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FREEBIES ELECTION DRAWS CLOSE



(Left) Delhi CM Atishi marlena with Arvind Kejriwal with during the road show from Kalkaji. (Centre) BJP leader Amit Shah with Delhi BJP President Virendra Sachdeva and party candidate from Jangpura constituency Tarvinder Singh Marwah. (Right) MP Priyanka Gandhi during a roadshow in the support of congress candidate Abhishek Dutt in Kasturba Nagar in New Delhi on Monday

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

The month long Delhi Assembly poll campaign turned into AAP freebies vs BJP freebies vs Congress freebies as the high-voltage campaigning ended at 5 PM on Monday with top leaders from major political parties including Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Home Minister Amit Shah, former Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal, Congress leaders Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi traded fierce jabs. They accused each other of corruption and failing the city's residents. The fiercely contested electoral battle has been defined by an unprecedented use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)-generated spoofs, sharp political jibes with big guns from all three major parties holding roadshows, public meetings, padayatras and bike rallies in a final push to sway voters. As the campaign ended on Monday evening, AAP and BJP have claimed to form the next government with Kejriwal predicting to win 55 for sure which can go up to 60. Addressing a press conference alongwith all BJP MPs from Delhi, Union minister Piyush Goyal claimed that the BJP is headed for a massive poll victory in Delhi, similar to what happened

recently in Maharashtra and Haryana. While the AAP branded the BJP as the "Bharatiya Jhootha Party" (party of liars) and "Gali Galoch Party" (abusive party), Prime Minister Narendra Modi referred to the AAP as "AAP-Daa" (disaster) and its leader Kejriwal as "Ghoshna Mantri" (minister of announcements). Congress, attempting to regain relevance, has called Kejriwal "Farziwal" (Fake) and a "Chhota Recharge" (small recharge) of Modi. Kejriwal also slammed the Election Commission, accusing it of favouring the BJP. Interestingly, the Delhi elections began with the AAP in the pole position to gain power yet again. But has something changed as we enter the last lap before the voting on February 5. BJP aiming to reclaim power in Delhi after more than 25 years, held 22 roadshows and rallies across the city. Union Home Minister Amit Shah, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, BJP President J P Nadda, and several BJP chief ministers were at the forefront of the canvassing on Monday. On the last day of campaigning, Prime Minister Narendra Modi lambasted the AAP government in

Delhi saying it was promoting only those students to Class 10 who were guaranteed to clear the board examination to guard its image. "I have heard that in Delhi they do not promote students to Class 10 if they perform poorly in Class 9," Modi said in an interaction with a group of students. "They only allow those students in Class 10 who are guaranteed to clear the exam. They fear that if the results are poor, the image of their government will be tarnished," the PM said in the interaction, a short video of which was shared by BJP leaders on social media. Congress, seeking a revival after failing to win any seats in the last two elections, also intensified its efforts. Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi held separate roadshows in Kalkaji and Kasturba Nagar, aiming to regain the party's lost foothold in the capital. BJP has changed its strategy from 2020 and is no longer calling the AAP's freebies as 'revadis' - in fact, it is promising to continue them. Whose face will attract voters? Will people trust Kejriwal again or is the vote this time in the name of Narendra Modi, who is asking people for one chance in Delhi?

BJP campaign got a last-minute boost with Centre's Annual budget announcement. The party was quick to come up with advertisements claiming it was Modi's gift for Delhi. This major announcement became a talking point not just in Delhi but even across the country as it impacts the large pool of salaried households. Around 45 percent middle class voters, a key support base of Modi, has traditionally been a stronghold of the BJP during the Lok Sabha polls, but recently, it felt overlooked as the party has focused on other vote banks. Traditionally, this vote bank has largely split between the BJP and AAP, but this time on the ground, the feedback is that the middle class could consolidate for the BJP after the announcement of income tax exemptions for up to Rs 12 lakh. The 8th Pay Commission announcement is another positive for the BJP, as a large number of government employees are based in Delhi as voters. There are 20 percent Dalit vote in the capital, which is primarily based in the jhuggis and clusters and it has been seen favourably towards the AAP, but may see a split now. If the jhuggi voters and Muslims remain fully behind the AAP, it could win big

with 50+ seats. But if there is a split in the jhuggi voters and the middle class consolidates behind the BJP, there could be a repeat of Haryana and Maharashtra results in Delhi. Voters residing in jhuggi-jhopdi (JJ) clusters have been backing the AAP for the past two elections. These voters are largely poor and the beneficiaries of free bijli-paani, free bus travel for women, mohalla clinics and more. BJP has focused on the slums and jhuggis clusters promising them a pucca house to everyone in the jhuggis, and the promise to continue free water and power, is what is giving BJP a look-in here. The BJP strongly feels that there will be a split in the 20% Dalit vote this time, which primarily lives in the jhuggis, and this will hurt the AAP badly. Overall, the AAP and BJP are in a neck-and-neck battle here. The second big factor in Delhi is the 13 percent Muslim vote, and at least 10-12 seats in Delhi where Muslim voters are pre-dominant. For over a decade now, the Muslims have consolidated in Delhi behind the AAP, bringing the party big victories. The BJP's chances in Delhi would have greatly improved if the Muslim votes had split between the AAP, Congress and Asaduddin Owaisi's AIMIM.



Rupee all time low

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ MUMBAI

MARKETS



The Rupee plunged 55 paise to close at an all-time low of 87.17 (provisional) against the US Dollar on Monday, as global market sentiments were impacted after the Trump administration slapped tariffs on Canada, Mexico and China. Forex traders said the Indian rupee touched a fresh all-time low on a surge in the US Dollar index and weak global markets after Trump Tariffs on Canada Mexico, and China triggered fears of a broad trade war. Donald Trump slapped Canada and Mexico with 25 per cent duties and China with a 10 per cent duty. At the interbank foreign exchange, the Rupee opened on a weak note at 87.00 and touched an intraday low of 87.29 against the American currency during the session. The local unit finally settled at a record closing low of 87.17 (provisional), lower by 55 paise over its previous close. On Friday, the rupee settled flat at 86.62 against the American currency. "We expect the rupee to trade with negative bias on strong US Dollar and FII

outflows amid a weak trend in the domestic markets. Worries over tariffs by the US administration may also pressurise the rupee," said Anuj Choudhary - Research Analyst at Mirae Asset Sharekhan. However, any central bank intervention may support the rupee. Traders may take cues from ISM manufacturing PMI data from the US. Investors may remain cautious ahead of the RBI's monetary policy meeting this week," Choudhary added. Meanwhile, the Dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 1.01 per cent higher at 109.46. Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, rose 1.41 per cent to USD 76.74 per barrel in futures trade.

GRAP III revoked

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) on Monday (February 3) lifted Stage III of the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) across Delhi-NCR, effective immediately. However, measures under GRAP Stage I and II will remain in place to control pollution levels, according to a statement from the CAQM. The use of BS-III petrol and BS-IV diesel cars (4-wheelers) has been allowed in Delhi and nearby NCR districts after



Terror attack leaves one dead, two injured

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

A retired Territorial army soldier, father of four daughters and one son, was killed in cold blood by unidentified terrorists inside his home in the Behibagh area of South Kashmir's Kulgam district on Monday. The wife of an ex-serviceman and another close relative, present inside the home, also received bullet injuries in the targeted strike, the first so far in 2025. The ex-serviceman, identified as Manzoor Ahmad Wagay, was rushed to the Government Medical College Hospital, Anantnag by family members where he succumbed to his fatal injuries. According to preliminary reports, both the women, including the wife of an ex-serviceman, were undergoing treatment and

their condition was stated to be stable. Chief Minister Omar Abdullah reacted strongly to the heinous act of violence. "Deeply saddened by the tragic killing of ex-serviceman Manzoor Ahmad Wagay Sahab in Kulgam. My heartfelt condolences to his family, and prayers for the swift recovery of his injured wife and daughter. Such heinous violence has no place in our society and must be condemned in the strongest terms. May peace and justice prevail" the Office of Chief Minister said in a post on X (earlier Twitter). According to local reports, the terrorists struck around 2.00 p.m. in the thickly populated area of Behibagh and managed to flee from the spot without facing any resistance.

Rahul questions Modi's Trump invite, Jaishankar refutes

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi on Monday created a flutter by raking up the issue of Prime Minister Narendra Modi 'not being invited for coronation of US President Donald Trump last month to which the External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar dismissed the claim as false and accused the Congress of harming India's global image. Jaishankar asserted that no discussion about an invitation to Prime Minister Modi ever took place and pointed out that the Prime Minister does not attend such events. Union Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Kiren Rijju too strongly objected to the remarks. "It is common knowledge that our PM does not attend such events. In fact, India is generally represented by Special Envoys," he clarified. Jaishankar represented India at Donald Trump's inauguration on January 20. He was seated in the first row during the ceremony. Mocking the Central government during Motion of Thanks on the President's address in Lok Sabh, Rahul claimed that if the Modi government had taken economic policies seriously, then the government would



(Left) Rahul Gandhi speaks in the Lok Sabha during the Budget session of Parliament. (Right) MEA S Jaishankar

not have had to send Foreign Minister S Jaishankar to the US to get an invitation for Prime Minister Narendra Modi for Donald Trump's swearing-in ceremony. "When we talk to the United States, we would not send the Foreign Minister three-four times to get an invite for our Prime Minister because if we had a production system and we were working on these technologies, the US President would come here and invite the Prime Minister," said Rahul. Rijju said the LoP cannot make such serious, unsubstantiated statements. "This is about the relationship between two countries. He is making unverified statements about the invitation of our Prime Minister. He should be responsible. If the Leader of the Opposition has the information, he must tell the House who has told him that the Foreign Minister visited for this purpose," Rijju said. Replying to him, Rahul Gandhi said he would apologise for disturbing the Parliamentary Affairs Minister peace of mind but the Congress leader continued with another his jab raking up the China issue and said that the Indian Army contradicted Prime Minister Narendra Modi's claims about Chinese army intrusion in Ladakh.

BJP moves Privilege against Sonia

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) MPs on Monday moved a privilege motion against Rajya Sabha MP Sonia Gandhi over her "poor thing" remark on President Droupadi Murmu. "We write this with great dismay about certain unparliamentary, derogatory and demeaning remarks recently made by Smt. Sonia Gandhi, Member of Parliament, Rajya Sabha, against the Hon'ble President of India, which warrant serious consideration and disciplinary action," the MPs



wrote to Rajya Sabha chairman. The MPs alleged that the statement was a "clear manifestation of elitist and

anti-tribal mindset of" Sonia Gandhi, who they claimed "is yet to understand the struggle and sensitivity of a tribal poor." "Given the gravity of this issue, we humbly urge you to take cognizance of this matter and initiate appropriate disciplinary action against Smt. Sonia Gandhi," the MPs said. "Such action is imperative not only to uphold the sanctity of parliamentary rules but also to reinforce the principles of decorum and mutual respect that are foundational to the effective functioning of our democratic institutions."

CM personally resolves public concerns

- Ensures ambulance for Balangir boy
- Sanctioned Rs 5 lakh for Boudh girl's treatment

NALINI SAHU ■ BHUBANESWAR

In a departure from the usual bureaucratic channels, Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi on Monday took a hands-on approach to address citizens' grievances by meeting them directly. This move marked a shift towards a more personal and proactive style of governance, ensuring that people's concerns were

heard and resolved in real-time. Majhi not only listened to complaints but also took immediate steps to resolve them by instructing officials on the spot. A heartwarming encounter involved 12-year-old Alok Kalse, a differently-abled boy from Saintala in Balangir district. Alok's family had been struggling with his medical



needs, but after sharing their plight with the Chief Minister, he immediately arranged for an ambulance to transport the boy to Bhubaneswar for treatment. "The CM didn't wait for me to approach him; he came right to me and assured me that my son's issue would be resolved quickly," said Alok's

mother. In another touching moment, a woman from Boudh district, waiting in a long queue with her sick daughter, shared her struggle with Majhi. Her daughter Pratyusha Giri needed costly medical treatment for a rare condition. Majhi immediately sanctioned Rs 5 lakh from the Chief Minister's Relief Fund

for the treatment and ensured that necessary medical arrangements were made. Majhi also took action for a woman seeking for months a pension for her husband, who is completely disabled. Majhi promised to personally ensure that her application reached the district Collector for approval.

A DIP OF FAITH



A Kinnar Akhara member tosses a trident while taking a holy dip on the 'Basant Panchami' during the ongoing Mahakumbh Mela, at the Sangam in Prayagraj

Cong team meets jailed students



PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR
Members of the Congress led by former Pradesh Congress Committee (PCC) president Niranjan Patnaik on Monday met Student Congress leader Udit Pradhan and others who are lodged at the Jharpada Special Jail here.

Later, Patnaik said that in a democracy, the opposition parties have the right to show black flags. But in the Mohan Majhi government's tenure, that right has been denied. In the martyrdom day of Mahatma Gandhi, Udit Pradhan and other Student Congress members were undemocratically arrested.

"I strongly condemn this. The Student Congress members who showed black flags to RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat should be immediately released. Otherwise, the Congress would be forced to hit the streets," Patnaik said.

In city Miscreants loot valuables from wedding in hotel

Came disguised as Baratis
PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR
In a daring heist at Suryansh Hotels and Resorts in Bhubaneswar, well-dressed miscreants disguised as guests decamped with gold jewellery, diamonds and cash during a wedding in Bhubaneswar on Sunday night.



The gang members, who notably clad themselves in suits, managed to abscond with diamonds and gold ornaments valued at approximately Rs 10 lakh and Rs 2.5 lakh in cash while everyone was busy during the marriage ceremony at the hotel in the Maitri Vihar area of the city.

Following the incident, the Maitri Vihar police have launched an investigation.

"The miscreants came along with the Baratis and decamped with

gold and diamond jewellery worth around Rs 14 lakh and cash which had been gifted by the relatives during the marriage," said Saroj Mishra, the victim.

"We immediately informed the hotel authorities and police about the matter. We are hopeful that the police will be able to nab the looters," Mishra added.

"We thought hotel will be a safer place to host the marriage as it has CCTV surveillance and restricted movements of guests. But after this loot incident, we cannot trust anyone," he stated.

Interview of the week

Divorce has become a fashion rather than a social stigma



SUGYAN CHOUDHURY



RUTUPARNA MOHANTY

Born to the Sarvodaya and Gandhian leader Late Bichitrnanda Mohanty, Rutuparna Mohanty took to social service like a fish takes to water. Her Maa Ghara Foundation Trust, a nonprofit-making organisation, is dedicated to protect, promote and defend the rights of the unwed mothers, sexually-abused girls and trafficked victims through resilient rescue care and legal protection. She has earned accolades for successfully rehabilitating more than 15,000 distressed women and girls of all ages within last two decades. Through her community-level women peace maker training, she has been able to usher in an era of women awakening vital for our society. She reforms the society by organising marriages of unwed mothers and sexually abused girls, rape victims by removing their social stigma while enabling them to lead a peaceful married life. Awards, national and international recognitions have come cascading down upon her. She prescribes the ancient Vedic cultural Sanskara (reformatory marriage) to restore the granite rock of our ideal Indian marriage system to provide a panacea to the hydra-headed ills of divorce afflicting our sacrosanct marriage system.

In an interview to *The Pioneer*, Rutuparna spoke to Sugyan Choudhury on many causes that diminish the institution of marriages while suggesting remedial measures for the same.

You have been working for more than two decades in the field of social change and from the last decade you are an advocate of the family court. What do you think are the major factors for the rising divorce rate in the Indian society?

After deeply analysing and understanding the social change for over two decades and as an advocate for last one decade, I feel that the major factors behind the rising of divorce rate are the decrease in tolerance level, economic independence, generation gap, social media impact, stress and mental health issue. Indian society, its culture and civilisation, its family tradition, its educational system were

very rich with a holistic dimension, which got eroded and polluted by the Mughal invasion and by the British hegemony. It strikes me much that there is possibly international conspiracy to destroy our age-old valued family tradition of excellence. India is the only country where we have a time-tested family tradition, a beautiful institution which now stands severely jeopardised by the onslaught of Western influence. It is the family and the family alone which gives shelter to children and elderly people alike. That is why it is not marriage between a boy and a girl but a bond between two families. Now, girls are educated and are doing jobs outside. The scenario has changed drastically because of women education and women empowerment. The woman who retires to her house after her day's work is expected to perform household chores. The orthodox mindset of the boy's family is not able to accept that this can be done by sharing the responsibilities. That is how misunderstanding creeps in, which gradually leads towards divorce. Secondly, both the boy and the girl are victims of a splendid ego mania. The girl thinks that she is equally capable like her spouse and not inferior in anyway. The husband thinks it is the duty of his wife to take care of everything and is unable to accept the change. A spirit of concession and compromise is absent among most young couples. Thirdly, deficit of trust between the couple is another reason. The invasion of technology, social media by which the wife is in touch with many people at the workplace and the husband is also in touch with many women at the workplace. They don't trust each other somewhere in some corner of their mind. Another reason is that the tender touch of human relationship like faith, love and sacrifice is very much missing in the families. Finally, the spiritual strength which made the Indian family invincible is now open to the vagaries of the outside world and cultures.

How do you think the increase in the rate of divorce is having impact upon the society and family at large

wherein the Indian marriage is said to be an institution?
In India, marriage is not just between two persons but between the two families which also constitute one of the 16 Sanskars according to Veda, which has now turned into a comical tragedy. Rather than giving more importance to the Vedic rituals, now more importance is given to events such as pre marriage photo shoots, dance events and others. Dowry plays a pivotal role in the degradation of the holistic approach. Also, with the decreasing trend of joint family culture and increase in nuclear family concept has reduced the buffering effect of extended families.

What are the legal provisions available in case of a family dispute and how can a person benefit out of it in case of family litigation?
Globalisation and media have introduced urban Indians to new views on marriage and divorce. The Supreme Court's rulings like decriminalising adultery in 2018 have shifted societal attitudes. Changes to the Hindu Marriage Act and the Special Marriage Act have simplified divorce procedures wherein getting a divorce has become a fashion rather than a social stigma. Yes, there are many provisions to safeguard the marriage, but rather than using those sections like Section 9 of the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955, the couple finds it easier to file a petition U/s 13A or 13B, get rid of their responsibilities and lead their lives independently.

What are the preventive measures that can be taken to decrease the trend?
To address divorce challenges, various support systems are available such as pre-marriage and pre-divorce counselling can help resolve conflicts while post-divorce counselling aids emotional recovery. One can also opt for legal aid services to ensure access to justice for those who can't afford legal representation even after divorce support groups offer a platform for divorced individuals to share experiences and provide mutual support.

What is your message for the future generation of couples?
Recently, doctors, psychiatrists, psychologists, gynaecologists and social workers got united in Gujarat through a programme called 'Parenting for Peace'. It has been proved there that a child's psychology and his/her personality is formed starting from the womb till five years. The child learns everything from four months in the womb by the activities, actions of the parents. Hence, those future generations of couples should take extra care for maintaining a harmonious and ideal life while they go for planning for a child.

Odisha gets Rs 10,599 cr in Rlys Budget

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR
Odisha has been allotted Rs 10,599 crore for railways in Budget 2025-26, said Union Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw on Monday.

He said Rs 10,599 crore has been allotted for railways in Budget 2025-26 which is Rs 13 crore more than what the State got in 2024-25 financial year.

The Railways has invested Rs 78,000 crore in Odisha and works of some of the projects are still under

derway," he said.

Currently, six new Vande Bharat Express trains are running from and through Odisha and more new trains would be introduced in the coming days as the four-laning work between Chennai and Calcutta would be completed soon and the railway work from Kolkata to Bhadrak is in progress, he said.

Vaishnaw further said new railway tracks of 2046 km have been constructed in Odisha in the last 10 years, which is more than the entire rail network of Malaya.



As of now, Kavach, the train protection system, would be installed in a total of 1,898 kilometers in Odisha and a target has been fixed to complete the installation of Kavach across the country within six years, he informed. Since 2014, a total of 1,516 km of railway has been electrified and with this Odisha is 100% electrified. Currently, as many as 48 projects of 4,784 km at a cost of Rs 73,723 crore is underway. Besides, 59 Amrit stations of Odisha are being developed at an estimated cost of Rs 2,379 crore.

IT officials grill Hansita, Anil in Jharpada



PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR
Officials of the Income Tax (IT) Department on Monday interrogated notorious fraudsters Hansita Abhilipsa and his close aide Anil Mohanty at the Jharpada Special Jail here regarding their huge illegal property.

The grilling would help authorities gather further details about the political connections, financial dealings and alleged human trafficking that the fraudster duo used to gather massive property and cash assets.

The questioning followed IT raids in early January at 16 different locations across Bhubaneswar, Kandhamal, Kalahandi, Jharkhand and New Delhi allegedly owned by the fraudster duo. During those raids, properties worth hundreds of crores as well as benami assets worth Rs 58 crore were identified and subsequently seized by the IT Department.

In Bhubaneswar, the raids were conducted on corporate offices

owned by the duo in the Raghunathpur area, Anil Mohanty's home in the SBT Apartments and another residence in Unit 8.

Following their arrest in December 2024, several skeletons stumbled out of the closet of the duo, who duped several high-profile businessmen involved in mining and construction sectors, by posing as the daughter and son-in-law of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Principal Secretary.

Further, links between Hansita and several politicians surfaced. A team of the Commissionerate police had taken Hansita and Anil on remand on January 24 to probe allegations of human trafficking operations involving young women.

Investigations by police had pointed to the possibility that the con duo used to arrange 'sex workers' for influential persons, businessmen and politicians to facilitate business agreements or secure political leverage as part of their modus operandi.

Paddy procurement target hiked to 77L MT

As more farmers still coming to mandis
PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR
Considering the prevailing situation that more farmers are still coming to mandis to sell their paddy, the State Government has enhanced its paddy procurement target for the kharif crop season from 65 lakh metric tonnes to 77 lakh MT.

The Group of Ministers led by Deputy Chief Minister Kanak Vardhan Singh Deo has taken this decision. Revenue and Disaster Management Minister Suresh Pujari, Food Supplies and Consumer Welfare Minister Krushna Chandra Patra, Cooperation Minister Pradeep Bal Samanta and Chief Secretary Manoj Ahuja and other senior officials attended the meeting.

With a minimum support price of Rs 2,300 and an additional input assistance of Rs 800 per quintal, more farmers have expressed their willingness to participate in the procurement.

Singh Deo said the process of paddy procurement has become more transparent and successful as

the Deputy Chief Ministers, ministers and senior officials are visiting the districts and monitoring the process. He also suggested that early steps should be taken for the purchase of paddy in the upcoming Rabi season.

Food Supplies and Consumer Welfare Principal Secretary Sanjay Kumar Singh said 46.36 lakh MT of paddy has been procured from 9.77 lakh farmers so far. Nearly Rs 10,000 crore as MSP and Rs 3,500 crore as input assistance have already been transferred to farmers' accounts.

Keeping in view the interest of the farmers, 3,883 nodal officers have been deployed with CCTV systems in the mandis. In addition, 217 enforcement squads have been constituted to keep a close watch on outside paddy vehicles, officials said.

Various complaints relating to the sale of paddy including generation of tokens, input support, MSP to farmers are being resolved expeditiously through the Command Control Centre set up at the Odisha State Civil Supplies Corporation. As many as 4.15 lakh calls have been received and resolved through toll free helpline No-1967.

Warm day temp in Feb triggers concern

Mercury likely to soar further
PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR
The State is experiencing unusually warm temperatures even though it is early February with temperatures soaring above 36 degrees Celsius in the first two days of the month, a period typically marked by mild winter.

On Sunday, Balangir recorded the State's highest temperature this year at 36.7 degrees followed by Titilagarh at 36 degrees, Jharsuguda 35.6 degrees and Bhubaneswar 34.4 degrees.

The India Meteorological

Department (IMD) attributed the temperature's sudden rise to clear skies and southwesterly winds, which trap heat. Further, the absence of winter moisture and the prolonged dry spells have intensified the conditions.

The weather office also predicted the prolonged heat to continue and stated that no significant weather changes are expected for the next four to five days and that temperature may soar further.

The unseasonal heat has triggered fears of a harsher summer ahead with people bracing for more sweltering days and relief unlikely anytime soon.

Notably, the weather patterns in the State shifted quite dramatically as cold wave persisted just a fortnight ago. Moreover, dense fog that began in late January has continued over many places including the twin cities of Cuttack and Bhubaneswar, causing sunlight to stay hidden during early morning hours.

The unusual February heat is part of a broader trend of climate change impacts on regional weather patterns with studies showing that climate change has increased the likelihood of abnormally high temperatures in parts of eastern India by approximately 45 times.

In Bhadrak DM disguises as farmer, probes 'katni-chhatni'

PNS ■ BHADRAK
In an unprecedented instance, Bhadrak District Magistrate Dilip Routrai disguised himself in ordinary clothes and even pretended to be a farmer at the Katsahi mandi under the district's Dhamnagar block to probe allegation of 'katni-chhatni' (undue price reduction of paddy upon quality assessment) on Saturday.

The Collector parked his vehicle far away and reached the Katsahi PACS (Primary Agricultural Credit Society) wearing shorts, a T-shirt, and a facemask. He walked and made several rounds of the mandi, inspecting and taking firsthand



stock of repeated issues being faced by farmers.

Without revealing his identity, the Collector interacted with farmers and inquired about paddy sales. Taking matters into his own hands, he then attempted to sell paddy using another farmer's token. However, the Cooperation official in charge mentioned that around 8 kg of paddy would be de-

ducted as wastage.

Finding the 'katni-chhatni' allegations to be true, Collector Routrai then issued a show-cause notice to the concerned officials on the spot.

"The allegations made against your PACS was found to be true and, therefore, you are asked to show cause why action as deemed proper shall not be initiated

against you," said the show-cause notice issued to the Katsahi PACS Secretary.

The notice also demanded the concerned officials to file their response within two days, failing which action deemed proper would be initiated against them.

The notice stated that the Collector had received various reports and allegations of how "farmers were falling prey to the machinations of the PACS and the millers".

The letter also stated that the Assistant Registrar of Cooperative Societies (ARCS) of Bhadrak had recently met Secretaries of several PACS to ensure that the farmers are not put to a loss.

'MLAs, MPs need minimum education level'

BJP Intellectual Cell holds webinar on Constitution

PNS ■ CUTTACK

The Intellectual Cell of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) held a discussion through the web on the significance of the Constitution recently as part of the party's "SAMBIDHAN GAURABA ABHIJAN."

The motive behind the programme is to enlighten the public at large about the Constitution of the country. Professor Dr Surjya Narayan

Misra joined the web meeting as the chief speaker. He opined that there is a necessity of prescribing a minimum level of education for the members of the Legislative Assembly and the Parliament. "This will make the democratic systems stable in the country and improve development," he said. MPs Dr Rabintra Behera and Sujit Kumar participated in the discussion and placed their opinions. Sukanta Biswal, the new elect president of Cuttack BJP Chapter presided and assured the august gathering that he will take all steps to implement the sug-

gestions of the intellectuals of the meet.

Sudarshan Nayak, the organizer of the BJP Intellectual Cell, joined the meet as a guest of honour. According to him, the Constitution of India is best in the world as it is made after analyzing the constitutions of different countries of the world.

Barada Das was the co-coordinator of the meet. Kartik Parichha, Umasankar Misra, Dr Nanda Nandan Das, Pratap Rout, Nimai Swain and Dippayan Pattanaik among others participated actively in the discussion.

In Sukinda After 5-yr wait, tribals rebuild village school on own

Authorities had cast blind eye to only govt school destroyed by Amphan

PNS ■ JAJPUR

After a gap of five years, children of Tumani village under Sukinda block in Jajpur district are attending classes again, thanks to a school rebuilt entirely by villagers af-

ter Cyclone Amphan destroyed the original structure of the school in 2020.

The Juang community got united to construct an asbestos-roofed school within 15 days, using funds and materials collected from each household.

According to sources, about 40 villagers, including children and youth, contributed free labour to complete the project.

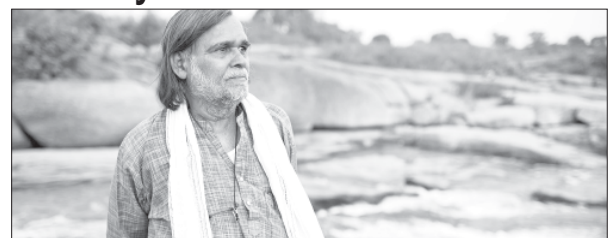
"We repeatedly requested the authorities to rebuild the

school, but nothing was done. Our children suffered due to negligence on the part of the authorities," said Kaila Pradhan, a villager.

The new school now serves 34 children who had been unable to attend classes, as the nearest school is 5km away in Deogaon.

Sukinda's block education officer (BEO) Narayan Das said the government has no other school in the village except for a private organisation running a school.

'Unchecked mining in Deomali to destroy water sources'



Samantara urges CM to save ecology, tribals of Koraput

RAJEEV RATHAN ■ BRAHMAPUR

Loksakti Abhiyan president and noted environmental activist Prafulla Samantara has demanded an immediate stop to indiscriminate mining in the Koraput region, citing its devastating impact on tribal communities and the environment.

Samantara alleged that mining activities were being carried out without Gram Sabha approval, violating legal norms and threatening the livelihoods of local people. He urged the State government to initiate discussions with affected communities before allowing further extraction of minerals.

Emphasizing the need for local industrialisation, he stressed that intermediate in-

dustries related to mining should be set up to ensure that tribal inhabitants benefit from the region's mineral wealth.

Strongly condemning the arrests of tribal activists resisting mining projects, Samantara accused the administration of silencing voices defending land, water, and forests. He warned that unchecked mining from Deomali to Balda could destroy perennial water sources feeding streams and rivers.

Raising concerns over the exclusion of Deomali from Forest Department records, he questioned the government's intent, fearing that Odisha's highest peak could soon be lost to mining.

As the Chief Minister hails from a tribal community, Samantara asserted that he is expected to safeguard tribal rights and take immediate action to protect the region's ecology and indigenous population.

In Phulbani ABVP holds Saraswati Puja Govt College



As college didn't organise fest

PNS ■ PHULBANI

This year, while it was decided not to hold Saraswati Puja in the Government Autonomous College, Phulbani, the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad decided to hold the puja.

It was reported that last year, during Ganesh Puja, students from outside the college entered the premises and created some chaos. As a result police was called. Therefore, the college had to intervene. Consequently, in order to avert such situations, the college authorities decided to stop the Saraswati Puja.

After learning about the news, the ABVP immediately decided to hold the puja, even though in late hours (after 3

pm). On the other hand, while it is mandatory to celebrate Ganesh Puja, Saraswati Puja and all national festivals in government educational institutions, the ABVP condemned why the college was completely closed.

In the college, the students pay a special fee for DSA at the time of admission. The DSA department conducts two pujas every year, namely Ganesh and Saraswati puja, at the expense of the students. So, under whose pressure the Saraswati puja was stopped this year has been a matter of investigation here.

The puja was celebrated in the presence of Amlan Patnaik, Shivshish Panda, Divya Ranjan Dakua, Rudra Madhav Mishra, Shritam Patra and many ABVP students including students from hostels.

Acid attack on G'pati lawyer 2 including ex-SBI Manager arrested

2 more accused still at large

RAJEEV RATHAN ■ BRAHMAPUR

The Gajapati police arrested two persons on Sunday in connection with the acid attack on senior lawyer P Rama Rao in Parlakhemundi in November 2024.

The arrested accused included the mastermind, a former bank manager and a youth who facilitated the crime. The attack was allegedly carried out for a supari of Rs 2 lakh with Rs 1 lakh paid in advance.

Gajapati SP Jotindra Kumar Panda said a financial dispute of Rs 55 lakh was the primary reason behind the attack. The mastermind has been identified as a former State Bank of India Manager D Venket Rao, who had lent the amount to a bus owner in 2005 to start a bar and a restaurant.

However, the borrower failed to repay the loan and all



related documents remained in the custody of lawyer Rama Rao. After multiple failed attempts to retrieve the documents, Venket Rao allegedly hired attackers to target the lawyer in an act of revenge, said Panda.

Notably, on November 9, two bike-borne assailants arrived at Rama Rao's residence in Paralakhemundi Jangam Sahi under the pretext of delivering a parcel. As soon as he stepped out, they threw acid on his face and fled.

The acid attack in broad daylight posed a major challenge for the police, especially

amid protests and strikes by the Parlakhemundi Bar Association demanding swift action.

The police formed two special teams, led by SDPO Madhabanand Naik and Model Police Officer Prashant Kumar Bhupathi, to investigate the case. With no clear leads initially, the team meticulously analysed 5,860 phone numbers and 450 call recordings from the day of the incident.

They also examined CCTV footage from various entry points into the town and used cyber cell data to trace the ac-

cus to Vijayawada in Andhra Pradesh.

Following the investigations, police arrested two accused, including mastermind D Venket Rao. However, the main attacker and the biker involved in the crime are still at large.

The acid attack on a senior lawyer had triggered outrage with the legal community expressing dissatisfaction over the delay in arrests. However, after the breakthrough, members of the Parlakhemundi Bar Association, including President Swarup Kumar Pal, Secretary Ramakrishna Naik and senior advocates Siddeshwar Mishra, Sisir Kumar Jena, Hirakhand Patnaik and Arun Parida, welcomed the police efforts and demanded strict legal action against all accused.

Meanwhile, P Rama Rao is undergoing treatment at a private hospital in Visakhapatnam while the police continue efforts to track down the remaining culprits.

K'mal fest, Palishree Mela from Mar 21



Preparatory meet held

PNS ■ PHULBANI

The Palishree Mela and Kandhamal Mahotsav will be held at Phulbani Stadium for five days from March 21 to 25.

A meeting in this regard was held at the Zilla Parishad Conference Hall on Wednesday evening under the chairmanship of district Collector Amrit Rutraja. The festival is held every year to highlight the art, culture and tradition of Kandhamal district.

However, in order to include all the blocks of the district in the festival, the Collector suggested that various sports

competitions along with a torch procession be organised this year and all the members also agreed to it. Similarly, local folk dance, folk songs etc will be given priority.

Among others, Additional District Magistrate, District Chief Development Officer and Executive Officer Zilla Parishad Shambhunath Nandi, District Chief Medical Officer Dr Santosh Padhi, Sub-Collector Chitta Ranjan Mahanth, PA ITDA Baliguda Gadadhar Patra, PA ITDA Phulbani Devyani Bhuyan, BJP district president Jagannath Sahu, police officers, Kui leaders and other members of the festival committee were present.

Shrimp Farmers' Conclave held in B'swar

Roadmap for shrimp culture in State outlined

PNS ■ BALESWAR

More than 500 shrimp and fish farmers, State administration officials, scientists and industry stakeholders participated at a 'Shrimp Farmers' Conclave 2025' held here. The ICAR-Central Institute of Brackishwater Aquaculture (CIBA), in association with the Department of Fisheries, Odisha and P2C Communications, organised the event.

In a message for the participants, Minister for Fisheries and Animal Resources Development, MSME, Government of Odisha Gokulananda Mallik highlighted the importance of the conclave for the State.

Inaugurating the confer-



ence, Deputy Director General- Fisheries, ICAR Dr JK Jena called upon the farmers to produce suitable size shrimps and fishes for the domestic market to get assured income for the farmers and break the myth that shrimps are produced for the foreign consumers. He emphasized that the State Department of Fisheries and the shrimp farmers association with the help of processors should prepare a 'shrimp production and marketing plan.'

"Farmers are the fulcrum in any farming sector around whom the technology, inputs, services and market revolve. With regions being unique in terms of resources and pro-

duction systems, region specific aquaculture planning is necessary," said Director, ICAR-Dr Kuldeep Kumar Lal. He also laid emphasis on the best resource management practices and production systems in brackishwater aquaculture, offering CIBA's technological solutions for the development of the sector in Odisha.

Principal Scientist CIBA and coordinator of the conclave A Panigrahi in his welcome note underlined that CIBA has developed several technologies to ensure farmers' profitability and farmers should select appropriate production system and their farm-business plan rather

than just emulating fellow farmers whose resources, infrastructure and capacity are entirely different.

Chief Editor, Aqua Post, Pravash Pradhan underlined the importance of ensuring financial security of the shrimp farmers, besides insurance and market linkage.

Notably, shrimp aquaculture is an important agri-business farming system practiced with entrepreneurship approach in the coastal districts. Odisha has a huge potential of 4.18 lakh hectare suitable for shrimp farming but utilised hardly 4% of that at present with a production of 45,000 metric tonnes of shrimp due to many reasons.

WHO envoy visits Jatni Leprosy Colony



PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

World Health Organisation (WHO) Goodwill Ambassador for Leprosy Elimination and Chairman, Nippon Foundation and Association of People Affected by Leprosy (APAL) and team of Sasakawa Leprosy (Hansen's Disease) Initiative Yohei Sasakawa visited the Jatni Leprosy Colony in Khorda district.

With help from language interpreters, he listened to residents of

Jatni Leprosy Colony for over an hour. He appealed to raise the monthly pension for persons affected with leprosy in Odisha.

Sasakawa called for improving access to education for children and young people in leprosy colonies. Sasakawa was accompanied by president of Sasakawa Health Foundation (SHF) Dr Takahiro Nanri; Programme Advisor (Medical Issues), SHF Dr VR Pemmaraju, besides APAL members from Odisha and other States.

Uphold 'Right to Life' for every citizen sans bias

Why so much outrage against RG Kar trainee's murder while Gwalior girl's cold-blooded murder goes unnoticed?



B RAMCHANDRA CST VOLTAIRE

It is a matter of deep concern that Right to Life as given under Article 21 of the Constitution of India does not carry the same meaning for every human being in India. It is being seen that if a young woman loses her life and honour in a non-BJP ruled State, the national outrage is immense.

But if the murder has happened to a young woman of 20 by her father in a BJP ruled State as she pressed her demand to marry the young boy of her choice, such a brutal death by gun-shots goes vir-

tually unnoticed; and the same is never raised, never condemned in any of the TV channels run by the super industrialists.

On August 9, 2024, a 31-year-old doctor trainee, working in the RG Kar Hospital in Kolkata was raped and murdered while she was resting in the seminar room of the hospital by one Sanjay Roy, a Police Mitra of the State. The outcry was

immense as the case did occur in the TMC-ruled West Bengal. It was more to defame CM of West Bengal Mamata Benerjee.

On January 14, 2025, a 20-year-old woman, Tanu Gurjar, firmly refused to marry the young man chosen by her father Mahesh Gurjar in Gwalior, MP. She insisted on marrying her lover from Agra with whom she had been in love for the last 6 years. Against her will her father printed out the marriage invitation card and fixed the marriage date on January 18.

As she was opposed to the proposed marriage with a young man of her father's choice she was rebuked harshly and beaten up mercilessly. So, she had no opportunity to go to the local police station to file her FIR. She circulated a video saying 'if I die my family will be responsible' on social media. The video reached the ears of many. The

police did not act as they should have acted. So, on January 14, 2025 at 9 pm in the evening hours, Tanu Gurjar was shot dead by her father and cousin Rahul.

The Freethought Party of India is deeply shocked at the horrendous event in Gwalior. MP being ruled by the BJP for the last several years, the cruel inhuman incident remained aloof from much publicity. BJP's leadership is largely allergic to any young woman marrying out of love. So, it should be understood that a father in a BJP-ruled State enjoys absolute freedom to take away the life of his daughter if she is determined to marry a young man out of love.

Here in this case neither the State High Court of MP nor the Supreme Court of India did take any suo moto cognizance of the brutal murder. The Freethought Party of India that advocates for full length

love marriage throughout India strongly condemns the failure of the State machinery to protect the life of Tanu.

Her SOS video that she circulated in the SM hoping that the State police would come forward to save her life from her caste-minded and status-oriented father did not work. Right to Life must be upheld by those who govern the citizens of India without any prejudice arising out of caste and religion. The National Human Rights Commission must do the needful in this matter.

No invitation card be ever printed by any father whose young daughter is in love with someone else. State Governments should come forward to organize the marriage of lovers free of cost with full protection of their lives and dignity.

(Voltaire is general secretary, Freethought Party of India)

Parliament: Opposition seeks accountability from Government on Maha Kumbh tragedy

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Rajya Sabha on Monday witnessed uproar from the treasury benches after Leader of Opposition (LoP) and Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge paid tribute to 'thousands' who died in stampede in Maha Kumbh on January 29. Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar asked him to authenticate or retract the statement. Opposition MPs in the Lok Sabha also voiced strong concerns over the Kumbh Mela stampede, accusing the Government of negligence and insensitivity and calling for accountability. Kharge was quick to add that "this is my estimate (and) if this is not right you (the Government) should tell what is the truth". He said he was ready to be corrected. "I did not say 'thousands' to blame anyone. But how many people died, give that information at least. I will apologise if I am wrong. They should give figures how many died, how many are missing," he said. However, while participating in a debate on the Motion of Thanks to the President's address in Rajya Sabha, Kharge used the phrase "the thousands who died in Kumbh" to pay tributes to the deceased. "I pay my tributes to the people who died in Maha Kumbh... The thousands who died in



Delhi Vice President and Rajya Sabha Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar conducts proceedings of the House as LoP Mallikarjun Kharge speaks during the Budget session of Parliament, in New Delhi. PTI

Kumbh," he said, leading to the protest by the ruling members. Kharge, however, added this was his estimate and the government should provide the correct figures. "This is my estimate, if this is not right you should tell what is the truth... I am asking you to declare what the actual numbers are. If I am wrong I am ready to correct," he said. Dhankhar urged him to retract his statement. "The LoP has indicated a scenario using figures to the extent of thousands. I appeal to him, in this House, whatever is spoken, carries great weight. You have spoken something which has numbed everyone," Dhankhar said. "A message that goes from here, even if it is contradicted, goes to the whole world. Can you go to that extent? I would

appeal to you as one of senior most leaders of this country, if you put a figure in thousands I can only appeal to your conscience," he said. Meanwhile in Lok Sabha, Opposition MPs voiced strong concerns over the Kumbh Mela stampede, accusing the government of negligence and insensitivity and calling for accountability. Speaking during the debate on the Motion of Thanks to the President's Address, DMK MP Kanimozhi expressed her condolences and criticised the government for its failure to ensure the safety of pilgrims. "I would like to express my grief and empathy to the people who lost their lives in the Kumbh Mela stampede. These people

would be protected, but unfortunately, no one protected them," she said. The Lok Sabha on Monday witnessed prolonged noisy protests by opposition parties, demanding a discussion on the stampede in Uttar Pradesh's Prayagraj and a list of the deceased. She alleged that the Government's approach to governance has led to societal divisions. "When religion and politics merge, it is the innocent who suffer. We don't even know the exact number of people who died in the stampede," she remarked. Samajwadi Party MP Naresh Chandra Uttam Patel also lashed out at the Uttar Pradesh Government's handling of the Kumbh event. "The Kumbh Mela was not struck by a

natural disaster; it was a glaring example of the government's failure," he said. The SP MP questioned why the authorities had not anticipated the overwhelming number of attendees and why no list of the deceased had been released yet. "The double-engine government has made a mockery of governance. To date, we have no official count of those who lost their lives in the stampede," he said. Shifting focus to the broader state of affairs, Patel also criticised the government's handling of the education sector. Trinamool Congress MP Kakoli Ghosh Dastidar condemned the Government's response to the Kumbh tragedy, criticising the brevity of the President's mention of the incident. "Millions of Hindus were preparing for the Mahakumbh, and many poor people saved money for the Mauni Amavasya. It is sad to say that the President only spent 61 words on this tragedy. She has neither condemned the deaths nor sent condolence messages to the families of the deceased," she said. She further alleged discrepancies in the official death toll. "There is a clear discrepancy between the number of dead bodies in the morgue and the number of people reported missing. The same thing happened during Covid times," she added.

Delhi HC summons Shashi Tharoor in Rajeev Chandrasekhar defamation case



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Monday summoned Congress leader Shashi Tharoor on a defamation plea filed by BJP leader Rajeev Chandrasekhar, seeking Rs. 10 crore for damaging the reputation. Justice Purushendra Kumar Kaurav posted the matter on April 28. "Let the plaint be registered as a suit. Issue summons to the defendant (Tharoor). List before the joint registrar



on April 28," said the court. In his suit, Chandrasekhar claimed Tharoor made false and defamatory statements at various public fora in April, 2024 that severely damaged his professional and personal reputation. Chandrasekhar has sought to restrain Tharoor from making any defamatory statements. While seeking a public apology, he sought Rs 10 crore in damages from Tharoor for allegedly defaming and tarnishing his reputation. The BJP leader

filed the defamation case over Tharoor's purported statements during an interview to a television channel where the latter allegedly said Chandrasekhar offered money to voters during 2024 Lok Sabha polls. The BJP politician is represented by law firm Karanjawala and company. In a tightly fought contest in Lok Sabha election from Thiruvananthapuram, Tharoor won by over 16,000 votes, against Rajeev Chandrasekhar.

Manipur violence: SC seeks forensic report on audio clips against CM

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Saying the State was "limping back to normalcy", the Supreme Court on Monday sought a sealed-cover forensic report on the authenticity of leaked audio clips alleging the role of Manipur Chief Minister Biren Singh in the ethnic violence. A bench comprising Chief Justice Sanjiv Khanna and Justice Sanjay Kumar sought the report from the Central Forensic Science Laboratory (CFSL) within six weeks and posted the plea by the Kuki Organisation for Human Rights Trust (KOHUR) on March 24. KOHUR, represented by advocate Prashant Bhushan,



sought a court-monitored SIT probe into the alleged role of the chief minister in the ethnic violence. Justice Sanjay Kumar, who was the Chief Justice of the Manipur High Court before being

elevated to the top court, said, "The chief minister of Manipur had hosted a dinner for me when I was elevated to this court, so if you have an issue with me hearing the matter then you can tell

me..." Bhushan said he did not have a problem at all. "The state is gradually limping back to normalcy and we will keep it (the matter) on hold at the moment," the CJI said. The bench would later see whether the top court or the high court should hear the case. Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the State, was in agreement with the observations. Bhushan, however, termed the contents of the audio leaks a "very serious matter" and said in the clips the chief minister was purportedly saying that Meitei groups were allowed to loot arms and ammunition of the state government. "I have annexed

transcripts of tape recordings," he added. The Solicitor General said the petitioner had "ideological inclinations" and there was a report by the three high court judges' committee stating there were efforts to keep the "pot boiling." "A truth lab confirmed that 93 per cent it is the voice of the chief minister," said Bhushan, "and truth labs are far more reliable than the FSL reports." The law officer questioned the veracity of the report of the truth lab. On November 8, last year, a bench headed by former CJI D Y Chandrachud directed the Kuki organisation to produce material to indicate

authenticity of some leaked audio clips. Bhushan alleged the recorded conversation prima facie showed the complicity and the involvement of the state machinery in violence against the Kuki Zo community. He said the clips had "disturbing conversations" and the chief minister could be heard instigating the violence and protecting the attackers while fuelling the violence aside from allowing arms and ammunition to be looted. The Kuki organisation's plea alleged the chief minister of Manipur was instrumental in "inciting, organising and thereafter centrally orchestrating the large-scale

murder, destruction and other forms of violence against the Kuki dominated areas in Manipur". "Petitioner is praying for a court-monitored investigation by special investigation team into the leaked audio tape clips as there is clear and strong prima facie evidence showing involvement of highest functionary, i.e., chief minister of a state. The investigation would need to unearth the conspiracy which appears to involve the highest functionary of state," it added. The plea said the investigation couldn't be done by the CBI, ED, etc., and would have to be carried out by a special investigative

team of officers of impeccable integrity selected by the top court. Asked about the clip during a recent PTI interview, Chief Minister Singh said, "Some people are after me... There is a conspiracy. The matter is sub-judice. I won't talk much about it. An FIR has been filed." Over 200 people were killed and thousands rendered homeless after Meitei and Kuki communities clashed with each other in May last year. Bhushan alleged the recorded conversation prima facie showed the complicity and the involvement of the state machinery in violence against the Kuki Zo community.

Punjab CM Bhagwant Mann urges Delhi voters to choose AAP

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann said people in Delhi will have to choose between education, development and women's upliftment on one side and "misconduct" on the other as they go out to vote on Wednesday. He led multiple roadshows on the last day of campaigning on Monday and encouraged people to vote for the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) on February 5 to sustain Delhi's development. Mann held roadshows in Adarsh Nagar and Shalimar Bagh to support AAP candidates Mukesh Goel and Bandana Kumari. "Today is the last day of the election campaign, and February 5 will be your last



day to decide which party to bring to power," said Mann. "On one side, there is a party that supports education, women's upliftment, and development; on the other

side, there is a party that engages in misconduct." "I don't know about 'Achhe Din' but the Aam Aadmi Party will surely bring honest and better days," Mann said referring to BJP's

widely known poll slogan that was first used during the 2014 Lok Sabha elections. "If the AAP comes to power, every household in Delhi will be able to save at least Rs 20,000 to Rs 25,000 per month," he asserted referring to the party's 'Bachat Patra' -- savings made by people due to the AAP government's schemes. Mann further stated, "The Bharatiya Janata Party has a lot of money—they may come today, tonight, tomorrow, or the day after with money. He said if "they come to offer you money, take it and buy essentials with it" but press the "broom" button -- AAP's poll symbol -- to ensure AAP victory. Voting for Delhi Assembly election is scheduled for February 5 and results will be declared on February 8.

BJP leader Kiran Choudhry slams Opposition

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Bhartiya Janta Party (BJP) leader Kiran Choudhry on Monday criticized Opposition parties, saying they are bereft of ideas and trying to build a false narrative against the Modi government, as the Rajya Sabha started a discussion on 'Motion of Thanks On The President's Address'. Moving the motion in the Upper House, Choudhry said the Prime Minister has addressed all the important issues, which had been lying dormant for a long time because of policy paralysis and the indifferent attitude of the erstwhile Congress government. "And it is heartening to know that Modi has put Bharat on the centre stage of the world community," said the BJP MP



from Haryana. President Droupadi Murmu on Friday, the first day of the Budget Session, addressed both the Houses of Parliament assembled together in the Lok Sabha chamber and said the pace of work has tripled in the third term of her government, which has worked with strong determination to lift the economy out of the state of "policy paralysis".

Launching a scathing attack on the Opposition, Choudhry said they are running a false narrative and trying to paint a wrong picture of the Narendra Modi government. She said the Modi-led government has taken transformative steps to find holistic solutions to address all important issues. "The opposition parties, who are bereft of all agenda, are trying to paint this government as anti-farmer, patriarchal, misogynist, majoritarian and despotic. This false propaganda is born out of their desperation for their plummeting political fortunes," she said. Choudhry said the false narrative of Opposition has been rejected by the people and cited the resounding victories of the BJP in recently concluded assembly elections in Haryana and Maharashtra.

Gurugram Police arrest accused in model assault case at Dorsia club

STAFF REPORTER ■ GURUGRAM

A man was arrested on Monday for allegedly beating a 31-year-old man inside a club on January 28, police said. The victim was identified as Nikhil Sehrawat, originally from Mohan Garden in Uttam Nagar, Delhi, who was currently living in Anantraj Estate in Sector-63 Gurugram. It is being said that the victim was a model by profession. The accused was identified as Rohit, a resident of Gwal Pahari of Gurugram. According to the police, the victim filed a complaint on January 28 that he went to the Dorsia Club located on Gurugram-Faridabad Road on January 25 with his friends. The victim alleged that after having food he started dancing. Meanwhile, the bouncers pushed him on the instructions of the club owner. They started pulling him out and attacked him with sticks and weapons. The victim was later undergone nose surgery at a hospital in Delhi. On the complaint of the victim model, the police have registered a case and started an investigation. Based on his complaint a case was registered against the club owner and the bouncer at the DLF Phase-1 police station. Meanwhile, during interrogation, the accused disclosed that the victim had consumed excessive alcohol and got injured during the scuffle while being taken out of the club. "In connection with the matter, an accused has been arrested for assaulting the victim. The investigation team is scrutinizing the CCTV footage of the club to identify the remaining accused," Sandeep, spokesperson of the Gurugram police, said.

WHO warns of 85 per cent rise in cancer cases in south-east Asia by 2050

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The South-East Asia Region reported the highest number of cancers of lips and oral cavity, uterine cervix, and childhood cancers among all World Health Organisation regions in 2022, regional director of the WHO SEAR Saima Wazed said on Monday. She said it is estimated that by 2050, there will be 85 per cent increase in the number of new cancer cases and deaths in the region. Wazed, who is the regional director of World Health Organisation South East Asian Region (WHO-SEAR) called for joint efforts led by governments, supported by WHO and partners, and through collaboration that will make the region better equipped to tackle the rising cancer burden. Ahead of World Cancer Day



on February 4, she said, "On this year's World Cancer Day themed 'United by Unique', which is a reminder of the collective commitment against cancer, WHO acknowledges every patient's unique experiences and the value of people-centred care delivered

jointly by healthcare providers, families, friends and community". The WHO South-East Asia Region reported 2.4 million new cases of cancer in 2022, including 56,000 children, and 1.5 million deaths. "Among all the WHO regions, our region had the

highest number of cancers of lips and oral cavity, uterine cervix, and childhood cancers. It is estimated that by 2050, there will be 85 per cent increase in the number of new cases and deaths in the region," Wazed stated. In the last few years, she said

the countries in the region have made notable progress in cancer control. Six countries have dedicated national plans for cancer control, and two countries have included cancer as part of national NCD plan to strategically guide cancer prevention and control activities. Bhutan successfully completed the Health Flagship project in 2020, where more than 90 per cent of the target populations were screened for gastric, cervical, and breast cancer each, with screened positives being linked to diagnosis and treatment. The country is currently integrating the model into mainstream health services. Through the 'Cancer Anywhere' program, Thailand has adopted universal health coverage approach to cancer management. Eight

countries have introduced nationwide Human Papillomavirus vaccination. Global initiative for childhood cancer is being implemented in ten countries through a regional network of institutions, she said. Seven countries have operational population-based cancer registries. In ten countries, tertiary level cancer care is generally available, reaching 50 per cent or more patients in need, she said. The region has seen the fastest rate of decline in tobacco use which is a major risk factor for several high burden cancers. WHO has worked closely with all the member states supporting these efforts. "There are, however, persistent challenges," Wazed said pointing out that the response to cancer control is not uniform among countries.

"National cancer control programmes and plans are not fully aligned with evidence or best practices resulting in their ineffective implementation. Policies and guidance on control of cancer-causing agents prevalent in the region, such as areca nut, is lacking," she said. Existing cancer prevention policies and programmes are not fully implemented, leading to millions of avoidable cases. Cancer services are included in health benefit packages in only six countries, Wazed stated. "Screening for specific cancers is low. For example, cervical cancer screening has less than 50 per cent coverage in seven countries, which is much below the target of 70 per cent required for elimination of cervical cancer as a public health problem," she said.

Third Amrit Snan draws millions in a spectacle of faith and devotion

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ MAHAKUMBH NAGAR

The third grand 'Amrit Snan' of the Maha Kumbh took place on the auspicious occasion of Basant Panchami, drawing millions of devotees from across the globe to the sacred confluence of the Ganga, Yamuna, and the mythical Saraswati at Triveni Sangam. Pilgrims, sadhus, and kalpavasis gathered in massive numbers, seeking spiritual liberation through the holy dip, reinforcing the centuries-old faith that a bath in these holy waters cleanses one of past sins and paves the way for moksha (salvation). At the break of dawn, the ceremonial bathing processions began with the arrival of the revered Naga sadhus, their bodies smeared in ash, wielding tridents, and chanting sacred hymns. The akharas, following the time-honored tradition, led the way as thousands watched in reverence. By evening, around 2 crore devotees had performed the sacred ritual, raising the total number of bathers since January 13 to an estimated 35 crore, according to Information Director Shishir.

This staggering figure includes 10 lakh kalpavasis, who observe a month-long spiritual retreat, and 6.58 lakh general pilgrims. The significance of this year's Maha Kumbh is further heightened by the rare 'Triveni Yog,' a celestial alignment that occurs once in 144 years, believed by astrologers to magnify the spiritual potency of the event. For many devotees, this was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. "This is not just a bath; it is a divine calling. The presence of Triveni Yog makes it all the more sacred," said Manoj Tripathi, a pilgrim from Varanasi. Another devotee, Kamala Devi from Rajasthan, expressed her joy: "I feel blessed to be here. I have waited my entire life for this moment. The energy is divine, and I feel spiritually uplifted." However, the spiritual fervor was accompanied by heightened security concerns following the tragic stampede during the previous 'Amrit Snan' on Mauni Amavasya, which resulted in at least 30 deaths and left 60 others injured. In response, the Uttar Pradesh government has significantly intensified security and



Naga Sadhus' arrive to take a holy dip at the Sangam on the occasion of Basant Panchami in Prayagraj. PTI

protocols. Additional personnel, medical teams, and emergency response units were deployed to maintain order and facilitate a "zero-error" bathing experience. "After the unfortunate incident, we have doubled security personnel at key entry and exit points, ensuring a regulated flow of devotees. Our priority is to protect the faith and lives of all who come here," said a senior police official overseeing the arrangements. A devotee from Madhya Pradesh, Ravi Sharma, praised the government's efforts, saying, "The arrangements are much better this time. The administration has ensured smooth movement, and I felt safe throughout the process." As per tradition, the three main sects—Sanyasi, Bairagi, and Udaseen—performed their ceremonial dips in a predetermined sequence. Each akhara was allotted a 40-minute window at the confluence, with the first group completing their ritual and returning to their camps by 8:30 a.m. Akhil Bharatiya Akhara Parishad head Ravindra Puri expressed his satisfaction with the

arrangements. "The administration has taken extensive measures to ensure a smooth and disciplined bathing experience. The Naga sadhus and all akharas are content with the coordination," he said. Another sadhu, Mahant Gopal Das, added, "This Kumbh is a reflection of our collective devotion. The discipline and faith of devotees inspire us all." Stretching across a 12-kilometer radius, the ghats of Sangam remained densely packed with devotees, many carrying traditional danda-kamandalu (wooden staff and water pot), while others walked with bundles on their heads and shoulder bags, chanting religious hymns. "The atmosphere is surreal, filled with devotion and purity. It is a blessing to be part of this divine congregation," said Sadhvi Ganga Bharti, a pilgrim from Haridwar. Another participant, Ramesh Yadav from Bihar, described his experience: "Taking a dip in the Sangam is a moment of complete surrender. I feel rejuvenated in mind and soul."



UP CM monitors Amrit Snan arrangements from war room

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ MAHAKUMBH NAGAR

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath closely monitored the arrangements for the Amrit Snan on Basant Panchami, convening a high-level meeting in the war room at his official residence at 3:30 AM. Receiving real-time updates from Director General of Police (DGP), Principal Secretary (Home), and officials from the Chief Minister's Office, he issued key directives to ensure a smooth and secure event. Reviewing security and logistical preparations, the Chief Minister emphasized seamless arrangements,

instructing officials to ensure that devotees faced no inconvenience. He stressed the need for heightened security at the bathing ghats, directing authorities to implement strict safety protocols and finalize all essential arrangements. With lakhs of devotees participating in the sacred dip at Triveni Sangam, CM Yogi placed special focus on administrative preparedness, including crowd management and traffic control. His proactive monitoring underscored the government's commitment to ensuring a well-organized and spiritually enriching Amrit Snan at Maha Kumbh.

Agni Snan Sadhana of Vaishnav Akharas begins on Basant Panchami



BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ MAHAKUMBH NAGAR

Prayagraj Mahakumbh is witnessing the convergence of various spiritual resolutions and rigorous sadhanas. Among them, the Panch Dhuni Tapasya, also known as Agni Snan Sadhana, commenced with the Amrit Snan festival on Basant Panchami. Mahakumbh is a sacred land of chanting, penance, and sadhana, where ascetics can be seen deeply immersed in their spiritual practices in every corner. A unique and intense sadhana has begun in Tapasvi Nagar on the occasion of Basant Panchami, sparking great

curiosity among devotees. This sadhana, called Panch Dhuni Tapasya or Agni Snan Sadhana, is an extraordinary practice where the sadhak (ascetic) surrounds himself with multiple circles of fire and meditates at the center. The intensity of the flames, which can scorch human skin in an instant, is multiplied several times, making this a supreme test of endurance and spiritual discipline. There is a tradition of this Agni Snan sadhana in Khalsa of Vaishnav Akhara, which is done after reaching a state of extreme sacrifice and restraint. Mahant Raghav Das of Shri

Digambar Ani Akhara explains that this practice is a special sadhana of the All India Panch Terah Bhai Tyagi Khalsa of Digambar Ani Akhara, the principal Akhara of Vaishnav tradition. The sadhana follows a rigorous cycle lasting eighteen years, with practitioners enduring the extreme heat and flames for five months every year. This extended period of penance is not only a spiritual pursuit but also a test of endurance and ascetic capability. Upon successfully completing this arduous journey, the ascetic earns the revered title of Vairagi.



Floral showers enchant devotees on last Amrit Snan

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ MAHAKUMBH NAGAR

The final Amrit Snan of Maha Kumbh 2025 on Basant Panchami turned into a mesmerizing spectacle as crores of devotees at the Sangam were showered with rose petals from helicopters. Under the Yogi government's directive, the grand floral tribute elevated the spiritual fervor of the sacred bathing ritual on Monday. Starting at 6:30 AM, as Akharas began their ritualistic dip in the holy confluence, helicopters

released a continuous cascade of fresh rose petals over the ghats. Devotees, saints, and Naga Sadhus stood in awe as the petals descended upon them, chanting "Jai Shri Ram" and "Har Har Mahadev," creating a divine atmosphere. The Uttar Pradesh Horticulture Department, following the government's elaborate plans for Maha Kumbh's bathing festivals, ensured the availability of fresh rose petals for the occasion. A staggering 20 quintals of

petals were used for each bathing event, a tradition that has been maintained since Paus Purnima and the first Amrit Snan on Makar Sankranti. The floral tribute was also a highlight of the second Amrit Snan on Mauni Amavasya. The breathtaking aerial floral showers not only enhanced the spiritual grandeur of the event but also left devotees with an unforgettable experience, marking a fitting culmination to the sacred Amrit Snans of Maha Kumbh 2025.

Naga Sadhus steal spotlight at Triveni Sangam

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ MAHAKUMBH NAGAR

The Naga Sadhus emerged as the center of attraction during the final Amrit Snan of Maha Kumbh 2025, mesmerizing thousands of devotees with their ancient traditions, martial arts, and spiritual fervor. Their disciplined rituals and striking presence on the banks of the Triveni Sangam created an atmosphere of awe and reverence. Leading the procession of Akharas in the sacred bathing ritual, the ascetics demonstrated their mastery of weaponry, expertly wielding spears, swords, and tridents. The rhythmic beats of the damru and the display of traditional combat techniques amplified the grandeur of the event, drawing both devotees and media alike. The Shobha



Yatra, organized for the Amrit Snan on Basant Panchami, was a spectacle to behold. Some Naga Sadhus rode majestically on horses, while others walked barefoot, adorned with

garlands, sacred ash, and matted hair decorated with flowers. Their fierce yet disciplined demeanor, guided by their Akhara leaders, highlighted their unwavering commitment to

asceticism. The energy of the Naga Sadhus was palpable as they performed martial arts, danced to the beats of drums, and engaged with onlookers. Many devotees

captured the electrifying moments on their mobile phones, while the Sadhus, in turn, welcomed them into their world of traditions. Some even added a touch of modernity by donning black sunglasses, blending their ancient customs with contemporary intrigue. As they took their ritual dip at the confluence of the Ganga, Yamuna, and the mythical Saraswati, the Naga Sadhus maintained their distinct style—splashing water, laughing, and playfully interacting with one another. Their joyous participation enhanced the spiritual aura of the Maha Kumbh, reinforcing its significance as a grand confluence of faith, tradition, and nature. Alongside the male Naga Sadhus, a significant number of female Naga Sanyasis also participated in the sacred rituals. Dressed in

saffron, unstitched garments, these women have renounced worldly ties, undergoing rigorous spiritual discipline that includes performing Pind Daan for their ancestors and even for themselves—a symbolic gesture of complete detachment. Their presence sparked great curiosity among devotees eager to learn more about their ascetic way of life. Through their remarkable displays of devotion, discipline, and tradition, the Naga Sadhus reaffirmed that the Maha Kumbh is more than just a religious gathering—it is a profound celebration of spirituality, heritage, and the deep-rooted bond between humanity and the divine. Their mesmerizing presence at Maha Kumbh 2025 ensures that this event will be etched in the memories of devotees for years to come.

King of Bhutan set to visit Mahakumbh on Tuesday



BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ MAHAKUMBH NAGAR

King of Bhutan, Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck, arrived in Lucknow on Monday. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath warmly welcomed the King at Chaudhary Charan Singh International Airport. The Chief Minister presented a bouquet to the King and inquired about his well-being. In return, the King of Bhutan

extended his greetings to CM Yogi Adityanath. In keeping with Indian tradition, artists welcomed the King with various cultural performances at the airport. Wangchuck acknowledged their efforts and encouraged the artists. On Tuesday, the King of Bhutan is set to visit Prayagraj Mahakumbh, where he will take a holy bath at the Triveni Sangam and perform darshan and Pujan at the sacred site.

Ayodhya sets record as over one Crore devotees visit since January 26

KAMLESH SRIVASTAVA ■ AYODHYA

Ayodhya has set a new record with over one crore devotees visiting the holy city between January 26 and Basant Panchami (February 3). Amid vigilant administrative arrangements, devotees arriving in Ayodhya are filled with joy and devotion, chanting slogans in praise of Modi, Yogi, and Lord Shri Ram. On Basant Panchami, lakhs of devotees performed sacred baths and offered prayers, further enriching the spiritual

atmosphere. For the first time since Ramlala was enthroned in the grand temple, Mahakumbh is being held in Prayagraj, drawing an influx of pilgrims to Ayodhya as well. Anticipating this, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath had deployed a dedicated team of officials to oversee the arrangements and ensure a seamless experience for devotees. Following a public meeting in Milkipur on February 2, he reinforced instructions to officials, emphasizing that no devotee should face any



difficulty. The sacred bathing ritual on Basant Panchami began at dawn and continued until the afternoon, accompanied by acts of charity and devotion. Devotees then proceeded to mathas and temples for darshan, with queues stretching till late evening at Ram Temple and Hanuman Garhi. The Ram Temple remains the spiritual epicenter of Ayodhya, attracting around three lakh devotees daily. The temple trust has made elaborate arrangements to facilitate darshan, keeping the temple

open for 18 hours a day. Hanuman Garhi continues to witness a steady stream of devotees, reinforcing Ayodhya's deep-rooted spiritual significance. The mathas and temples of Ayodhya witnessed vibrant celebrations on Basant Panchami, as sadhus and saints joyfully played with colors, marking the festive spirit. As part of the rituals, abir and gulal were also applied to the deity seated in the sanctum sanctorum. Ramlala, was adorned in new yellow garments, symbolizing the arrival of spring. According to

the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Tirtha Kshetra Trust, gulal was applied to Ramlala, and priests exchanged it as prasad, enhancing the spiritual atmosphere. A variety of offerings, including kheer, puri, dry fruits, and fruits, were presented as part of the sacred rituals. While Prayagraj offers vast spaces for ritual baths, Ayodhya's focus remains on Ramlala, drawing massive crowds to a concentrated area. Managing such a large gathering was a significant challenge, but effective administrative planning and

strategy ensured smooth coordination. IG Praveen Kumar highlighted key measures implemented for crowd management, including road diversions, designated parking areas, and a substantial police deployment to maintain order. Entry to the fairgrounds was regulated based on safety protocols, ensuring a hassle-free experience for devotees. Divisional Commissioner Gaurav Dayal affirmed that officers are monitoring the fair zone 24/7, with arrangements in place to accommodate 25,000 to 30,000 people.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Quest for clean energy

With a strong financial backing, the country is poised to make nuclear power a cornerstone of its energy mix

As India continues its journey toward energy transition and sustainability, the role of nuclear power has become increasingly vital. The Union Budget 2025-26, presented by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, earmarked Rs 20,000 crore for the Nuclear Energy Mission, aiming to significantly enhance India's nuclear energy capacity. This ambitious initiative is set to propel India towards achieving at least 100 GW of nuclear energy capacity by 2047, a significant leap from the current 8 GW. Presently, nuclear energy constitutes less than 2 per cent of India's total energy mix. With an installed capacity of 8 GW, India's nuclear sector lags behind other energy sources, such as coal, solar and wind. The Modi government is prioritising nuclear power as a stable and clean energy source. The July 2024 Budget had already set the stage for nuclear expansion by highlighting the need to amend the Atomic Energy Act of 1962 to allow private sector participation in nuclear power generation. The 2025-26 Budget builds upon this foundation by reinforcing the push for small modular reactors (SMRs). India's ambitious renewable energy targets include achieving 500 GW of non-fossil fuel energy capacity by 2030. While solar and wind energy play a crucial role in this mix, they are subject to weather conditions and require large-scale energy storage solutions. Nuclear energy, on the other hand, provides continuous, low-carbon power without the intermittency issues of renewables. SMRs, with a capacity of up to 300 MW, offer distinct advantages over conventional nuclear reactors. Their modular design allows for quicker assembly, reduced costs and enhanced safety features. By promoting indigenously developed SMRs, India aims to increase its self-reliance in nuclear technology and reduce dependency on foreign nations. The allocation of Rs 20,000 crore under the Nuclear Energy Mission signals a clear intent to boost nuclear power generation. This funding will support research and development in indigenous nuclear technologies, particularly SMRs. Infrastructure development will be a key focus, with plans to set up at least five SMRs by 2033 as part of a long-term nuclear expansion plan. Despite its benefits, nuclear energy in India faces several challenges. Regulatory barriers exist due to the Atomic Energy Act and the Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act, which currently limit private sector involvement and require amendments. Public concerns on safety remain a significant issue, as nuclear accidents worldwide have created scepticism, necessitating stringent safety protocols. Technological monopolies present another challenge, as nuclear technology is concentrated among a few global players, making domestic capacity-building initiatives essential. But a push for nuclear energy is the need of the hours. It will reduce country's carbon footprint, enhance energy security, and meet its growing electricity demands sustainably.



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PICTALK



People fly kites at the annual Basant Panchmi festival in Amritsar

Budget 2025: A game changer for MSMEs and startups

With focus on financial accessibility, technology and market linkages, the budget will strengthen India's startup ecosystem and boost employment



MANISH SINGHAL

Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) are the backbone of India's economic structure, contributing nearly 30 per cent to GDP, 45 per cent to our exports and generating employment for over 200 millions. The budget for 2025-26 holds much promise for the 5.7 crore MSMEs in India. As India chases its 'Viksit Bharat' dream, Agriculture, the MSME sector, Investment and Exports have been identified as the key engines for driving growth. MSMEs account for about 27 per cent of India's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), positioning themselves as the backbone of economic activity and growth.

Ranging from small-scale artisans and local service providers to growing businesses across rural and urban India, MSMEs are diverse and significantly contribute to industrial output and innovation in India. In line with the government's recognition of MSMEs as the 'second engine' of economic expansion, the 2025-26 Budget introduces key reforms to enhance financial accessibility, technological adoption, and market linkages. A notable step was the enhancement of the credit guarantee cover for MSMEs from Rs 5 crores to Rs 10 crores, leading to additional credit of Rs 1.5 lakh crore over the next 5 years. By enhancing the investment and turnover limits, the 20.09 million registered MSMEs (19.4 million micro-enterprises, 5,54,000 small enterprises and 52,000 medium enterprises) now have greater and easier access to capital for technological upgradation and to build efficiencies. Traditionally, MSMEs have battled limited access to affordable and timely credit, inadequate infrastructure, and complex regulations. The increased guarantee cover addresses one of the major pain points for MSMEs and start-ups while the budget's continued emphasis on skilling promises an ongoing supply of skilled labour. As of January 2025, India has over 159,000 recognised startups, securing its place as the



world's third-largest startup ecosystem. The special funding options for start-ups and first-time entrepreneurs in the budget are likely to encourage more individuals to start businesses, innovate and generate employment. In this regard, to additional Rs 10,000 crore Fund of Funds Scheme (FFS) and the proposed Deep Tech Fund will provide crucial capital for startups, particularly in AI, Climate Tech, and Agri Tech. Enhanced MSME support and policies will improve the ease of doing business and further accelerate growth for future entrepreneurs. The new simplified taxation and regulatory framework will attract private capital, which in turn will further accelerate growth. Many MSMEs are labour-intensive. Key industries like leather, and textiles are major employment generators. The focus on improving productivity and quality of the leather industry goods through Government schemes that support design, machinery etc will positively impact the sector's export potential and generate employment too. With the Government's aim to make India a global hub for toys, MSMEs can consider setting up units in identified clusters to create an ecosystem that manufactures world-class toys while pro-



THE DIRECT TAX BENEFITS PROVIDED IN THE BUDGET WILL BOLSTER CONSUMPTION-LED DEMAND THROUGH ENHANCED DISPOSABLE INCOMES IN THE HANDS OF TAXPAYERS. THIS WILL FURTHER GIVE IMPETUS TO MSME PRODUCTION AND ENHANCE THEIR OVERALL GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

moting Indian toy makers, who can perhaps use the infrastructure in these clusters to explore overseas markets. Food processing is another sector that has received attention in the budget and which can make the MSME sector in our country more robust. It gives our farmers an opportunity to sell their produce, gives businesses an opportunity to add value and also generates employment in the north-east region which needs more economic opportunities. The direct tax benefits provided in the Budget will bolster consumption-led demand through enhanced disposable incomes in the hands of taxpayers. This will further give impetus to MSME production and enhance their overall growth and development. Agriculture is the backbone of the Indian economy and has rightfully received attention in the budget. Most of our farmers hold small and medium land areas and come under the MSME category. By focusing on 100 districts with low productivity, moderate crop intensity and below-average credit parameters, the farming output will get a boost. Missions promoting pulse cultivation, and fruit and vegetable cultivation are bound to improve agricultural practices, infrastructure,

employment opportunities, access to credit and promote the food processing industry. It will also help develop the backward areas of rural India and curtail urban migration significantly. The substantial increase in credit through Kisan credit cards is also commendable. India's traditional textiles have received a lift with the mission to improve cotton production using sustainable practices and technological support. Not just cotton farmers, but the Indian textile industry has a chance to reclaim its past glory, especially with the political upheaval in neighbouring Bangladesh pushing textile units there into a tailspin. The proposal to transform India Post into a large supply chain across rural India will link up rural artisans to entrepreneurs and markets. While these measures could significantly enhance the growth trajectory of MSMEs and startups, solidifying their role as key drivers of the Indian economy, the need for simpler cross-border payments to enable seamless global trade and include service exports under interest equalisation schemes could further reduce operational hurdles and encourage more units to be set up. (The writer is Secretary General, ASSOCHAM, views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

AMERICA RAISES TARIFFS

Madam—The United States has decided to increase tariffs on Canada, Mexico and China. This step can be considered significant in enhancing America's self-reliance and strengthening domestic industries. From the American perspective, this policy aims to boost their economy, increase domestic employment opportunities, and reduce the trade deficit. It will lead to a higher demand for local products in the US, thereby strengthening its production capacity.

For India, this situation could open new opportunities. The additional 10 per cent tariff on China may benefit Indian exporters, as it could make Indian products more competitive in the US market. Sectors such as textiles, IT and automobiles are particularly likely to experience growth in exports. Moreover, this decision could also support India's 'Make in India' initiative. If India strengthens its manufacturing capabilities, it could become a better alternative to China for the US. This situation has the potential to further deepen India-US trade relations. Thus, while this policy might pose challenges for some countries, it could create new opportunities for developing nations like India. If India aligns its production and export strategies effectively, it can emerge as a key player in global trade.

R K Jain | Barwani

TAX RELIEF FOR MIDDLE CLASS

Madam—This year's Union Budget of FY 2025-26 is one of the most special ones among every such Union Budget being presented in Modi's prime ministerial term. One of the welcoming aspects of the budget is its substantial focus on the middle class section of society. So far, in the last decade, the Budget's so on the table were serving the two extremes of the society, either the poor class or the rich class. In an attempt to please these extreme sections of society, the government often misses the opportunity to cater to the aspirations of the larger line of society formed by the middle class. The cherry on the cake for the

Women U-19 win T20 World Cup



India beat South Africa by nine wickets in the 2025 U-19 T20 World Cup final at the Bayuemas Oval in the Malaysian capital of Kuala Lumpur. Champions India won all their group-stage matches against West Indies, Malaysia and Sri Lanka before getting the better of Bangladesh and Scotland in the Super Six. In the semifinal, they defeated England to make it six wins on the bounce. Meanwhile, South Africa topped Group C with wins over New Zealand, Samoa, and Nigeria.

In the Super Six round, South Africa defeated Ireland but had to share points with the USA after the game was abandoned due to rain. In the semifinal, they defeated Australia by five wickets to seal their spot in the final. In the final, India defeated South Africa by nine wickets to win the coveted trophy.

Jayanthi S Maniam | Mumbai

middle class people is the increase in the personal income tax slab from erstwhile 7 to 12 lakhs. Just like the government tries every possible attempt to lure the state of Bihar with multiple announcements, similarly, the government's focus on the middle class is welcoming.

The nutritional scheme-like revamping of the poshan abhiyaan, the establishment of five centres of excellence for skilling, Saksham Anganwadi, the National Manufacturing Mission, and so on are among the welcoming initiatives from the side of the government. We hope that the middle-class section of society will happily enjoy the upcoming year with quality improvement on their wellbeing and attentive focus. Hopefully the middle class businessmen as well as the salary class will gain from the welcoming developments announced in the budget 2025-26.

Kirti Wadhawan | Kanpur

SONIA GANDHI DRAWS FLAK

Madam—Apropos of the headlines (February 1) 'Rashtrapati Bhavan Slams the Congress' and PM Modi's scathing attack

on Congress, Sonia Gandhi's unsavoury comments on President Draupadi Murmu have been widely criticised in public. The slangs like 'boring', 'tired', and 'poor lady' demean the supreme constitutional authority and supreme commander of armed forces. In the presidential elections, Congress had opposed President Murmu. Embroiling the president in a political wrangle must be condemned. Congress is setting new records of low politics. The ruckus the Congress party created on Hindenburg reports in the Parliament, media, and demonstrations met the inevitable tragic end when the Hindenburg Research wound up its operations. Nothing could be proved, but of course, it misled the people. Congress has not spared any constitutional authority from the Election Commission, CAG, Supreme Court and now the President herself. Congress has finally written its script of losing credibility as a political party.

Vinod Johri | Delhi

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

The human touch in AI: Why we anthropomorphise machines

As AI continues to evolve, it is crucial to maintain clear boundaries between machine intelligence and human cognition



BIJU DHARMAPALAN

In an era increasingly defined by artificial intelligence (AI), a curious psychological phenomenon has emerged—humans are anthropomorphising AI tools. From virtual assistants like Siri and Alexa to large language models like ChatGPT, people often ascribe human-like emotions, intentions and even personalities to these systems. While this tendency may seem benign or even endearing, it has profound implications for society, ethics, and the way we perceive technology. By giving AI tools human-like names, voices and personalities, developers create a sense of familiarity and comfort. For instance, when Alexa responds with a cheerful "Hello!" or when ChatGPT uses conversational language to explain complex topics, users are more likely to feel at ease. This human-like interaction fosters trust, making people more willing to rely on AI for tasks ranging from scheduling appointments to providing emotional support. A lot of evidence points to psychological causes for this behaviour. As a species, we have an innate propensity to



attribute human characteristics to things that do not exist. Even inanimate things, like animals and objects, can have feelings and purposes. The advent of AI has amplified this tendency to an unprecedented degree by creating tools that can engage in decision-making, interactive communication and natural language processing in ways that are reminiscent of humans. Incorporating human-like characteristics into AI systems takes advantage of this natural propensity, making them appear more relatable and trustworthy. While the benefits of anthropomorphising AI are evident, the practice is not without its pitfalls. When AI tools are designed to mimic human behaviour too closely, users may forget they are interact-

ing with a machine. This blurring of lines can lead to over-reliance, misplaced trust, and even exploitation. For instance, a user might confide deeply personal information to a chatbot, unaware that their data could be stored, analysed, or misused. Deploying AI tools in delicate situations raises even more serious ethical concerns. Take into account the application of AI in counselling and treatment. Although a chatbot designed to mimic human behaviour can offer some assistance, it can't replace a human expert when it comes to empathy and moral reasoning. Users' potential misunderstanding of AI as a substitute for human therapists highlights the importance of openness and limits. The ethical ramifications of anthropomorphisation need to be considered by regulators and lawmakers as AI becomes more integrated into everyday life. AI tools do not yet possess awareness, emotions, or free will; thus, companies must be forthright in informing consumers of these limits. Another important point is

that AI could be used in a deceptive way. Companies and governments might use human-like AI to make convincing and emotionally engaging connections. AI chatbots used for customer service or political campaigns might quietly sway people's views and choices, which raises concerns about ethics and whether users agree to this influence. While AI can enhance productivity, creativity, and convenience, it is essential to maintain a clear distinction between human intelligence and machine intelligence. Designers should focus on developing efficient and useful AI without encouraging unrealistic emotional attachments. Additionally, individuals should cultivate a healthy scepticism toward AI interactions, recognising the sophisticated abilities yet realising that they are fundamentally non-human. The moment humans forget social interactions and machines start social interactions, it's the end of humanity. (The writer is the Dean-Academic Affairs, at Garden City University; views are personal)



FIRST COLUMN

A PARENTING GUIDE FOR THE DIGITAL AGE

This new era of parenting demands a thoughtful, proactive approach to raising future-ready generations



SHAINY SHARMA

The 21st century has introduced new challenges and opportunities in parenting. As we raise Generation Alpha (born 2012-2024) and Generation Beta (born 2025-2039), it is crucial to adapt parenting strategies to their digital upbringing, rapid technological advancements and changing societal norms. Ensuring these children grow up healthy, happy and disciplined requires a balance of traditional values and modern approaches.

There is no denying that, unlike previous generations, Generation Alpha and Generation Beta are growing up with easy access to technology, which affects their lifestyle habits. It is of utmost importance that parents/guardians take proactive steps to ensure their children's wellbeing such as providing balanced nutrition such as a diet rich in proteins, vitamins and fibres while limiting processed foods and sugary snacks; reducing screen time and promoting physical activities such as cycling, swimming and team sports to improve fitness and social skills; setting screen-free bedtime routines to ensure quality sleep, which is crucial for the cognitive and emotional development and encouraging children to spend time offline by engaging in hands-on activities like painting, gardening and DIY projects.

Not only these, but in an era of social media influence and fast-paced lifestyles, parents/guardians need to support their children by creating a strong emotional connection; encouraging resilience and a growth mindset; guiding them in reducing digital overload, and engaging them in mindful activities such as yoga, meditation, journaling, or simple relaxation exercises to help them cope with



stress. Above all, what matters the most is the art of discipline. With instant gratification becoming a norm in the digital age, parents/guardians must realise that these generations will grow up in an AI-driven world, requiring skills beyond academics. Parents/Guardians can help prepare them by encouraging critical thinking and creativity and providing problem-solving challenges, STEM activities and artistic outlets.

They can also provide proper guidance on responsible internet usage, cybersecurity and online ethics, followed by developing social skills in a hybrid world. Raising healthy, happy and disciplined Gen Alpha and Gen Beta children requires a thoughtful blend of love, guidance, and adaptability. Parents/Guardians must embrace new-age parenting by integrating digital awareness with traditional values while fostering emotional resilience and self-discipline.

By prioritising wellbeing, education and strong moral foundations, one can ensure these generations grow into responsible, fulfilled, and future-ready individuals. Also, by providing proper nutrition, encouraging physical and mental wellbeing, fostering social skills, and setting positive examples, parents/guardians can create an environment where children thrive. It is aptly said that a happy and healthy child is not just the result of luck but of consistent efforts, care and understanding from those who nurture them.

(The writer is an educator; views expressed are personal)

The impact of tariffs: Global shifts and the US dilemma



ATUL SEHGAL

From China's rapid economic ascent to the stagnation facing developed nations, trade tariffs have profound effects, influencing international trade



The present world is witnessing a situation of several impending tariffs on international trade. Tariffs in international trade are an instrument to reduce imports from specific countries and to promote indigenous production of goods and services. Countries grow rich by producing and selling value-added goods and services. The buyers of these goods and services can be within the country or outside. Obviously, more buyers are outside than inside and for this reason, exports hold the prime key to countries' enrichment.

The newly installed government in the USA is proposing to impose trade tariffs on several countries ostensibly to reduce the burden of taxes on the domestic population and promote indigenous manufacturing of goods. For any country, it is the balance of trade i.e. the excess of exports over imports that determines its buying capacity in the international market as well the strength of its monetary currency vis-a-vis the international ruling currency US Dollar. This is true of every country except the USA because its currency is not pegged to gold whereas other currencies are. For this reason, we see how post World War 2 (1939-1945), Japan and Germany developed fast a big indigenous manufacturing capability based on modern technologies and through extensive exports of valued added industrial goods like machinery, automobiles and other technological products. The currencies of these countries gradually strengthened and a stage was reached when their products became price uncompetitive in exports. For example, the Japanese Yen which was equivalent to approximately 0.01 USD in the year 1994 is now traded for USD 0.0064 in 2025. This was true of most of the developed countries at that time (1990 to 2000). The result was that diminishing price competitiveness in exports led to an industrial and economic decline. This led to the consti-



THE CASE OF THE USA IS TYPICAL AND DIFFERENT. IT HAS BEEN EXPORTING HIGH-TECHNOLOGY GOODS AND LIBERALLY IMPORTING LOW-END CONSUMER GOODS FOR A LONG PERIOD

tution of WTO and GATT through which this stagnation hit the economies of the developed countries that sought a revival of high trade and growth. However, the advent of China and its rapid rise on the world economic horizon changed the scenario dramatically and rather unexpectedly. The controlled tariff regime and its regulation under the GATT were greatly leveraged by China through a unique model of economic growth based on high borrowing, mega-scale production and export focus.

While all the above was going on, even the Chinese economic model began to falter because it was unsustainable, being heavily debt and export-dependent. The stagnating economies of Europe and many other countries sought to revive growth through tariffs. Tariffs are basically import duties enabling higher costs of landed goods imported from specific countries. The agreed tariffs under GATT helped the developed countries to grow, albeit to a small degree because of the limitations imposed by demographic factors and technological obsolescence, besides the economic blizzard unleashed by China.

The result of the above developments was that in the last 5-10 years, countries have become increasingly protective and insular in their trade practices and have started putting tariff barriers to protect and bolster their domestic industries.

The case of the USA is typical and different. It has been exporting high-technology goods and liberally importing low-end consumer goods for a long period. But high technology goods including arms and ammunitions export could not keep pace with its requirements due to ever-changing secu-

rity scenarios, absorption or development of high technology in countries like India, Brazil and South Africa. This has led to the debt of the USA touching an astronomically high figure of 33 trillion USD. This is long-term unsustainable. With the growth of domestic technologies and production facilities in the erstwhile third-world countries, of which India is a prime example, export prospects of US-made products have fallen considerably.

This is also due to the emergence of Chinese multinational companies which are giving a serious challenge to the existing MNCs in Europe and the USA. But the tariff war by the USA on specific countries of the world is not going to be a panacea for its impending economic ills. Its population will have to be made more productive.

With a very high cost of production due to the high cost of services and labour, the US economy is presently not in a favourable position to compete for international exports of lower-end consumer goods in general. Even for high technology goods like warfare and space technology products, it cannot today compete with emerging industrial economies like China and India. What is happening to the USA is quite opposite to what happened to Japan and Germany in the late nineties and thereafter.

The continuing strengthening of the USD is due to the flight of the dollar from various countries to the USA by the operations of FIs and FHs. Excess of money supply in the US economy will lead to runaway inflation which will further impact adversely its middle and lower class population. The imposition of high tariffs on imported goods will have the same effect.

If the USA chooses to abolish income tax alongside import tariff increase, it could very well end up with huge domestic fiscal deficits which will have to be met by debt or currency printing. Thus what the present US government contemplates could well land it into an economic inflationary spiral.

This situation will be exactly a more intense version of what the government desires to remedy presently. It could be almost something like falling from the frying pan into the fire.

The possibility of all this happening becomes pronounced because of the coming together of BRICS nations and the usage of parallel currencies for international trade. Also, the fact that many countries could well retaliate with counter-tariffs on the USA after the US imposed tariffs strengthens further the above possibility.

Given this, the best course of action for the US would be to link once again its currency with gold — a process of reversal of what was done in 1971. This will lend stability and sustainability to the US economy and also to the global economy. In general, the matter of trade tariffs is best left to individual countries, looking at their resources and economic circumstances.

Global countries have always been historically interdependent because of their specific areas of strengths and weaknesses in resources. The naturally existing areas of resource abundance and deficiency will remain. However social and political factors are dynamic and will always impinge on policy pronouncements. The prudent and perseverant will win even in this arena.

(The author is a management consultant based in New Delhi; views are personal)

The colours of identity: Unraveling the layers of race, bias and belonging

Among the many facets of identity, skin colour remains one of the most prominent yet divisive markers of difference

Variety. A singular word that carries depth, stretching across every horizon within our periphery. Everything, whether tangible or intangible, holds a streak of diversity, existing in more than just one form. The human race is the finest testament to this theory, embodying an expansive fluctuation of diversity in ways unparalleled. No two humans are exactly the same, no matter the similarity. From the obvious—gender, ethnicity, nationality—to the microscopic strands of DNA, variety defines existence.

Among the many dimensions of human diversity, skin color stands as one of the most visible yet most divisive. The spectrum of human skin spans hues of black, brown, white, and even shades of yellow,



ALINA HUSSAIN

forming a palette that should symbolise coexistence. However, rather than being embraced as a natural manifestation of diversity, this spectrum has historically been distorted into a hierarchy. The darker shades, unfairly positioned at the bottom, contrast starkly with the privileges afforded to the lighter tones at the top. This stratification of color has shaped life experi-

ences, often determining opportunities, treatment, and social perceptions. India, with its rich cultural and genetic diversity, encapsulates nearly the entire range of this scale. To the global eye, Indians and their South Asian neighbours fall in the middle—brown. This stain of brownness seeps beyond national borders, appearing across continents where South Asians have migrated and settled. However, unlike colors on a painter's palette, which blend to create new shades, human societies tend to resist seamless integration. Instead, racial identities remain dissonant, sometimes even immiscible. The concept of being "white-washed" is one such manifestation of this resistance—an observation aimed at those who adopt

Western customs, implying a dilution of their native culture under the influence of whiteness.

South Asians, however, have long held a deep connection to their cultural roots. Even in foreign lands, communities of brown-skinned individuals tend to cluster together, finding comfort and belonging among their own. This natural act of unity transcends national identities, allowing individuals from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka to identify simply as brown in predominantly white societies. Migration dissolves political boundaries, fostering a sense of kinship rooted in shared experiences rather than nationality. The primary reason for South Asian migration to the West



has historically been the pursuit of a better livelihood. The roots of this movement can be traced back to 19th-century colonisation, where white Europeans established themselves as the superior race while relegating the browns and blacks to a lower status. This racial hierarchy was not only imposed but deeply internalised, embedding itself into the psyche of societies across generations. The consequences of this structured superiority

continue to persist, subtly influencing perceptions and opportunities to this day. Though the era of overt, institutionalised racial discrimination has passed, its remnants linger. Silent racism manifests in subtle yet persistent ways—being followed in a store, being presumed guilty before proven innocent, or being typecast into stereotypes like "smelly" or "uncivilised."

The unspoken biases that people of color endure may be so ingrained in social interactions that they sometimes question whether their experiences of discrimination are real or imagined. But just because racism has grown quieter does not mean it has disappeared. At times, however, this silence gives way to overt expressions of prejudice. The question

then arises: can racism be unlearned? Can deep-seated biases, cultivated over centuries, be eradicated? Some argue that racism is built on a foundation of illusion—a false construct designed to uphold power structures rather than any scientific or logical basis. Commerce, globalisation and education might pave the way toward dismantling these biases, but the journey is long and uncertain.

Yet racism is not a one-way street. Just as people of color face discrimination in white-majority societies, white individuals experience racism in South Asian countries as well. Whether rooted in resentment from the colonial past, an ingrained inferiority complex, or sheer ignorance, racism in India and other parts of the

region is equally loud and apparent. This internal bias is a lingering vestige of colonial influence, stubborn and deeply embedded in the collective consciousness.

Ultimately, our skin color is an inescapable part of our identity. But as history has shown, social constructs evolve. Just as oppression once seemed an immutable reality but has gradually been challenged and deconstructed, so too can racial prejudices fade with time. While the road to a world free of color-based biases is long, there remains a glimmer of hope—a strip of rainbow amidst the storm, promising a better, more inclusive tomorrow.

(The writer is a law student and a freelance writer; views are personal)

Trump plans to cut US funding to South Africa over land law

PTI ■ CAPE TOWN

US President Donald Trump has said he will cut all funding to South Africa and has launched an investigation into the country's policies, claiming a "massive" human rights violation is happening over a new land expropriation law.

Trump made the pledge to stop all future funding on his Truth Social platform on Sunday, writing: "South Africa is confiscating land, and treating certain classes of people VERY BADLY." In South Africa, Trump wrote, a "massive Human Rights VIOLATION, at a minimum, is happening for all to see. The United States won't stand for it, we will act. Also, I will be cutting off all future funding to South Africa until a full investigation of this situation has been completed!" The South African government said Monday that the Trump administration needed to have a better understanding of the new law, which is meant to help redress the impact of decades of white minority rule in South Africa under the apartheid regime, which ended in 1994. South African President Cyril Ramaphosa said in a statement that "the South African government has not confiscated any land." During apartheid, land was taken from South Africa's Black majority, who were forced to live in areas designated for Blacks only. Billionaire Elon Musk, who is one of Trump's close allies, was born and raised in South



Africa and has also targeted Ramaphosa's government, accusing it of being anti-white and claiming in 2023 it was allowing a "genocide" against white farmers. Experts in South Africa say that while there are cases of white farmers being killed, it is rather a reflection of the country's desperately high levels of violent crime across the board, which are some of the worst in the world. In comments to reporters, Trump said Sunday "they're taking away land, they're confiscating land and actually they're doing things that are perhaps far worse than that." Trump didn't say exactly which policy he was referring to, or which people were being mistreated. But his comments appeared to be in reaction to the new land law South Africa passed last month that gives the government scope to acquire land from private parties if it is in the public interest. The law has been debated and considered for years and has

been criticized by some interest groups in South Africa as opening the way to seize land from some of the country's white minority. However, the government says people's rights are still protected and land can only be taken in specific circumstances where it is not being used productively and it's in the public interest that the land is redistributed. The office of Ramaphosa released a statement Monday, saying: "The recently adopted Expropriation Act is not a confiscation instrument, but a constitutionally mandated legal process that ensures public access to land in an equitable and just manner as guided by the constitution." "South Africa, like the United States of America and other countries, has always had expropriation laws that balance the need for public usage of land and the protection of rights of property owners." South African Foreign Minister Ronald Lamola said Trump's

administration should use the investigation it says it is launching

"to deepen their understanding of South Africa's policies as a constitutional democracy. Such insights will ensure a respectful and informed approach to our democratic commitments." South Africa is a major beneficiary of US funding under the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, or PEPFAR, which contributes around \$400 million a year to the country's HIV/AIDS program. That funding was already under threat after Trump's freeze on foreign aid across the world. Trump has been critical of South Africa in the past. Ramaphosa's office said there is "no other significant funding that is provided by the United States in South Africa," although South Africa is America's largest trading partner in Africa by some way, according to the US International Trade Commission. Trump has previously been critical of South Africa's government, writing in a social media post during his first term in 2018 that land was being seized from white farms and there was "large scale killing of farmers." Trump said in the same message — which was roundly criticized in South Africa as making false claims — that he was ordering then-Secretary of State Mike Pompeo to investigate. There are an average of around 70 homicides a day in South Africa, according to official crime statistics, and the vast majority of victims are Black.

China reiterates threat to retaliate against US tariffs

PTI ■ TAIPEI (TAIWAN)

US President Donald Trump's trade war with Canada, Mexico and China is ramping up over the production and importation of the opiate fentanyl, along with trade surpluses and illegal border crossings by migrants from across the globe. Here is what Beijing says about it:

What has been China's reaction so far? China has reiterated its threat to take "necessary countermeasures to defend its legitimate rights and interests" following Trump's decision to impose 10 per cent tariffs on China for allegedly doing too little to stem the production of precursor chemicals for fentanyl. The Foreign Ministry statement issued Sunday did not mention any specific retaliatory measures, but said "China calls on the United States to correct its wrongdoings, maintain the hard-won positive dynamics in the counter-narcotics cooperation, and promote a steady, sound and sustainable development of China-US relationship." China says the US action violates World Trade Organisation rules and has vowed to bring a case before the body that governs global commerce. The Ministry of Public Security on Sunday made near identical charges and the Commerce Ministry also issued a closely worded statement. **Who does China say is to blame?** Trump accuses China of allowing the production of fentanyl,



which is then made into tablets in Mexico and smuggled into and distributed throughout the US, which records some 70,000 overdose deaths from the drug annually. China says the US must hold itself to account instead of "threatening other countries with arbitrary tariff hikes," the Foreign Ministry said. "The United States needs to view and solve its own fentanyl issue in an objective and rational way... (China is) one of the world's toughest countries on counter-narcotics both in terms of policy and its implementation." Experts say China executes an unknown number of people each year for smuggling drugs, but domestic drug use is relatively low. The Ministry of Public Security statement said the US has not reported any fentanyl precursor seizures originating in China since Beijing began to take legal action. **What other issues may be having an impact on the dispute?** China's enormous trade deficit with the US, which reached nearly USD 1 trillion last year, has been a constant target of Trump's complaints. Tariffs would make Chinese goods more expensive for US consumers, who will ultimately have to pay a significant part of the cost of importing everything from toys to clothing. China's vital export market could be impacted if US consumers decide to "buy American." The Chinese domestic economy has failed to respond to a range of government-backed stimuli, while foreign infrastructure projects and other major government initiatives that add to the country's already high public debt threaten more economic stagnation. That is already starting to derail Chinese President Xi Jinping's push to overtake the US in key economic and political indicators, threatening his ultimate ambition to conquer the island republic of Taiwan and assert Chinese primacy in the Indo-Pacific region. Stopping illegal immigration has also been one of Trump's core political messages, and was named in tariff actions against US neighbours Mexico and Canada. Illegal arrivals from China are considered a fraction of such numbers, but Trump has put virtually every country on notice that he will hold them accountable for their nationals who enter the US outside the law.

North Korea slams Rubio for calling it 'rogue' state

Seoul (PTI):

In its first direct criticism of the Trump administration, North Korea lashed out at US Secretary of State Marco Rubio for calling it a "rogue" state and warned Monday that such "coarse and nonsensical remarks" will never contribute to US interests. The statement is the latest in a series of North Korean signals that it will maintain its tough stance on the US for now, though Trump has said he's intent on reaching out to its leader Kim Jong Un to revive diplomacy. "The hostile words and deeds of the person who is in charge of the US foreign policy served as an occasion of confirming once again the US hostile policy toward the DPRK which remains unchanged," the Foreign Ministry said, using the acronym of the country's official name, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. "Rubio's coarse and nonsensical remarks only show directly the incorrect view of the new US administration on the DPRK and will never help promote the US interests as he wishes," it said. The statement took issue with what the ministry called Rubio's branding of North Korea as a "rogue" state in a media interview. It likely referred to Rubio's appearance on "The Megyn Kelly Show" on Jan. 30, in which he called North Korea and Iran "rogue states" as he addressed foreign policy challenges. It was not the first time for US officials to describe North Korea as a rogue state. But the North's latest statement suggests the country won't likely quickly embrace Trump's overture.

Trump 'agreed' USAID should be shut down: Musk

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

The US Agency for International Development is on the cusp of being shuttered, according to the Trump administration's billionaire adviser and Tesla CEO Elon Musk - who has been wrestling for control of the agency in recent days.

Early Monday, Musk held a live session on X Spaces, previously known as Twitter Spaces, and said that he spoke in detail about USAID with the president. "He agreed we should shut it down," Musk said. "It became apparent that its not an apple with a worm in it," Musk said. "What we have is just a ball of worms. You've got to basically get rid of the whole thing. It's beyond repair." "We're shutting it down." His comments come after the administration placed two top security chiefs at USAID on leave after they refused to turn over classified material in restricted areas to Musk's government-inspection teams, a current and a former US official told The Associated Press on Sunday. Members of Musk's Department of Government Efficiency, known as DOGE, eventually did gain access Saturday to the aid agency's classified information, which includes intelligence reports, the former official said. Musk's DOGE crew lacked high enough security clearance to access that information, so the two USAID security officials - John Voorhees and deputy Brian McGill - believed themselves legally obligated to deny access. The current and former US officials had knowledge of the incident and spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to share the information.

Musk on Sunday responded to an X post about the news by saying, "USAID is a criminal organization. Time for it to die." He followed with additional posts on X about the aid agency. Kate Miller, who serves on an advisory board for DOGE, said in a separate post that no classified material was accessed "without proper security clearances." It comes a day after DOGE carried out a similar operation at the Treasury Department, gaining access to sensitive information including the Social Security and Medicare customer payment systems. The Washington Post reported that a senior Treasury official had



resigned over Musk's team accessing sensitive information. Musk formed DOGE in cooperation with the Trump administration with the stated goal of finding ways to fire federal workers, cut programs and slash federal regulations. USAID, whose website vanished Saturday without explanation, has been one of the federal agencies most targeted by the Trump administration in an escalating crackdown on the federal government and many of its programs. "It's been run by a bunch of radical lunatics. And we're getting them out," Trump said to reporters about USAID on Sunday night. The Trump administration and Secretary of State Marco Rubio have imposed an unprecedented freeze on foreign assistance that has shut down much of USAID's humanitarian, development and security programs worldwide - compelling thousands of layoffs by aid organizations - and ordered furloughs and leaves that have gutted the agency's leadership and staff in Washington. The US is by far the world's largest donor of humanitarian aid, with USAID administering billions of dollars in humanitarian, development and security assistance in more than 100 countries. Peter Marocco, a returning political appointee from Trump's first term, was a leader in enforcing the shutdown. USAID staffers say they believe that agency outsiders with visitors' badges asking questions of employees inside the Washington headquarters are members of Musk's DOGE team. Democratic Sen. Elizabeth Warren said in a post on Sunday that Trump was allowing Musk to access people's personal information and shut down government funding. "We must do everything in our power to push back and protect people from harm," the Massachusetts senator said, without giving details.

Denmark PM seeks support from EU partners

PTI ■ BRUSSELS

Denmark's prime minister insisted on Monday that Greenland is not for sale and called for a robust response from her European Union partners should US President Donald Trump press ahead with his threat to take control of the island. "I will never support the idea of fighting allies. But of course, if the US puts tough terms on Europe, we need a collective and robust response," Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen told reporters in Brussels as EU leaders gathered for defense talks. Greenland, home to a large US military base, is an autonomous territory of Denmark, a long-time US ally. Last month, Trump left open the possibility that the American military might be used to secure Greenland, as well as the Panama Canal. "We need Greenland for national security purposes," he said. Frederiksen said she has "great support" from her EU partners on the fact "that everybody has

to respect the sovereignty of all national states in the world, and that Greenland is today a part of the Kingdom of Denmark. It's part of our territory and it's not for sale." She acknowledged US concerns about security in the Arctic Region, where Russia and China have been increasingly active. "I totally agree with the Americans that the High North, that the Arctic region is becoming more and more important when we are talking about defence and security and deterrence," Frederiksen said, adding that the US and Denmark could have "stronger footprints" in Greenland, in security terms. "They are already there and they can have more possibilities," she said, underlining that Denmark itself can also "scale up" its security presence. "If this is about securing our part of the world, we can find a way forward," Frederiksen said. Last week, her government announced a roughly 14.6 billion kroner (nearly \$2 billion) agreement with parties includ-



European Council President Antonio Costa, left, greets French President Emmanuel Macron as he arrives for an EU summit at the Egmont Palace in Brussels, on Monday

ing the governments of Greenland and the Faeroe Islands to "improve capabilities for surveillance and maintaining sovereignty in the region."

It would include three new Arctic naval vessels, two additional long-range surveillance drones and satellite capacity, the Defence Ministry in

Copenhagen said. Frederiksen's remarks came as EU leaders met for defence talks but with no clear sign yet from Trump about how he intends to try to

end Russia's war on Ukraine. The Europeans fear that any attempt to pull together a quick deal would not be favourable to Ukraine. UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer and NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte were set to join the bloc's 27 leaders at a self-styled "retreat" at Egmont Place in the Belgian capital. The summit agenda focuses on EU-US cooperation, military spending and ramping up Europe's defense industry. The meeting comes as Europe's biggest land conflict since World War II approaches its third anniversary, and with confidence in Trump shaky as he threatens his allies with tariffs. Trump already slapped duties on European steel and aluminum during his first term. "We were listening carefully to those words, and of course we are preparing also on our side," EU foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas said. But, she underlined, "there are no winners in trade wars. If... the US starts a trade war, then the one laughing on the side is China. We are very interlinked."

B'desh abode of communal harmony, says Yunus

Dhaka (PTI):

Bangladesh belongs to all of its citizens and is a safe place for all people regardless of religion or caste, Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus has said, as he greeted members of the Hindu community on Saraswati Puja. Hindus in Bangladesh celebrated Saraswati Puja on Monday amid traditional enthusiasm, festivity and religious fervour. In a message on Sunday, Yunus said Bangladesh is an abode of communal harmony. "For thousands of years, people of all religions have been living together in this country irrespective of caste, colour and religion," he said. "The country belongs to all of us and is a safe place for all people regardless of religion or caste," he added. Yunus took over as the country's interim leader after a student-led uprising last year forced former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to flee to India on August 5, ending her 15-year rule. The interim government "has been relentlessly working to improve the fate of all irrespective of race, religion, and caste and ensure their equal rights," Yunus said. The goddess Saraswati is a symbol of truth, justice, and the light of knowledge, he said.

Schools closed, emergency crews deployed on volcanic Greek island Spike in seismic activity raises quake concerns

PTI ■ SANTORINI (GREECE)

Schools were closed and emergency crews deployed on the volcanic Greek island of Santorini on Monday after a spike in seismic activity raised concerns about a potentially powerful earthquake. Precautions were also ordered on several nearby Aegean Sea islands — all popular summer vacation destinations — after more than 200 undersea earthquakes were recorded in the area over the past three days. "These measures are precautionary, and authorities will remain vigilant," Civil Protection Minister Vasilis Kikilias said late Sunday following an emergency government meeting in Athens. "We urge citizens to strictly adhere to safety recommendations to minimise risk." While Greek experts say the quakes, measuring up to magnitude 4.7, are not linked to Santorini's volcano, they acknowledge that the pattern of seismic activity is cause for concern. Government officials met with scientists throughout the weekend and on Monday to assess the situation, while schools were ordered shut on the nearby islands of Amorgos, Anafi and Ios. On Santorini, residents and visitors were advised to avoid large



indoor gatherings and areas where rock slides could occur, while hotels were instructed to drain swimming pools to reduce potential building damage from an earthquake. Fire Service rescuers who arrived on the island on Sunday set up yellow tents as a staging area inside a basketball court next to the island's main hospital. "We arrived last night, a 26-member team of rescuers and one rescue dog," said fire brigadier Ioannis Billias. Quakes continued rattling the island through the night and on Monday morning, many over magnitude 4.0, and Billias said many residents, including entire families, spent the night in their cars. Crescent-shaped Santorini is a premier tourism destination with daily arrivals via commercial flights, ferries, and cruise ships. The island draws more

than 3 million visitors annually to its whitewashed villages, built along dramatic cliffs formed by a massive volcanic eruption more than 3,500 years ago. Prominent Greek seismologist Gerasimos Papadopoulos cautioned that the current earthquake sequence — displayed on live seismic maps as a growing cluster of dots between the islands of Santorini, Ios, Amorgos, and Anafi — could indicate a larger impending event. "All scenarios remain open," Papadopoulos wrote in an online post. "The number of tremors has increased, magnitudes have risen, and epicentres have shifted northeast. While these are tectonic quakes, not volcanic, the risk level has escalated." In Santorini's main town of Fira, local authorities designated gathering points for residents in preparation for a potential evacuation, though Mayor Nikos Zorzos emphasized the preventive nature of the measures. "We are obliged to make preparations. But being prepared for something does not mean it will happen," he said during a weekend briefing. "Sometimes, the way the situation is reported, those reports may contain exaggerations... so people should stay calm."

At least 19 killed, mostly women, in car bomb blast in northern Syria

PTI ■ DAMASCUS (SYRIA)

A car bomb exploded on the outskirts of a northern Syrian city on Monday, killing at least 19 people, all but one of them women, and leaving more than a dozen wounded, hospital workers said. The car detonated next to a vehicle carrying mostly female agricultural workers on the outskirts of the city of Manbij. The dead included 18 women and one man, a nurse at the hospital, Mohammad Ahmad, told The Associated Press. Another 15 women were wounded, some of them in critical condition, according to the local Syrian civil defence. No group immediately claimed responsibility for the explosion. It was the seventh car bomb explosion in Manbij in just over a month, said Munir Mustafa, the deputy director of civil defence. Manbij in northeastern Aleppo province continues to witness violence even after the downfall of President Bashar Assad in December. Turkish-backed factions, known as the Syrian National Army, have clashed with the US-backed Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces. The factions took the city from the SDF in early December during

a lightning insurgency that toppled President Bashar Assad. A resident said the car that detonated was parked on the roadside. The recurring attacks have forced residents to become more vigilant, he said. "There are efforts from the people of Manbij to focus on protecting some neighbourhoods as well as setting up surveillance cameras in the main neighbourhoods of the city," Jameel al-Sayyed, a Manbij activist and journalist said. Mustafa warned that the attacks in Aleppo province near Syria's second city are a threat to Syria's progress to bring about post-war security and economic recovery. Most of the explosions took place at night. "The continued attacks on Syrian civilian areas and targeting civilians while they are trying to recover from the effects of the war of the defunct Assad regime... threaten their lives, deepens their humanitarian tragedy, undermines educational and agricultural activities and livelihoods, and worsens the humanitarian situation in Syria," Mustafa said. A car bombing in Manbij on Saturday killed four civilians and wounded nine, state news agency SANA reported, citing civil defense officials.

Pakistan Prez Zardari to leave for China on 5-day state visit today

Islamabad (PTI) President Asif Ali Zardari will travel to China on Tuesday on a five-day state visit during which he will discuss a broad spectrum of bilateral relations with the Chinese leaders...

Their "discussions will encompass the full spectrum of Pakistan-China relations, with a particular focus on economic and trade cooperation; counter-terrorism and security collaboration, China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and future connectivity initiatives..."

Balochistan with China's Xinjiang province, is the flagship project of China's ambitious Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The BRI is seen as an attempt by China to further its influence abroad with infrastructure projects funded by Chinese investments across the world.

which is opposed to China's investments in the resource-rich province. Pakistan said it has constituted a 12,000-strong para-military force to protect Chinese workers in the country. China has asked Pakistan to make efforts to effectively close the security loopholes and demanded more targeted measures to provide full protection for the CPEC and the safety and security of Chinese personnel, projects and institutions in Pakistan.

at the special invitation of the Chinese government, The Express Tribune newspaper reported. In a statement, Foreign Office Spokesperson Shafiq Ali Khan said the visit underscores the tradition of high-level exchanges between Pakistan and China, reflecting the deep commitment of the two countries to strengthen their all-weather strategic cooperative Partnership, it added.

SHARP INCREASE IN TERROR ATTACKS IN JANUARY 2025
Meanwhile, Pakistan witnessed a sharp increase in terror attacks in January 2025, surging by 42 per cent compared to the previous month, a think tank has said. Quoting the data released by the Pakistan Institute for Conflict and Security Studies (PICSS), Dawn reported on Monday that at least 74 militant attacks were recorded nationwide, resulting in 91 fatalities, including 35 security personnel, 20 civilians and 36 militants.

forces personnel, 54 civilians and 10 militants. The report highlighted an intensified counterterrorism campaign by security forces, which led to elimination of at least 185 militants in January, making it the second deadliest month for militant casualties since 2016. The highest number of militants killed in a single month since 2016 was recorded in December 2024, when security forces neutralised 190 militants. The combined toll of militant attacks and security operations in January stood at 245 fatalities, comprising 185 militants, 40 security forces personnel and 20 civilians.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) remained the worst-affected province, followed by Balochistan. In KP's settled districts, insurgents carried out 27 attacks, resulting in 19 fatalities, including 11 security personnel, six civilians, and two militants. The tribal districts of KP (erstwhile Fata) witnessed 19 attacks, leading to 46 deaths, including 13 security personnel, eight civilians, and 25 militants. Balochistan also experienced a surge in militant activity, with at least 24 attacks, which claimed 26 lives, including 11 security personnel, six civilians, and nine militants.

Officials: Remains of 55 of 67 victims of midair collision identified

Arlington (PTI): Authorities said Sunday they have recovered the remains of 55 of the 67 people killed in the deadliest US air disaster since 2001. Washington, DC Fire and EMS Chief John Donnelly said at a news conference that divers still need to find the bodies of 12 more victims and are committed to the dignified recovery of remains as they prepare to lift wreckage from the Potomac River as early as Monday morning.

night vision goggles?" Duffy asked on CNN. The American Airlines flight with 64 people on board was preparing to land from Wichita, Kansas. The Army Black Hawk helicopter was on a training mission and had three soldiers on board. Both aircraft plunged into the Potomac River after colliding. The plane's passengers included figure skaters returning from the 2025 US Figure Skating Championships in Wichita, Kansas, and a group of hunters returning from a guided trip.

They spoke hours after families of the victims visited the crash site just outside Washington, DC, walking along the banks of the Potomac River near Reagan National Airport to memorialize their loved ones. Dozens of people arrived in buses with a police escort close to where an American Airlines jet and an Army Black Hawk helicopter collided Wednesday, killing all 67 aboard the two aircraft. Federal investigators were working to piece together the events that led to the crash while recovery crews were set to pull more wreckage from the chilly water.

Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy on Sunday said he wanted to leave federal aviation investigators space to conduct their inquiry. But he posed a range of questions about the crash while appearing on morning TV news programs. "What was happening inside the towers? Were they understaffed?... The position of the Black Hawk, the elevation of the Black Hawk, were the pilots of the Black Hawk wearing

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To be known to all that I, Prabhjot Kaur W/o Sh. Parminder Singh R/o 457, Ground Floor, DDA SFS Flats, Pocket GH-13, Paschim Vihar, New Delhi-110087 has applied for conversion of DDA Flat No. 457, Ground Floor, SFS Flat-II, Pocket GH-13, Paschim Vihar now known as Paschim Vihar, New Delhi-110087 from lease hold to free hold in DDA. The original documents i.e. First & Final Demand letter of the above flat have been lost. An FIR to this effect has been lodged in P.S. Crime Branch in S/O No. 430/2014 LR No.25531/30/2025 dated 03.02.2025. Any person(s) claiming any right, interest, having any objection or found in possession of original documents, may write/contact with above named person at above address/phone No. 9899044717 within 15 days from the date of publication of this notice. The person claiming any right, interest, objections with respect to this property can personally inform or write to Dy. Director (LAB) H or Director (H-1D) Block 3rd Floor, Vikas Sadan, INA, New Delhi.

PUBLIC NOTICE
General public is hereby informed that my clients Kshitiz Bhatnagar S/o Late Arun Kumar Bhatnagar, his wife Smt. Anshika Bhatnagar and their daughter Ms. Tushika Bhatnagar all R/o SRB 58C, Shipra Riviera, Indirapuram, Ghaziabad (U.P.) 201010 have severed all personal and family relations & ties with their respective elder brother, brother-in-law and uncle Sh. Nikhil Bhatnagar R/o SRB-58C, Shipra Riviera, Indirapuram, Ghaziabad (U.P.) 201010. The present declaration signifies that as of today, my clients will not be involved in any sort of social or family affairs with the above said person. My clients further undertake to not interfere in his personal life or activities and explicitly renounce any form of connection or communication with him. Anybody dealing with the said person shall do at their own risk and responsibilities and my clients shall not be responsible for the same.

Public Notice
This is to inform the general public that Mr. Vijay Sharma, Mr. Vishal Sharma & Mr. Kunal Sharma are the owner of Plot no. 291, property ID no. 18F4N772 area measuring 209.06 sq. mtrs. located at T.A. Urban Estate HST, Faridabad, Tehsil Balabagan, Distt. Faridabad, Haryana through Transfer Deed in blood relation dated 15.08.2024 as doc. No. 491 executed by Mr. Tarsem Lal in favour of Mr. Vijay Sharma, Mr. Vishal Sharma & Mr. Kunal Sharma in presence of Mr. Vijay Sharma, Mr. Vishal Sharma & Mr. Kunal Sharma in the presence of mortgaging the said property with Tata Capital Limited. Any objections or concerns regarding this transaction should be raised within a period of 7 days from the date of this public notice. Any objections submitted after the completion of this 7-day period will not be considered with respect to the said property or the interests of our client.

PUBLIC NOTICE
Notice is hereby given to the General Public that Mrs. Seema Bhatra is the owner of Residential First Floor, without roof rights of House No. 5-H-44/4A, Sector-16, Noida, Uttar Pradesh, Situated in the area of Village N.I.T. Faridabad, Tehsil and District Faridabad, Haryana by virtue of Regd. GPA Dated 10.08.2018, as Doc. No. 2036, executed by Mrs. Shashi Gandhi, same to be finance by SMFG India Credit Company Limited (Formerly Fullerton India Credit Company Limited), General public hereby informed that if anybody has any charge/interest/in the said property or any kind of dispute kindly inform the undersigned in writing on the below mentioned address within 07 days of the present. Rahul Raj Pathak, Advocate S.C. Associates (Law Firm) FF 18, Lotus Pond Plaza, Vihar Khand Indirapuram, Ghaziabad, U.P. Pin: 201112764, 0126444360 Email: spgpcsecc@rediffmail.com, Ph: 901112764, 0126444360

CCL Central Coalfields Limited "A Miniratna Company" (A Subsidiary of Coal India Limited) NOTICE
All the tenders issued by CIL and its Subsidiaries for procurement of Goods, Works and Services are available on websites of Coal India Ltd. www.coalindia.in/ respective Subsidiary Company (CCL, www.centralcoalfields.in), CIL e-procurement portal https://coalindiatenders.nic.in and Central Public Procurement Portal https://eprocure.gov.in in addition, procurement is also done through GeM portal https://gem.gov.in

PUBLIC NOTICE
Information is given to general public at large that Mrs. Laxmi Devi who is/are purchasing the Residential built up Third Floor, with roof/terrace rights, built on property bearing No. L-56-A, having plot No. 36, area measuring 75 sq. yards, out of khata No. 30, situated in the area of village nangli jalib, colony known as New Mahavir Nagar, in block-C, Gali No. 19, New Delhi from Mrs. Deepika Batra W/o Mr. Rajesh Batra who was the owner of property by virtue of Sale Deed dated 25.08.2022 (Doc. No. 21180) executed by Mrs. Deepika Batra W/o Mr. Rajesh Batra. Mr. Arvind Kumar W/o Mr. Kanwal Kumar Makkar, intend to mortgage the same against the financial assistance from Hero Housing Finance Limited. The title of the said property is/are in the name of Seller i.e. Mrs. Deepika Batra W/o Mr. Rajesh Batra. To comply the requirements of BANK/NBFC, we give this public notice that if any person(s) having any objection regarding ownership and/or creating mortgage of the said property is/are hereby requested to intimate in writing to the undersigned within 07 days at below address.

PUBLIC NOTICE
Notice is hereby given that my client Rajat Singh and Laxesh Bhatnagar partners in M/s. Eminent Enterprises is presently pursuing a Real Estate Property Bearing No. 1, area measuring 1280 sq. yards situated in the layout plan of Vasant Vihar, Munirka Marg, New Delhi - 110057 (Plot No. 115002) in the name of ADITYA BIRLA India State of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints vide Sale Deed dated 27/02/2012 (Document No. 74111) executed by M/s. Golden Charal Restorers Pvt. Ltd. whereas The Indian Society of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints confirmed that they are not having the below mentioned Complete Title Deed pertaining to the said property. FIR has already been lodged on dated 23/1/2025. Page Nos. 34-552 (being blank stamp papers only for purposes of fulfilling applicable stamp duty of the said property) Deed dated 10.12.2007, registration No. 11943. All persons having any claim against or in respect of the said property, in any part thereof, by way of sale, exchange, mortgage (equitable/registered or otherwise), gift, trust, inheritance, family arrangement, maintenance, bequest, partnership, possession, lease, easement, tenancy, tenancy, charge, pledge, easement or otherwise whatsoever, are hereby requested to notify the same in writing to us with supporting documentary evidence at the address mentioned above within 15 days from the date of falling which the claim or claims, if any, of such person or persons will be considered to have been waived and/or abandoned. Kamal Kant Gupta (Advocate) Utr. Me. FF-2, F.I. Mahalwani Metro Tower, Sec-4, Vaishali, Gtr., U.P. Mob. 9810063351

PUBLIC NOTICE
Notice is hereby given on behalf of SAUMYA GUPTA with respect to FIRST FLOOR WITHOUT ROOF/TERRACE RIGHTS OF BUILT-UP PROPERTY BEARING NO.15-A, AREA MEASURING 60 SQ. YDS., OUT OF KHATA NO.19/20, SITUATED IN THE REVENUE ESTATE OF VILLAGE MATALA, KNOWN AS COLONY JAIN COLONY, IN BLOCK-T EXTN. PART III, UTTAM NAGAR, NEW DELHI, which is presently owned by MRS. LALITA CHAUHAN had purchased the subject property from MR. RAHUL KOHLI AND MR. VICKY CHAUHAN in presence of ADITYA BIRLA HOUSING FINANCE LIMITED. To comply the requirements of BANK/NBFC, we give this public notice that if any person having any type of claim/right/interest/creating mortgage over the said property may inform in writing at the address mentioned above with all his objections, within 7 days from today, failing which it shall be presumed that the said property is free from all type of Encumbrances. Mrs. Saumya Gupta, Plot No. 136, (Bastem) Uday Park, New Delhi-110049 Contact # 011-4046316

CHHATRAPATI SAMBAHJINAGAR MUNICIPAL CORPORATION
PHONE NO: (0240)-2333536-40,2348001-05 (PBX) FAX-(0240)-2331213 website:-http://www.aurangabadmahapalika.org/
Date: 3/2/2025
Request for Proposal
E-Tender Notice No 2025-AMCA-114533-I/2024-25
Development of Project for Sports Complex and Commercial Shops under P.G.3 at TV Centre N10 in Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar Municipal Corporation on Build Operate and Transfer (BOT) Basis. Situated at Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar. Details such as bid document last date of submission, date of Pre bid conference etc. will be available from 4/2/2025 from 17.00 hrs. on https://www.mahatenders.gov.in portal. All interested bidders may apply online through this portal.

Table with 2 columns: Sr.No, Description, Details. Includes items like Name of Work, Department, EMD, Bid Validity, Form Fee, etc.

THE PUNJAB STATE COOPERATIVE MILK PRODUCERS FEDERATION LTD. SCO 153-155, SECTOR 34-A, CHANDIGARH-160022. EPABX NO. 0172-5041812,66
Notice Inviting Tender
www.verka.coop
tenders are hereby invited for the purchase and supply of following items:-

Table with 3 columns: Sr. No., Name of Work/Item, Period/Tentative Qty. Lists items like For Verka Head Office, For Verka Bathinda Dairy, etc.

S Korean appeals court upholds acquittal of Samsung chief
Seoul (AP): A South Korean appeals court on Monday upheld a lower court's ruling that acquitted Samsung Electronics Chairman Lee Jae-yong of financial criminal charges over a contentious merger between Samsung affiliates that cemented his grip over the biggest South Korean company. The Seoul High Court rejected an appeal by prosecutors. You Jin Kim, Lee's lawyer, welcomed the ruling, saying he hopes that Lee would now focus on his company following Monday's verdict. Prosecutors can again appeal to the Supreme Court, whose rulings are final. In February 2024, the Seoul Central District Court said the prosecution failed to sufficiently prove the merger between Samsung C&T and Cheil Industries was unlawfully conducted with an aim to strengthen Lee's control over Samsung Electronics. Lee, a third-generation corporate heir who was officially appointed chairman of Samsung Electronics in October 2022, has led the Samsung group of companies since 2014, when his late father, former chairman Lee Kun-Hee, suffered a heart attack.

Format C-1 (for candidate to publish in Newspapers, TV) Declaration about criminal cases
(As per the judgment dated 25th September, 2018, of Hon'ble Supreme Court in WP (Civil) No.536 of 2011 (Public Interest Foundation & Ors. Vs. Union of India & Anr.)
Name and address of candidate: Pushpa Singh W/o Late Satbir Singh R/o. 301, Ward No.4, Mehrauli, New Delhi-30
Name of political party: INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS
Name of Election: DELHI ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS 2025
*Name of Constituency: AC 45, MEHRAULI, VIDHANSABHA
I, Pushpa Singh, a candidate for the abovementioned election, declare for public information the following details about my criminal antecedents:

PUBLIC NOTICE
NOTICE is hereby given that Mr. Brijesh Kumar Jain is mortgaging One shop on ground floor bearing Shop Municipal no. 466, having its area measuring 127.88 sq. ft., or say 118.88 sq. mtrs., approx. up to ceiling level, without roof rights, (said shop), situated at Near Katra Mohan, Main Road Chaudhri Chowk, Delhi-110006 with AU Small Finance Bank Ltd.
All persons claiming an interest in the said property or any part thereof by way of sale, gift, lease, inheritance, exchange, mortgage, charge, lien, trust, possession, easement, attachment or otherwise whatsoever are hereby requested to make the same known to the undersigned at his office within 7 days from the date hereof, failing which the property would be considered as unencumbered and no objections will be entertained thereafter.

Format C-1 (For candidate to publish in Newspapers, TV) Declaration about criminal cases
(As per the judgment dated 25th September, 2018, of the Hon'ble Supreme Court in WP (Civil) No.536 of 2011 (Public Interest Foundation & Ors. Vs. Union Of India & Anr.)
Name and address of the candidate : Sharad Kumar R/o 123 Bhumiya Wala Chowk Bakoli Delhi-36
Name Of the Political party : AAM AADMI PARTY(AAP)
Name of election: DELHI ASSEMBLY ELECTION, 2025
Name of the Constituency: AC-01 NERELA,VIDHANSABHA
I, Sharad Kumar, a candidate for the abovementioned election, declare for public information.
The following details about my criminal antecedents:

कार्यालय नगर निगम गुरुग्राम
सर्वजनिक सूचना
नगर निगम गुरुग्राम के भवन कर रिवाइज में युनिक प्रॉटी आइड डीओ नो ICL2QJ3 नकल नो F2465, SECTOR 2&3 PALAM VIHAR, Gurugram।
JINDAL LEASEFIN LIMITED
CIN : L74899DL1994PLC059252
Regd. Office : 110, Barbar Road, New Delhi - 110 001
Ph: 011-46201000, Fax : 011-46201002, E-mail : jindal@jindal.in
Website: www.jindalleasefin.in
NOTICE is hereby given that the Extra-Ordinary General Meeting (EGM) of the members of Jindal Leasefin Limited will be held on Tuesday, February 25, 2025 at 5:00 p.m. at Kejriwal Firms House, Holambi Khand Narela, Delhi - 110 082 to transact the business as set out in the Notice convening the EGM, in compliance with applicable provisions of the Companies Act, 2013 (Act) and rules made thereunder and Securities and Exchange Board of India (Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015 read with all the applicable circulars issued by Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA Circulars) and Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI Circulars) (MCA Circulars and SEBI Circulars collectively referred as 'Circulars').

Sitharaman encourages states to approach Finance Commission on tax concerns

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
With southern states voicing concerns over 'unfair' tax money devolution, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has said the states have to engage and highlight their concerns with the 16th Finance Commission, whose recommendations will decide how the funds are divided. Population is one of the criteria used by Finance Commissions to decide how the tax revenues are divided. Southern states, which have managed to check the rise in population, feel they get a raw deal when compared to the northern states with much larger population growth. In an interview with PTI, Sitharaman said the central government does not decide



on the devolution formula. The devolution of taxes is made in accordance with the recommendations of the Finance Commission and the aggrieved southern states should approach the panel for change in parameters. "It is for the states to engage with the Finance Commission to express their concerns about the parameters based on which the tax devolution principles are laid down by them. "And if they think over a decade, they've had a distinctly different paradigm happening there. It is for them to highlight those issues to the Finance Commission," she said. After all, she said, the Centre takes the Finance Commission's recommendations, particularly on the core suggestions, and follows them. It is not appropriate for them to voice concerns as the central government does not decide devolution of taxes, she added. The Finance Commission typically gives recommendations for the division of tax revenues for five years. The 13th Finance Commission gave recommendations for 2010-11 to 2014-15 and its successor recommended formula for 2015-16 to 2019-20. The 15th Finance Commission gave suggestions for 2020-21 in its first report and then for 2021-2025-26.

Give suggestions on new income tax bill: CBDT chief to industry

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) Chief Ravi Agrawal on Monday asked industry players to give their suggestions on the new income tax bill, which will be tabled in Parliament this week. The new income tax bill, which will replace the six decade old Income Tax act, 1961, has been drafted within six months and efforts have been made to simplify the language to make tax compliance easier for taxpayers and make it easier to read and understand. Agrawal said that the new bill has been drafted in such a way that it meets international standards. Also, the new law has been made concise, as old provisions have been removed, making it less bulky. He asked the industry to give



their suggestions once the new bill is introduced and assured them that the suggestions would be looked into. With regard to updated I-T returns (ITR-U), Agrawal said in the last three years about 90 Lakh such returns were filed. Around ₹8,500 Crore additional revenues were garnered. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in her Budget speech had said that the time limit to file updated ITRs for any assessment year will be extended from the current limit of two years to four years.

India's manufacturing growth peaks at six-month high in January

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
India's manufacturing sector growth started the year 2025 on a strong footing and touched a six-month high in January, fuelled by the steepest upturn in exports in nearly 14 years, a monthly survey said on Monday. The seasonally adjusted HSBG India Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) rose from December's one-year low of 56.4 to 57.7 in January supported by the fastest upturn in new export orders since February 2011. In PMI parlance, a print above 50 means expansion, while a score below 50 denotes contraction. "India's final manufacturing PMI marked a six-month high in January. Domestic and export demand were both strong, supporting new orders growth," said Pranjal Bhandari, Chief India Economist at HSBG. Goods producers attributed the substantial increase in new orders to better domestic demand and a pick-up in international sales. Subsequently, manufacturers in India continued to scale up production volumes. The latest increase was substantial and the fastest since October 2024. Going forward, companies turned more optimistic about

output prospects, with nearly 32 per cent of firms forecasting growth and just one per cent expecting a reduction. According to panel members, buoyant underlying demand, better customer relations, favourable economic conditions and marketing efforts all bode well for growth prospects. Robust sales gains and upbeat forecasts prompted companies to recruit additional workers at the start of the fourth quarter of this fiscal year. "The employment PMI suggested robust job creation in the manufacturing industry, as the index increased to its highest level since the series was created. Input cost inflation eased for a second month, relieving pressure on manufacturers to raise final output prices," Bhandari noted. On the price front, cost pressures retreated to their weakest in 11 months, but selling prices rose solidly amid buoyant demand. The survey further noted that capacity pressures among manufacturers in India remained mild. Underlying data showed that strong job creation in recent months enabled companies to stay on top of their workloads, the survey said.

India's customs duty cut to 10.66 per cent: CBIC

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
India has significantly reduced its average customs duty rate to 10.66 per cent from 11.65 per cent and is now moving towards the same levels as prevalent in the Southeast Asian countries, a senior government official said on Monday. Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) Chairman Sanjay Kumar Agarwal said the rate rationalisation exercise was carried out with the objective of making the tariff structure simple, ensuring competitiveness of Indian industry and simplifying the tax regime. "Now the average customs rate in India has come down from 11.65 per cent to 10.66 per cent and we are now moving towards the average rate in Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries," he said here at an interaction with industry representatives. The 10-nation bloc ASEAN countries are Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam. The exercise was also important for dispelling the

narrative of developed countries like the US that India has one of the highest tariffs. The US President Donald Trump's administration has accused India of being "tariff king" and "tariff abuser". He noted that in the high duty brackets from 25 per cent to 150 per cent, only a few products are available in the country. "There are very few items on these high rates...Rates are otherwise in the narrow band of zero to 10 per cent," he said, adding that steps have also been announced in the Budget 2025-26 in this

direction. The government has rationalised basic customs duty rates, slashing the number of levies to just eight, but has kept the effective duty rates on most items the same by adjusting cess to further ease of doing business. Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman removed seven tariff rates in the 2025-26 Budget. This is over and above the seven tariff rates removed in the 2023-24 budget. After this, there will be only eight remaining tariff rates, including a 'zero' rate to further ease of doing business.

This rationalisation is designed to simplify the tariff structure, enhance trade competitiveness, and support India's integration into global supply chains, he added. He said the thrust in the budget was to ensure adequate availability of the items which are critical for manufacturing in the country like critical minerals. These minerals, he said, are required for manufacturing areas like semiconductors, for transitioning to clean energy and for space programmes. These minerals are not available in the country and they are imported.

BharatPe CMO Parth Joshi resigns to launch new venture



PNS ■ NEW DELHI
Parth Joshi, Chief Marketing Officer (CMO) of BharatPe has resigned to launch his own venture in consumer brands space, according to sources in the industry. Joshi was appointed as BharatPe's CMO in June 2021. "After an incredible journey at BharatPe, I have decided to take the next step and pursue my entrepreneurial ambitions. I am grateful for the opportunities, learnings, and support I have received during my time here. BharatPe has always encouraged innovation and leadership, and I leave with nothing but appreciation for the team and the culture that fosters growth," Joshi said.

Gold jumps ₹400 to breach ₹85,000-mark

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
Gold prices jumped ₹400 to hit a fresh record high of ₹85,300 per 10 grams in the national capital on Monday on the back of continued demand by jewellers and stocks, according to the All India Sarafa Association. Traders said sharp depreciation in rupee and firm trends in the international markets lifted gold rates to record high levels. The precious metal of 99.9 per cent purity had settled at ₹84,900 per 10 grams on Saturday.

Gold of 99.5 per cent purity rose for the fourth straight session by climbing ₹400 to hit another record high of ₹84,900 per 10 grams. The yellow metal ended at ₹84,500 per 10 grams in the previous trading session. Rallying for the fifth consecutive session, silver increased ₹300 to ₹96,000 per kg on Monday. The white metal finished at ₹95,700 per kg in the previous market close. On Monday, the rupee plunged 55 paise to close at an all-time low of 87.17 (provisional) against the US dollar as global

Hindustan Media Ventures posts Q3 net profit at ₹18 Crore

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
Hindustan Media Ventures Ltd (HMVL) on Monday reported a consolidated profit after tax of ₹18 Crore in the December quarter. The company had posted a loss after tax of ₹0.82 Crore in the October-December period a year ago, according to a regulatory filing by HMVL, the publisher of Hindi daily Hindustan. Its revenue from operations rose eight per cent to ₹197.47

₹182.95 Crore in the corresponding period a year ago. Total expenses of HMVL were ₹201.68 crore, down 3.2 per cent in the December quarter. Its revenue from printing and publishing of newspapers and periodicals was ₹179.72 Crore. HMVL's revenue from Digital jumped four-fold to ₹16.72 Crore in the December quarter against ₹4.18 Crore in the corresponding quarter.

Agriculture industry hails Budget as bold play for revitalising rural India

PNS ■ NEW DELHI
Experts and farmers on Saturday welcomed the comprehensive package to revitalise agriculture sector, calling it "bold and a Mahakumbh of reforms. Susheel Kumar, Country Head and Managing Director of Syngenta India Pvt Ltd, lauded the budget for its commitment to bridging the urban-rural divide. "This Budget reflects a clear intent to create new opportunities for farmers, youth, women, and agri-entrepreneurs, ensuring inclusive growth across the agricultural sector. It is encouraging that the

government is leveraging India's demographic dividend to engage rural youth in agricultural activities," he said. "Hybrid seed varieties should be included in the National Mission on High-Yielding Seeds. Also, reinstating the 200 per cent income tax deduction for R&D would be crucial for attracting private investment." Ajai Rana, chairman of the Federation of Seed Industry of India and CEO and MD, Savannah Seeds emphasised. He praised the Budget's focus on advancing research and seed innovation. He highlighted the National Mission on

High-Yielding Seeds and the Mission on Cotton Productivity as key policy reforms that would significantly benefit the seed industry. However, some expressed concerns over unmet expectations. Dr. KC Ravi, Chief Sustainability Officer of Syngenta India, noted the absence of long-standing demands, including GST rationalisation and an extension of the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme to the agrochemicals sector. "The Jan Vishwas Bill 2.0 is a welcome reform, but we hope similar trust-based governance is extended to the crop protection industry," he remarked.

Investors from EFTA bloc, Israel coming to India to explore business opportunities

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
A large contingent of investors from four European nation bloc European Free Trade Association (EFTA) and Israel are visiting India next week to explore business opportunities, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal has said. The EFTA members are Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, and Switzerland. Visit of more than 100 investors from EFTA member countries assumes significance as it has signed a Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA) with India on March 10, 2024. Under the pact, India has received an investment

commitment of USD 100 billion in 15 years from the grouping while allowing several products such as Swiss watches, chocolates, and cut and polished diamonds at lower or zero duties. The pact is expected to come into force by the end of this year. Goyal said EFTA representatives are coming with over 100 investors. More than 200 investors are expected to visit from Israel. The three-day visit will start from February 10. "Big companies are coming. People with interests in technology and setting manufacturing units (are coming)," he added. The EFTA bloc committed an investment of USD 100 billion -

USD 50 billion within 10 years after the implementation of the agreement and another USD 50 billion in the next five years - which would facilitate the creation of one million direct jobs in India. This is a first-of-its-kind pledge agreed upon in any of the trade deals signed by India so far. EFTA countries are not part of the European Union (EU). It is an inter-governmental organisation for the promotion and intensification of free trade. It was founded as an alternative for states that did not wish to join the European community. India is separately negotiating a comprehensive free trade agreement with the EU, the 27-nation bloc.

INBRIEF

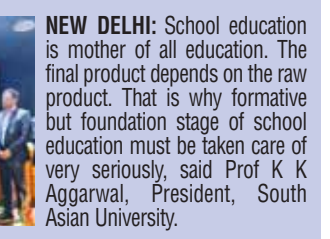
REC WINS GOLD SHIELD IN ICAI AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN FINANCIAL REPORTING

NEW DELHI: REC Limited, a Maharatna Public Sector Enterprise and a leading NBFC-IFC under the Ministry of Power, Government of India, has been awarded 'Gold Shield' in ICAI Awards for Excellence in Financial Reporting for the financial year 2023-24.



SCHOOL EDUCATION IS MOTHER OF ALL EDUCATION- PROF K K AGGARWAL

NEW DELHI: School education is mother of all education. The final product depends on the raw product. That is why formative but foundation stage of school education must be taken care of very seriously, said Prof K K Aggarwal, President, South Asian University.



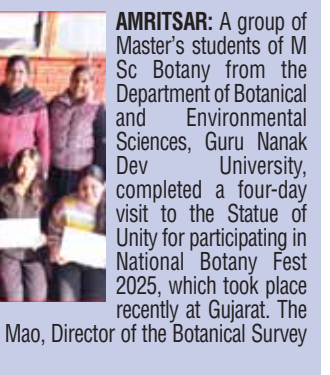
SCIENCE NEEDS DEMOCRACY TO FLOURISH: PROF AARON CIECHANOVER

KATTANKULATHUR: Nobel Laureate Prof Aaron Ciechanover delivered a special address at the inaugural of Pro UPS conference held at SRM Institute of Science and Technology (SRMIST). The conference focused on protein homeostasis, its impact on human diseases, and drug discovery.



GURU NANAK DEV UNIVERSITY STUDENTS SHINE AT NATIONAL BOTANICAL FESTIVAL

AMRITSAR: A group of Master's students of M Sc Botany from the Department of Botanical and Environmental Sciences, Guru Nanak Dev University, completed a four-day visit to the Statue of Unity for participating in National Botany Fest 2025, which took place recently at Gujarat. The event was inaugurated by Dr A A Mao, Director of the Botanical Survey of India, Kolkata.



Cooperative renaissance through Tribhuvan Sahkari University Bill, 2024



BINOD ANAND ■ NEW DELHI
Prime Minister Narendra Modi's commitment to strengthening the cooperative sector has taken a major step forward with the introduction of the Tribhuvan Sahkari University Bill, 2024. This initiative aims to establish Tribhuvan Sahkari University, dedicated to cooperative education, research, and management training. It will play a pivotal role in achieving the vision of "Sahkar Se Samridhhi" (Prosperity through

Cooperation) by equipping professionals with the skills necessary to enhance innovation and efficiency in cooperative enterprises. The cooperative sector is vital to India's socio-economic structure, providing livelihoods to millions. Recognising its potential, the government has introduced structured education and training through this university. By integrating cooperative principles into mainstream education, the institution will offer specialised courses to empower students, cooperative society members, and industry professionals. This initiative will also foster research and development, bridging existing knowledge gaps and strengthening India's cooperative movement on a global scale. A key feature of this initiative is going to be the blend of

ancient wisdom with modern education aligns with Modi's vision of a self-reliant and culturally enriched India. The curriculum will emphasise holistic learning, integrating traditional Indian economic philosophies with contemporary management techniques. Inspired by Vedic traditions, students will learn about sustainable agricultural practices, ethical business conduct, and community-driven economic models. Another objective of the university is to standardise cooperative education across India. Currently, cooperative training is fragmented and lacks uniformity. By offering diploma, degree, and certification programs in sectors such as dairy, fisheries, agriculture, banking, and marketing, the university will streamline cooperative education. Tribhuvan Sahkari University

will also act as a central institution, converging resources from ICAR centers, Krishi Vigyan Kendras, CSIR institutions, health-related institutes, and other universities. This will train PACS secretaries and support national development programs, ensuring a multi-disciplinary approach to cooperative growth. Moving beyond the traditional MSP model, the university will help cooperatives adopt market-driven solutions and self-sustaining business models. Additionally, it will align with health institutions to develop cooperative models for rural healthcare, ensuring affordable medical services. A major goal of the university is to protect national interests by securing the economic rights of farmers and artisans. Farmers and artisans form the backbone of India's rural economy, and their prosperity

is critical for national self-reliance. The university also has a long-term economic vision: to generate 50 per cent of India's Gross National Product (GNP) from the cooperative sector by 2047. Through research, training, and policy advocacy, it will incubate human resources that drive entrepreneurship, create employment, and foster financial inclusion. By advancing Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and transitioning toward Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) principles, the university will prepare cooperatives for long-term sustainability. Encouraging green technologies, ethical business practices, and inclusive governance, this initiative will position India as a global leader in sustainable cooperative development. The university will redefine

cooperative education, positioning cooperatives as key drivers of economic and social transformation. It will conduct research on global cooperative models, blockchain in cooperatives, and strategies to enhance cooperative entrepreneurship through mentorship and funding initiatives. The introduction of the Tribhuvan Sahkari University Bill reflects Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visionary leadership and dedication to inclusive economic growth through cooperative empowerment. This initiative will create a new generation of skilled professionals dedicated to strengthening India's cooperative movement. As India moves towards economic self-sufficiency, the cooperative sector will play a pivotal role in sustainable development and rural prosperity.

Jonathan, Kaur clinch gold at National Games

PTI ■ DEHRADUN
Fifteen-year-old Bengaluru shooter Jonathan Antony delivered a grand performance on the biggest domestic stage when he outwitted Paris Olympics bronze-medallist Sarabjot Singh and the more fancied Saurabh Chaudhary to clinch the 10m air pistol gold at the National Games here on Monday.
Jonathan, whose shooting career took wings when he won gold in the CBSE South Zone Rifle Shooting Competition in 2022 while studying in eighth standard, shot a superb 240.7 for Karnataka in the final to overcome the challenge of Services veterans Ravinder Singh (silver, 240.3) and Gurpreet Singh (bronze, 220.1) and Sarabjot, who won a bronze in the Paris Olympics' 10m air pistol



gold and bronze in the youth category. "I'm thrilled with this win.



highest level makes this victory even more meaningful. Today was my day, and I'm proud of how it all came together," Antony said.

Punjab's Sift Kaur Samra secured gold in the women's 50m rifle 3-positions event after shooting a superb 461.2 to overcome the challenge of state-mate Olympian Anjum Moudgil, who shot 458.7. Surabhi Bharadwaj of Telangana bagged the bronze medal, shooting 448.8. The 23-year-old Samra, an Asian Games gold medallist, produced a commanding performance in the qualification round as well to finish second behind Madhya Pradesh's Ashi Chouksey (598). Ashi was in a different zone in the qualification but she could not maintain the rhythm in the final to finish a dismal seventh. "This feels like a comeback for me after the Olympics," said Samra, who had a forgettable Paris Olympics. "I didn't take a break (after Paris) and kept training, so winning the gold today feels special," Samra said in a press release. "I'm pleased with how I executed my routine and the small details that made the difference. It's also wonderful to share the podium with Anjum, who's an incredible shooter." Moudgil, also from Punjab, claimed the silver medal with 458.7 points. "This is the third National Games where Sift and I have finished on the podium together. She's an extraordinary shooter, and I've always admired her," said Moudgil, a winner of two silver medals at the 2018 World Championships. "While my scores weren't great in the beginning, I knew that staying calm and focused would get me to the podium. This has been the best shooting range I've competed in and the organisation has been fantastic."



Marcus Rashford joins Aston Villa

PTI ■ LONDON
Marcus Rashford will look to reignite his career at Aston Villa after joining on loan for the rest of the season from Manchester United, where he has fallen out with recently hired manager Ruben Amorim.
The move was completed late Sunday, with neither Premier League club disclosing any more terms surrounding the deal. The Press Association and other sections of the British media have reported Rashford was joining Villa with a view to a permanent transfer for 40 million pounds (\$50 million) and that Villa was paying a loan fee as well as covering the majority of Rashford's salary, reportedly worth nearly \$400,000 a week.
The 27-year-old forward, one of the most famous players in the Premier League, had not played for United, his hometown club, since Dec. 12 amid concerns from Amorim about Rashford's commitment to training. He has also been overlooked for recent England squads and didn't play at the European Championship last year, after a season when he was dropped by United on one occasion for disciplinary reasons.
There was speculation about a move to Italy or Saudi Arabia, but Rashford is staying in England and now needs to prove to Villa

Sanju Samson fractures index finger

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
Star wicketkeeper-batter Sanju Samson has fractured his index finger after being hit by a Jofra Archer scorching during the fifth T20 International against England in Mumbai and will be out of action for more than a month, sidelining him from the upcoming Ranji Trophy quarterfinals.
It is learnt that Sanju has returned to his home base Thiruvananthapuram and will only start training after completing his rehabilitation at the National Cricket Academy (NCA). He would need NCA's green light before returning to competitive action.
"Samson has fractured his right index finger. It will take him five to six weeks before he can resume proper nets. So there is no chance of him playing the Ranji Trophy quarter-final for Kerala (vs J&K) in Pune from February 8-12," a BCCI source in the know of things told PTI on conditions of anonymity. "In all likelihood, his comeback will happen in the IPL for Rajasthan Royals," he added.
Samson, who had a poor series against England and is



South Africa with three centuries in seven games, missed the Champions Trophy selection as he hadn't played a single Vijay Hazare Trophy game.
The England series turned out to be an underwhelming one for the flamboyant Rajasthan Royals skipper, who scored only 51 in five games with 26 in the opening game at the Eden Gardens being his top score.
He was consistently troubled by the short deliveries from Archer, Mark Wood, and Saqib Mahmood and was mostly dismissed within the first Powerplay.
With India not due to have any white-ball assignments after Champions Trophy till end of July, the 30-year-old Samson will have to wait considerably for his next opportunity, which would be an away series against Bangladesh in August.



India is a sleeping giant in golf: Greg Norman

PTI ■ GURUGRAM
Australian legend Greg Norman believes India is a sleeping giant in golf and it would require more competitions in the country to help its players realise their true potential as he pitched for making the recently-concluded International Series here an annual affair.
The 69-year-old former world number one, who has 88 professional titles under his belt, was hopeful of India's growth in the sport.
"One of my initial focus points was to invest into the sleeping giant, which was the Asian tour. India is a sleeping giant when it comes to Golf. I mean you just look what's happening in India with the game of golf, it has only just started, right?" Norman told select media on the sidelines of the Asian Tour event here on Sunday.
"For the next 25 years, which is a generation, India is right in the middle of them," he said.
Norman was the CEO of LIV, a breakaway league founded in 2022 and financed by Saudi Arabia.
It has introduced some fresh rules like three-day 54-hole tournaments, instead of the traditional 72-hole four-day events. The LIV tournaments have also done away with the concept of weekend cut and all those who start get to play the entire tournament besides being entitled to prize money.
The International Series is a partnership between the Asian Tour and LIV but it adheres to the traditional 72-hole concept with a cut at the end of two rounds to ensure that players are entitled to points under the world golf ranking system, which has refused to recognise the 54-hole LIV events.
The LIV events have also faced significant resistance from the existing PGA Tour (USA) and the European Tour, which claim that the parallel tour "disrupts" the sport by offering players higher prize money and a seemingly more relaxed rules structure.
Norman believes LIV can have a great role in helping Indian golf, which was on a high when the likes of Jeev Milkha Singh, Shiv Kapur, SSP Chavrasia, Jyoti Randhawa and Arjun Atwal regularly won tournaments on all three tours till about a decade back.
However, the momentum has been somewhat lost in the past five years.
"I love LIV to come to India because to me, it's significant, right? Everything takes baby steps. And obviously, the international place to enter the league is important to do that," he pointed out.
"LIV created a new dynamic for the game of golf because it gave an opportunity in the competitive golfing world for a new business model...Different formats have come out and enticed millions and millions of people to come into the game of golf," he asserted.
"I truly believe LIV will be the true global golf platform for golf. We want to be in all the continents of the world...We bring a product that's a plug and play that's never been done before. We bring franchise models. We're bringing the youth side of it," he explained.
Norman lauds Anirban Lahiri
Lahiri has joined ranks with LIV along with some other prominent names like Bryson DeChambeau, two-time Major winner Dustin Johnson and Lee Westwood, a former world number one.

Manchester City thrashed 5-1 by Arsenal and in Premier League

PTI ■ LONDON
After a recent uplift in their results, the pain returned for Manchester City and Manchester United in the Premier League.
City conceded a goal inside two minutes and was overwhelmed in the second half in a 5-1 loss at Arsenal, which trimmed the gap to leader Liverpool to six points on Sunday.
United lost again at home, 2-0 to Crystal Palace, and now has seven defeats in 13 league games at Old Trafford this season — something not seen since the 1890s.
The chances of City winning a fifth straight Premier League title are surely over — the champions are 15 points behind Liverpool with 14 matches remaining — and they must have felt humiliated by the end of the game at

Emirates that again demonstrated the new-found hostility between Arsenal and City.
City arrived having won six of its last eight games in all competitions but all is still not right with Pep Guardiola's team, which let in a sloppy opener when Manuel Akanji was dispossessed near his own area and Martin Odegaard scored.
Haaland was goaded after that goal by Gabriel in a hangover from the spiky 2-2 draw between the teams in September but responded by equalizing in the 55th.
Arsenal went back in front in the 57th through Thomas Partey's deflected shot and there were further goals from Myles Lewis-Skelly, Kai Havertz and Ethan Nwaneri as City fell apart in a similar fashion to the 4-2 loss at Paris Saint-Germain in the



that went on there, you do have that fire in your stomach." Arsenal was alone in second place, three points above Nottingham Forest and nine above fourth-placed City.
MARTINEZ SUSTAINS SERIOUS INJURY IN

Champions League last month.
"How we played in the last 30 minutes is not acceptable. It's not us," City defender John Stones said. "I'm angry, upset."
Arsenal revelled in the win. Lewis-Skelly, an 18-year-old defender, marked his goal by sitting down, crossing his legs and delivering a "Zen" celebration — one often used by Haaland. And when the final whistle sounded, the home team played Kendrick Lamar's "Humble" loudly around the stadium — surely a nod to Haaland telling Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta to "stay humble" after the 2-2 draw in September.
"This is a thing that's been building up over a certain amount of time," Arsenal midfielder Declan Rice said. "With the Etihad at the start of the season and everything Sunday for United with a tearful Lisandro Martinez carried off on a stretcher with a left knee injury — the latest injury to afflict the Argentina defender.
Jean-Philippe Mateta scored both goals in the second half for Palace to end United's three-match winning run in all competitions — a streak coming after manager Ruben Amorim had called his team "the worst team, maybe, in the history of Manchester United."
The Amorim era looks set to be without Rashford, at least until the end of the season, with the forward reportedly undergoing a medical examination at Aston Villa ahead of sealing a loan move with a view to a permanent transfer.
Even with striker Rashford absent, Amorim fielded a team with no out-and-out



striker and failed to create many good chances against Palace, which picked off United on the counterattack. Mateta's goals came in the 64th and 89th minutes.
United has lost seven of its first 13 home games in the Premier League this season and that hasn't happened since the 1893-94 season, according to the competition's statistic supplier, Opta. Five of those defeats have come in the last six home matches under Amorim.
"It is difficult to play here because we want to please our fans," Amorim said. "This season is going to be like that, I said it since the first day."
RELIEF FOR POSTECOGLOU AS TOTTENHAM WINS
United dropped to 13th in the standings and was just one place and two points ahead of Tottenham, which won 2-0 at

Brentford to end a four-match losing run in the league and ease some pressure on manager Ange Postecoglou.
Vitaly Janelt scored an own-goal at a corner to put Tottenham ahead at halftime and Pape Sarr added the second goal in the 87th.
"We needed a big effort again today, a physical effort. We put that in," said Postecoglou, who rested defender Micky van de Ven after the defender returned from injury in the midweek win over Elfsborg in the Europa League.
"Outstanding effort by the players." The result was a huge boost for Tottenham ahead of arguably the team's biggest match of the season, the second leg of the English League Cup semifinals against Liverpool on Thursday.

Praggnanandhaa beats Gukesh to clinch Tata Chess title

PTI ■ WIJK AAN ZEE

The Indian juggernaut in international chess remained unstoppable as Grandmaster R Praggnanandhaa fought through exhaustion and nerves to defeat world champion D Gukesh in a clash of compatriots to clinch the Tata Steel Masters title for the first time in his prolific career.

The bespectacled 19-year-old from Chennai, a city that has become the cradle of Indian chess, came from behind to upstage the 18-year-old world number three 2-1 in the tiebreaker of the event's 87th edition here on Sunday.

This was after both players ended up tied on 8.5 points after losing their 13th-round games. While Gukesh lost to fellow Indian Arjun Erigaisi, Praggnanandhaa went down to Vincent Keymer of Germany.

In the tie-breaker, there was huge drama typical of two young players looking to win each and every game they played in the tournament as they played the tie-



break. "I am still shaking, it was such a crazy day. I don't know how to express. I didn't really expect to win. Somehow things went my way," Praggnanandhaa told the official tournament website after his triumph.

Asked if it was the most tense day of his chess career, which began when he was a mere two years of age. "Today is more special because I won the tournament. Definitely most stressful day," he responded.

The teenager became the first Indian after Viswanathan Anand to win the title. Anand won it thrice (2003, 2004 and 2006) individually when it was called the Corus Chess Tournament, named on the title sponsor of that time. The legend also shared the honours twice (1989 and 1998) in its earliest form of Hoogovens Tournament.

Praggnanandhaa faced the Benoni with reversed colours in the first game of the tie-break and it seemed like he had equalised easily in the middle game. However, Gukesh had other thoughts as he kept trying and won, thanks to a blunder by Praggnanandhaa that cost him a full rook.

In a must-win second game of the tiebreaker, Praggnanandhaa employed the Trompowsky opening, and this time Gukesh could claim a slight advantage with his black pieces.

"I was just trying to relax, to rest a bit. It was a very difficult game. Against Vincent I didn't play anywhere close to the level I was playing here. I should buy something for Arjun. At some point I thought Gukesh was better," the former world youth champion quipped.

"For sure, (this win) it is the highlight. When I came here, I wanted to win but the field was very strong. I didn't really think about it much until yesterday," he added.

"I am completely exhausted. I was also quite tired. I just want to get some rest now."

During the tie-break, by just keeping his position together, Praggnanandhaa patiently waited and capitalised on an unforced error from Gukesh to first knock down a pawn and then his technical abilities were enough to see the normal blitz games through with a 1-1 score.

This took the match into sudden death, where Praggnanandhaa drew white and once again Gukesh was better with some imaginative play on the queen side that netted him a pawn.

The sudden death had a time control of two minutes and thirty seconds for white against three for black but that did not deter Praggnanandhaa from trying to defend an inferior endgame.

Just while the position looked completely drawn and another game was on the cards, Gukesh lost control in the battle of nerves and first lost a pawn then his last remaining knight.

Praggnanandhaa showed perfect technique to take the full point and his maiden victory at the Masters. For Gukesh, this was the second year running when he tied for first position and lost the tiebreaker. In the previous edition, Gukesh had lost to Chinese Wei Yi.



Bevan inducted to Cricket Australia's Hall of Fame

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Former batter Michael Bevan, widely regarded as one of the greatest ODI finishers who displayed impeccable game awareness and mastered difficult run chases with minimal risk, has been inducted to Cricket Australia's Hall of Fame.

The 54-year-old, who was a part of Australia's 1999 and 2003 World Cup-winning teams, made 6912 ODI runs at a brilliant average of 53.58 in 232 games, batting in middle-order, mostly at number six.

During his career that ran from 1994 to 2004, Bevan exemplified maximum returns at minimum risk, and was a genius in keeping the required rate during chases in check by picking singles and twos that would often lull the opposition and ultimately steer Australia over the line.

"Congratulations to former Australian player Michael Bevan on his induction to the Australian Cricket Hall of Fame," Cricket Australia posted on X.

Speaking to 'cricket.Com.Au', the imposing left-hander, who has also dabbled in coaching, said his ODI success was down to a deep understanding of the format.

"When I reflect on my one-day career, and get an understanding of why I performed like I did, how I was able to manage the innings, or the run rate...I think that was sort of natural to me," he said.

"Minimising risk, understanding which bowlers to target, what types of shots to play in certain situations, and the ability to understand when to put your foot down, and when to take the foot off the accelerator as well... (were) the principles that I used," he added the owner of 67 unbeaten ODI knocks who struck 46 half-centuries and six hundreds in the format.

He could never really replicate that success in Tests and Bevan said he accepted that the traditional form was not really meant for him quite early. Bevan played only 18 Tests. He made his debut in 1994 and played the five-day game only till 1998.

"I wasn't ready to play Test cricket. I had my own demons," he said.

His long-time captain Steve Waugh was a huge fan of his work ethic in the nets and in his book, he mentioned that Bevan "would literally invent strokes to fuel his search for greatness and his desire to attain new levels of excellence."

Bevan could maneuver Australia out of trouble with his tenacity and the ability to find the gaps in the tightest fields to keep the scoreboard ticking and eventually chase down targets for victories by the thinnest of margins.

"...I felt with the one-day game, I always did what I did - I had the ability to win close games, and that was always there. It wasn't something that I learned or had to go through, it was really just intrinsic, which is kind of a bit weird," he said of his career.

Buttler praises Abhishek Sharma's innings

PTI ■ MUMBAI

England captain Jos Buttler has heaped high praise on Abhishek Sharma for smashing a whirlwind 54-ball 135 in India's 150-run win in the fifth T20 here, describing the record knock as one of the finest examples of "clean ball striking".

Abhishek entered record books with the second fastest T20 century by an Indian batter off 37 balls and hit 13 sixes -- the most in an innings for any player from the country, powering the hosts to 247 for nine.

"Yeah, (we are) obviously disappointed (with the result), they (India) played a fantastic batting innings. I think credit to Abhishek Sharma, I thought that's as clean a ball striking as I've seen, I thought he played fantastically well," Buttler told the media after India recorded their second biggest T20I win by runs on Sunday.

Buttler denied England were "shellshocked" from Abhishek's onslaught on his bowlers but said there were only two options for his side — either to go boom or bust.

"We always sit down and think



what more could we have done or how we could have stopped him, but some days I think you have to give a lot of credit to the opposition, I thought he played brilliantly well," Buttler said.

"Shellshocked's not quite the word, I think. It can be difficult sometimes when a player gets on a roll and they play as well as he did," Buttler said.

"Looking back at the last IPL, him and Travis Head were the same at the top of the order for Sunrisers (Hyderabad) and obviously he's brought that into India."

"He (Abhishek) played a brilliant innings and sometimes you want to credit the opposition. You always think of what more could you do, how could we get him out, how could we slow him down and, but yeah, credit to us for, you know, sticking in there and fighting back and keeping them down to 240 after the start they got," Buttler said.

The England captain acknowledged the pitch remained the same for his batters as the visitors were bowled out for 97 in 10.3 overs with Phil Salt scoring a 23-ball 55.

"I've played in a few games like this and it generally goes one of two ways, you either get actually somewhere near or you fall in a heap and today was that day," he said.

"The way Phil Salt went out there and struck the ball, it was obviously a really good wicket, you needed someone to go with him and one or two guys to catch fire and that's the way you're going to chase that down."

"Like I said, you either get quite close in games like this and surprise yourselves or it doesn't work but, no, we certainly won't change the way we want to play. We need to, you know, keep backing that, be even more committed and you're desperate to do well and execute that," he said.

Buttler said he wouldn't want England to change their style of play after a 1-4 series loss to India.

"We've had our moments actually in all the games bar the first one probably and today. We had moments in Chennai, Pune and obviously the game we won in Rajkot," he said.

"As we get more experienced, more committed to the style we want to play and the nuances of the game of how we're going to win those moments, then (we would) go on to win the match and win series," he added.



CT 2025 Trophy tour concludes in India

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The trophy tour for the ICC Champions Trophy concluded in India with the coveted prize touring cities of Mumbai and Bengaluru ahead of the tournament beginning February 19.

The upcoming edition of the eight-team 50-overs tournament will be held in Pakistan and Dubai from February 19 to March 9.

"The Trophy Tour has covered all eight participating nations during its global journey and, with the conclusion of India leg, it will now travel to its final stop in Pakistan," the ICC said in a statement on Monday.

The tour in Mumbai included trophy's visits to the Wankhede Stadium, Shivaji Park, the Gateway of India, Carter Road, historic Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus, and Bandstand among other locations.

It was also displayed during the celebrations to mark the completion of 50 years of the Wankhede Stadium.

In Bengaluru, the trophy visited venues including Nexus Shantiniketan Mall, Bengaluru Palace, Freedom Park, KR Market, Town Hall, St Mary's Basilica, M Chinnaswamy Stadium, Church Street and Vidyarthi Bhavan.

We want to play high-risk, high-reward cricket in T20s: Gambhir

PTI ■ MUMBAI

India head coach Gautam Gambhir said the team is ready to push the barriers in T20 Internationals with the adoption of a fresh "high-risk, high-reward" approach, and the target is now "to get 250-260 regularly" in the format.

That shift in mindset was evident in India's 4-1 mauling of England in the just-concluded five-match series.

In the fourth T20I at Pune, India kept attacking England despite losing wickets to eventually set a match-winning 181 for 9, and at Mumbai on Sunday, the hosts raced to 247 for 9, their fourth highest total in this format.

"That's the kind of T20 cricket we want to play. We don't want to fear losing a game of cricket. We want to play high-

risk, high-reward cricket. And these guys have adopted that ideology really well," Gambhir told the host broadcaster after the match on Sunday.

Gambhir said they are looking to post tall totals in the vicinity of 250 in every game, and he doesn't mind getting out for a low score in some matches while attempting to achieve the task.

"We want to try and get to 250-260 regularly. And in trying to do that, there'll be games where we'll get bundled out for 120-130. And that is what T20 cricket is all about.

"Unless and until you don't play that high-risk cricket, you won't get those big rewards as well. Most importantly, I think we're on the right track. Come those

Gambhir used the Abhishek Sharma to further validate his point.

Head wins Allan Border medal, Sutherland receives Belinda Clark honour

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Star batter Travis Head was named the Swinner of the prestigious Allan Border Medal for the top Australian men's cricketer, while young all-rounder Annabel Sutherland was awarded the Belinda Clark Medal at the Australian Cricket Awards held here on Monday.

Head, who had an outstanding year across all three formats with 1,427 runs since the start of the polling period, received 208 votes to secure the top honour, surpassing Josh Hazlewood (158 votes) and Pat Cummins (147 votes).

"Pretty hard to believe. It's been a good year. Very pleased I've been able to fit in, do a role, and lucky I've been able to play all formats. It's a nice accomplishment, and I'll enjoy it," Head said in a recorded interview from Galle.

The 31-year-old Head also took home the Men's ODI Player-of-the-Year award and finished second in the Twenty20 and Test Player-of-the-Year awards.

Head won the ODI honours despite figuring in just five of the 11 ODIs that Australia played during the eligibility period. His standout performance, including a magnificent 154 not out against England at Trent Bridge, helped



him edge past Alex Carey, Steve Smith, and Xavier Bartlett for the top prize.

For Sutherland, it was a first Australian Cricket Award, which came just days after her maiden Test century at the MCG, becoming the first woman to make a ton on that ground.

The 23-year-old all-rounder began the 12-month voting period with an impressive 210 against South Africa at the WACA and later scored her third Test century -- a brilliant 163 in the Ashes.

Sutherland received 168 votes, surpassing Ashleigh Gardner (143 votes) and Beth Mooney (115 votes) to win the Belinda Clark Medal.

"Pretty surreal. To win an award named after Belinda Clark is pretty special," said Sutherland.

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER
KHURDA IRRIGATION DIVISION, KHURDA
Dist: Khurda, Odisha - 752056
Tel: 06755-796308
Mail id: - eekhura@irrigationdivision@gmail.com

A-1010

*Procurement Notice No. KHD-07 OF 2024-25, Dtd. 30.01.2025

- Name of the work : 08 (eight) nos. of Civil Work
- Tender Cost : Varies from Rs.12.80 Lakhs to Rs.41.11 Lakhs
- Bid Document Cost : Rs.6000/-
- Bid Security : Varies from Rs. 12,800/- to Rs.41,200/-
- Class of Contractor : D & C & B
- Period of Completion : 02, 03, & 12 calendar months
- Other details are as follows.

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	Availability of Tender On-line for bidding		Date of Opening of Bid
		From	To	
Superintending Engineer, Khurda Irrigation Division, Khurda	KHD 07-01 of 2024-25	04.02.2025 at 11.00 A.M	13.02.2025 up to 5.00 P.M	14.02.2025 at 11.00 A.M.
	KHD 07-08 of 2024-25			

8. - e-mail id : eekhura@irrigationdivision@gmail.com

9. If required lottery may be held on 19.02.2025 at 11.00 AM

Further detail conditions can be seen from the Govt. website www.tendersodisha.gov.in

OIPR-32078/11/0007/2425 Superintending Engineer Khurda Irrigation Division, Khurda.

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
Panchayat Samiti, Dharamgarh
E-Procurement Notice
Bid Identification No. PS-DHG-T-2/2024-25

i-467

1	No. of the work:	: Building works 6 nos.
2	Estimated cost:	: Rs. 18.33 to 20.27 Lakhs
3	Class of Contractor:	: "C & D"
4	Period of completion:	: 6 months
5	Date and time of availability of bid document in the portal:	: 11.00 hrs of 03.02.2025 to 17.00 hrs of 18.02.2025
6	Last date/Time for receipt of bid in the portal:	: 17.00hour of 18.02.2025
7	Name and address of the Officer Inviting Bid:	: Block Development Officer, Dharamgarh
8	Date & Venue of Opening of the Single Cover Bid and Technical Bid (Cover 1).	: On 19.02.2025 at 11.00 AM in the Office of the Panchayat Samiti, Dharamgarh

Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal <https://tendersodisha.gov.in>

Sd/-
Block Development Officer
Dharamgarh

OIPR-19176/11/0003/2425

ODISHA CONSTRUCTION CORPORATION LTD.
(A Govt. of Odisha Undertaking)
CENTRAL WORKSHOP, RASULGARH,
Bhubaneswar-751010 (Odisha)
Tel- 0674 - 2580107,
Email : smpmcw@gmail.com
(GSTIN-21AAACO2571K22M)

CAD-2464

Tender call Notice No. OCC/CWS/PROC/FAB-08/63/2024-25 dtd.03.02.2025.

Type of work : Labour charges for sand blasting and application of one coat primer of finished fabricated items of Kanupur Irrigation Project

Total No. of work : 01(One).

Period of supply : 01(One) month.

Procurement Officer	Tender Call Notice No.	Cost of Tender document (Including GST)	Sale of tender document	Submission of tender document (Off-line mode)
Senior Manager (Mech.), OCC Ltd., Central Workshop, Rasulgarh, Bhubaneswar	OCC/CWS/PROC/FAB-08/63/2024-25 dtd.03.02.2025	Rs.7080/- (Non-refundable)	04.02.2025 10.00AM to 13.02.2025 1.00 PM	04.02.2025 10.00AM to 13.02.2025 3.00 PM

Date of opening of the Tender : 13.02.2025 at 4.00 P.M.

Further details can be seen from the website (www.odishaconstruction.com)

Amendment/corrigendum/cancellation, if any shall be posted on-line only (OCC website).

Sd/-
Senior Manager (Mech.)-I
OCC Ltd., Bhubaneswar

OIPR-34163/11/0046/2425

GOVT. OF ODISHA
DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES
O/O THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER, PRACHI DIVISION, BHUBANESWAR - 12
E-mail: prachi.division@yahoo.co.in, eeprachidivision@gmail.com
No. 655 Dt. 29.01.2025
e-PROCUREMENT NOTICE NO - SEPRD - 16/2024-25

A-1003

Bid Documents consisting of work, estimate cost, cost of tender paper, EMD, time of completion, class of contractor, the set of terms & conditions of contract and other necessary documents can be seen in e-procurement portal www.tendersodisha.gov.in complete online process only

01. Nature of work	Civil works (Canal / River bank restoration / Building)
02. No. of Works	21 (Twenty One) Nos.
03. Bid Identification No.	SEPRD - 16/2024-25
04. Estimated Cost (in Rupees)	Rs. 5.00 Lakhs to Rs. 30.00 Lakhs
05. Earnest Money Deposit	Referred to DTGN
06. Cost of Tender Paper	Referred to DTGN
07. Period of Completion	Referred to DTGN
08. Date & time of availability of bid documents in the Portal	From 05.02.2025 (10.00 AM) to 16.02.2025 (5.30 PM)
09. Date and time of Opening of Tender Documents & online bids	17.02.2025 at 11.30 AM
10. Date of Lottery (in case of situation arises)	25.02.2025 at 3.00 PM
11. Name and Address of the Officer Inviting Bid	Superintending Engineer, Prachi Division, Bhubaneswar-12. E-mail: prachi.division@yahoo.co.in , eeprachidivision@gmail.com

Further details (corrigendum, addendum, cancellation) can be seen from the State Govt. Portal www.tendersodisha.gov.in

OIPR-32096/11/0006/2425

Sd/
Superintending Engineer
Prachi Division, Bhubaneswar