby solemnly affirm and declare that I am care giver guardian of my daughter Adishwara Sarkar and Ashish Kumar Sarkar and A K Sarkar is the same and one identical person, being her father as well as Dr. Sathi Das and Sathi Das is the same and one identical person, being her mother via affidavit before the 1st Class Judicial Magistrate at Alipore dated 15th December 2025.

Name Change I, Basudeb Dey (Old Name), Son of Sajal Krishna Dey, residing at 5, Asgar Mistry Lane, P.O.- Gobinda Khaitak, P.S.- Topsis, Kolkata- 700046, West Bengal, India, have changed my name and shall henceforth be known as Basudeb Dey (New Name), as declared before the Notary Public at Kolkata dated 19/12/2025. Basudeb Dey (Old Name) and Basudeb Dey (New Name) both are same and one identical person.

Name Change I, Prasanta Kumar Dutta (Old Name), Son of Late Manindira Mohan Dutta, residing at 5, Kanta Mohan Mullick Road, P.O. & P.S. - Belguria, Dist- 24 Parganas (North), Pin 700056, West Bengal, India, have changed my name and shall henceforth be known as Prasanta Kumar Dutta (New Name), as declared before the 1st Class Judicial Magistrate at barrackpore Court dated 18/12/2025. Prasanta Kumar Dutta (Old Name) and Prasanta Kumar Dutta (New Name) both are same and one identical person.

Name Change I, Abdul Mannan (Old Name), Son Of Abdulmajid Sekh, Residing At Vill & Post-Saiyedpur, West Medinipur- 721147, West Bengal, Have Changed My Name And Shall Henceforth Be Known As Sek Abdul Mannan (New Name) Vide An Affidavit Sworn Before The Notary Public At Kolkata On 19/12/2025. Abdul Mannan And Sek Abdul Mannan Both Are The Same And One Identical Person.

NAME CHANGE I, Arun Kumar, on behalf of my Daughter Reshmi Kumari, R/o: Vill- Repura Rampurishwanath, P.O.- Jaintpur, Dist- Muzaffarpur (Bihar)-843123 shall be known as Rashmi, sworn before 1st Class Judicial Magistrate, Sealadh Court vide affidavit (No:15580) Dated : 18.12.2025. Reshmi Kumari & Rashmi is the same & identical person.

Name Change I, Sathi Das, wife of Ashish Kumar Sarkar, residing at 12/B, Dhirendranath Ghosh Road, Bhawanipur, S 24 Pargana-700025, do hereby solemnly affirm and declare that I am care giver guardian of my daughter Advaitashwara Sarkar and Ashish Kumar Sarkar and A K Sarkar is the same and one identical person, being her father as well as Dr. Sathi Das and Sathi Das is the same and one identical person, being her mother via affidavit before the 1st Class Judicial Magistrate at Alipore dated 15th December 2025.

Name Change I, Basudeb Dey (Old Name), Son of Sajal Krishna Dey, residing at 5, Asgar Mistry Lane, P.O.- Gobinda Khaitak, P.S.- Topsis, Kolkata- 700046, West Bengal, India, have changed my name and shall henceforth be known as Basudeb Dey (New Name), as declared before the Notary Public at Kolkata dated 19/12/2025. Basudeb Dey (Old Name) and Basudeb Dey (New Name) both are same and one identical person.

Name Change I, Abdul Mannan (Old Name), Son Of Abdulmajid Sekh, Residing At Vill & Post-Saiyedpur, West Medinipur- 721147, West Bengal, Have Changed My Name And Shall Henceforth Be Known As Sek Abdul Mannan (New Name) Vide An Affidavit Sworn Before The Notary Public At Kolkata On 19/12/2025. Abdul Mannan And Sek Abdul Mannan Both Are The Same And One Identical Person.

Name Change I, Md Zainal Abidin (old name) So Ali Ahmed, residing at 60/H/9, Dr Sudhir Bose Road, Kolkata-700023, West Bengal, India, have changed my name and shall henceforth be known as Zainal Abidin (new name), as declared Before The Notary Public at Kolkata, vide an affidavit dated 19/12/2025. Zainal Abidin (old name) both are same and one identical person.

NAME CHANGE I, Arun Kumar, on behalf of my Daughter Reshmi Kumari, R/o: Vill- Repura Rampurishwanath, P.O.- Jaintpur, Dist- Muzaffarpur (Bihar)-843123 shall be known as Rashmi, sworn before 1st Class Judicial Magistrate, Sealadh Court vide affidavit (No:15580) Dated : 18.12.2025. Reshmi Kumari & Rashmi is the same & identical person.

Name Change I, Adhir Ranjan Roy Chowdhury S/O Ganesh Shasmal, resident of Vill- Dakshin Shibganj, P.O. & P.S.- Pathar Pratima, Dist.- South 24 Parganas, State- West Bengal, That I was Brendra Nath Shasmal Thereafter I changed my said name and acquainted as in my present name Adhir Ranjan Roy Chowdhury vide an affidavit before the 1st Class Judicial Magistrate 1st class at Alipore, South 24 Pgs. dated 06/08/2025. Adhir Ranjan Roy Chowdhury and Brendra Nath Shasmal both are same and one identical person.

Name Change I, Md Faruk Hossain Molla and Faruk Hossain Molla (Old Names), Son of Nurul Islam Molla, residing at Purkait Gheri, P.O - Kumrapara, Dist - 24 Parganas (South), Pin - 743383, West Bengal, India, have changed my name and shall henceforth be known as Faruk Hossain Molla (New Name), as declared before the Notary Public at Kolkata dated 16/12/2025. Md Faruk Hossain Molla and Faruk Hossain Molla (New Name) all are same and one identical person.

Nischinda Gram Panchayat Bally, Howrah E-TENDER INVITING NOTICE Electronic Tenders are hereby invited from the bonafied and resourceful bidders for development works vide e-NIT No. -18, Sl. No. 1 to 4, Fund : APAS 25-26. Published date: 19/12/2025. Date of Closing : 14/01/2026. Date of Opening: 16/01/2026. Details are available in https://wbntenders.gov.in & https://etender.wb.nic.in and Office Notice Board. Sd/- Pradhan Nischinda Gram Panchayat

Office of the Principal DEBRA THANA SAHID KSHUDIRAM SMRITI MAHAVIDYALAYA (Government Aided, Autonomous, NAAC Accredited "A" Grade College, affiliated to Vidyasagar University) P.O.-Chakshyampur, Dist.- Paschim Medinipur. PIN-721124, W.B. INDIA NOTICE INVITING TENDER Tender Reference No. dtkskm/NIT75/25 dated: 19/12/2025 Tender ID -2025_DHE_977151_1 E-Tenders are invited from eligible suppliers/agencies having successfully completed similar nature of works with adequate working experience and financial capabilities. Information about the work: Name of the work DTP works, Printing and Binding of Book of Abstracts for 8th Regional Science and Technology Congress Bid Submission Start Date 19/12/2025 at 11AM Bid Submission End Date 14/01/2026 at 6 pm Sd/(Dr. Rupa Dasgupta) Principal Debra Thana Sahid Kshudiram Smriti Mahavidyalaya Chakshyampur, Debra, Paschim Medinipur

GOVERNMENT OF MANIPUR Office of the Deputy Commissioner/Executive Director District Rural Development Agency, Churachandpur District NOTICE INVITING TENDER Churachandpur, the 17th December, 2025 Tender No: 8/04/DRDA-EE/OpenT/2025: The Project Director, DRDA Churachandpur on behalf of the Governor of Manipur invites item rate tender through open tender from eligible Contractors for 02 (two) nos of works costing below 1 (one) crores. The Tender details and documents shall be available from 1100 Hrs of 17/12/2025 to 1000 Hrs of 24/12/2025 at the Deputy Commissioner, Churachandpur District. Bid submission start date : 1100 Hrs of 17/12/2025 to 1000 Hrs of 24/12/2025 Bid submission end date : 1100 Hrs of 24/12/2025 Date of opening of Bid : 1530 Hrs of 24/12/2025 Venue : Office of the Deputy Commissioner, Churachandpur District Sd/- (Jameson Hangshing) Project Director, DRDA Churachandpur District

38 Projects of New Lines, Gauge Conversion and Doubling of 5,098 Km Costing ₹89,780 Crore Sanctioned in Maharashtra

MI News Service, 20 Dec 2025, New Delhi: Budget allocation during the last five years has increased significantly. Budget allocation for infrastructure projects and safety works, falling fully/partly in the State of Maharashtra is as under:
Period 2009-14, Outlay ₹1,171 crore/year 2025-26 ₹23,778 crore (More than 20 times)

The details of commissioning/ laying of new track falling fully/partly in the State of Maharashtra during 2009-14 and 2014-25 is as under:
Period 2009-14, New track Commissioned 292 Km. Average commissioning of new tracks 58.4 Km/year. Period 2014-25, New track Commissioned 2,292 Km. Average commissioning of new tracks 208.36 Km/year (More than 3 times)

Capacity Augmentation works for Mumbai Suburban area Presently, about 120 originating Mail/Express trains and about 3200 sub urban trains are handled daily in Mumbai area. To increase capacity and improve safety, several steps have been taken by Indian Railways as under:
To increase train handling capacity at various stations in Mumbai area, following works have been completed/taken up/planned at various stations:

Location: Bandra Terminus, Details: 3 Pit Lines have been completed
Location: Mumbai Central Details: Platform extension for 24 LHB coaches
Location: Jogeshwari Details: 2 additional platforms
Location: Dadar Details: 1 additional platform

Location: Vasai road Details: 6 platforms, 3 pit lines and 5 stabling lines
Location: Panvel-Kalamboli Details: 5 platforms, 4 pit lines and 2 sick lines
Location: Kalyan Details: 6 platforms and 4 pit lines
Location: LTT Details: 4 platforms and 2 pit lines
Location: Parel Details: 6 platforms, 5 pit lines, 6 stabling lines
Location: Virar Details: 25 stabling lines
Location: Dahisar road Details: 11 stabling lines
Location: Mira road Details: 25 stabling lines
In addition to above, Platform extension work at 34 stations to accommodate 15 car EMUs have been taken up.

To improve the capacity of rail network in Mumbai suburban area, Mumbai Urban Transport Project (MUTP-II) costing ₹8,087 crore, MUTP-III costing ₹10,947 crore and MUTP-IIIA costing ₹33,690 crore have been sanctioned. These projects include following works in Mumbai Suburban Area:
Name of Project: CSMT-Kurla 5 & 6 Line (MUTP-II) (17.5 km), Cost: ₹91 Cr.
Name of Project: Mumbai Central-Borivali 6 Line (MUTP-II) (30 km) Cost: ₹19 Cr.
Name of Project: Extension of Harbour Line from Goregaon-Borivali (MUTP-III) (7 km) Cost: ₹26 Cr.
Name of Project: Borivali-Virar 5 & 6 Line (MUTP-III) (26 km) Cost: ₹2,184 Cr.
Name of Project: Virar-Dahisar Road 3 & 4 Line (MUTP-III) (64 km) Cost: ₹3,587 Cr.
Name of Project: Panvel-Karjat Suburban Corridor (MUTP-

III) (29.6 km) Cost: ₹2,782 Cr
Name of Project: Airoli-Kalwa (elevated) Suburban Corridor link (MUTP-III) (3.3 km) Cost: ₹476 Cr
Name of Project: Kalyan-Asangaon 4 Line (MUTP-III) (32 km) Cost: ₹1,759 Cr
Name of Project: Kalyan-Badlapur 3 & 4 line (MUTP-III) (14 km) Cost: ₹1,510 Cr
Name of Project: Kalyan-Kasara 3 Line (67 km) Cost: ₹793 Cr
Name of Project: Naigaoon-Juichandra double chord Line (6 km) Cost: ₹176 Cr
Name of Project: Nilaje-Kopar double chord Line (5 km) Cost: ₹338 Cr
Name of Project: Kalyan Yard remodeling work Cost: ₹86 Cr

To enhance passenger carrying capacity, 238 rakes of 12 cars each with doors have been sanctioned under MUTP-III & IIIA at a cost of ₹19,293 crore. The process for procurement of these rakes has been taken up. As on 01.04.2025, 38 projects (11 New Lines, 02 Gauge Conversion and 25 Doubling), of a total length of 5,098 Km, costing ₹89,780 crore, falling fully/partly in Maharashtra, are sanctioned. The summary is as under:-

Category: New Line
No. of sanctioned Projects: 11
Total Length (in Km): 1,355
Length Commissioned Upto Mar'25 (Km): 234
Exp. upto Mar'25 (₹ in Cr.): 10,504
Category: Gauge Conversion
No. of sanctioned Projects: 02
Total Length (in Km): 609
Length Commissioned Upto Mar'25 (Km): 334
Exp. upto Mar'25 (₹ in Cr.): 4,286
Category: Doubling/Multi-tracking

No. of sanctioned Projects: 25
Total Length (in Km): 3,134
Length Commissioned Upto Mar'25 (Km): 1,792
Exp. upto Mar'25 (₹ in Cr.): 24,617
Category: No. of sanctioned Projects: Total 38
Total Length (in Km): 5,098
Length Commissioned Upto Mar'25 (Km): 2,360
Exp. upto Mar'25 (₹ in Cr.): 39,407

Details of some of the recently completed projects falling fully/partly in Maharashtra are as under:
Project: Pune-Miraj-Londa Doubling (467 Km) Cost (₹ in crore): 4,670
Project: Manmad-Jalgaon 3rd line (160 Km) Cost (₹ in crore): 2,574
Project: Jabalpur-Gondia Gauge Conversion (300 Km) Cost (₹ in crore): 2,005
Project: Chhindwara-Nagpur Gauge Conversion (150 Km) Cost (₹ in crore): 1,512
Project: Panvel-Pen Doubling (35 Km) Cost (₹ in crore): 263
Project: Pen-Roha Doubling (40 Km) Cost (₹ in crore): 330
Project: Udhna-Jalgaon Doubling (307 Km) Cost (₹ in crore): 2,448
Project: Mudkhed-Parbhani Doubling (81 Km) Cost (₹ in crore): 673
Project: Bhusawal-Jalgaon 3rd line (24 Km) Cost (₹ in crore): 325
Project: Jalgaon-Bhusawal 4th line (24 Km) Cost (₹ in crore): 261
Project: Daund-Gulbarga Doubling (225 Km) Cost (₹ in crore): 3,182

Some of the main projects falling fully/partly in the Maharashtra which have been taken up are as under:
Name of the project: Gondia-Ballarshah (Chanda Fort) doubling (240 Km) Cost (₹ in crore): 4,373
Name of the project: Hotgi Bypass line (6 Km) Cost (₹ in crore): 177
Name of the project: Panvel-Chouk doubling section (17 Km) Cost (₹ in crore): 491
Name of the project: Panvel-Somtane Chord line and Panvel-Chikhli Chord line (8Km) Cost (₹ in crore): 445
Name of the project: Miraj Chord line (2 Km) Cost (₹ in crore): 129
Name of the project: Wardha-Balharshah quadrupling (135 Km) Cost (₹ in crore): 2,226
Name of the project: Puntamba-Sainagar Shirdi doubling (17 Km) Cost (₹ in crore): 227
Name of the project: Itarsi-Nagpur 4 line (297 Km) Cost (₹ in crore): 5,010
Name of the project: Chhatrapati Sambhajanagar-Parbhani doubling (177 Km) Cost (₹ in crore): 2,006
Name of the project: Gondia-Dongargarh 4th line (84 Km) Cost (₹ in crore): 1,985
Name of the project: Wardha-Bhusawal 3 & 4 line (314 Km) Cost (₹ in crore): 8,199
Name of the project: Jalgaon-Bhadli 5 line (9 Km) Cost (₹ in crore): 114
Name of the project: Gondia bypass line (19 Km) Cost (₹ in crore): 354
Name of the project: Jalgaon-Manmad 4 line (160 km) Cost (₹ in crore): 2,574
Name of the project: Bhusawal-Khandwa 3 & 4 line (131 Km) Cost (₹ in crore): 3,285
Name of the project: Mudkhed-Medchal & Mahbubnagar-Dhone doubling (417 Km) Cost (₹ in crore): 4,686

Name of the project: Chhatrapati Sambhajanagar-Ankai doubling (98 Km) Cost (₹ in crore): 961
Name of the project: Nilaje and Kopar double chord Line (5 Km) Cost (₹ in crore): 338
Name of the project: Mudkhed junction bypass line (3 Km) Cost (₹ in crore): 62
Name of the project: Purna bypass line (3 Km) Cost (₹ in crore): 72
Name of the project: Ankai bypass Line (2 Km) Cost (₹ in crore): 29
Name of the project: Parbhani-Parli Vajjanath doubling (65 Km) Cost (₹ in crore): 770
Name of the project: Latur Road Station bypass line (2 Km) Cost (₹ in crore): 47
Name of the project: Parli-Vajjanath Station bypass line (2 Km) Cost (₹ in crore): 56
Name of the project: Pachora-Jamner gauge conversion with extension upto Malkapur (84 Km) Cost (₹ in crore): 955
Name of the project: Vadhaan Port-New Palghar doubling (22 Km) Cost (₹ in crore): 1,423
Name of the project: Ahilyanagar-Beed-Parli Vajjanath new line (261 Km) Cost (₹ in crore): 4,957
Name of the project: Baramati-Lonand new line (64 Km) Cost (₹ in crore): 1,844
Name of the project: Wardha-Nanded new line (284 Km) Cost (₹ in crore): 3,445
Name of the project: Indore-Manmad new line (360 Km) Cost (₹ in crore): 18,529
Name of the project: Wadga-Gadchiroli new line (52 Km) Cost (₹ in crore): 1,886
Name of the project: Jalna-Jalgaon new line (174 Km) Cost (₹ in crore): 5,804
Name of the project:

Daund-Manmad doubling (236 Km) Cost (₹ in crore): 3,037
Name of the project: Kalyan-Kasara 3rd line (68 Km) Cost (₹ in crore): 1,433
Name of the project: Wardha-Nagpur 3rd line (76 Km) Cost (₹ in crore): 698
Name of the project: Wardha-Ballarshah 3rd line (132 Km) Cost (₹ in crore): 1,385
Name of the project: Itarsi-Nagpur 3rd line (280 Km) Cost (₹ in crore): 2,450
Name of the project: Rajnandgaon-Nagpur 3rd line (228 Km) Cost (₹ in crore): 3,545
Name of the project: Wardha-Nagpur 4th line (79 Km) Cost (₹ in crore): 1,137
Further, construction works on the flagship High speed bullet train project have gathered momentum in Maharashtra. Now 100% land acquisition has been completed. Works of bridges, aqueducts etc. have been taken up.

Western DFC also passes through Maharashtra. About 178 route Km of western DFC is situated in Maharashtra which is about 12% of overall route length of western DFC. 76 Km of this project from NewGholvad to New Vaitarna in Maharashtra has already been commissioned. Balance works have been taken up. Connectivity of WDFC to JNPT will boost the capacity to handle cargo and container traffic from port to Delhi NCR.

During the last three years i.e. 2022-23, 2023-24, 2024-25 and the current financial year 2025-26, 98 surveys (29 New Line, 2 Gauge Conversion and 67 Doubling) of total length 8,603 Km falling fully/partly in the State of Maharashtra, have been sanctioned.
Railway projects are sanctioned Zonal Railway-wise and not State-wise or Region-wise as Indian Railways' projects may span across State boundaries.

Railway infrastructure projects falling fully/partly in the State of Maharashtra are covered under Central Railway, South Central Railway, South East Central Railway, South Western Railway and Western Railway Zones of Indian Railways. Zonal Railway wise details of Railway projects are made available in public domain on Indian Railway's website.

Sanction of any railway project depends upon many parameters/factors which include the following:
Anticipated traffic projections and remunerativeness of the proposed route
First and last mile connectivity provided by the project
Connection of missing links and providing additional route
Augmentation of congested/saturated lines
Demands raised by State Governments/Central Ministries/Public representatives,
Railway's operational requirements
Socio-economic considerations
Overall availability of funds
Completion of Railway project/s depends on various factors which include the following:
Land acquisition
Forest clearance
Shifting of infringing utilities
Statutory clearances from various authorities
Geological and topographical conditions of area
Law and order situation in the area of project site
Number of working months in a year for particular project site etc.

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Railway projects are sanctioned

Further, construction works on the flagship High speed bullet train project have gathered momentum in Maharashtra. Now 100% land acquisition has been completed. Works of bridges, aqueducts etc. have been taken up.

Western DFC also passes through Maharashtra. About 178 route Km of western DFC is situated in Maharashtra which is about 12% of overall route length of western DFC. 76 Km of this project from NewGholvad to New Vaitarna in Maharashtra has already been commissioned. Balance works have been taken up. Connectivity of WDFC to JNPT will boost the capacity to handle cargo and container traffic from port to Delhi NCR.

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GST and Income Tax: Two Pillars Converging in the Digital Era

MI News Service, Kolkata: Revenue generation remains the backbone of governance and economic stability in any country. In India, both direct and indirect taxes play a vital role in sustaining public finances. Among them, Goods and Services Tax (GST) and Income Tax have emerged as the two most significant pillars of the Indian revenue system, now increasingly interlinked through technology-driven data integration.

GST expert Anup Kumar Luharuka said that as GST and Income Tax data are now compared through technology, taxpayers should reconcile their books before filing returns. Even minor mismatches, he noted, can lead to notices and compliance issues.

GST, a consumption-based indirect tax, was implemented on 1 July 2017 to subsume multiple state and central levies such as VAT, service tax and excise duty. Income Tax, on the other hand, is a long-standing direct tax imposed on income earned by individuals and entities. While both taxes differ in nature and structure, recent policy and system-level changes have brought them closer than ever before.

Before the introduction of GST, indirect tax data was scattered across states and central departments, making it difficult for authorities to reconcile turnover declared in sales tax or service tax re-



GST expert Anup Kumar Luharuka

turns with income reported in Income Tax Returns (ITRs). This lack of coordination limited effective verification and enforcement. The post-GST regime has changed this landscape entirely.

The post-GST regime has fundamentally altered the taxation framework, enabling seamless comparison between GST filings and Income Tax declarations through a unified digital system.

One of the most significant developments is the reflection of GST turnover in Form 26AS and the Annual Information Statement (AIS). Turnover reported in GST returns—particularly GSTR-3B—is now visible to income tax authorities, allowing direct comparison with income disclosures made by taxpayers.

This integration enables tax authorities to compare GST turnover with income

disclosed in ITRs. Any major mismatch between the two can lead to scrutiny, assessment proceedings.

The linking of GST and Income Tax data is aligned with the government's broader objective of transparent and technology-led taxation. By leveraging digital records and analytics, authorities can now identify under-reporting of income, incorrect turnover disclosures and potential tax evasion more efficiently.

For GST-registered taxpayers, reporting turnover consistently across GST returns and income tax filings has become critical. Errors or discrepancies, even if unintentional, may invite notices and prolonged litigation.

The GST Network (GSTN) has played a crucial role in strengthening compliance by creating a fully digital ecosystem for registration, return filing and record maintenance.

This digital trail allows businesses to maintain accurate accounts while enabling authorities to assess income tax liability based on real-time transactional data.

The growing linkage between GST and Income Tax underscores a clear policy direction: India's tax administration is moving towards real-time monitoring, data matching, and accountability. While this enhances revenue protection for the exchequer, it also places greater responsibility on taxpayers to ensure accuracy and consistency in reporting.

With increased reliance on data matching, experts advise taxpayers to regularly reconcile:

- GST turnover with books of accounts
- GST returns with Income Tax Returns
- Form 26AS/AIS data with declared income

Such reconciliation is now essential to avoid disputes and ensure smooth compliance.

In my Opinion, GST and Income Tax, the two vital pillars of India's taxation system, are no longer operating in isolation. Their increasing integration underscores the need for taxpayers to maintain consistency and accurately reconcile turnover reported across the GST and Income Tax portals to prevent discrepancies and ensure compliance.

These are personal views on relation between GST and Income Tax.

"Speaking bad words about PM Modi also hate speech": BJP's Chalavadi Narayanaswamy opposes Karnataka govt's bill

MI News Service, Bengaluru: Leader of Opposition in the Karnataka Legislative Council, Chalavadi Narayanaswamy, on Saturday said that speaking "bad words" about Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah is also "hate speech" as he opposed the hate speech bill passed in the Karnataka Assembly.

Narayanaswamy reminded the incident of Karnataka Minister Priyank Kharage calling PM Modi "nalayak beta" two years back. He said that even Karnataka CM Siddaramaiah did not have the "guts" to stop Priyank Kharage because he is the son of Congress President

Mallikarjun Kharage. "There is a discussion about the hate speech bill that has the Congress government but the Congress... Some people talk about the home minister and the prime minister with bad words; that is also hate speech. Priyank Kharage once said Nalayak PM," he said.

"Chief Minister Siddaramaiah was also there, but they have not stopped him because they have no guts to touch Kharage because his father is AICC President... Using the filthy language and the hate speech is the practice of the Congress party," he added.

Karnataka Legislative Council on Friday passed the Hate Speech and Hate Crimes

Prevention Bill, 2025, amid ruckus in the upper house of the state legislature as both the Congress MLAs and the Opposition Bharatiya Janata Party MLAs engaged in a heated argument.

Karnataka Home Minister G Parameshwara said the proposed legislation was not driven by political vendetta but was aimed at curbing hate speech and hate crimes, whereas BJP MLC CT Ravi attacked the Congress, claiming that the party would not win if elections were held in the state today.

Defining hate speech, Parameshwara said it refers to "the communication of hate speech by making, publish-

ing, or circulating, or any act of promoting, propagating, inciting, abetting, or attempting such hate speech to cause disharmony or feelings of enmity, hatred, or ill-will against any person (dead or alive) or a group of persons or an organisation."

Explaining the intent of the legislation, the Home Minister said that hate crimes needed a precise definition to effectively address statements and actions that target specific communities. "It's about someone speaking out against a particular community," he said.

Any person convicted under this bill could face a jail term of up to 7 years and/or a fine of Rs 50,000.

People need to think whether they want democracy or not: VIP Chief Mukesh Sahani

MI News Service, Patna: Viskasheh Insan Party (VIP) Chief Mukesh Sahani on Saturday alleged that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and their allied parties were engaged in ending democracy. He said the election

results were being influenced by money, and that people needed to ponder whether they wanted democracy in the country.

Speaking to reporters, Mukesh Sahani said, "We joined Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Voter

Adhikaar Yatra. The BJP and their allied parties are engaged in ending democracy. Baba Sahab Ambedkar gave everyone in this country the right to vote. In the Bihar elections, the BJP came up with a scheme at the last mo-

ment and started depositing Rs 10,000 into women's accounts. If elections are being manipulated in this way, then it is better to stop the polls. Through this, they had swayed the people's mandate in their favour in Bihar.

EAST BENGAL win historic SAFF CLUB CUP

MI News Service, Kathmandu/ Kolkata: Historic East Bengal Club created yet another history by winning the Women's SAFF Club Cup, the first Indian Club to achieve this unique laurel.

East Bengal FC (India) defeated APF FC (Nepal) 3 - 0 in the final of the SAFF Club Cup at Dashrath Rangasala Stadium in the Nepalese capital of Kathmandu on Saturday.

Fazila Ikwaput (22', 46') and Shikhy Devi (35') contributed for the Red and Gold Brigade in this phenomenal victory. East Bengal eventually remained unbeaten in the entire tournament. Earlier in this tournament East Bengal FC had defeated South Asian clubs like Transport United, Karachi City FC (Pakistan) and Nasrin Sports Club (Bangladesh)

Massive fire engulfs plastic manufacturing unit in Thalassery

MI News Service, Kannur: A massive fire broke out at a plastic manufacturing unit in Thalassery in Kerala's Kannur district on Saturday afternoon.

Multiple fire and rescue units were rushed to the scene and are working to bring the blaze under control.

The fire erupted in the afternoon, and fire tenders arrived promptly after receiving the alert.

The cause of the fire is yet to be ascertained. There has been no immediate confirmation of casualties, and the details regarding any loss of life or damage to property and manufactured goods are still being assessed.

Police and fire department officials are on site, and further information is pending as firefighting operations continue.

"BJP's Godse-like mindset has not ended yet": Punjab Congress chief

MI News Service, Chandigarh: Punjab Congress President Amarinder Singh Raja Warring on Saturday alleged that the BJP's "Nathuram Godse mindset has not ended yet" after the VB-G RAM G Bill (Viksit Bharat Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajevika Mission (Gramin)) was passed by the Parliament.

Speaking to ANI, Warring said that including the name of Ram and removing Mahatma Gandhi's name from MGNREGA is a "way to fool people," with the ultimate aim of killing the scheme itself.

"Removing the name of the Father of the Nation, Mahatma Gandhi, is not a good thing; it shows that the BJP's Nathuram Godse-like mindset has not ended yet. We all have faith in Lord Ram, but including Lord Ram's name in government schemes will not achieve anything; it's just a way to fool people," he said.

Claiming that the Centre wants to end the scheme, Warring added that any positive changes, such as higher wages and longer working days, have been offset, with the states now required to bear 40 per cent of the cost.

"LG who proclaims himself as Delhi's 'local guardian' has abandoned capital to choke like gas chamber": AAP

MI News Service, New Delhi: With Delhi choking under toxic air for over a week, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) has demanded accountability from Lieutenant Governor (LG) VK Saxena for leaving the capital in crisis while enjoying a cricket match in Ahmedabad.

According to a release from the party, AAP Delhi State President Saurabh Bharadwaj, joined by senior leader and MLA Sanjeev Jha, shared an old video on X in which the LG is seen projecting himself as Delhi's "local guardian" and holding the previous government responsible for pollution.

The AAP Delhi Unit Chief said the so-called local guardian has vanished ever since the BJP assumed power, abandoning Delhi's residents to a gas chamber while the BJP government confines itself to tall claims instead of action.

In a post on X, AAP Delhi State President Saurabh Bharadwaj said, "The LG, who calls himself Delhi's local guardian, has left Delhi-ites gasping for breath and is watching a match in Ahmedabad. Earlier, he would appear on television every day with an army of officials wearing masks, giving interviews. Now,

"You have harassed her": Jharkhand Minister slams Nitish Kumar over hijab row, offers government job to woman doctor

MI News Service, Dhanbad: Jharkhand Health Minister Irfan Ansari on Saturday slammed Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar over the incident in which he allegedly attempted to remove the hijab of a Muslim woman during a public function earlier this week.

Speaking to the media in Dhanbad, Irfan Ansari said he would not tolerate any form of indecent behaviour or discrimination.

He also offered a government job to the doctor in Jharkhand, stressing that he will take action against anyone who engages in such behaviour.

"I have made a decision; if such indecent behaviour happens to anyone, I will step forward... You have harassed her.

Ahead of Christmas, Christ Church Shimla holds candlelight prayers, attracts locals and tourists

MI News Service, Shimla: Ahead of the Christmas festival, candlelight prayers were organised at the historic Christ Church, located at Ridge Maidan in Shimla, on Saturday evening. The iconic church, considered a major landmark of the hill town, witnessed participation from local residents as well as tourists.

Speaking to ANI, Dr. Vinita Roy, Priest In-Charge, Christ Church Shimla, said that Christmas celebrations at the church begin well in advance.

"Our Christmas programmes start much earlier. From the season of Advent itself, our preparations begin. This year, Advent started on November 30, and since then, our Christmas programmes have been ongoing. In the first week of December, we went door-

door through. On Rajendra Prasad Road, work was going on in full swing, with long queues of trucks lined up and labourers actively engaged. Construction, demolition, breaking and excavation work was continuing without any pause," he said.

Questioning the government's priorities, Saurabh Bharadwaj said, "Some may claim that this work is very important, but cannot it be stopped for even a month? Is this work more important than the health of small children who are being forced to move around with nebulizers?"

He further pointed out that the government's response was limited to tokenism. "A machine has been parked for water sprinkling merely as a formality. The dust accumulated on it and the spider webs covering it clearly show that it has been standing there for months without being used. This is only meant to mislead the public and the courts. In reality, construction work of the central government is continuing unabated in Central Delhi, while the sprinkling machine stands idle, gathering dust," Saurabh Bharadwaj said.

Referring to ongoing construction work in Central Delhi, Bharadwaj said that during his visit on Friday, he observed excavation work using JCB machines near Parliament House and India Gate, with dust flying freely in the air. "Children were forced to cover their mouths with handkerchiefs while passing

through. On Rajendra Prasad Road, work was going on in full swing, with long queues of trucks lined up and labourers actively engaged. Construction, demolition, breaking and excavation work was continuing without any pause," he said.

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Referring to ongoing

Community-run food co-ops can reduce food insecurity boost healthy diets research shows

Sydney/Wollongong : (The Conversation) As grocery prices continue to rise, many Australians are struggling to afford healthy food and are looking for alternatives to the big supermarket chains. The recent supermarkets inquiry, run by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission, confirmed Australia's grocery sector is highly concentrated, with limited competition and rising retail margins. In regional and remote areas, consumers often face higher prices and fewer choices.

One option growing in popularity around the country is the community food co-operative, or "food co-op".

Food co-ops are local not-for-profit or member-owned groups where people join together to buy food in bulk, usually straight from farmers or wholesalers. These co-ops can take different forms, including shops, neighbourhood-based hubs, or box delivery models. They typically offer a range of foods such as fresh fruit and vegetables, bread, dairy products, eggs and pantry staples.

By co-ordinating their orders, members can reduce food costs, limit packaging waste, and avoid supermarket markups. Co-ops can also help lower transport emissions by reducing long supply chains.

We've been researching the

benefits of food co-ops. We've found this model could reduce food insecurity and increase people's intake of fruit and vegetables.

How are food co-ops run?

Some co-ops are owned and run by their members. Any surplus or profits are generally reinvested into the co-op or shared through lower prices, improved services, or support for local community initiatives.

Other co-ops are managed by not-for-profit organisations focused on improving food access for whole communities.

More recently, digital platforms and apps have made it even easier for people to start or join co-ops and connect with local growers.

Regardless of the model, co-ops are guided by values of cooperation, fairness and community benefit, rather than profit.

What does the research say?

We recently published a study which adds to a growing body of evidence showing food co-ops can play an important role in improving diet and reducing food insecurity.

Food insecurity is when someone doesn't have reliable access to affordable, nutritious food. It can mean skipping meals, eating less fresh produce, relying on cheap processed foods, or experiencing ongoing stress about

being able to afford groceries.

We surveyed more than 2,200 members of Box Divvy, a community-based food co-op operating across New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory. Within this co-op, members join local "hubs", pool their orders for groceries through an app, and collect their

more than 50% of surveyed members were classified as "food insecure". This is well above the national average (estimated to be around 22%). It suggests many people turning to food co-ops are already under significant financial pressure.

After joining, food insecurity dropped by nearly 23%. The

bles they usually ate in a day. On average, members increased their vegetable intake by 3.3 serves per week and their fruit intake by 2.5 serves. The benefits were even more pronounced for people experiencing severe food insecurity, who tend to have poorer diets overall. They ate 5.5 more serves of vegetables and



food from a nearby coordinator.

To measure food security, we used an internationally recognised survey that asks about things such as running out of food or skipping meals due to cost.

Before joining the co-op,

rate of severe food insecurity - where people skip meals and regularly experience hunger - more than halved.

These changes were accompanied by improved diets. We asked participants to report how many serves of fruit and vegeta-

4.4 more serves of fruit per week while using the co-op.

These are meaningful improvements that bring people closer to meeting national dietary guidelines. This matters because eating more fruit and vegetables is linked to a lower risk of chron-

ic diseases such as heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and some cancers. Other research has reflected similar findings. A 2020 Sydney-based study found co-op members were more likely to meet the recommended servings of fruit and vegetables than non-members.

Another study of The Community Grocer, a Melbourne-based social enterprise, found their weekly markets offered produce around 40% cheaper than nearby retailers and improved healthy food access for culturally diverse and low-income customers.

Internationally, a Canadian study of a community-based food box program - similar in structure to some co-ops - reported higher fruit and vegetable intake among regular users. It found a decline in intake for those who stopped using the service.

In Wales, disadvantaged communities that used co-ops reported better access to fresh produce. Similarly in New Zealand, co-op participants reported better access to healthy food.

In qualitative research, people who have experienced food insecurity say co-ops offer a more dignified alternative to food relief by offering choice and control over what's on the table. Where to next?

Despite clear benefits, food co-ops remain largely overlooked in Australian policy. This is at a time when national conversations about price gouging and supermarket power highlight the need for viable, community-based alternatives.

Meanwhile, food co-ops also face operational challenges. For example, regulatory requirements can vary significantly between local councils and states. This makes it difficult to establish, scale or replicate successful co-ops.

Government support could help co-ops grow where they're needed most. Some measures might include:

-seed funding and small grants to establish co-ops in low-income communities

-subsidised memberships or vouchers for eligible households

-investment in digital tools and logistics to support efficient operations, particularly in rural and remote areas

-simplifying regulatory processes.

As the Feeding Australia strategy develops under the Albanese government, there's an opportunity to consider how community models such as food co-ops could complement broader national efforts to improve food security and strengthen local food systems.

Adults with intellectual disabilities are at risk for dementia

Intellectual disability (ID) is thought to be associated with an increased risk of dementia and its onset is influenced by both inherited and acquired factors. It is also known that a lower cognitive reserve-the capacity for thinking developed by learning and deliberate mental effort-increases the risk of dementia in the general population.

It is hypothesised that dementia is more common in people with ID given the likelihood of a shorter educational lifespan and a reduced intellectual capacity.

The prevalence of dementia among individuals with ID without Down syndrome (DS) in comparison to the general population is unknown, and the risk variables that affect dementia risk aren't fully understood.

Recently, researchers uncovered the prevalence of dementia and identified the risk factors that can lead to dementia among people with ID in Japan. The team was led by Professor Shintaro Takenoshita, Assistant Professor in the Department of Neuropsychiatry at Okayama University Hospital, Japan. Their findings were published in the journal *Alzheimer's Research & Therapy* on 18 July 2023.

"Diagnosing dementia in people with ID is difficult owing to the mixed effects of innate cognitive decline and the cognitive decline that occurs over time due to dementia. However, it is quite possible to diagnose dementia if cognitive and lifestyle functions are assessed chronologically based on information from family and other support persons. We believe that even in persons with intellectual disabilities, dementia needs to be properly evaluated," explains Prof. Takenoshita regarding the group's motivation to pursue the study.

The team surveyed the severity of ID, educational history, and comorbidities across 1,831 participants in residen-



tial treatment facilities spread across Japan. The relevant data was collected by interviewing caregivers of all the participants, and a direct examination was performed using clinical criteria for dementia and neurocognitive disorders for participants suspected of having cognitive decline.

Emphasizing the report's key findings, Prof. Takenoshita says, "We found that 6.44% of the participants were diagnosed with dementia. Furthermore, our analyses revealed that dementia was more prevalent in younger people with ID compared to the general population. Lastly, we pinpointed seven factors with significant links to dementia. These were hypertension, depression, stroke, age, severity of ID, duration of education, and traumatic brain injury."

These findings are expected to enable better screening for dementia and improve the support and medical care for people with ID. It is important to note that some of the risk factors are modifiable. Therefore, depending on a patient's profile, providing adequate education, preventing head trauma and stroke, and making hypertension and depression medications readily available could be the first steps in preventing the onset of dementia in people with ID.

"This is the largest study that explores the prevalence of dementia in a population with ID. Additionally, we minimized the study's bias by surveying participants from a wide geographic range. This implies that the risk factors we identified are reliable targets for designing interventions intended to minimize the risk of dementia in people with ID," explains Prof. Takenoshita.

Moving forward, Prof. Takenoshita is confident that future studies can build on the scope of his team's work. As the understanding of dementia evolves, public health recommendations in medical policies can be developed specifically for people diagnosed with ID. Along these lines, the insights on the modifiable risk factors can potentially help catch the onset of dementia and ensure that people with ID do not miss out on treatment or interventions that are readily available.

Identification of brain signals for improved memory



Memory performance varies widely between people. Now, scientists at the University of Basel have found that specific brain signals are connected to these variations.

While it is well known that certain brain regions play a crucial role in memory processes, so far it has not been clear whether these regions exhibit different activities when it comes to storing information in people with better or worse memory performance.

Having investigated this matter, a research team led by Professor Dominique de Quervain and Professor Andreas Papassotiropoulos has now published its results in the journal *Nature Communications*. In the world's largest functional imaging study on memory, they asked nearly 1,500 participants between the ages of 18 and 35 to look at and memorize a total of 72 images. During this process, the researchers recorded the subjects' brain activity using MRI. The participants were then asked to recall as many of the images as possible - and as in the general population, there were considerable differences in memory performance among them.

Signals in brain regions and networks

In certain brain regions including the hippocampus, the researchers found a direct association between brain activity during the memorization process and subsequent memory performance. Individuals with a better memory showed a stronger activation of these brain areas.

Do you know cognitive behavioral therapy comforts fibromyalgia pain experienced by brain? Study finds

Patients with fibromyalgia (FM), a condition that mostly affects women and is marked by chronic pain, tiredness, and brain fog, usually have limited access to treatment options and explanations for their symptoms.

Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), according to researchers at Mass General Brigham, can significantly lessen the burden of FM by, among other things, reducing pain-catastrophizing, a detrimental cognitive and emotional response that can exacerbate pain by way of helplessness, rumination, and intrusive thoughts. Neuroimaging research that demonstrates a decline in connection between brain regions associated with self-awareness, pain, and emotional processing lends support to this conclusion.

The findings of the study were published in *Arthritis & Rheumatology*.

"In this study, we looked at the interplay between psychological processes and the brain's connectivity patterns in response to pain," said co-senior author Robert Edwards, PhD, a clinical psychologist in the Department of Anesthesiology, Perioperative & Pain Medicine at Brigham and Women's Hospital, a founding member of the Mass General Brigham healthcare system. "We wanted to explore how CBT, a talk therapy aimed at combatting maladaptive thoughts, can enhance individuals' daily functioning and alter the brain's processing of pain-related information."

Edwards explains that CBT can reduce negative cognitive and emotional responses to pain. He says that while these responses are normal, they can amplify the disabling effects of chronic pain, and make conditions like FM more burdensome.

The research team for the study included researchers from three Mass General Brigham members: Spaulding Rehabilitation Hospital, Brigham and



Women's Hospital and Massachusetts General Hospital. Mass General Brigham brings together 16 member institutions, including academic medical centers, top-tier specialty hospitals, community hospitals and more. Research that spans more than one of these entities is more than the sum of its parts, helping to provide insights and unique perspectives from multiple settings and areas of expertise.

Researchers recruited 98 women, randomly assigning 64 to a treatment group receiving CBT and 34 to a control group that received education about FM and chronic pain but was not taught specific CBT techniques. All participants were between 18 and 75 years old and had a confirmed FM diagnosis for at least six months. To collect baseline data, all participants completed several validated pain and quality of life questionnaires. Each group participated in eight intervention sessions, consisting of 60-75-minute visits with a licensed mental health provider. Participants were primarily assessed for their levels of pain interference, or a measure of how much their pain disrupted their daily activities, pain catastrophizing, pain severity and the overall impact FM had on patients' quality of life.

Results demonstrated that those who underwent CBT experienced significantly greater reductions in pain interference. CBT participants also exhibited significantly less pain catastrophizing and reported that their FM symptoms had significantly less impact on their daily lives. The team saw evidence that after undergoing CBT, patients experienced changes in the activities of all three networks that suggested a diminished focus on pain.

"Prior to participants undergoing CBT, we saw that certain parts of the brain linked to self-awareness and sensation were very connected, suggesting patients were pertinently aware of the pain sensation they were experiencing and internalized these symptoms," said co-first author Jeungchan Lee, PhD, an instructor in the Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation based at Spaulding Rehabilitation Hospital and the Athinoula A. Martinos Center for Biomedical Imaging at Massachusetts General Hospital. "After CBT, these connections were significantly less strong, suggesting that patients were better at separating themselves from their pain after therapy."

Researchers discover genetic code of rare kidney cancer

For the first time, the inherited characteristics of reninoma, a rare form of kidney cancer, have been investigated. Researchers from the Wellcome Sanger Institute, Great Ormond Street Hospital, and The Royal Free Hospital also identified a potential pharmacological target that may be used as an alternative to surgery in the new report.

The findings were published in *Nature Communications*.

Reninoma is one of the rarest cancers in humans, with just about 100 instances having been identified globally to date (1). Even though surgery can usually treat it, it can still spread and generate metastases or cause severe hypertension. Reninoma is currently managed only by surgery since there are no available medication treatments. It was unknown till now.

Researchers discovered that the development of this rare cancer is caused by a specific error in the genetic code of the cancer gene *NOTCH1*.

The team examined two cancer samples - from a young adult and a child (2) - with advanced genomic techniques, known as whole genome and single nuclear sequencing (3). Their findings suggest that the use of existing drugs targeting this specific gene is a possible solution to treating reninoma for patients where surgery is not a viable option.

Taryn Treger, first author of the study and The Little Princess Trust Fellow at the Wellcome Sanger Institute, said: "Many

cancerous tumours have already been deciphered with genomic technologies, however, this is not so true in rare cancers, particularly those affecting children. Our work aims to fill that gap. This is the first time that we have identified the drivers for reninoma and we hope that our work continues to pave the way towards new therapies for childhood cancers."

Dr Tanzina Chowdhury, co-lead author of the study, at Great Ormond Street Hospital, said: "Rare kidney cancers known as reninomas do not respond to conventional anti-cancer therapies.

The only known treatment at the moment is surgery. Our study shows that, actually, there is a specific and well-studied gene that drives this rare cancer. If we use already known drugs that affect this gene, we might be able to treat it without the need for an invasive technique such as surgery." Dr Sam Behjati, co-lead author of the study, Wellcome Senior Research Fellow at the Wellcome Sanger Institute and Honorary Consultant Paediatric Oncologist at Addenbrooke's Hospital, said: "Rare cancers are exceedingly challenging to study, and patients with such tumours may therefore not benefit from cancer research. Here, we have a powerful example of cutting-edge science rewriting our understanding of an ultra-rare tumour type, reninoma, whilst delivering a finding that potentially has immediate clinical benefits for patients."

Study finds connection between adverse childhood experiences, muscle dysmorphia

WASHINGTON : According to a recent study, adolescents and young adults who had adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) before the age of 18 had a substantially higher risk of presenting indications of muscular dysmorphia.

The findings were published in the *Clinical Social Work Journal*.

These new findings highlight the importance of gaining a better understanding of the relationship between muscle dysmorphia, or the pathological pursuit of muscularity, and adverse childhood experiences (such as emotional abuse, sexual abuse, and domestic violence), as previous research has shown that more than half of North American children and adolescents experience at least one adverse childhood experience during their lifetime.

"Those who experience adverse childhood experiences may engage in the pursuit of muscularity to compensate for experiences where they once felt

inferior, small, and at risk, as well as to protect against future victimization," says lead author Kyle T. Ganson, PhD, MSW, an assistant professor at the University of Toronto's Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work. "The experience of adverse childhood experiences may also increase body dissatisfaction, specifically muscle dissatisfaction, which is a key feature of muscle dysmorphia."

Previous studies have shown that adverse experiences in childhood can lead to harmful health effects. While prior research has demonstrated that adverse childhood experiences are highly common in people with eating disorders and body dysmorphic disorder, few studies have looked at the association between adverse childhood experiences and muscle dysmorphia. The study's researchers analyzed data from over 900 adolescents and young adults who participated in the Canadian Study of Adolescent Health Behaviors.

Funeral held for Bangladesh's uprising leader Sharif Osman Hadi



MI News Service, Dhaka: Bangladesh held the funeral of prominent youth leader Sharif Osman Hadi on Saturday drawing a large number of people in the capital amid extra-tight security after his death triggered unrest across the country.

Interim government Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus along with his advisory council members and Army chief General Waker-uz-Zaman attended the funeral for the 32-year-old spokesperson of 'Inqilab Mancha' held at the South Plaza of Parliament complex at Manik Mia Avenue.

Yunus spoke briefly ahead of the janaza (funeral prayers) even as politicians representing former prime minister Khaleda Zia's Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), Jamaat-e-Islami and student-led National Citizen Party (NCP) joined the prayers. The country is also observing a day of state mourning following the death of Hadi, who was one of the prominent leaders of the student-led protests last year, which led to the ouster of prime minister

ritual, who chanted slogans against India like "Delhi or Dhaka - Dhaka, Dhaka" and "brother Hadi's blood will not be allowed to go in vain."

Violent protests rocked Dhaka and major cities after the announcement of Hadi's death on Thursday at a Singapore hospital six days after gunmen shot him. Hadi particularly drew the political limelight launching his radical rightwing cultural group 'Inqilab Mancha' after the last year's violent street campaign, dubbed July Uprising, led by Students Against Discrimination (SAD) campaign topped then prime minister Sheikh Hasina's Awami League government on August 5, 2024.

Three days after Hasina fled to India, Yunus assumed the charge of the interim government as the SAD nominee on August 8. Hadi was waging a campaign along with SAD and several rightwing groups demanding Hasina's return to be exposed to gallops after a special Bangladesh tribunal sentenced her to death for her crackdown of the uprising using brutal force.

In Dhaka, a large number of law enforcement personnel have been deployed in and around the Parliament complex, and a tight security cordon has been imposed across the entire area, according to the Dhaka Tribune newspaper. The government has also imposed a ban on flying drones in the area, and those wishing to attend the funeral were asked not to carry any bags or heavy objects, it said.

Awami League condemns attacks on media offices, flags crisis in Bangladesh

MI News Service, Dhaka: Bangladesh's Awami League party strongly condemned a series of nationwide attacks targeting media offices, cultural institutions, and diplomatic missions, describing them as a "planned terrorist attack."

The party asserted that such incidents show that the minimum characteristics of a modern, civilised state have ceased to exist in the country.

These attacks targeted the offices of the country's leading newspapers, Prothom Alo and The Daily Star; the national cultural institution Chhayanaut; the Indian Assistant High Commission offices in Chattogram and Khulna; the Indian Cultural Centre; the remaining structures of the Bangabandhu memorial museum—an important symbol of the nation's history; various other media offices, cultural institutions, and diplomatic establishments across the country.

Additionally, another Hindu youth in the country was mercilessly beaten and burned to death in an "act of communal hatred".

The unrest broke out across the country following the death of Sharif Osman Hadi, spokesperson of the radical group Inqilab Mancha.

"These barbaric attacks and killings constitute a direct and extreme assault on Bangladesh's sec-



ular ethos, the ideals of the Liberation War, pluralism, cultural heritage, and media freedom. As an independent, sovereign, and pluralistic state, Bangladesh has been turned into a safe haven for terrorists. Targeting cultural institutions and diplomatic missions of another country is a gross violation of decency and state security, and above all, a blatant breach of diplomatic norms and international law," read a statement issued by the Awami League.

Slamming the Muhammad

Yunus-led interim government, the party said, "The entire state machinery has sunk into the filth of extremist communal frenzy, with the committee calling itself a government acting as an active patron."

According to the Awami League, these "hostile forces, extremist communal and militant groups", are engaged in a well-planned conspiracy to destroy peaceful coexistence, create religious divisions, and embarrass Bangladesh internationally.

"The killing of a minority Hindu

youth by beating and burning proves that these forces are enemies of humanity, religious values, and the rule of law," the party stated. Condemning the repeated attacks and acts of vandalism at the historic Dhanmondi 32, a site in the memory of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the Awami League called it the "ultimate expression of the arrogance of anti-Liberation War and anti-people forces".

"The Bangabandhu Memorial Museum at 32 was burned, bulldozers were brought in to demolish it, and even upon those ruins, attacks have been carried out again. Such a perverse mentality belongs to the killer-fascist Yunus and his militant forces. We denounce this hateful mindset. The future will never tolerate such reckless displays by the ignorant," the party stated.

The Awami League stressed that bringing all terrorists, instigators, and patrons involved in these attacks and killings to justice and ensuring exemplary punishment is an urgent necessity.

"However, the indifference and inaction of the current occupying government toward these groups are clearly evident. Therefore, public awareness must be built at every level of society against these extremist communal forces and militant terrorists," it emphasized.

Europe to participate in Ukraine-U.S. peace talks on Friday: Ukrainian official

MI News Service, Kiev: Representatives of Europe will take part in peace negotiations between Ukraine and the United States on Friday, Ukraine's top peace negotiator Rustem Umerov said.

"Today in the United States, together with Lieutenant General Andrii Hnatov, we will begin another round of consultations with the American side. At the invitation of the U.S. side, European partners are also involved in this format," Umerov wrote on social media.

He added that the Ukrainian delegation has already held preliminary consultations with European representatives and is preparing for further discussions with the U.S. side.

Umerov emphasized that the Ukrainian team remains committed to a constructive process and will act in line with the priorities set by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, including the need for reliable long-term security guarantees for Ukraine.

Phone tapping case: Commissioner holds meeting with SIT

MI News Service, Hyderabad: Hyderabad Police Commissioner VC Sajjanar on Friday, December 19, held the first strategic meeting with the newly constituted special investigation team (SIT) probing the alleged phone tapping by the previous Bharat Rashtriya Samithi (BRS) regime in Telangana.

The SIT has planned to draw a roadmap for investigation into the phone tapping case. Following a review of the case details, Sajjanar and the SIT discussed legal and technical requirements to move forward in the investigation. The meeting included high-ranking officials from various jurisdictions, including representatives from Siddipet, Ramagundam, Madhapur and Maheshwaram, as well as specialised units such as the Greyhounds, the Anti-Narcotics Bureau and the Hyderabad Metro Rail.

The meeting stressed on maintaining continuity in the probe. The Commissioner had consulted with officers who had previously supervised the case since its registration at the Punjagutta police station, ensuring that the new team benefits from earlier findings. The SIT is expected to intensify its probe into the alleged unauthorised surveillance activities to identify those responsible for the breach of privacy protocols. Telangana Police on December 18 constituted an SIT under the overall supervision of the Hyderabad Police Commissioner to probe the alleged phone tapping by BRS government when it was in power. The Director General of Police (DGP), B Shivadhar Reddy, issued an order, constituting the nine-member SIT.

Ramagundam Police Commissioner Ambar Kishore Jha, Siddipet Commis-



sioner of Police SM Vijay Kumar, DCPs Rituraj and K Narayan Reddy, Greyhounds Group Commander M Ravinder Reddy, Additional DCP KS Rao, Assistant Commissioner of Police (ACP) P Venkatagiri and Deputy Superintendents of Police Ch Srihar and Nagerud Rao are members of the SIT. Jubilee Hills Police ACP Jubilee Hills Venkatagiri is the investigating officer.

He has been heading the investigation into the case registered at Panjagutta Police Station in March last year. The SIT said it will complete the investigation in the case and file a charge sheet expeditiously, according to the DGP. The development came a week after Special Intelligence Bureau's (SIB) former chief T Prabhakar Rao surrendered before the SIT headed by the ACP. The retired IPS official surrendered on December 12, a day after the Supreme Court directed him to surrender for custodial interrogation. Prabhakar Rao allegedly orchestrated the illegal surveillance of several prominent individuals during the BRS rule. He had allegedly constituted a special team in the SIB to tap the phones of those working against the BRS government.

Israel Lebanon hold talks on Hezbollah disarmament, return of displaced residents

MI News Service, Jerusalem/Beirut: Israel and Lebanon held talks on Friday as part of a security dialogue, focusing on Hezbollah's disarmament and the return of residents to their homes in Lebanon's southern border villages, according to Israeli and Lebanese sources. The meeting, under U.S. coordination, took place in the town of Naqoura in southwest Lebanon, near Israel's northern border.



Karam highlighted Lebanon's firm position on the humanitarian and national importance of enabling displaced villagers to return safely to their homes. A ceasefire agreement between Hezbollah and Israel has been in force since Nov. 27, 2024.

Despite the deal, Israel has continued to carry out occasional strikes in Lebanon, saying they are aimed at eliminating Hezbollah threats. Earlier this month, the two countries held their first direct talks in Naqoura, which Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu called "a first attempt to lay the groundwork for relations and economic cooperation between Israel and Lebanon."

According to an Israeli statement, the meeting centered on Hezbollah's disarmament and the advancement of economic projects, highlighting a mutual interest in countering Hezbollah and ensuring long-term security for communities on both sides of the border.

A statement by the Lebanese presidency said that during the talks,

Pakistan: Audit flags financial irregularities worth billions in Punjab province

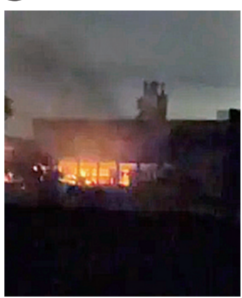
MI News Service, Lahore, Pakistan: Lahore (Pakistan), December 20 (ANI): Financial irregularities amounting to billions of rupees have been detected in Pakistan's local government institutions across the southern region of the Punjab Province. The Express Tribune reported, citing the Auditor General of Pakistan's audit report for the financial year 2022-23, released on Saturday.

The audit, which examined the accounts of Pakistan's 128 local government institutions, revealed serious lapses, including non-production of financial records, violations of prescribed procedures and irregularities related to pension payments. The most significant issue identified was the non-production of records worth PKR 12.87 billion in 53 cases. Procedural violations involving PKR 9.14 billion were reported in 368 cases, while additional financial irregularities amounting to PKR 101.42 billion were flagged in 472 cases, as reported by The Express Tribune.

The report also pointed to fraud and misappropriation totalling PKR 14.2 million in three cases, along with pension-related irregularities of PKR 95.8 million in another three cases. A key concern highlighted by the audit was the absence of effective internal control mechanisms. According to The Express Tribune, districts in southern Punjab lack functional internal audit departments, with mismanagement and negligence identified as major factors behind financial lapses. While audit teams reported recoveries exceeding PKR 7.1 billion, the report noted that only PKR 114.5 million of the recovered amount could be independently verified.

Israel bombs wedding in Gaza amid ceasefire talks in US

MI News Service, Tel Aviv: The Israeli military bombed a wedding in Gaza as Friday, December 19 as mediators held ceasefire talks in the United States.



The attack happened on a shelter in Gaza City. Six people were killed and many others were injured in the bombing. According to report by Al Jazeera, Israeli tank shells struck the second floor of a school-turned-shelter while displaced Palestinian families were gathered there to attend a wedding.

The attack was the latest ceasefire violation by Israel since the US brokered agreement between Israel and Hamas came into effect in October 2025. The bombing comes at a time when US President Donald Trump's special envoy for the Middle East, Steve Witkoff, and other senior US officials were set to begin talks in Miami, Florida, on how to reach the next phase of the Gaza agreement.

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio confirmed that the talks are taking place with representatives of Qatar, Turkey, Egypt and the United Arab Emirates, saying that he may join the negotiations later.

Rubio stressed that the US priority is completing the first phase of the truce deal by setting up a Palestinian technocratic committee to help govern Gaza, establish-

ing the foreign-led "Board of Peace", and deploying an international policing force to the territory.

"No one is arguing that the status quo is sustainable in the long term, nor desirable, and that's why we have a sense of urgency about bringing phase one to its full completion," the secretary told reporters during a press conference.

He was confident that donors will contribute to the reconstruction effort and for all the humanitarian support in the long-term, building of phases two and phases three of the ceasefire agreement. Earlier, US media reported that Qatar's Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al Thani, Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan and Egyptian Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty, will be part of the meeting in Miami.

According to Israeli media, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is holding a restricted security consultation to examine the second phase of the ceasefire and the future scenarios. "Israel could launch a new military campaign to disarm Hamas if Trump were to disengage from the Gaza process, while acknowledging that such a move was unlikely because the US president wants to preserve calm in the enclave," an Israeli official was quoted as saying by the country's public broadcaster.

U.S. hits over 70 IS-linked targets in Syria in massive retaliatory strikes

MI News Service, WASHINGTON: The U.S. military struck more than 70 suspected Islamic State-linked targets across central Syria on Friday in retaliation for a recent attack that killed two U.S. soldiers, the U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) said.

"This operation is critical to preventing ISIS from inspiring terrorist plots and attacks against the U.S. homeland," Adm. Brad Cooper, commander of CENTCOM, said in a statement. "We will continue to relentlessly pursue terrorists who seek to harm Americans and our partners across the region." The operation, supported by fighter aircraft from Jordanian Armed Forces, employed more than 100 precision munitions targeting known IS infrastructure and weapons sites, the statement said.

U.S. President Donald Trump said Friday on his Truth Social that the Syrian government fully supported the strikes, warning that all terrorists "will be hit harder than you have



ever been hit before" if they, in any way, attack or threaten the United States.

Syria "reiterates its steadfast commitment to fighting ISIS and ensuring that it has no safe havens on Syrian territory, and will continue to intensify military operations against it wherever it poses a threat," Syria's ministry of foreign affairs and expatriates said Friday on its official X account.

"The Syrian Arab Republic invites the United States and member states of the international coalition to support these efforts in a manner that contributes to the protection of

civilians and the restoration of security and stability in the region," it added.

"This is not the beginning of a war -- it is a declaration of vengeance," said U.S. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth in a post on the social platform X, noting the strikes are "in direct response to the attack on U.S. forces" on Dec. 13 in Palmyra, Syria.

According to CENTCOM, two U.S. service members and one U.S. civilian were killed, and three other service members were injured, in an ambush by a lone IS gunman in Syria on Dec. 13. Following the attack, U.S.

and partner forces conducted 10 operations in Syria and Iraq, resulting in the deaths or detention of 23 terrorist operatives.

Over the last six months, U.S. and partner forces in Syria have launched more than 80 operations "to eliminate terrorists posing a direct threat to the United States and regional security," CENTCOM said.

The New York Times reported that the massive strikes were expected to last several hours, deep into early Saturday morning in Syria. The U.S. military presence in Syria has been reduced to about 1,000 troops, it added.

No group has claimed responsibility for the Dec. 13 attack. Syria's Ministry of Interior Affairs earlier identified the attacker as a member of Syria's internal security service. IS lost most of the territory it once controlled in Syria and Iraq, but U.S. officials said remnants of the group continue to stage insurgent attacks and pose a persistent security threat in the region.

Nearly 2.8 mln Afghan refugees return from Iran and Pakistan in 2025: UNHCR



MI News Service, Kabul: The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has reported that nearly 2.8 million Afghan refugees have returned to Afghanistan from Pakistan and Iran so far in 2025.

In a statement, the UN refugee agency warned of mounting humanitarian and protection challenges, noting that many of the returnees are women and children.

To address these needs, the agency is seeking 258.6 million U.S. dollars to provide emergency assistance, including temporary shelter, essential relief items, and protection

services to support families upon their arrival, the UNHCR said.

The agency cautioned that without urgent international support, the combination of large-scale returns, ongoing vulnerabilities in neighboring countries, and severe funding shortages could further deepen Afghanistan's humanitarian crisis.

Around 6 million Afghan refugees, mostly undocumented, are currently living abroad, with the majority living in Iran and Pakistan, the Afghan Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation said in late July.

India's Vir Gahrotra wins historic gold at Pole and Aerial Sports World C'ship

MUMBAI : Indian athlete Vir Gahrotra won a gold medal at the Pole and Aerial Sports World Championship, achieving India's first-ever podium finish at this international event in Budapest, Hungary.

Vir, a 16-year-old from Mumbai, represented India in the Junior B Amateur Men (15-17 years) aerial silk category. Facing competitors from countries with strong aerial sports traditions like Ukraine, Hungary, and the Czech Republic, Gahrotra delivered a technically demanding and winning performance.

Aerial silk is a performance-orientated form of aerial gymnastics that demands substantial upper-body strength, endurance, flexibility, and artistic expression.

At the championship level, routines are evaluated based on technical precision, execution, and artistry, not just difficulty. Gahrotra's gold-winning routine was notable for its control, consistency, and calmness despite fatigue, which earned it the highest scores from the judges.

India achieved a historic milestone by participating in the inaugural POSA World Aerial Championships 2025, organised by the Pole Sports & Arts World Federation (POSA). Held in Budapest, this prestigious international event gathered top aerial and pole athletes from more than



40 countries.

Vir's victory marks a historic milestone for Indian aerial sports, as he won the country's first-ever gold medal at the championship in the Junior B Men - Amateur Aerial Silks category. This achievement is a proud and significant moment for India's debut on the international stage.

The four-day championship showcased world-class rigging,

with certified international judges overseeing the event. It included top disciplines such as Aerial Silks, Aerial Hoop, Aerial Artistic, and Pole Sport. Although the aerial competitions have finished, the Pole Sport contests are still in progress, with athletes from around the globe delivering exciting performances.

The Indian team was commanded by head coach Ria Bajaj

and Coach Masuma Mun, with assistance from Indian Federation Committee members Shrikant Warankar, Suresh Gandhi, and Pankaj Kande.

"This debut marks a powerful beginning for India at POSA. Our students have trained tirelessly, and witnessing them perform with confidence and excellence on a global stage is deeply inspiring," Coach Ria said.

Ashes: England slide to 207/6 at stumps on Day 4 in massive chase of 435 in Adelaide Test

ADELAIDE : Pat Cummins and Nathan Lyon led the bowling effort on Day 4 as Australia moved within touching distance of an unassailable 3-0 lead in the Ashes, reducing England to 207/6 in the chase of 435 here at the Adelaide Oval on Saturday.

On the final day, the visitors need 228 runs to win, while the hosts require just four wickets to clinch the series with an unassailable 3-0 lead.

Australia added 78 runs to their overnight score of 271/4 on Day 4 of the third Ashes Test here at the Adelaide Oval as the English bowlers managed to hold them to 349 in their second innings, setting themselves a 435-run target.

Australia were once again firmly in control, establishing a massive 434-run lead that put them close to securing the Ashes. During a brisk morning session, Travis Head and Alex Carey contributed significantly to the scoreboard, pushing Australia's lead beyond 400 runs swiftly.

Head's excellent innings ended at 170, dismissed by Josh Tongue, while Carey was caught at leg slip off Ben Stokes. For England, Tongue stood out as the most effective bowler, claiming four wickets and offering some resistance with the ball.

Cummins was quick to provide his side with an early breakthrough in the final innings as Ben Duckett found his way back to the pavilion at the stroke of lunch, in just the second over, courtesy of a sharp catch by Marnus Labuschagne as Australia held a commanding



position by reducing England to 5/1 at lunch.

Chasing 435 in the fourth innings was always a daunting challenge, and with the Australian bowlers performing at peak intensity, it appeared an insurmountable task for England.

The Aussie skipper Cummins breathed fire as he continued the team's celebrations by picking Ollie Pope's wicket. Zak Crawley and Joe Root then provided stability and a ray of hope with a 78-run third-wicket partnership, but Cummins struck for a third time to remove Root, making it the 13th instance of him dismissing

the England batter in Tests.

Brook and Crawley too did well with a 68-run stand to stretch through the session as they reached 106/2 at Tea, but what followed next was a disappointing collapse. Nathan Lyon spun a web to dismiss Brook and soon removed skipper Stokes as England's batting unit came crashing down.

The spinner returned for his third over and picked up his third wicket, this time trapping Jack Crawley as Jamie Smith and Will Jacks remained unbeaten on Day 4, with England at 207/6 at stumps.

SIX INDIANS IMPRESS AT US KIDS INDIAN CHAMPIONSHIP

MANESAR : Nihal Cheema, Drona Singh Dhull and Prince Bainsla among the boys, and Naaysha S Sinha, Gairat Kaur Kahlon and Shiksha Jain among the girls, were outstanding performers in the fifth edition of the US Kids Golf Indian Championship at Classic Golf and Country Club.

Despite challenging weather conditions and the smog, local golfers made a clean sweep of the titles, with creditable displays in a rather tricky situation.

The Tournament Committee reduced the final round for all sections to nine holes because there was insufficient daylight on account of a delayed start.

Nihal Cheema in Boys 8 was the only player to shoot par or better on all three days, emerging as a runaway winner over his main rival, Zovra Sikand. Chandigarh lad Cheema posted rounds of 36-34-33 in his 9-hole rounds. On the final day, he was bogey-free and had three birdies.

Another fine performer was Haryana golfer Drona Singh Dhull, who birdied four of the



nine holes in the Boys 11 category. He shot the best round of the day, a 4-under 32 for nine holes, with four birdies and no bogeys.

Prince Bainsla, who had the best round of the week among all players with a 6-under 66 on the first day, won the Boys 15-18 ahead of Shashank Sachin

Richard Ngarava named Zimbabwe's new Test and ODI captain

NEW DELHI : Zimbabwe Cricket (ZC) have named Richard Ngarava as the new captain for both Test and One-Day International (ODI) formats, with Brian Bennett serving as vice-captain.

The appointments were confirmed during the ZC Board's fourth-quarter meeting in Harare on Friday. The left-arm fast bowler takes over from veteran batter Craig Ervine, who is stepping down after guiding the team through an important rebuilding phase.

ZC chairman Tavengwa Mukuhliani congratulated the new leadership team and acknowledged the contributions of the outgoing captain. "Ngarava has shown remarkable growth as a player and leader over the years. He commands respect within the dressing room and has consistently delivered for Zimbabwe across all formats. We believe he is ready to lead the team into its next chapter. Brian's appointment as vice-captain reflects our confidence in his cricketing intelligence, maturity, and long-term leadership potential."

"He represents the future of Zimbabwean cricket. Craig



Ervine led with professionalism, resilience, and dignity during a challenging period. ZC is deeply grateful for his contribution to the team's stability and progress," Mukuhliani said in a statement released by Zimbabwe Cricket.

Ngarava, who debuted internationally in 2017, is a key part of Zimbabwe's bowling lineup. As a left-arm fast-medium bowler, he has played in Tests, ODIs, and T20Is, and is the first Zimbabwean to reach 100 T20I wickets.

His career highlights include match-winning five-wicket hauls in both Test and ODI cricket, as well as a key contri-

but ion in Zimbabwe's first home Test victory in 12 years. Bennett, a talented young all-rounder from Zimbabwe, has advanced quickly since leading the Under-19 team and making his senior international debut in all formats by age 21.

His recent milestones include centuries in both Test and ODI formats, setting the record for the fastest Test hundred by a Zimbabwean, and notable performances in both red-ball and limited-overs cricket. ZC stated that these appointments are part of its long-term plan to develop a competitive and sustainable national team.

NEW VOICE ON THE SIDELINES, SAME HUNGER ON THE TURF FOR SG PIPERS AS THE SQUAD ASSEMBLE IN RANCHI

RANCHI : The SG Pipers women have hit the turf in Ranchi with renewed purpose as the countdown begins for the Hero Hockey India League 2025-26, scheduled to run from 28 December 2025 to 10 January 2026. With sticks down and focus sharpened, the squad's arrival marks the start of a crucial phase in what promises to be a fast, high-stakes tournament.

Adding fresh direction to the group is Head Coach Sofie Gierts, who joins the team in Ranchi ahead of the season, ably supported by Indian hockey veteran and former India captain Helen Mary. Her arrival brings clarity and structure at a time when margins will be tight and momentum decisive.

The Pipers squad carries strong recent international form into the league. Leading from the front is captain Navneet Kaur, who crossed the 200 international caps milestone in 2025, reinforcing her standing as one of Indian hockey's most experienced attackers. Over the past year, Navneet has remained a consistent presence for India in high-pressure fixtures, driving the forward line and setting the competitive tone in the attacking circle.

At the back, Udit anchors the defence after one of the strongest seasons of her career. Named Player of the Tournament at the Women's Asia Cup 2025, Udit combined defensive authority with attacking impact, scoring three goals from penalty corners while handling key defensive responsibilities against top opposition.

The squad brings together international experience and diversity, with players representing multiple hockey-playing nations. This blend offers the Pipers depth across positions and tactical flexibility, a critical asset in a short league where recovery time is limited and adaptability often decides outcomes.

Speaking after joining the team in Ranchi, head coach Sofie said, "It feels great to be part of this talented group in person, especially in a hockey-crazy city like Ranchi. The team is well balanced and every player is keen to get started. We have an exciting mix of players from different countries, and that diversity will be one of our biggest strengths. The focus now is on starting our preparation the right way and ensuring we are united and ready when the league begins on the 28th."

Speaking ahead of the season, captain Navneet Kaur said, "The preparation heading into this season has been positive, and there is a strong sense of clarity and confidence within the group. The players are motivated, focused, and excited about what lies ahead."

For the SG Pipers women, the objective this season is clear. After reflecting on previous outcomes, the emphasis is on sharper execution, winning key moments in both circles, and staying competitive through every quarter. With the league returning to Ranchi, the Pipers are determined to bounce back with intent and turn preparation into points when the whistle blows.

