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MONEY 10
SITHARAMAN ENCOURAGES STATES TO APPROACH FINANCE COMMISSION ON TAX CONCERNS



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

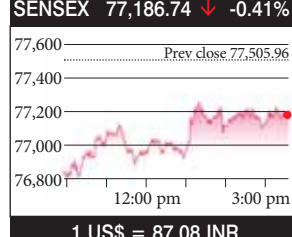
with 50+ seats. But if there is a split in the jhuggi voters and the middle class consolidates behind the BJP, there could be a repeat of Haryana and Maharashtra results in Delhi. Voters residing in jhuggi-jhopdi (JJ) clusters have been backing the AAP for the past two elections. These voters are largely 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 of 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 this order.

WEATHER

AQI 286
MAX 24.1°C(+2.1)
MIN 10.2°C(+1.6)

Stage III of GRAP had been implemented in Delhi on January 31, after a significant deterioration in air quality due to calm winds and smog, which caused the Air Quality Index (AQI) to spike to 365. "Delhi's average AQI has significantly improved as the AQI of the day clocked 286 today as per the AQI Bulletin provided by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), clearly indicating a downward trend.



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

India's Chandrika Tandon shines at Grammys with 'Triveni'

ABHI SINGHAL ■ NEW DELHI

Under the dazzling glow of stage lights and the thunderous applause of a global audience Chandrika Krishnamurthy Tandon at the age of 71, made India proud with her first Grammy award for the album 'Triveni' in the Best New Age, Ambient or Chant Album category. The Grammy Awards were organised by the Recording Academy, and was held at the Crypto.Com Arena in Los Angeles on late Sunday. Tandon, an Indian-American vocalist and entrepreneur was earlier also nominated for her album 'Soul Call' in 2009. Her now won work 'Triveni' is a collaborative work with South African flautist Wouter Kellerman and Japanese cellist Eru Matsumoto. As the music industry's most

prestigious honour, the Grammys have long been a platform where legends are born, history is made, and emotions run high. While receiving the award alongside her collaborators, Chandrika Tandon said, "Music is love, music is light, and music is laughter and let's all be surrounded by love, light, and laughter. Thank you for the music, and thank you to everyone who makes music." Triveni, her album, reflects the essence of its name that symbolises the confluence of India's sacred rivers Ganga, Yamuna, and Saraswati. It brings together three globally acclaimed artists: Indian singer-composer Sonu Tandon, Grammy-winning flautist Wouter Kellerman, and Japanese guitarist Matsumoto. The album weaves ancient



Eru Matsumoto, from left, Wouter Kellerman, and Chandrika Tandon accept the award for best new age, ambient, or chant album for "Triveni" during the 67th annual Grammy Awards

Vedic chants with melodic flute and resonant cello, creating a reflective soundscape that fosters mindfulness, self-discovery, and connection. This harmonious blend of Indian classical music, New Age

overarching theme of healing resonance. The songs are: "Pathway to Light", "Chant in A", "Journey Within", "Aether's Serenade", "Ancient Moon", "Open Sky", and "Seeking Shakti". Tandon also took her Instagram to express gratitude for her first Grammy. She wrote, "Honoured to receive a GRAMMY for our collaborative album Triveni. A moment that reminds me that music is love, music ignites the light within all of us, and, even in our darkest days, music spreads joy and laughter. Congratulations to all the other nominees in our category. Thank you for the music, and thank you for each and everyone that creates and supports the music; may all our lives be enveloped in Love Light Laughter."

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

SJMM supremo arrested in Latehar, arms, ammo recovered

PNS : DALTONGANJ

Latehar police has given a severe jolt to the SJMM who was a kind of pain in the neck of the police in Latehar district.

Latehar police nabbed and jailed a 50 year old naxal supremo of the banned splinter group of naxal Sangharsh Jan Mukti Morcha (SJMM) Rajesh Singh Kherwar alias Shaitan alias Topi who was evading arrest for 12 long years.

Latehar SP Kumar Gaurav said, "Supremo of SJMM Rajesh Singh Kherwar alias Shaitan alias Topi was arrested on Sunday who was remanded to judicial custody today Monday under sections of 308 (2) and 308 (5) of the BNS and section of the Arms act."

This 'Shaitan' has 13 cases against him out of which 2 cases fall in Gumla district. Latehar District's Chandwa and Balumath police stations have his



SP Latehar Kumar Gaurav (second from right) briefing media persons in Latehar on Monday. PNS

remaining 11 cases.

Gaurav further said "This naxal supremo did carry a reward of 2L of rupees." However sources said the state government withdrew this reward on him in 2016.

Rajesh Singh Kherwar was not only operative in Latehar district but also in Gumla district. Police have recovered one desi revolver of 9 mm calibre, 2 rounds of

fire and cell phone from him.

Gaurav added "He is not only notorious but he knows the art of evasion. He evaded his arrest for thirteen long years till our police finally got him."

On being asked if for his evasion for over a decade or so, was his property ever seized under the law to which Gaurav said "Warrant of seizures of property was executed."

"This naxal supremo used whatsapp call. He used to threaten his target through voice call and video call" reiterated Gaurav.

Latehar police recovered his same cell phone with which he used to make voice calls and video calls to frighten his target all for levy.

Sources said this naxal supremo was after a contrac-

tor of TTIPL engaged in laying the third railway lines here.

The contractor Vivek Tiwary was threatened on January 27. Rajesh Singh Kherwar flaunted his weapon through the video call ostensibly to chill Tiwary for levy.

Tiwary showing courage and trust in Latehar police and its chief Kumar Gaurav lodged an FIR against Rajesh Singh Kherwar with the Latehar police station on January 29. Sources said the Latehar police swung into action and got him on February 2.

Sources said some ten years ago such a courage to lodge FIR against the naxal was out of question for fear of life.

But now things have changed like this where Tiwary mustered all the courage and stood against the naxal supremo Rajesh Singh Kherwar. Latehar police have come closer to public said sources.

YUVA conducts awareness rally on MNREGA



PNS : JAMSHEDPUR

As part of the nationwide MNREGA Day celebrations, a social organization, Youth Unity for Voluntary Action (YUVA), in collaboration with local authorities, organized an awareness rally in several villages of Potka block, Jamshepur.

The rally aimed to educate rural communities about the benefits and provisions of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MNREGA). Participants carried placards and banners with slogans such as "Har Ghar Ko Adhikar 100 Din Ka Rozgar" (Every household has the

right to 100 days of employment).

YUVA, in partnership with the Azim Premji Foundation, has been working to empower gram sabhas in three panchayats of Potka block. The organization's efforts focus on creating awareness about MNREGA, promoting social audit, and ensuring transparency and accountability in the implementation of the scheme. The rally was attended by a large number of villagers, who were informed about the key provisions of MNREGA, including the guarantee of 100 days of employment, minimum wage, and social security benefits. "We aim to create awareness about MNREGA and ensure that rural communities are able to access their entitlements under the scheme," said Jaiprakash Sahoo, a project coordinator of YUVA.

Governor to attend convocation of Women's University

PNS : JAMSHEDPUR

Governor Santosh Gangwar, is scheduled to attend the second convocation ceremony of Jamshepur Women's University as the Chief Guest. The convocation will be held on 4 February at the university campus in Sidhgora, where final preparations are underway. In view of the Governor's visit, the district administration is making elaborate security arrangements.

As part of the preparations, District Magistrate-cum-Deputy Commissioner Ananya Mittal and Senior Superintendent of Police Kishore Kaushal inspected the venue at Sidgora. Present at the site were PD ITDA Deepankar Chaudhary, City SP Kumar Shivashish, DTO Dhananjay, DSP Bhola Prasad, and other officials.

During the inspection, senior district officials closely reviewed the ongoing preparations at the university and assessed necessary measures for security and law enforcement. Instructions were given to the officials present to ensure smooth execution of the event. Special focus was placed on parking arrangements and maintaining seamless traffic movement during the VIP visit.



The District Magistrate emphasized that all concerned officials have been instructed to ensure foolproof security. A thorough review of all security aspects is being conducted, and an adequate number of magistrates, police officers, and security personnel will be deployed.

4 held in Jeweller's robbery case in Garhwa



NITYANAND DUBEY : GARHWA

The police in Garhwa have solved the robbery case involving gold merchant S Kumar Soni, which took place on 29 January. Four suspects were arrested: Manish Kumar Bhuinya, known as Kujur, Abhishek

Kumar Chaudhary, Mithun Kumar Mahato, and Vishal Kumar Chaudhary. Abhishek is from Ranka, Garhwa, while Vishal is from Daltonganj, Palamau. Manish and Mithun live in Namkum, Ranchi.

The police recovered the stolen jewellery, the gold merchant's mobile phone,

the motorcycle used in the robbery, a homemade pistol, two live .315 rounds, and an empty cartridge from the suspects.

Garhwa Superintendent of Police (SP) Deepak Pandey announced this on Monday.

SP Pandey told the media that on 2 February, around 4:30 pm, the police received a tip about suspicious young men in the Tenudih forest in Garhwa. The team went to the area and arrested the four men. They all confessed to the crime.

In their statements, the suspects said Abhishek Kumar Chaudhary planned the robbery. He contacted Manish Bhuinya, Kujur, Mithun Mahato, and Vishal Kumar Chaudhary to help him rob S Kumar Soni in Garhwa. The group arrived on the morning of 29 January. They first checked

Soni's location and then robbed him at knifepoint, taking all the jewellery and his mobile phone from the boot of his motorcycle. After the robbery, they ran away.

On 2 February, the robbers met in the Tenudih forest to split the stolen gold and silver jewellery when the police caught them.

Manish Bhuinya has six cases against him, Mithun Mahato has two, and Vishal Kumar Chaudhary has one in different police stations. The work of Ranka SDPO Rohit Ranjan Singh, Inspector Subhash Kumar Paswan, Station House Officer Animesh Shantikari, Prabhat Kumar, Anil Hembram, Rajesh Kumar Jha, ASI Vinay Kumar Pandey, Havildar Doman Mochi, and Constable Kaushal Kishore Tiwari in catching the suspects is commendable.

NIPM Ranchi to hold regional conference

PNS : RANCHI

The grand "Eastern Regional Conference 2025 - Ranchi" organized by the National Institute of Personnel Management (NIPM) Ranchi Chapter will be held on February 14 and February 15, 2025.

The theme of this prestigious conference is "Future of Work: Refining HR for Samridh Bharat", which will focus on the future and development of Human Resource (HR) Management in India.

Towards the successful organization of this conference, today, the official brochure was unveiled in the presence of senior officials of NIPM. The program was presided over by Shri Harshnath Mishra, President of NIPM Ranchi Chapter.

HR professionals, business leaders, academicians, research scholars and students from across the country will participate in this conference, who will share their experiences, research and strategies. The objective of the conference is to discuss the latest trends, challenges and opportunities in the human resource sector, so that the role of HR can be made more effective in the sustainable economic development of India.

During this, discussions will also be held on modern technologies, artificial intelligence (AI), digital transformation and Future of Work. Through this event, the stalwarts of industry and education will get a platform where they will be able to share their experiences and ideas.

This effort of NIPM Ranchi Chapter will prove to be an important step towards shaping the future of HR.



Chief Minister Hemant Soren along with his wife and MLA Kalpana Murmu Soren arrives for attending Upanayanam Sanskar ceremony of former Jharkhand Congress State President Rajesh Thakur's sons Rajvardhan and Yashvardhan at Co-operative Colony in Bokaro on Monday. PNS

IIM-R inaugurates EDP for lady officers of NABARD

PNS : RANCHI

IIM Ranchi inaugurated the Executive Development Programme on Women Leadership, an initiative designed to empower and enhance the leadership capabilities of Lady Officers from NABARD. This three-day programme focuses on equipping participants with essential skills in decision-making, team-building, addressing gender equality, and developing emotional intelligence.

The event began with the lighting of the lamp, symbolizing knowledge, wisdom, and discipline. Prof.

Tanushree Dutta, Programme Director & Dean of Academics at IIM Ranchi, welcomed the participants and emphasized that learning is a mutual and continuous journey. She expressed enthusiasm for the course of interactive sessions and extended her gratitude to NABARD for their relentless support in fostering leadership development. Prof. Amit Sachan, Dean of Executive Education and Consultancy at IIM Ranchi, highlighted the diverse range of topics to be covered, including work-life balance, legal rights, emotional intelligence, and

strategic decision-making. He underscored the importance of such training in preparing women officers for high-responsibility roles.

The inaugural session also featured insights from Smt. Amita Tripathi and Shri Pankaj Tripathi, Faculty Members at the National Bank Staff College (NBSC) Lucknow, who stressed the significance of women-led development, workplace diversity, and industry collaboration. With 27 participants representing 19 states, the programme brings together a dynamic group of professionals eager to



enhance their leadership acumen. Dr. Surendra Babu, Vice Principal of NBSC Lucknow, reflected on his journey from a District Development Manager in Ranchi, emphasizing the need for continuous skill enhancement and deliberate leadership.

S.K. Jahagirdar, Chief General Manager of NABARD, Jharkhand, acknowledged the remarkable achievements of the attendees, commending them for overcoming adversity, excelling in their roles, and making a lasting impact in their offices and states.

Coal India Inter-Company Carrom Tournament kicks off

PNS : RANCHI

Manoj Kumar, CMD, CMPDI inaugurated the Three-day Coal India Inter-Company Carrom Tournament 2024-25 organized by CMPDI from 03.02.2025 to 05.02.2025 at "Rabindra Bhawan", CMPDI, Ranchi. On this occasion, Ajay Kumar, Director (Technical/P&D/RD&T); JCC members Ashok Yadav, RP Singh and Devendra Tiwari, Sanjay Kadambar, General Manager (P&A); General



Managers/Heads of Departments from CMPDI(HQ) and Regional Institute-III, Ranchi along with a large number of sports lovers were present. Speaking on this occasion, Kumar said that this tournament provides a platform for the players to come together, exchange ideas and experiences, and engage in friendly competition. He further said that sports not only promote physical health but also strengthen the mind, Sportsmanship

isn't about focusing on winning or losing, rather, it's about finding inspiration to perform better and motivating ourselves to continuously improve. The tournament started with the singing of the Coal India corporate song, followed by formal introduction of Teams and players. Coal India Limited and all its subsidiary companies along with Singareni Collieries Company Limited (SCCL), Kothagudem are participating in this Tournament.

Senior citizens shine at 'Gata Rahe Mera Dil' Competition

PNS : JAMSHEDPUR

A singing competition titled 'Gata Rahe Mera Dil' was organized by Aastha Jamshepur, exclusively for senior citizens. The event witnessed enthusiastic participation, with 25 senior contestants showcasing their musical talents. In the competition, Anita Rakshit secured the first position, while Syed Azizuddin claimed the second spot, and Neelambar Chaudhary stood third. The jury panel comprised renowned city musicians B Krishna Rao, Biplab Mitra, and Krishna Sinha, who meticulously judged the performances. The welcome speech was delivered by Shatrughan Singh, while the stage proceedings were conducted by Anita Singh and Suraj Kumar Ray.



The event was graced by the presence of the President of the Senior Citizens Association, Shivpujan Singh, as the chief guest. Special guests included the Honorary General Secretary of Tulsi Bhawan, Prasanjit Tiwari, Anshu Sarkar of Yoga Sarkar Trust, social worker Poorvi Ghosh, along with social workers Amit Kumar, Shamim Ulfat, and Madhukar Ji. Several key members of Aastha Jamshepur attended the program, including patron

Dr. Vibhuti Sharan, President Sumant Sinha, General Secretary Prashant Krishnan, Drama Secretary Anita Singh, Organization Secretary Shatrughan Singh, and Film Secretary Partho Bhattacharya. Other notable attendees included Kanchan, Anant Deepika Banerjee, Nivedita Srivastava, Babli Meera, Aarti Srivastava, Anurag, Sanjit, Roshan, Anshu, and Ankit, along with music lovers and artists from the city.

Railway funds allocation to Jharkhand at record high: Vaishnaw

Railway fund allocation now risen by 16 times to Rs 7,302 crore from Rs 457 crore in 2009-14

PNS : RANCHI

Jharkhand has been allocated Rs 7,306 crore in the Union Budget 2025-26 to accelerate the development of railways in the state. Railway minister Ashwini Vaishnaw talking to media persons in Delhi said that in Jharkhand, the average allocation under the last five years of the UPA government was Rs 457 crore. It has now risen by 16 times to Rs 7,302 crore.

Slamming opposition leaders who have been targeting NDA government over poor allocation of funds for Railway projects in State, the Railway Minister said that work on rail projects worth Rs 52,885 crore are on in the state, while 57 stations are being redeveloped.

Vaishnaw on Monday said Jharkhand has been allocated Rs 7,306 crore in the Union Budget 2025-26 to accelerate the development of railways in the state.



He also said 1,311 km of new tracks were laid in Jharkhand in the past 10 years, "which is more than the entire rail network of the United Arab Emirates (UAE)". He said a total of 57

stations are being developed under the Amrit Bharat Station Scheme in the state at a cost of Rs 2,314 crore.

"The Railways' investment in Jharkhand is around Rs 60,000 crore," the minister said.

ter said.

As many as 943 km of rail route has been electrified in Jharkhand since 2014, and the state has achieved 100 per cent electrification, an official release said.

Twelve Vande Bharat trains covering 14 districts operate in Jharkhand, it said.

There has been a remarkable increase in budget grants for railways in Jharkhand, West Bengal and Odisha in 2025-26.

Addressing a press meet through video conferencing from New Delhi, Union Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said that there has been a big allocation in the Union Budget (2025-26) pertaining to Railways.

In the current budget, the total outlay for Railways' modernization and expansion in Jharkhand is Rs. 7,306 crores against the average outlay of Rs.457 crores during 2009 to 2014.

The Budget allocation for 2025-26 is 16 times (approx.)

more than the average Budget allocation of 2009-14.

In the budget (2025-26) there has been a record allocation of Rs.13,955 crores for West Bengal against the average allocation of Rs.4,380 crores during the period from 2009 to 2014.

The Budget allocation for 2025-26 is three times (approx.) more than the average Budget allocation of 2009-14.

For Odisha, there has been a total allocation of Rs.10,599 crores for 2025-26 against the average outlay of Rs.838 crores during 2009 to 2014.

The Budget allocation for 2025-26 is 12.5 times (approx.) more than the average Budget allocation of 2009-14.

Anil Kumar Mishra, general manager, South Eastern Railway was present at SER Headquarters, Garden Reach during the video conference of the Union Railway Minister.

CM meets locals in Dumka, resolves problems

PNS : RANCHI

Common people from different areas who reached the residence of Chief Minister Hemant Soren at Khijuria, Dumka today met him and apprised him of their problems. The Chief Minister directed the concerned officials to resolve the problems of the people soon. On this occasion, the Chief Minister told the people that this is Abua Government. With the blessings of all of you, a strong government has been formed once again in the state. Resolving your problems is among the top priorities of our government.



Chief Minister Hemant Soren listening to people from various areas at his residence, Khijuria in Dumka on Monday. PNS

The Chief Minister said that during the last tenure of our government, under the "Aapki Yojana-Aapki Sarkar-Aapke Dwar" program, lakhs of people applied to avail the benefits of the welfare schemes of the government in the camps organized in every

village and panchayat and it was also executed quickly. The officials reached the door of your house and listened to your problems with full sensitivity and resolved them. At present, work is being done to empower women in the state through

"Mukhyamantri Mainiya Samman Yojana" along with various welfare schemes of the government. The Chief Minister said that work is being done to take the state in a positive direction by fulfilling all the promises made by our government.

Govt to invite startup ideas under new policy from Feb 4

CM Hemant Soren serious about promoting startups in State



PNS : RANCHI

Chief Minister Shri Hemant Soren is serious about promoting startups in the state. In view of this, the new Jharkhand Startup Policy 2023 of the state was approved in the cabinet meeting held on 7 December 2023. Now the Jharkhand government is starting new startup ideas in the state through the portal <http://abvil.jharkhand.gov.in> from February 4, 2025 under the new Jharkhand Startup Policy 2023, where applicants will be able to give their ideas through this portal.

New Jharkhand Startup Policy 2023 is applicable in the state, for the successful operation and implementation of which ABVIL has been formed as Section 8 under the Companies Act 2013. The function of this agency is to select startups in the state, promote the startup ecosystem and implement the fiscal and non-fiscal incentives provided in the policy under the Common Incentive Disbursement Guidelines. Under this policy, an

online digital platform has been created whose URL is <http://abvil.jharkhand.gov.in>, through which new startup ideas will be received online by the applicant and the selection process of startups will be started from 4 February 2025 by calling a meeting of the State Evaluation Board by the department. Chief Minister Hemant Soren approved the new policy (New Jharkhand Startup Policy 2023) on 7 December 2023, cancelling the old Startup Policy 2016. After the approval of the cabinet, the Department of Information Technology and e-Governance has notified it. With this, the policy implemented in 2016 has been canceled. The new startup policy has been implemented for the next five years. During this period (till the year 2028), a target has been set to develop at least one thousand startups in the state. By this period, a target has been set to include Jharkhand among the leading 10 states by creating a favourable ecosystem in the state.

2 persons die in road accident

PNS : RANCHI

Two persons died in a horrific road accident on Monday morning near Radgaon in Tamar police station area on Ranchi-Tata main road, while another was seriously injured.

The deceased include 25-year-old Ritu Raj Kumar and 20-year-old Janhavi Kumari, residents of Golmuri in Jamshedpur, while Ritu Raj's sister Rohini Singh has been seriously injured.

The three people had gone to a wedding ceremony from Jamshedpur to Ranchi in a WagonR car and were returning to Jamshedpur in the morning. Meanwhile, the car hit a parked trailer from behind near Radgaon. The collision was so severe that the car was completely shattered and all three people were trapped in the car.

After the accident, local villagers informed the Tamar police. The police reached the spot and with the help of local people, pulled out the three from the car. Ritu Raj and Jhanvi Kumari died on the spot, while Rohini Singh was seriously injured.

Police station in-charge Roshan Jha immediately called an ambulance and sent Rohini Singh to the hospital for treatment, where she was referred to RIMS after first aid. It is being told that Rohini's condition is critical.

Jha said that on receiving information about the accident, the police reached the spot with a team and took out the bodies of the deceased. Initial investigation made it clear that the accident happened due to high speed. He said that the family members of the deceased have been informed about the incident.

This accident also points towards the continuously increasing road accidents on the Ranchi-Tata main road, where there is a need to be more cautious about road safety.

Tribals facing significant insecurity in State, claims BJP

PNS : RANCHI

BJP state spokesperson Rafia Naz has reacted sharply to the statement made by Chief Minister Hemant Soren on the 46th foundation day of Jharkhand Mukti Morcha. Describing the Chief Minister's statement as ridiculous, she said that this statement of the Chief Minister is only a hot air and has no reality.

Chief Minister Soren had said that "Wherever there are tribals in the whole country, they should come to Jharkhand, we will settle them." Reacting to this, Rafia Naz said that the reality is that the tribal brothers and sisters of Jharkhand state are feeling insecure today, whereas in other states the tribals are completely safe. Expressed serious concern about the safety of the tribal community of Jharkhand. She alleged that the tribal community is feeling insecure in the state due to Bangladeshi infiltrators. The Chief Minister should first ensure the safety of the tribal community across the state and then invite them.

Rafia Naz said, "The land and resources of the tribal community of Jharkhand are being continuously occupied by Bangladeshi infiltrators, which has not only become a threat to their existence, but a conspiracy is also being hatched to erase their social and cultural identity. These infiltration activities are also harming the communal and social fabric of Jharkhand."



She also said, "Due to the border security situation in Jharkhand and the inaction of the state government, the ever-increasing influence of Bangladeshi infiltrators has become a big threat to the security of the state. BJP demands strict action on this issue and urges the government to ensure that the tribal community gets full security and justice."

Rafia Naz said, "Our party is always committed to protecting the interests of the tribal community and we appeal to the state government to take strict action against Bangladeshi infiltrators."

Neither are they getting proper health care, nor education, nor security, nor employment, nor are they able to develop properly.

Rafia Naz alleged that the state government is not taking any concrete steps for the welfare of the tribals, while the Chief Minister is misleading the public with his meaningless talks.

Rafia Naz said, "If something has to be done for the tribal brothers and sisters, then first of all the Chief Minister needs to take concrete steps against Bangladeshi infiltrators and save the tribal brothers and sisters of Jharkhand from Bangladeshi infiltration and as far as the tribal brothers and sisters are concerned, they are completely safe in other states of the country more than in Jharkhand."

UNCERTAINTY LOOMS LARGE OVER JAC BOARD EXAMS



PNS : RANCHI

Matriculation and intermediate examinations conducted by Jharkhand Academic Council are likely to get postponed this year. The exams which are scheduled to begin from February 11 may get delayed as admit cards for the same have not been issued yet.

The tenures of JAC Chairman Dr Anil Mahto and Vice Chairman Dr Vinod Singh came to end on January 18. The govern-

ment has not appointed a new chairman and this delay could now affect the exams. Initially, exams for class 8 were scheduled to commence from January 28 and for class 9 from January 29-30, but they too were also postponed.

A total of 7.83 lakh students - 4.33 lakh for matric and 3.50 lakh students for intermediate are supposed to appear for the exams. As many as 2100 centres have been set up by the board across the State for suc-

cessfully conducting the examinations.

As per the information received, the name of the new chairman may get decided by February 5 while an official notification regarding this will be issued on the night of February 4. To ensure there are no disruptions in the exam preparation, the selected officers will take charge of their post on February 5 and the process of signing the admit cards will also begin on the same

day. The admit cards will then be uploaded online by February 6.

It is being reported that even if the admit cards are uploaded on the above mentioned date they will only get delivered to the candidates before February 10, leaving no extra time for any corrections if required. Hence, holding the exam on the scheduled date of February 11 may not be possible.

If the exams are postponed, there is also a possibility that a large number of students may not appear for them. JAC has already given instructions to print and supply the question papers. They will reach the districts before the scheduled date of the exam with the pre-decided date mentioned on it. If the date of the exam is rescheduled and the same question paper is used, questions may be raised in such a situation.

If the exams are delayed, the future of numerous students will be uncertain, as those who wish to pursue higher education in reputed institutes may face difficulties during the admission procedure.

Alumni Meet at SCS



A nostalgic Alumni Meet was organized at the Vidyasagar Auditorium of Surendranath Centenary School, bringing together over 70 members of the alumni community, including retired teachers. The event aimed to reconnect old friends, reminisce about fond memories, and strengthen ties with the alma mater. The gathering was marked by warmth, camaraderie, and shared stories of the past. The school's management and staff were delighted to welcome back their former students and colleagues. "We are thrilled to see our alumni come together and relive their memories," said Principal Samita Sinha.

BoB DGM visits Ranchi Regional Office

VG Senthilkumar, Deputy General Manager, Head-Marketing & Branding visited Bank of Baroda Regional Office Ranchi on Monday. During this, a meeting was organized with all the branch heads under Ranchi region. During this meeting, he gave various types of information related to social media, digital products of the bank etc. All the staff members of the regional office, other executives and all the staff members of the branch were present in the said program.



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 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 kalpvasis 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 kalpvasis, 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. crowd management measures to ensure a safe and seamless event. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath personally inspected the arrangements on Saturday, directing officials to enforce strict safety 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.



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 as 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 FII. 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 colour 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 Shaqat 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

PUBLIC NOTICE
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 cat-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 Demand letter of the above flat has been lost. An FIR to this effect has been lodged in P.S. Crime Branch in side 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. 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 are in the process 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 taken into consideration by the said party 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. Ph: 901117764, 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. 38, 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 Bhatra 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. Electricity Bill is not available 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 please herewith requested to intimate in writing to the undersigned within 07 days at below address.

PUBLIC NOTICE
Notice is hereby given that my client Dajit Singh and Lakhayal partners in M/s. Elanet Enterprises is in process of raising a loan from ICICI Bank for the amount of Rs. 120,00,000/- (Rupees Twelve Crores) only, for the purpose of purchase of land in the area of Village Vasant Vihar, Munirka Marg, New Delhi - 110057. The said property is being mortgaged to ICICI Bank in favour of Mr. Dajit Singh and Lakhayal partners in M/s. Elanet Enterprises. The said property is being mortgaged to ICICI Bank in favour of Mr. Dajit Singh and Lakhayal partners in M/s. Elanet Enterprises. The said property is being mortgaged to ICICI Bank in favour of Mr. Dajit Singh and Lakhayal partners in M/s. Elanet Enterprises. The said property is being mortgaged to ICICI Bank in favour of Mr. Dajit Singh and Lakhayal partners in M/s. Elanet Enterprises.

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 80 SQ. YDS, OUT OF KHATA NO. 19/20, SITUATED IN THE REVENUE ESTATE OF VILLAGE MATALA, KNOWN AS COLONY JAIN COLONY, IN BLOCK-C 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 below 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. SAUMYA GUPTA, Plot No. 136, (Basement) Uday Park, New Delhi-110049 Contact # 011-4046316

CHHATRAPATI SAMBHAJINAGAR 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 Sambhajinagar Municipal Corporation on Build Operate and Transfer (BOT) Basis. Situated at Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar. 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. Row 01: Name of Work, Development of Project for Sports Complex and Commercial Shops under P.G 3 at TV Centre N10 in Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar Municipal Corporation on Build Operate and Transfer (BOT) Basis. Row 02: Department, Build Operate and Transfer (BOT). Row 03: EMD (Online payment only), Rs. 4,71,028/-. Row 04: Bid Validity, 120 Days. Row 05: Form Fee (Online payment only), Rs. 11,800/- (including GST). Row 06: Time Limit of Work, 18 Months. Row 07: Performance Bank Guarantee (For successful bidder only), 5% of Project cost in the form of Bank Guarantee of Nationalized bank. Row 08: Date & Time of Publishing/Downloading of Tender, 4/2/2025 Time 17:00Hrs. Row 09: Date of pre-bid meeting, 14/2/2025 Time at 13:00 Hrs. Row 10: Date & Time of Submitting the Tender, 28/2/2025 Time upto 14:00 Hrs.

verka
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
e tenders are hereby invited for the purchase and supply of following items:-
1. For Verka Head Office, Chandigarh Di-Calcium Phosphate
2. For Verka Bathinda Dairy
Hiring of:
a) Insulin and vehicles for supply of packed milk and fresh milk products in bathinda milkshed area. (1.5 MT-04 Vehicles, 1.7 MT-01 Vehicle, 05 MT-01 Vehicle, 04 MT-01 Vehicle, 1.2 MT-01 Vehicle).
b) Vehicles for sale depot bathinda & verka bathinda dairy for supply of W.M.P. S.M.P., Panjiri, Ghee, Butter, Powder, Tetra Pack & Other products all Punjab & other States (Cap.09 Ton, 15 Ton, 20 Ton, 25 Ton).
c) Advertisement Agency for the purchase of advertisement and branding material.
d) Cold Store (Deep Freezer) for the storage of white butter. (Cap. approx. 400 to 500 MT)
NOTE:
1. For complete details regarding above tender (NIT), please visit our website i.e. www.verka.coop & e Tendering portal i.e. eproc.punjab.gov.in, if any, will be uploaded on website only.
2. Corrigendum, if any, will be uploaded on website only.
NA/12/27863/2023/413369 Dated CHD - 2/3/2025
Dy. General Manager (Purchase)

Public Notice
This is to inform you that Mr. Anwar Jami intends to purchase the second floor, without terrace/roof rights, measuring 113.86 square meters, built on part of the property bearing no. 3680, Ward No. XI, Andron Sabzi Mandi, Darya Ganj, New Delhi, from Mrs. Arisha. The said property was originally owned by Mr. Bakar Sabri. He sold it to Mrs. Naifsa Begum through a Sale Deed dated 15.03.2013. Thereafter, Mrs. Naifsa Begum sold the property to Mr. Rashid. Subsequently, Mr. Rashid sold the property to Mrs. Arisha Khan. Mrs. Arisha Khan is the undisputed owner of the said property. The same property is being financed by RBL Bank, Branch Gurgaon. If any person(s) objection(s) regarding subject property, then kindly inform submit his/her objection within 07 days from the date of the notice in writing. The said objection may be kindly sent to the undersigned by way of the Registered Post on the address given below and by E-mail failing which, the claim as per address shall be treated as null and void in respect of the subject property.
ASHWANI KUMAR (Advocate), Chamber No. 122, Teshil Compound, Ghaziabad, U.P.

Public Notice
This is to inform the general public that Kailash Narain Mehra in respect of Property No. 255, area measuring 33 Sq. Yds. i.e. 27.60 Sq. Mtrs. situated at Kucha Sangri, Narain, Bana Bana, Khan, Delhi - 110028, being the owner thereof through 3 Relinquishment Deed i.e., (1) Relinquishment Deed dated 08.02.2006 as doc. No. 1153 executed by (1) M/s. Shivam Narain Mehra in favour of (2) Mr. Om Narain Mehra (3) Mr. Vinod Kumar Mehra (4) Mr. Sushant Chandra Mehra (5) Mr. Akhil Kumar Mehra in favour of Mr. Kailash Narain Mehra in respect of property no. 255. (2) Relinquishment Deed dated 10.02.2006 as doc. No. 1193 executed by (1) Mr. Mohan Narain Mehra (2) Mrs. Shiv Ranu Mehra (3) Mr. Ashwani Mehra (4) Mr. Anish Mehra (5) Mrs. Shazia Rani Mehra (6) Mr. Santosh Kumar Mehra in favour of Mr. Kailash Narain Mehra in respect of property no. 255. (3) Relinquishment Deed dated 07.03.2006 as doc. No. 1956 executed by Mr. Gopal Narain Mehra in favour of Mr. Kailash Narain Mehra in respect of Property No. 255. Kailash Narain Mehra intends to transfer the ownership of above-mentioned Property by way of Sale Deed to Shavriti Devi. Subsequently, Shavriti Devi is in the process of mortgaging the said property with SBI Home Finance Co. Ltd. (Formerly Fullerton India Home Finance Co. Ltd.). Any objections or concerns regarding this transaction should be raised within a period of 07 days from the date of this public notice. Any objections submitted after the completion of this 07-day period will not be considered binding with respect to the said property or the interests of our client. If anyone wishes to raise an objection, please do so within the stipulated 07-day period by contacting Law Veritas: North (Advocates & Legal Consultants) at Office No. 11, 1st Floor, Building No. A-44/A, Sector-16, Noida, Uttar Pradesh 201301; Landline(s): +91021-3101683, e-mail: accounts@lvnorth.in

Public Notice
Reg. Entire Third Floor with roof/terrace rights "Said Floor" a part of Property Bearing No. 305, area measuring 80 sq.yds, falling in Kharsa No. 144 min. Situated at Anriti Pura (B), in the area of Village Garhiharia, Maina, Lalpat Nagar, New Delhi. (Hereinafter referred to as the "Said Property"). Be it known to all that our client, Mrs. Beena (hereinafter called the "Purchaser") intends to purchase the said floor from Mr. Anand Mishra, Attorney of Mr. Tan Sukh Khimji Shingadia (hereinafter called the "Attorney-holder"). In this connection, the Attorney-holder has informed the purchaser that he is the sole and absolute attorney holder in respect of the said floor of the said property vide POA documents viz. GPA, ATS and Will dated 11.04.1996 executed by Mr. Tan Sukh Khimji Shingadia in his favour. The said POA documents further informed that Mr. Tan Sukh Khimji Shingadia owned the said property vide POA documents viz. GPA, ATS and Will dated 11.04.1996 executed by Mr. Darshan Lal in his favour. The Attorney holder has informed the purchaser that the said floor is not mortgaged anywhere and there is no charge or dispute or any litigation pending regarding the said floor. Any person including Banks, Financial Institutions, relatives having any claim, right, title or interest in or over the said property whatsoever into or upon the said floor is hereby called upon to make the same known, in writing, with documentary evidence, by Registered AD Post, to the undersigned at the address mentioned herein below within 07 days of publication of this notice and in the event of no response having been received to the notice, the title of the attorney-holder in respect of the said floor shall be deemed to be clear of any charge or encumbrance of any nature whatsoever and any subsequent claim shall not bind our clients/Purchaser, in any manner whatsoever. Shikant Arora, Advocate M/S Intelective Law Offices A-74, GFL, Defence Colony, New Delhi - 110024

Public Notice
This is to inform the general public that Kailash Narain Mehra in respect of Property No. 255, area measuring 33 Sq. Yds. i.e. 27.60 Sq. Mtrs. situated at Kucha Sangri, Narain, Bana Bana, Khan, Delhi - 110028, being the owner thereof through 3 Relinquishment Deed i.e., (1) Relinquishment Deed dated 08.02.2006 as doc. No. 1153 executed by (1) M/s. Shivam Narain Mehra in favour of (2) Mr. Om Narain Mehra (3) Mr. Vinod Kumar Mehra (4) Mr. Sushant Chandra Mehra (5) Mr. Akhil Kumar Mehra in favour of Mr. Kailash Narain Mehra in respect of property no. 255. (2) Relinquishment Deed dated 10.02.2006 as doc. No. 1193 executed by (1) Mr. Mohan Narain Mehra (2) Mrs. Shiv Ranu Mehra (3) Mr. Ashwani Mehra (4) Mr. Anish Mehra (5) Mrs. Shazia Rani Mehra (6) Mr. Santosh Kumar Mehra in favour of Mr. Kailash Narain Mehra in respect of property no. 255. (3) Relinquishment Deed dated 07.03.2006 as doc. No. 1956 executed by Mr. Gopal Narain Mehra in favour of Mr. Kailash Narain Mehra in respect of Property No. 255. Kailash Narain Mehra intends to transfer the ownership of above-mentioned Property by way of Sale Deed to Shavriti Devi. Subsequently, Shavriti Devi is in the process of mortgaging the said property with SBI Home Finance Co. Ltd. (Formerly Fullerton India Home Finance Co. Ltd.). Any objections or concerns regarding this transaction should be raised within a period of 07 days from the date of this public notice. Any objections submitted after the completion of this 07-day period will not be considered binding with respect to the said property or the interests of our client. If anyone wishes to raise an objection, please do so within the stipulated 07-day period by contacting Law Veritas: North (Advocates & Legal Consultants) at Office No. 11, 1st Floor, Building No. A-44/A, Sector-16, Noida, Uttar Pradesh 201301; Landline(s): +91021-3101683, e-mail: accounts@lvnorth.in

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:

Table with 4 columns: Sl. No., Name of Court, Case No. and dated, Status of case(s). Row 1: In the Court of Judicial Magistrate first class Patiala House Court, Cr Case No. 54538/2024, Case Title State VS Priyanka Aggarwal & Others, Charge framed not framed, FIR NO. 0048/2024, DATED 10/08/2024 POLICE STATION NAME - NORTH AVNUE, DISTRICT- DELHI, STATE, U/S 223(A)/3(5) OF BHARATIYA NAGARIK SANHITA 2023 False Disobeying an order from a public servant charges against the candidate.

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 11.88 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 required 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. Adv. Himanshu Bansal Progressive Law Group, 9/14, Third Floor, East Patel Nagar, Delhi - 110008 Mobile: 8800257301 e-mail: himanshu@plgroup.in Date: 03.02.2025

Public Notice
This is to bring to the notice of the General Public that Regular Letter of Allotment bearing Ref No HSIIDC: RLA2019AUG01746-263 dated 17.08.2019 issued by Haryana State Industrial and Infrastructure Development Corporation Ltd. in favour of M/s. Masu Brakes Ltd. having its office at 42 KM Stone, Delhi Rohtak Road, NH-10 Bahadurgarh, Distt. Jhajjar, Haryana - 124507 in respect of Industrial Plot no. 18, Sector - 30A, Phase II, Industrial Model Township Rohtak has been misplaced. Any person in possession of the abovementioned document is requested to handover the same to the undersigned within a period of 15 days from date of publication of this notice, failing which it will be presumed that the documents have been irretrievably lost. Adv. Himanshu Bansal Progressive Law Group, 9/14, Third Floor, East Patel Nagar, Delhi - 110008 Mobile: 8800257301 e-mail: himanshu@plgroup.in Date: 03.02.2025

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:

Table with 4 columns: Sl. No., Name of Court, Case No. and dated, Status of case(s). Row 1: In the Hon'ble High court of Delhi, Case no CRL Rev. 251/2024 Case Titled State v Ramesh Bhardwaj AND Others, Prosecution has filed a criminal revision petition Before Hon'ble High Court 251/2024 against order of Discharge passed by the Spl.Judge CBI Sh. Ajay Kumar Rouse Avenue Court New Delhi.

कार्यालय नगर निगम गुरुग्राम
सर्वजनिक सूचना
नगर निगम गुरुग्राम के भवन का रिवाइज में सुधार के अन्तर्गत आरंभ हो रहा है। 10/12/2023 तक नगर निगम के 12465, SECTOR 2&3 PALAM VIHAR, Gurugram में अन्तर्गत कचरा को नगर निगम द्वारा प्रकृत क्षेत्र में डाला जा रहा है। 16/05/2021 के पश्चात जो कि इस भवन को वसूला जा रहा है। 20/09/1992 से मॉलिन का के बरे प्रवर्षों को नगर निगम द्वारा प्रकृत क्षेत्र में डाला जा रहा है। 10/12/2023 तक नगर निगम के 12465, SECTOR 2&3 PALAM VIHAR, Gurugram का सब गिजेंचर का दिनांक 20/02/2013 से कानूनी बरतार है।
दिनांक 03/02/2025 को नगर निगम के 12465, SECTOR 2&3 PALAM VIHAR, Gurugram को नगर निगम द्वारा प्रकृत क्षेत्र में डाला जा रहा है। जो कि वसूला जा रहा है। 16/05/2021 के पश्चात जो कि इस भवन को वसूला जा रहा है। 20/09/1992 से मॉलिन का के बरे प्रवर्षों को नगर निगम द्वारा प्रकृत क्षेत्र में डाला जा रहा है। 10/12/2023 तक नगर निगम के 12465, SECTOR 2&3 PALAM VIHAR, Gurugram का सब गिजेंचर का दिनांक 20/02/2013 से कानूनी बरतार है।
देशीय नगर अधिकारी - II
नगर निगम गुरुग्राम

JINDAL LEASEFIN LIMITED
CIN : L74899DL1994PLC059252
Regd. Office : 110, Barbar Road, New Delhi - 110 001
Ph: 011-46201000, Fax : 011-46201002, E-mail : jindal@jindal.India
Website: www.jindalleasfin.in
NOTICE
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'). In compliance with the Circulars, EGM/Notice has been sent only by email to all the members, whose email IDs are registered with the Depository Participants or the Company or Company's Registrar and Share Transfer Agent, Beetal Financial & Computer Services Pvt. Ltd. The emailing of EGM/Notice to all the members has been completed. The soft copy of the EGM/Notice is also available on the Company's website at www.jindalleasfin.in, website of BSE Limited at www.bseindia.com and on the website of CDSL, e-voting agency at www.evotingindia.com. The cut-off date for determining the eligibility to vote by remote e-voting or voting at the EGM shall be Tuesday, February 18, 2025 ("Cut-off date"). Shareholders of the Company, whose names appear in the register of members / list of beneficial owners as on Cut-off date, shall only be entitled to vote either through remote e-voting or voting at the EGM on the resolution set forth in the EGM/Notice. A person who is not a shareholder as on the Cut-off date should treat this communication for information purposes only. The voting rights of shareholders shall be in proportion to their share in the paid up equity share capital of the Company as on the Cut-off date. Any person who acquires shares and becomes a member of the Company after dispatch of Notice and holds shares as on the Cut-off date, may obtain the login ID and password by sending a request at helpdesk.evoting@cdslindia.com. However, if they are already registered with CDSL for e-voting, then they can use their existing user ID and password to cast their vote(s). All the members are informed that the business set out in the Notice may be transacted through remote e-voting or voting at the EGM. The remote e-voting facility will be available from February 22, 2025 (09:00 a.m.) to February 24, 2025 (05:00 p.m.). The remote e-voting will not be allowed beyond the aforementioned date and time and the remote e-voting module will be forthwith disabled upon expiry of the aforesaid period. Once the vote is casted by the member on a resolution, the member will not be allowed to modify or change his/her vote subsequently. Shareholders who have casted their vote(s) by remote e-voting prior to the Cut-off date may also attend and participate in the EGM but shall not be entitled to cast their vote(s) again. Facility for voting will also be available at the EGM and those members present in the EGM, who have not casted their vote on the resolution through remote e-voting and are not otherwise barred from doing so, shall be eligible to vote at the EGM. The detailed procedure for e-voting, including the manner in which members holding shares in physical/demat form and who have not registered their email address, can cast their vote(s) through remote e-voting or voting at the EGM, is provided in the EGM/Notice. In case the shareholders have any queries or issues regarding e-voting, they may refer Frequently Asked Questions ("FAQs") and e-voting manual available at www.evotingindia.com under the help section or send an email to helpdesk.evoting@cdslindia.com or call at toll free no. 1800 225 53 33. By Order of the Board of Directors For JINDAL LEASEFIN LIMITED Rajendra Prasad Rustagi Company Secretary & Compliance Officer

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

market sentiments were impacted after the Trump administration slapped tariffs on Canada, Mexico, and China. In futures trade on the MCX, gold contracts for April delivery increased ₹461, or 0.56 per cent, to ₹82,765 per 10 grams.

"Gold rallied positively on MCX. Participants increased gold allocations as concerns over a potential Trade War 2.0 from the US triggered safe-haven demand," Jateen Trivedi, VP Research Analyst of Commodity and Currency, LKP Securities, said.

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

crore in the third quarter. It stood at ₹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.

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.

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.

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 not a part of the ODI set-up, was hit off the third ball bowled by Archer which was close to 150 clicks. While he hit another six and four, the swelling increased once he was back in the dug-out. The scans showed a fracture.
Samson, who came into the T20I series after a stupendous run against Bangladesh and 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 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



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 UNITED LOSS
On the day locally born striker Marcus Rashford edged closer to a departure from Old Trafford, Manchester United lacked a cutting edge up front in the loss to Crystal Palace. And there was more bad news

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 T20I here, describing the record knock as one of the finest examples of "clean ball striking".

Abhishek entered record books with the second fastest T20I 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 big tournaments, we want to



continue playing this way and we don't want to fear losing anything," he added.

"I think the ideology of this T20 team is based on selflessness and fearlessness, and I think in the last six months, these guys have done it day in, day out."

Gambhir used the breathtaking 54-ball 135 of Abhishek Sharma to further validate his point.

"We want to keep backing players like Abhishek Sharma. We have to be patient with

these boys. I haven't seen a better T20 hundred against bowlers who are bowling at 140-150 kph consistently," he added.

Gambhir also lauded spinner Varun Chakravarty for reinventing himself and coming back stronger to international cricket.

"I think his transformation from IPL to international T20 cricket has been phenomenal. This series was probably the benchmark as well because England is a high-quality side. They've got some really quality cricketers and the kind of surfaces we've played on - I think they were fantastic batting wickets and the way he's bowled those tough overs has been phenomenal," said Gambhir.

Chakravarty was the highest wicket-taker in the series with 14 scalps at an average of 9.85 and economy rate of 7.66.

There were talks about rifts in the Indian dressing room after the team's disastrous outing in the Border-Gavaskar Trophy series against Australia.

Gambhir said everything will fall in place once the team returns to winning ways.

"They (these players) have played a lot of cricket against each other. That's all Indian cricket is all about us."

"When results start going your way, everything goes well. Our players know what it means to represent 140-150 crore Indians," he added.

On the controversy surrounding Harshit Rana coming in as a concussion sub for Shivam Dube in the previous match at Pune, Gambhir said rather lightly: "He (Dube) probably bowled four overs today."

Head wins Allan Border medal, Sutherland receives Belinda Clark honour

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Star batter Travis Head was named the winner 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.

Australia pacer Josh Hazlewood claimed the Men's Test Player-of-the-Year award. It marked his first Australian Cricket Award, with Hazlewood taking 30 wickets at just 13.16 in Tests against the West Indies, New Zealand, and India.

Young cricketer Sam Konstas, who made an impressive debut at 19 during the Boxing Day Test of the Border-Gavaskar Trophy against India, was named Young Cricketer of the Year. Konstas scored 113 runs across the last two Tests, including a memorable 60 off 65 balls on

debut.

He became an instant sensation after he took down star India pacer Jasprit Bumrah, who had been a menace to Australian batters throughout the five-Test series, which Australia ultimately won 3-1.

Though the award night was devoid of the stars, as they were busy in the ongoing Test series in Sri Lanka, allrounder Mitchell Marsh stole the spotlight with a hilarious Bumrah anecdote that had the audience in stitches at the Crown Casino here.

"My little nephew, Ted, is four years old. We played backyard cricket the other day, and he came in with Bumrah's action... And the nightmare continues," Marsh joked.

In other awards, Ashleigh Gardner was named Women's ODI Player of the Year after finishing as Australia's leading run-scorer in the format with 385 runs. Beth Mooney was crowned Women's T20 Player of the Year for the third time, having scored 618 runs during the voting period.

Leg-spinner Adam Zampa won Men's T20I Player of the Year after taking 35 wickets in 21 T20Is, edging out Head by three votes. Cameron Green was awarded the Community Impact Award for his efforts in raising awareness about kidney disease. The award ceremony also saw Michael Clarke, Michael Bevan, and Christina Matthews inducted into the Australian Cricket Hall of Fame.

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