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CHAMPIONS BRING THE TROPHY HOME! JAI HO

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA Dubai

India sealed an unprecedented third Champions Trophy triumph with an unblemished record as Rohit Sharma combined his inherent freedom with steely resolve to inspire his side to a four-wicket win in a closely-fought final against New Zealand, here on Sunday.

India won the trophy without losing a match, reflecting their dominance in the tournament which they won back in 2002 and 2013.

No other team has won the event thrice. Well-timed fifties by Daryl Mitchell (63) and Michael Bracewell (53) steered the Kiwis to 251 for seven after Indian spinners led by Kuldeep Yadav applied the squeeze for a large part of their innings.

Indian batters needed to capitalise on that fine effort of the bowlers, and Rohit, who many believe was featuring in his last ODI match for India, led from the front, slipping into his tur-



bocharged version almost immediately The chase of 252 grew tight in the business end while the Blackcaps spinners were operating on a sluggish pitch, but skipper Rohit's ebullient 83-ball 76 had already given them the cushion to overhaul the target in

KL Rahul with his 34 not out, there was no dramatic twist to the tale, leading the side past the finish line after India lost well-set-

Pacer Nathan Smith, who replaced injured Matt Henry in the line-up, felt the heat as the 37-year-old Rohit hammered him for two sixes and as many fours in the beginning of the chase.

At the other end Shubman Gill (31), who helped Rohit to raise 105 runs for the opening wicket, was more subdued and the lone spark in his innings was a maximum off spinner Rachin Ravindra.

	WINS THROUGH DECADES		
CONTRACTOR OF THE PARTY OF THE	Year	Winner	Margin of wins
	1998	South Africa	South Africa won by 4 wickets
	2000	New Zealand	New Zealand won by 4 wickets
	2002	Sri Lanka and India	India and Sri Lanka declared co-champions
	2004	West Indies	West Indies won by 2 wickets
	2006	Australia	Australia won by 8 wickets
	2009	Australia	Australia won by 6 wickets
	2013	India	India won by 5 runs
EY/II	2017	Pakistan	Pakistan won by 180 runs
	2025	India	India won by 4 wickets

India, what is wrong with these men?

Macabre carnality in Hampi

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ Bengaluru ampi, a UNESCO world heritage site in Karnataka, is in the news for wrong reasons as two women including an Israeli tourist, were raped at knifepoint by a group of local persons who robbed their mobile phones and Rs 9,500 cash late Thursday night.

An Orissa youth Bipash, who was with the victims at the time of attack, was bashed up by the group and thrown into Thungabhadra Canal. His body was recovered on Friday morning while two friends of the victims jumped into the canal and swam to safety. One of the victim was a US citizen while the other person was from Nashik in Maharashtra.

The Israeli lady and her female companion, who was the former's host, went to the scenic Koppal for stargazing around Thursday midnight, when the attack happened. The police, according to Ram Arasiddi, the Superintendent of Police, Koppal told media persons that two of the

on to trace the third person. The arrested duo has been identified by the victims and their associates. Both the women are undergoing

treatment at a government run hospital in Koppal. Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and deputy chief minister DK Shivakumar took to social media and condemned the incident. Siddaramaiah described the attack on women as a most heinous act. The police are yet to catch hold of the third attacker even at the time of going to Press on Sunday evening. Police said the names of arrested persons were Handi Malla (22) and Chetan Sai (21).

What has upset the local population is the timing of the incident as this is considered as a tourist season in Hampi which draws a lot of tourists from India and abroad. "This is likely to cause a rethinking on the part of travelers who had selected Hampi, which is hardly 25 km away from the spot," said M R Hari, CEO, Invis Muti Media, tourism management and consultancy

Perverse depravity in Pune

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Pune man arrested for alighting from

a BMW and urinating at a traffic junction in Pune was on Sunday remanded in police custody till March 10 along with his co-passenger. A video of the act, which took place on Saturday morning in Shastrinagar in Yerawada area, had gone viral on social media, prompting police to book Gaurav Ahuja (25) and Bhagyesh Oswal (22) for public nuisance, rash and negligent driving, causing danger on public roads and other offences under Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita and Motor

While Oswal was arrested from his residence on Saturday, Ahuja, who was driving the car, was detained hours later from Karad in neighbouring Satara district and was placed under

police official said. In the clip that went viral on social

media platforms, Oswal can be seen occupying the front seat of the luxury car, while Ahuja is urinating at a traffic junction before taking to the wheel and speeding off after making an obscene gesture at a person videoing the incident.

Ahuja and Oswal were produced in the sessions court here, with the public prosecutor seeking seven-day police remand to allow a probe into whether the two had consumed any narcotic substance. The duo's lawyer opposed the remand plea claiming police was working under political and media pressure and had invoked BNS sections that did not apply to the case. After hearings arguments from both sides the court remanded Ahuja and Oswal in police remand till March 10.

Sick obscenity booked in Bihar

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Patna

ihar Police has ordered a statewide crackdown on the public playing of double-meaning Bhojpuri songs, calling it a "burning social problem" that endangers women's security and has a "perversive effect" on children's minds. The move comes as authorities aim to curb the growing influence of vulgar songs in public spaces, warning of strict action against

A circular issued by the state Police Headquarters directs all Inspector Generals (IGs), Deputy Inspector Generals (DIGs), and railway police to take action against those playing such songs in public spaces. "A special drive must be carried out across the state to identify those who indulge in such activities and promote vulgar and double-meaning Bhojpuri songs," the circular stated. The move comes swiftly after renowned actress Neetu Chandra took a strong stance against vulgarity in music by filing a PIL in the Patna High Court. Her petition specifically targets singer Yo Yo Honey Singh's latest

song, Maniac, citing its objectionable content. Neetu who authored an article for The Pioneer on the

issue on occasion of Women's Day, also urged the court to impose a ban on Bhojpuri songs that promote misogyny, arguing that their lyrics often objectify and demean women. In this regards she also met top Bihar

police officials including DGP Vinajy Kumar on Sunday.

The letter highlights concerns about the impact of these songs on society. "It becomes embarrassing for women when they hear such vulgar and double-meaning Bhojpuri songs at public places, functions, buses, trucks and auto-rickshaws," it read.

The directive also stressed that such songs create an unsafe atmosphere. "Sometimes they feel insecure also when such songs are played. Strict action should be taken against those who are caught violating the directive in this regard," the circular added.

People caught playing such songs in public spaces will face legal action under relevant sections of the Bharatiya Nyay Sanhita. The issue has been a subject of concern in the Bihar Assembly as well. Responding to the demand, the state government had assured that "strict action would be taken against those who promote obscene and double-meaning Bhojpuri songs.'

Terror continues unabated in Jammu

MOHIT KANDHARI Jammu

mid large scale protests against the 'targeted killing' of three members of a Hindu family in the remote Billawar area of Kathua, the Union Home Secretary Govind Mohan Sunday chaired a high level security review meeting with different heads of the parasenior army and intell agency officers in Jammu to chalk out a 'comprehensive strategy' to tackle the threat on

According to highly placed official sources, the Union Home Secretary was briefed in detail about the dynamic deployment pattern of additional troops inducted in the region to further beef up security ahead of the summer season.

Senior BSF and CRPF officers who attended the meeting were directed to enhance vigil and surveillance along the border villages to prevent any fresh infiltration.

The Inteligence agencies also briefed the Union Home Secretary about the efforts being made to generate pin pointed human intelligence to flush out the Pakistani terrorists hiding in the region with the help of their sympathizers and over ground workers.

The J and K police Chief and army commanders briefed the Union Home Secretary about the ongoing anti-terrorist operations launched across the Jammu region to neutralise these foreign terrorists. Recent assessment of various intelligence agencies suggested presence of several groups of Pakistani terrorists across several districts of Jammu region. During the meeting a thorough review of security arrangements for the proposed start of railway services connecting Kashmir Valley with the rest of country was also reviewed.

Ahead of the crucial security review meeting the entire Billawar belt and other adjoining areas witnessed complete shutdown against the rising

incidents of civilian killings.
Local BJP MLA Satish Sharma and leader of

the opposition in the J& K Assembly Sunil Sharma visited Billawar to pacify the agitated residents and delivered a strong message on behalf of the Union Home Minister Amit Shah to stay united in the decisive fight against the 'faceless' enemy.

of a postmortem report of the deceased civilians including a teenager, the Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha Sunday ordered a thorough and transparent investigation into the killing of three relatives of a family in Kathua. The doctors panel handed over the dead bodies of the deceased to their relatives late Dunday afternoon. The last rites will be performed on Monday.

| This is a clear case of target killings by terrorists...we want the government to intensify the antiterrorist operations in the forests to neutralise them.

- Gopal Krishan, BJP leader

The probe was ordered after Union Minister Dr Jitendra Singh directly pointed to the involvement of terrorists in the killing of three

According to police, the bodies of Varun Singh (15), his paternal uncle Yogesh Singh (32) and maternal uncle Darshan Singh (40) were found from the Ishu nullah in the remote Malhar area in the higher reaches of the district on Saturday. The trio had gone missing on March 5.

"I have ordered a thorough and transparent investigation, and all the necessary support to the families will be provided," the LG said in a

He said he was shocked and saddened beyond words at the brutal killing of the three.

"I assure the people that the perpetrators will be brought to book at the earliest. Justice will be ensured and accountability will be fixed," Sinha

He offered his condolences to the families and friends of the deceased.

However, the Union Minister said the killings were a matter of great concern.

"The brutal ki ing of 3 youth by terrorists in Bani area of district Kathua is extremely sad as well as a matter of great concern. There appears to be a deep conspiracy behind spoiling the atmosphere in this peaceful area," the minister, who represents Udhampur Parliamentary constituency that covers Kathua, said on X.

"We have discussed this matter with the officials concerned. The Union Home Secretary himself is reaching Jammu so that the situation can be assessed on the spot. I am confident that it will be ensured that such incidents do not happen again and the confidence of the people

remains strong," he said. Addressing a gathering of protestors in Billawar local BJP leader Gopal Krishan said, "This is a clear case of target killings by terrorists, engulfing the peaceful area in fear and anger...we want the government to intensify the anti-terrorist operations in the forests to neutralise the terrorists hiding in the forests for the last one year".

He said the people will not allow the terrorists to succeed in their designs and harm the communal harmony by carrying out selective

Senior BJP leader and Billawar MLA Satish Sharma, who visited the deceased family, said it is premature to say who killed the three civilians. "It is a matter of investigation as nobody has seen how they were killed. Police are looking in all aspects, including the terror angle, in the case," he said.

Opposition plots an EPIC session

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

⊣he second leg of the Parliament Budget session will resume on Monday amid indications of an 'EPIC' showdown that while the EPIC numbers of between the Centre and the Opposition, which is planning to raise issues such as the alleged manipulation of electoral rolls, the fresh bout of violence in Manipur and India's handling of the Trump administration.

The focus of the government will be on getting Parliament nod for the demands for grants, completion of the budgetary process, seeking approval for the Manipur budget and passage of the Waqf Amendment Bill.

Home Minister Amit Shah is expected to move a statutory resolution seeking Parliament approval for the proclamation of President's Rule in Manipur. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman is also scheduled to table the budget for Manipur on Monday. Manipur has been under President's Rule since February 13 after the resignation of Chief Minister N Biren Singh.

The Opposition said it is set to corner the government over the issue of duplicate Electoral Photo Identity Card (EPIC) numbers. The Trinamool Congress has taken the lead in flagging the issue, following which the Election Commission declared that it would take corrective measures within the next three

The Election Commission had rejected the Trinamool Congress

claim that the voter lists were manipulated to allow voters from other states to exercise their franchise in West Bengal.

The poll body also made it clear some voters "may be identical", other details such as demographic information, Assembly constituency and polling booth

Trinamool Congress leaders are meeting the Election Commission on Monday and have also rallied

A Joint Committee of Parliament submitted its report on the bill in the Lok Sabha amid vociferous protests by the opposition.

Issues such as the fresh violence in Manipur, the threat of reciprocal tariffs by US President Donald Trump, the political furore over the delimitation of parliamentary conan echo in Parliament.

Congress leader Jairam Ramesh has said the opposition INDIA bloc leaders will hold "extensive consul-



the Congress, DMK, Shiv Sena-UBT, tation" to jointly oppose the Waqf to raise the issue in both Houses of Parliament during the second part of the Budget session. For the government, the early passage of the Waqf Amendment Bill is a priority.

Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju said at the India Today Conclave last week that the government is keen on the early passage of the Waqf Amendment Bill as it will solve many issues of the Muslim

bill. Ramesh also said the Congress will also keep raising the issue of irregularities in the election process, alleging that elections are "no longer free and fair" and are being "masterminded and orchestrated".

He said the Congress will raise the issue of Trump's reciprocal-tariff threats during the second half of the Budget session and called for a bipartisan collective resolve to deal with the threats.

Manipur far cry from normal

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA Imphal

ormal life was affected in Kuki-dominated areas of Manipur on Sunday as agita-tors enforced an indefinite shutdown called by Kuki-Zo groups against a "crackdown by security forces".

The situation in Kangpokpi district, where at least one person was killed and 40 others were injured in clashes between Kuki demonstrators and security forces on the previous day, remained tense but calm on Sunday.

In other Kuki-dominated areas in Churachandpur and Tengnoupal districts as well, protesters burnt tyres and blocked roads with boulders, which the security forces were seen clearing. However, no fresh violence has been reported so far.

Business establishments remained closed and few vehicles were seen plying the roads in Kukidominated areas in the state. Agitators were seen asking people to remain indoors.

Additional security forces have been deployed in Gamghiphai and other parts of the district along the NH-2 (Imphal-Dimapur Road) and

vehicular patrolling was being conducted to ensure law and order, a district official said.

A protester was killed while over 40 others, including women and policemen, were injured in clashes between Kuki demonstrators and security forces in different parts of Kangpokpi district on Saturday, officials said.

Clashes erupted between demonstrators and security forces in the Kuki-dominated district after police fired tear gas shells to disperse them, as they opposed Union Home Minister Amit Shah's directive allowing free movement across the state. Protesters clashed with security forces till late on Saturday night as the agitators used catapults against the law enforcers, he said, adding windshields of at least five vehicles of the security forces were damaged.

The Indigenous Tribal Leaders' Forum (ITLF), a Kuki-Zo body, extended support to the indefinite shutdown called by Kuki Zo Council (KZC) in all areas inhabited by the community in Manipur to protest the crackdown of security forces on demonstrators protesting free movement along all roads in the ethnic strife-torn state.

Rahul Gandhi's *mochi* steps into global shoes and Sudheer Rajbhar encouraged me to take my

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ Sultanpur

year ago, Ramchet, a 60-year-old cobbler from Sultanpur, spent his days stitching and repairing footwear in a small roadside shop, barely making ends meet. Today, he is gearing up to launch his own footwear brand, 'Ramchet Mochi,' thanks to the support and mentorship of Congress leader Rahul Gandhi.

Ramchet's journey took a turn when Rahul Gandhi, during his outreach programs, noticed his craftsmanship and decided to help. The Congress MP from Rae Bareli gifted him a machine to improve his work and later invited him to Delhi, where he had the opportunity to present his handmade slippers to Sonia Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra at 10, Janpath.

In a further push to his entrepreneurial dream, Rahul Gandhi arranged for Ramchet to visit Mumbai, where he met Sudheer Rajbhar, a wellknown leather entrepreneur and founder of the design brand Chamar Studio. For Ramchet, who had never boarded a flight before, the experience was



Sudheer Rajbhar, a well-known leather entrepreneur

"I saw innovative footwear and bag designs using

wood and rubber. I also experimented with

machine-based crafting techniques. Rahul Gandhi

skills to the next level," Ramchet told local reporters in Sultanpur. Since then, Ramchet has expanded his work.

He has set up a small workshop with a few artisans and invested in better tools. His son, who once had no interest in the trade, now spends hours each day learning the craft. The cobbler who once earned Rs 100-150 per day now earns in thousands and dreams of building his own

Rahul Gandhi, who shared their meeting on social media on March 6, praised Rajbhar's success story as an example of Dalit entrepreneurship and the potential of traditional artisans when given access to opportunities.

For Ramchet, the dream is no longer just about survival. With his new brand taking shape, he hopes to inspire other local artisans to believe in their craft and strive for something

Congress leaders have praised Rahul's initiative,

calling it a model for grassroots entrepreneurship.



Five more FIRs for fraud against Ansal Group

▼ive additional FIRs have been filed against the Ansal Group at the Sushant Golf City police station. This follows earlier cases of land fraud registered at the Gomti Nagar and Hazratganj police stations.

The directors of Ansal Infra are accused of defrauding customers by promising plots and villas that were never delivered. The township development, promised to customers, remained incomplete even after the agreed-upon deadline.

When customers sought answers, the directors and their associates allegedly resorted to threats.

Kanhaiya Lal, a retired captain from Telibagh, booked a villa in 2012 and paid Rs 12,71,000 at that time. However, he has still not received possession of the villa.

Rakesh Chandra Srivastava, a resident of Gomti Nagar Extension, booked a plot in 2007 for Rs. 3.5 lakh, expecting to build a house after 15 years. Yet, he has not Pranav Ansal, Sushil Ansal, Rajeshwar Rao,

Kailash Chandra, from Omaxe City in Sushant Golf City, booked three plots, but the company's directors refused to register the land.

Pushpalata Bajpai, a resident of Aliganj Sector-H, booked a plot in 2011 and paid Rs 13,21,000. Despite this, she has not received her plot.

Veena Chandani, from Ashiyana Sector-K, booked two plots in 2011, paying Rs 16,63,000, but has still not received possession. Anupam Agarwal, a resident of Emaar Gomti Greens, bought a 1528square-foot plot in September 2022 for around Rs. 2.32 crore. Company directors Pranav Ansal and others assured him of a quick registration. However, the allotment was suddenly cancelled.

Upon further investigation, Anupam discovered that the land had already been sold for Rs 3.33 crore.

The victims of the fraud have accused Ansal Property and Infra directors—

Vikas Singh, Vinay Tiwari, Prashant, and Manoj Kapoor—of cheating them.

According to police sources, under the Hi-Tech Township Policy in UP, Ansal was granted a licence in 2003 to develop a township on 1335 acres. However, even after five years, the township was not developed. Despite this, in 2008, the government expanded the township area to 3530

In 2012, the township area was increased further to 6500 acres after a second extension was granted, which was against the policy, as extensions were meant to be granted only once.

The company owes Rs 450 crore to the Lucknow Development Authority (LDA), and after being declared bankrupt, the LDA's money has been stuck.

The National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) has dissolved the company's board, and now a receiver appointed by the NCLT will decide the fate of the township land, which is no longer in the company's



The College of Nursing, Command Hospital, Central Command, Lucknow, celebrated its Annual Day, 'SPANDAN', in a dazzling display of talents and camaraderie at Maj LJ Singh AC Auditorium in Lucknow Cantonment. The event showcased deep passion for extracurricular activities of budding military nurses in an evening of cultural extravaganza. Maj Gen Subrato Sen, SM, MG Med, Headquarters Central Command, was the chief guest. The event commenced with a display of exhibits by the talented nursing students. The event comprised scintillating performances by the students, which captivated the audience. Maj Gen Subrato Sen presented the College Colours to Nursing Cadet Madhu Kumari and the Best House trophy to house Signus for scoring the highest points in the weeklong Inter-House Competitions, which included hobbies, dramatics, and literary competitions.

Rare, life-saving surgery gives 21-year-old new lease of life

Lucknow (PNS): A 21-year-old man from Bahraich defied the odds after undergoing a complex six-hour surgery at King George's Medical University (KGMU). Diagnosed with carcinoma testis, he developed large bilateral retroperitoneal tumours despite surgery and chemotherapy. The tumours, measuring 25 cm on the left and 20 cm on the right, pressed against major blood vessels and vital abdominal organs, causing severe pain, vomiting, and an inability to eat. His condition worsened, and after multiple failed attempts at treatment elsewhere, he was admitted to KGMU's urology department.

Led by Dr Apul Goel, Dr Manoj Yadav, and Dr Avneet Gupta, the surgical team successfully removed the massive tumours in a high-risk operation. Despite the danger of life-threatening bleeding, the procedure was completed without complications.

Just seven days post-surgery, the patient was discharged in good health, able to eat normally again.

KGMU Vice-Chancellor Prof Soniya Nityanand praised the team, calling the surgery a milestone in urological surgery and a testament to the skill and dedication of the doctors who saved his life.

Elderly woman killed over money dispute

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Lucknow

n elderly woman was allegedly murdered in Mampur village, located in the BKT police station area, over a money dispute. The victim, identified as Rajana (65), had recently sold her land for Rs 1.20 crore. After selling the property, she used the proceeds to purchase new land in Barabanki.

According to villagers, Rajana had been living alone since the death of her husband, Fakire. Using the money from the land sale, she bought land in Barabanki in the name of her nephew, Meva Lal, who is from Raitha village. Meva Lal also used to bring her food regularly. On March 6, Meva Lal delivered food to his aunt as usual.

However, when he returned the next day, he found her house locked and his aunt missing. After unsuccessfully searching for her, he filed a missing report at the BKT police station and called emergency services. The situation took a grim turn when, on Sunday morning, village elder Mangalu and others discovered Rajana's body in a grove near the boundary wall of ITM College. They immediately notified incident.

A police team, led by ACP Amol Murkut, reached the scene. The field unit was also called in for further examination. The body was inspected and then sent for post-mortem, while investigation to determine the circumstances surrounding her death are underway

CYLINDER BLAST

A woman and her three children had a narrow escape after an LPG cylinder exploded while cooking in Banthra area here on Sunday morning.

The woman, Sonam (34), wife of Ajay Gautam, was cooking food using a 5-kg LPG cylinder, while her children were playing in the courtyard when the cylinder caught fire.

Sonam tried to extinguish the fire, but to no avail. She ran out of the house along with her children and raised an alarm.

As the cylinder exploded, the wall and roof of the house collapsed, leaving neighbours terrified. Police inspected the spot after getting the information about the

One Stop Centre pillar of women's safety, protection

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Lucknow

¬he Uttar Pradesh government is making significant strides in empowering, securing and promoting women's self-reliance.

The state's Women and Child Development Department is implementing a range of impactful schemes to enhance women's social, economic, political and cultural achievements while raising awareness about their rights and ensuring gender equality. These womencentric initiatives are being rapidly executed to foster inclusive development and

A prime example is the One Stop Centre initiative, which has become a vital support system for women and girls facing adversity. This programme has assisted over two lakh distressed women so far. These centres offer medical and legal aid rehabilitation and counseling to women suffering from domestic violence, dowry harassment, sexual abuse, child marriage, exploitation and gender discrimi-

Additionally, advancing its commitment to women's empowerment, the Yogi Adityanath government has extended support to over 7 lakh women through the 181 Women Helpline. Furthermore, the dignity and convenience of women have been prioritised with the construction of 1,100 pink toilets across the state.

Women's Day, Women Welfare Minister Baby Rani Maurya flagged off the rescue vehicles of the One Stop Centre, marking a significant step towards enhancing the effectiveness of this initiative.

Maurya emphasised that the Yogi government's top priority is to uplift women and make them self-reliant. She pointed out that the One Stop Centre has emerged as a vital pillar for women's safety and protection in UP. She added, "Women possess the power

to bring positive change to society and the nation and are equally capable of tackling any challenge as men."

She said the Yogi government was dedicated to empowering women through comprehensive efforts focused on their safety, education, employment and social

The minister said the Women and Child Development Department was working strategically to ensure the effective implementation of schemes for the benefit of

Beware of coloured sweets during Holi!

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE Lucknow

ssistant Commissioner of Food Safety, Vijay Pratap Singh, has Advised the public to avoid coloured sweets during the Holi festival, as they may pose health risks.

He also recommended checking khoya carefully before purchase.

Singh stated that during the festive period, authorities conducted 20 raids and collected 100 samples of various food items, including paneer, khoya, sweets, and flour, to ensure safety. He highlighted concerns about overly coloured 'kachari and papads, which may contain excessive food colourings, even if deemed edible.

The official also cautioned against purchasing sweets with silver 'warq' as adulterators often use harmful aluminium foil in place of real silver, which can be detrimental to health. He advised buying food from licensed shops instead of tem-

porary vendors set up for the festival.

Additionally, Singh discussed checks conducted at sweet-making workshops to ensure hygiene and compliance with Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP). He urged the public to be cautious of adulterated khoya, explaining that it may contain non-milk fats or starch.

A simple test can be done by rubbing khoya between fingers or adding iodine tincture to warm water mixed with khoya to check for purity.

Singh reported a recent raid at Charbagh khoya market, where 3.5 quintals of khoya were left behind by sellers. He confirmed ongoing surveillance efforts and regular raids across Lucknow to ensure food safety throughout the year, not just during festivals. He assured that while they take action based on credible complaints, shopkeepers are not unduly

Youth found dead on rly tracks had sent location to friend

Lucknow (PNS): The youth, whose body with Alam. was found on the railway tracks in Google location to a friend just before he was killed, police investigation revealed. It also emerged that the victim had called his childhood friend and said, "Brother, I have been cheated. You need to come quickly... they will kill me."

When his friend arrived, he found the body 500 metres away from the location. The deceased, Shahnawaz (20), was a driver and a resident of Chandan village in Indiranagar. His childhood friend, Pankaj, lived just 100 metres away.

On Friday, Pankaj's wedding procession was headed to Gosainganj. Pankaj's brother, Prabhat, invited Shahnawaz to join the procession, but Shahnawaz refused, citing that he didn't have proper clothes.

Later, Prabhat and others insisted he join, so Shahnawaz asked his childhood friend, Alam, for clothes. Alam lent him his suit and Shahnawaz left for the wedding procession. The investigation revealed that Shahnawaz had expressed fear for his life and had shared details about a confrontation with Prabhat and others during a call

An hour after the call, Shahnawaz's body post-mortem on Saturday, the family insisted on filing a case before performing the last rites. The last rites were performed after the case was registered. Alam said Shahnawaz called him at

11:13 on the fateful night. "He was angry, cursing and mentioning Prabhat and other boys from Faridinagar. However, he didn't name them all. He said, 'I will come and tell you; come pick me up right now. There's been a fight here," Alam recalled. Alam added that Shahnawaz sounded

out of breath, as if someone had made him run. "The call got disconnected after a while. He didn't have money, so I sent him Rs 100 via Google Pay. When I called back, he sent me his location and asked me to meet him at Ahimamau," he said. The police stated that they will interro-

gate Prabhat, who is currently named in the case. "The real cause of the incident can only be determined by questioning Prabhat. We need to understand what happened, who was with him, and we will catch the accused soon," the police said.

Man beheads woman after she asks him to marry her; arrested

allegedly beheading his girlfriend when she asked him to marry her, the Bahraich police said on Sunday.

"The case began after police found the headless body of a woman near Jagannathpur village on Friday. She was dentified on Saturday as a woman, who was living with her parents after marriage," Additional Superintendent of Police (Rural) Durga Prasad Tiwari said.

Investigations led to the arrest of Asif Raza alias Faizan (24), her lover and a local motorcycle mechanic, police said.

During interrogation Faizan confessed that he killed his girlfriend because she kept pressuring him to marry her, Tiwari said. According to the police officer, the accused watched a Telugu movie 'Salaar' before executing the murder.

Faizan lured her to a canal on March 6, beheaded her with a makeshift weapon, and hid the head separately, he said.

"He was caught fleeing to Nepal on Sunday, with police recovering the head, weapon, and other evidence. The accused has been sent to jail on judicial custody," the police officer said.

MAN KILLS NEWLY-WED **WIFE. HANGS SELF**

In Ayodhya, a newly-wed man committed suicide after allegedly strangling his wife to death hours after their wedding ceremony. Pradeep from the Saadat Ganj locality under Ayodhya Cantonment police station limits, married Shivani on Saturday, police said.

After the marriage party returned to the groom's house on Saturday afternoon, post-wedding rituals were performed through the day. The bride and the groom retired to their room late on Saturday night, police said.

"After the couple did not respond to repeated knocks on Sunday morning, the family members broke open the door and

Lucknow (PTI): A man was arrested for Investigations led to the arrest of Asif Raza alias Faizan (24), her lover and a local bike mechanic, police said

> found Shivani's body on the bed, while Pradeep was found hanging from the ceiling fan," Senior Superintendent of Police, Raj Karan Nayyar, said.

> Since the room was found bolted from inside, prima facie it appears that the groom killed the bride before taking his life, the officer said.

> "The bodies have been sent for autopsy and a probe is underway," the SSP said. Meanwhile, a 19-year-old girl allegedly committed suicide by hanging in Ballia on Sunday, police said.

> The deceased was identified as Aditi Gupta, a Class 11 student and resident of Bara Pokhara locality under the Maniar police station limits.

> According Maniar Station House Officer Ratnesh Dubey, Aditi's father Manoj Gupta, a grocery shop owner, found her room locked from inside when he returned home at around 10:30 am. Upon forcing the door open, he found her hanging by a saree and immediately informed the police. Dubey said the body was sent for post-mortem. "Preliminary findings suggest that Aditi took the extreme step after being scolded by her father," he said.

> Sources said her father was upset with Aditi for speaking to a boy on phone. The deceased was the second among

four sisters. Her mother was in Ballia at the time, accompanying another daughter

Imam booked for playing loudspeaker above volume limits

Sambhal (PTI): Police have registered a case against an imam and seized a loudspeaker from a mosque in the Chandausi area of Sambhal district for allegedly using it for 'azaan' at a volume exceeding the prescribed decibel limits.

According to an official statement, the action was taken on Saturday night at a mosque in the Punjabhiyan locality, where 'azaan' or call to prayer was played at a volume violating the prescribed limits set by against Hafiz Shakeel Shamsi, the imam of the mosque, under sections 223 (disobedience to order duly promulgated by public servant), and 270 (public nuisance) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, and the Noise Pollution (Regulation and Control) Rules, 2000. The loudspeaker has been seized, and legal proceedings are underway," the statement said.

Journalists not safe in UP: CPI (ML)

Lucknow (PNS): The CPI (ML) criticised the UP government, stating that honest and fearless journalists who expose corruption are not safe under Yogi Adityanath's regime. 'Criminals are killing them in broad daylight, and the Sitapur incident stands as a stark example," state secretary Sudhakar Yadav said in a statement issued on Sunday. He condemned the state's law and order situation, saying, "From the chief minister to the ministers, everyone is self-absorbed, praising 'Ram Rajya.' According to them, criminals have either fled the state or are in jail. If that's true, then how was journalist Raghavendra Vajpayee shot dead on a highway in Sitapur on Saturday afternoon?"

Yadav said that Raghavendra, a correspondent in Sitapur, was known as a fearless journalist who had exposed the government's "zero tolerance" towards corruption. "He had uncovered a paddy purchase scam and stamp theft in land transactions. Some individuals were being investigated when he was killed, paying the ultimate price for exposing the truth," Yadav added.

NOTICE

I am Ashwani Kumar Bharati son of Ramnayan Bharati resident of village and post Gadwal Deoria Ambedkar Nagar Uttar Pradesh 224137. There is an error in my ECHS card that my name is Ashwni Kumar and date of birth is 01/07/1938. In my Aadhaar card and PAN card my name is Ashwani Kumar Bharati and my date of birth is 15/02/1945 which is true and correct

NOTICE

I, Raju, S/o Braj Kishore Vaish, have changed my name, and I am now recognized as Raj Kumar Vaishya. In the future, will be known by this name, and I will sign with the same name. in some record my above name already mentioned. Rajkumar and Raju are same person. Raj Kumar Vaishya New Kachari Saraimeera, District Road, Kannauj

Farmer shot dead in sleep Budaun (PTI): A 32-year-old farmer was shot 10.30 am. Upon forcing the door open, he found

dead by unidentified men while he was sleeping at a poultry farm in Uttar Pradesh's Budaun district, police said on Sunday.

The incident took place on Saturday night in the Bilsi area when Rampal (32) was asleep at the farm. Around 2 am, two unidentified men barged in and shot him in the head before fleeing, police said. Rampal died on the spot, his wife Ashlekh told the police.

Upon receiving information, a police team led by Circle Officer Sanjeev Kumar Singh reached the spot, and the body was sent for post-mortem, officials said. An investigation has been launched based on the complaint, and statements from Rampal's wife and others are being recorded, Singh said. "We will soon crack the case," he added. Locals said the couple were using the poultry farm as their residence.

19-YEAR-OLD GIRL IN UP ENDS LIFE AFTER BEING SCOLDED BY FATHER

Ballia: A 19-year-old girl allegedly committed suicide by hanging here on Sunday, police said. The deceased has been identified as Aditi Gupta, a Class 11 student and resident of Bara Pokhara locality under the Maniar police station limits, they said.

According Maniar station house officer Ratnesh Dubey, Aditi's father Manoj Gupta, a grocery shop owner, found her room locked from inside when he returned home at around her hanging by a saree and immediately informed the police. Dubey said the body has been sent for post-mortem.

"Preliminary findings suggest that Aditi took the extreme step after being scolded by her father," he said. Sources said her father was upset with Aditi for speaking to a boy on phone. The deceased was the second among four sisters.

Her mother was in Ballia at the time, accompanying another daughter for an exam, police

DRUG PEDDLER HELD WITH MORPHINE WORTH RS 1.5 CR

Barabanki: The Anti-Narcotics Task Force (ANTF) has arrested an alleged drug peddler and recovered morphine worth Rs 1.5 crore from an autorickshaw on the Lucknow-Ayodhya road in Barabanki district, a police official said on Sunday. ANTF Deputy Superintendent P Beenu Singh said 1.5 kilogram of morphine was recovered from the autorickshaw, parked in front of an empty house in near KD Singh Babu Stadium in Kotwali area.

The accused has been identified as Fayaz alias Munna Tailor, from Barabanki district, Singh said. The international market value of the seized drug is estimated at around Rs 1.5 crore, she added. During interrogation, Fayaz revealed that he is an associate of notorious district smuggler Jaipal, the officer said.

Regular eye check-ups best way to prevent glaucoma

Lucknow (PNS): The Glaucoma Awareness Walk, organised jointly by IMA Lucknow and the Lucknow Ophthalmological Society, took place at Janeshwar Mishra Park on Sunday to raise awareness about the disease.

Doctors highlighted that glaucoma is a serious eye condition known as the "silent thief of vision" due to its lack of early symptoms. By the time it is detected, vision loss is often irreversible, making timely diagnosis and treatment crucial. 'Regular eye check-ups are the best way to prevent glaucoma.

Everyone over 40, especially those with diabetes, high blood pressure, or a family history of glaucoma, should have annual eye check-ups," said a senior doctor. Glaucoma affects 12 million people in India and is the third leading cause of blindness after cataracts and refractive errors. Due to lack of awareness, 40% to 90% of cases remain undiagnosed. Early detection can prevent or slow vision loss. Cataract testing and treatment are free at government hospitals and covered under the Ayushman Bharat Card Scheme.

पंजाब नैशनल बैंक 🔘 punjabnational bank

GAD SECTION, CIRCLE OFFICE 59/29, BIRHANA ROAD, KANPUR -208001 PREMISES REQUIRED

Punjab National Bank requires suitable ready built and well-constructed ha type building having Carpet Area including space for Branch, ATM (1400 sqf to 1800 sqft) on lease/rental basis premises should be in Ground Floor & if in first floor, lift facility at Rail Bazar, Kanpur. Premises offered should have al clearance certificates from statutory authorities. Interested owners registered Power of attorney Holders of such premises in the desired locality who are ready to lease out their readily available premises on long term lease basis preferably for 15 years or more may send their offers in the prescribed format available on Bank's Web Site www.pnbindia.in or the same may be obtained from the above address during office hours. The complete offer duly sealed & signed and should reach the undersigned on or before (15.03.2025 by 5.00 pm) at the above address. Bids can also be placed in sealed box kept

No brokerage and other charges will be paid by the Bank. Bank reserves the right to accept or reject any or all offers at its sole discretion without assigning

First session of Dhyan Chand Sports University to start this year: Yogi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Meerut

hief Minister Yogi Adityanath, on Sunday, made several significant ✓announcements regarding the development of Meerut.

During an interaction with the media here, Chief Minister Yogi said that Uttar Pradesh's first sports university, named after Major Dhyan Chand, was being established in Meerut and its construction was expected to be completed by November 2025.

The chief minister, who recently inspected the site, said that the university's first session would commence this

Initially, the classes will be held at the Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel University of Agriculture and Technology. This institution is set to play a crucial

role in nurturing sports talent in the Highlighting Meerut's enhanced con-

nectivity under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Chief Minister Yogi noted that the city has witnessed remarkable progress over the past

He said, "The nation's first rapid rail service has been launched between Delhi and Meerut, complementing the existing 12-lane expressway. Additionally, the Ganga Expressway, which will connect Meerut to Lucknow and Prayagraj, is nearing completion. This year's budget has been allocated to extend the expressway from Meerut to Haridwar to strengthen connectivity further. Following the successful infrastructure development in Prayagraj, special attention is now being focused on Meerut." The chief minister also discussed key urban issues such as the inner ring road, traffic congestion, vending zones, sewerage, drainage, and solid



Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath during inspection of the under-construction Major Dhyanchand Sports University, Meerut, on Sunday

CM: Youths can overcome any challenge with govt's support

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Meerut

ttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Sunday hailed the youths of the state, saying they can overcome any challenge with the government's support. Speaking at worked to take themselves forward."

a loan distribution function in Meerut, Chief Minister Yogi said, "For youths, a challenge is not a challenge. If the government stands by them, they can pave their way through any challenge. The youths of Uttar Pradesh have waste management in meetings with local officials and public representatives. He assured that adequate funds would be allocated promptly upon receipt of relevant proposals.

Chief Minister Yogi reiterated his commitment to equipping Meerut with world-class infrastructure and praised the proactive role of public representatives in accelerating the region's development. He also emphasised the vision of transforming Meerut into a model city through comprehensive planning and

Wanted criminal killed in encounter in Mathura

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE Lucknow

wanted criminal carrying a cash reward of Rs 1 lakh on his arrest was reward of KS 1 lakel of the medical killed in an encounter with the police in the highway area of Mathura district on Sunday.

A team of Mathura police led by Senior Superintendent of Police Shailendra Pandey, killed wanted gangster Fati alias Asad in an encounter in the wee hours of Sunday. In the exchange of fire, Asad sustained bullet injuries and was rushed to a hospital where doctors pronounced him dead. Sources in the UP Police said that on August 19, 2020, the Asad gang had killed Indian cricketer Suresh Raina's uncle Ashok Kumar, aunt Asha Devi and their son Kaushal Kumar.

"Asad was wanted by the police since then. In 2023, the Muzaffarpur police had killed Asad's accomplice Rashid in an encounter," they said. Asad, who was the kingpin of the interstate Chhaimar gang, was wanted by the Mathura police. "The slain criminal, a native of Garh Mukteshwar in Hapur district, had more than three dozen cases registered against him in Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Punjab, and Jammu Kashmir," the sources said. SSP Shailesh Pandey said that information was received from an informer that a hardened criminal of the Chhaimar gang, along with his three accomplices, was seen in a house in the Krishna Kunj Colony under the highway police station. "Acting on the tip-off, I, along with my team, rushed to the spot and cordoned off the area," he said. The SSP said that on seeing the police team, the criminals opened indiscriminate fire on the cops. "In the retaliatory firing, Asad sustained a bullet injury and was taken to the hospital, where

he was pronounced dead. Rest of the criminals fled from the spot and combing is being done to arrest them," he said.

It may be mentioned that on August 19, 2020, three people, including cricketer Suresh Raina's aunt and uncle, were murdered by the Chhaimar gang for robbery in Pathankot. The police had also announced a reward of Rs 50,000 on Rashid alias Sipai, an accomplice of notorious criminal Asad. A month later, the police killed the main murder accused Rashid in an encounter on Soram-Goyla road. The search for Asad was on.

Pandey said that on August 19, 2020, Chhaimar gang chief Asad had prepared the entire plan for robbery in Pathankot. After this, his accomplice Rashid raided the house of cricketer Suresh Raina's aunt and uncle. When they opposed the robbery, Rashid seriously injured Suresh Raina's uncle Ashok Kumar, aunt Asha and his cousin Kaushal Kumar. Raina's uncle Ashok died on the spot, while aunt Asha and brother Kaushal died in the hospital.

Two miscreants related to this case were caught by the city Kotwali police during an encounter in Kidwai Nagar on September 19, 2022. One miscreant was identified as Kaka alias Golu alias Shahian. of Dhalapada village slum in Thana Gangoh, district Saharanpur, while the other miscreant was Talib alias Faijan alias Asim of Moradabad Peepal Sana. The name of Rashid came to the fore in the police investigation. He was absconding and a reward of ₹50,000 was announced on his arrest. On April 1, 2023, Rashid was injured in an encounter with the police and the Special Operation Group (SOG) in Shahpur police station area. He was taken to Shahpur community health centre where doctors pronounced him dead.

Govt to upgrade technological skills of top transport officials

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Lucknow

ttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has stressed on reducing road accidents by equipping officials of the Transport Department with the latest technology.

To achieve this, he regularly provides guidelines to department officials through meetings. In line with this vision, top officials and employees of the Transport Department will now undergo training in

facilitate this initiative. A dedicated training cell, headed by the additional transport commissioner (administration), has been established by Transport Commissioner Brajesh Narayan Singh to oversee the training programmes. Additionally, Fariduddin, the divisional transport officer of Basti, has been appointed as the nodal officer for the

Centre of Excellence. Singh said, "The IDTR Rae Bareli will focus on building a permanent and modern training system for transport officers across Uttar Pradesh. The training will cover the latest technology, data-driven policy-making, enforcement strategies and e-governance."

He said specialised programmes would be organised for officers at all levels, including RI, PTO, ARTO, RTO, DTC and ATC. Besides this, refresher courses for existing staff and training for new officers would also be conducted regularly, he added.

The transport commissioner stated, "The training curriculum for transport officers would be designed to meet the specific needs of UP, align with evolving trends in the national transport sector, and advanced technology.

The Institute of Driving Training and Research (IDTR) in Rae Bareli is being adhere to guidelines from the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH).

Additionally, the curriculum will incorpo transport sector, ensuring officers stay informed about international best practices." The IDTR in Rae Bareli is being developed as a Centre of Excellence. It will host workshops focused on training, refresher courses, new schemes, and reforms for transport officers.

The curriculum will emphasise technical upgradation, data analytics, and artificial intelligence (AI) to enhance digitalisation, efficiency and data-driven decision-making in transport management. Key areas such as smart traffic management, automated driving test systems, road safety analysis, and e-governance will be integral parts of the training.

To ensure practical learning, the curriculum will follow a case study-based approach, enabling officers to gain a deeper understanding of policy-making and enforcement processes, and to develop effective solutions for modern transport challenges. Regular training sessions will cover topics like road tax collection, permit systems, enforcement techniques and modern traffic management systems, aiming to improve the administrative efficiency of transport officers.

A dedicated training cell has been established to design and implement these programmes. This cell will be led by the (administration). It will include members such as the Additional transport commissioner (enforcement), additional transport commissioner (revenue), additional transport commissioner (road safety), additional transport commissioner (IT), the finance controller of the transport commissioner's office, and the nodal officer of the Centre of Excellence at IDTR Rae Bareli.

Singh further claimed that in line with the chief minister's vision, there is a strong focus on reducing road accidents and equipping officers and employees with the latest technology. Comprehensive training will be provided to achieve this,

Lovers killed for 'honour' in Baghpat

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Lucknow

In a case of honour killing, a 19-year-old youth and his girlfriend were killed, allegedly by the family members of the girl after they reportedly found them together at her home in Baghpat district

According to the police, Balram Kataria of Sadakpur Jonmana village in Baghpat was having an affair with 18-year-old Shrishti Singh of the same village for the last two years, but her family members were not aware of this.

Early on Sunday morning, Kataria went to Singh's home, where the two met in an empty room. However, the girl's family members grew suspicious, apprehending a stranger in the house, and found them together. They beat both of them and allegedly strangled them to death with a

rope in the room.
"We rushed to the spot following the double murder. A first information report (FIR) has been lodged at the Baraut Kotwali police station by family members of the deceased. Pushpendra Singh, the father of the girl, is in our custody. Investigation is underway after which formal arrests of those involved in the double murders will be made," said Baghpat's Superintendent of Police Arpit

The bodies of both the victims were sent

for post-mortem. In Agra, a youth was killed and his ACP said.

brother was injured after they were stabbed by neighbours during an altercation at Chunnipura village in Basauoni area of the city late on Saturday night.

According to Additional Commissioner of Police Virendra, Dev Singh (27) and his brother Ramveer (25) were trying to mediate a dispute between their neighbour Ram Lal and his nephews Amar Chand and Suraj.

He said the victims' mother Sheela told police that all the three neighbours attacked her sons with knives.

Both the brothers were rushed to a hosital, where Dev Singh succumbed to his injuries. The accused are at large, and police have launched a search for them,

Interstate child trafficking gang busted, 4 held

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Ballia

Police have busted an interstate gang involved in child trafficking with the arrest of four men, officials said on

Two missing girls have also been rescued from the gang, they said.

According to the police, two teenage girls had gone missing from the Maniyar police station area within a month.

On December 24, 17-year-old Kalyatri Prajapati went to appear for a practical exam at Maniyar Inter College but did not return. Following a complaint from her mother, a case was registered on December 29 against unidentified per-

Similarly, on January 13, Anjali Rajbhar (16), a Class 10 student, went to the same school and disappeared. Based on her mother's complaint, a case was registered

Superintendent of Police Omvir Singh said that during the investigation, police gathered crucial evidence and conducted raids, leading to the arrest of Ashok Kumar Kumawat (25) and Kishan Bhati from Pali district in Rajasthan, along with Mohan Yadav (24) from Gaura Bagahi (Gangapur) village in Maniyar, and a 17-

The police rescued both the missing girls, he said.

During interrogation, the accused revealed details about their interstate trafficking network, which allegedly targets girls estranged from their families and sells them in other states for marriage and domestic work.

The police also recovered Rs 35,000 from the possession of the arrested per-

SP Singh stated that further investigations are underway to uncover the full extent of the racket.

Couple booked for selling their infant for ₹1.6L

In Barabanki, four people, including a couple here ,have been booked for allegedly selling their two-month-old child to a businessman from Lucknow

for Rs 1.6 lakh, police said on Sunday. The incident came to light on Friday night, prompting police action that resulted in recovery of the child from a businessman's house in Lucknow on Saturday, officials said.

Police said that the infant was now

Welfare Committee. According to Child Helpline district

coordinator Manoj Kumar, the couple from Kotwali area had handed over their child for adoption to Mohammad Yasir, a scrap business owner from Lucknow,

"Yasir, who runs a business in Kaiserbagh Ghasiyari Mandi, allegedly emotionally blackmailed the couple, who were struggling financially, into giving up their infant," Station House Officer Alok Mani Tripathi said. Yasir was detained, and the child was

returned to Barabanki on Saturday evening," the station house officer said. Based on a complaint police have booked the parents along with Yasir and his wife in the matter.

The station house officer said that police were currently investigating the involvement of other people in the gang responsible for the illegal transaction. The accused father, who already has two other children, cited financial constraint as reason for taking this step.

"I was hopeful that the third child would have a better future," the father told media persons in Barabanki on

Preps on to welcome skimmer chicks on sands of Ganga

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE Lucknow/

¬ollowing the record-breaking arrival of over 6.6 billion devotees at the Maha Kumbh Mela, preparations have now begun to welcome the rare Indian skimmer chicks on the sands of the Ganga. At the beginning of the Maha Kumbh fair, more than 150 pairs of Indian skimmers, a species that typically lays eggs from December to late February or early March, arrived in Prayagraj. Along with these skimmers, their eggs and newborn chicks are now being protected from wild animals through the deployment of a large number of watchers. Additionally, the wildlife team has been put on high alert. Over 90 species of native and

world's largest fair, contributing significantly to pollution control. Bird enthusiasts from across the globe visit the Maha Kumbh to witness these species. Considering this, a bird festival has also been organised. Under the instructions of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, a special plan has been designed to promote ecotourism, ensuring environmental conservation while also creating new employment opportunities for local communities.

Indian skimmers find a home on the sands of Sangam: According to Divisional Forest Officer (Prayagraj) Arvind Kumar Yadav, more than 150 pairs of Indian skimmers have settled in the Sangam region, blending seamlessly into the natural environment alongside millions of devotees during the Maha Kumbh. To protect their eggs from wild foreign birds have also arrived at the animals, these birds bury them in the sand.

Several preventive measures have been implemented by the Yogi government to ensure the safety of both the skimmers and their chicks, as well as to boost eco-tourism. A large number of watchers have been deployed to safeguard these rare eggs and young skimmers from wild animals and other threats. The wildlife team is also actively monitoring the area, ensuring both security and conducting a census of the birds. Continuous patrolling efforts are underway to protect both the birds and their eggs from potential dangers. A comprehensive plan has been prepared to promote eco-tourism, keeping environmental conservation at the forefront while generating significant employment opportunities for locals. More than 90 species of native and foreign birds have arrived, enhancing the region's biodiversity and contributing to its ecological balance

90% participation PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Lucknow The campaign also benefited from inter-departmental dhe Mass Drug Administration (MDA) campaign for filariasis eradcoordination. Deputy Chief ication, spearheaded by the Yogi Adityanath government, concluded successfully by administering medicine to 90

MDA campaign sees

per cent of the targeted population. A significant achievement of the campaign was its success in convincing 93 per

cent of those who initially refused to take

the medicine. State Programme Officer for Filaria, Dr AK Chaudhary, reported that the campaign was conducted in 45 blocks across 14 districts of Uttar Pradesh from February 10 to 25. In several districts, a follow-up round was conducted to provide medication to those who initially refused or were unavailable during the main drive.

The campaign aimed to cover 1.10 crore people, of which 98,95,981 were successfully administered the medicine. Except for Jaunpur, all districts reported a medicine intake rate of over 80 per cent. In the final rankings, Barabanki secured the top spot, followed by Bareilly, Jalaun and

Dr Chaudhary highlighted that a major breakthrough was achieved in addressing refusal cases. Of 1.58 lakh people who initially refused, 92.7 per cent were convinced

to take the anti-filariasis medicine. He added, "Only children below one year, pregnant women, seriously ill patients and those who were outside the district were exempted. PSP played a crucial role in this success, with filariasis affected area

Minister Brajesh Pathak and Principal Secretary for Medical and Health Partha Sarathi Sen **Sharma contacted public** representatives and heads of education and Panchayati Raj departments, urging cooperation.

patients and other PSP members activecontributing to the refusal conversion." The campaign also benefited signifi-

cantly from inter-departmental coordination. Deputy Chief Minister Brajesh Pathak and Principal Secretary for Medical and Health Partha Sarathi Sen Sharma contacted public representatives and heads of education and Panchayati Raj departments, urging cooperation.

As a result, public representatives, village heads, ration dealers and subdivision development officers extended full support to the campaign. Additionally, the Education department played a key role in spreading awareness among the pub-

Symptoms of filariasis include fever attacks, pain and swelling in the affected body part; swelling in organs, genitals or breasts and discomfort or pain in the

PAC jawan's mutilated body found

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Bareilly

Provincial Armed Constabulary (PAC) jawan deployed at the Uttar Pradesh chief minister's residence in Lucknow was found dead on a railway track in the Mirganj area on Sunday morning, police said.

The mutilated body of Ankur Kumar, 26, belonging to the 47th Battalion, H-Dal PAC, Ghaziabad, was found near Gula Phatak around 6:30 am, police said.

His mobile phone was found nearby, ringing. The call led to the identification of the body. Additional Superintendent of Police (South) Anshika Verma said the body was found on the Bareilly-Moradabad railway track. "Upon reaching the spot, we found a mobile phone next to the deceased. A call on the phone revealed that he was PAC constable Ankur Kumar, son of Rakesh Kumar, a resident of Manohara village in Muzaffarnagar's Sikheda police station area," she said.

Meanwhile in Bahraich two workers died due to electrocution at a house here, police said on Sunday. Mohammad Ahmed (35) and Afzal (40), both natives of Gonda district, had been working for several days at the house of a man named Sajjan in Harchanda village. On Saturday afternoon, the duo was carrying an iron ladder to the terrace when it accidentally came in contact with an overhead electric wire near the house. Both men suffered a severe electric shock and died on the spot.

Minister highlights schemes for empowerment of women

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Varanasi

P Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Stamp and Court Registration Fees Ravindra Jaiswal while addressing a function held on International Women's Day at the Commissioner's Auditorium here on Saturday evening, said the central and state governments are running many special schemes for the uplift of women so that they can become self-reliant.

On the occasion Jaiswal along with another UP Minister of State (Independent Charge) for AYUSH and Food Security Dr Dayashankar Mishra 'Dayalu' honoured 400 women. Jaiswal threw light on the important scheme of the Modi government, 'Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao'. "Under this scheme launched in 2015, the focus is on improving the child sex ratio and promoting education of girl", he said, adding that Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana is being run by the central government for financial benefits to pregnant women. "This scheme which was launched in 2017 aims to provide financial assistance to pregnant and lactating women", he said.

Jaiswal said Mahila Shakti Kendra launched in 2017 with the objective of empowering rural women helps to connect women with government schemes and programmes through community participation. "The future of girls is being secured with Sukanya Samriddhi Yojana launched in 2015 with the objective of encourage savings for the future of girls", he said. Referring to the Ujjwala Yojana, he said this is one of the ambitious schemes of the Modi government which has brought a big change in the lives of rural women especially. Besides, he said



Uttar Pradesh Minister Ravindra Jaiswal honouring a woman in Varanasi

that the ban on triple talaq has empowered Muslim women. The minister said the Pradhan Mantri Mahila Shakti Kendra Yojana aims to empower rural women to create awareness about the schemes provided by the government for rural women through community participation. He said that 'Sakhi Niwas', Working Women Hostel Scheme provides safe and convenient accommodation to working women. This scheme is for women who work away from their home and need a safe place to stay. The Modi government aims to benefit 26,306 women from 523 hostels. The Rashtriya Mahila Kosh Yojana provides small loans to poor women so that they can start their own business. One Stop Centre Scheme is an important scheme for women affected by violence which provides support and guidance to them and helps them to rebuild their lives. The main objective of this scheme is to provide support and guidance to women affected by violence at one place, provide legal, med-

ical and psychological assistance, shelter and rehabilitation services and make them aware of their rights, he added.

Discussing the schemes of Uttar Pradesh government for women, he said that under Mission Shakti Abhiyan, security, respect and employment opportunities are given to women and girls to make them self-reliant. Mahila Suraksha Bal (Anti-Romeo Squad) has been formed. The UP government has reserved 50 per cent seats for women in Panchayat elections, so that they can move forward in politics. Women Empowerment Centres have been opened in every district of the state, where women are informed about government schemes. To make women self-reliant, they are being trained in sewing, embroidery and other skills. Under the Rani Laxmibai Mahila Samman Kosh Yojana, financial assistance is given to women who are victims of domestic violence, sexual harassment or any other violence. Under the Chief Minister Mass Marriage Scheme, the government arranges marriages of daughters of poor families and provides financial assistance. For the safety of women, 'pink booth' and a special contingent of women police have been formed in UP. On this occasion, a cultural programme was also presented by the women power, he added.

A large number of women and others, including city BJP president Vidyasagar Rai and Naveen Kapoor, were prominently present in the programme.

BLW organises cleanliness drive

On the occasion of International Women's Day, Banaras Locomotive Works (BLW) organised a mega cleanliness drive on Saturday under the leadership of General Manager (GM) Naresh Pal Singh. The drive was also conducted in the back lanes of the residential colonies and park areas near Bal Udyan. The event witnessed enthusiastic participation from principal heads of departments, senior officials, Employee Council members, RPF personnel, volunteers of Civil Defence, St John Ambulance Brigade, Bharat Scouts and Guides, employees, their family members, and local residents. Addressing the gathering, the GM said, "Cleanliness is not just a campaign but our collective responsibility. The participation of women makes this initiative even more impactful, as they are the cornerstone of society and can effectively establish cleanliness habits within families and communities." He urged all employees and their families to make cleanliness a part of their daily routine, emphasising that cleanliness and women's empowerment are closely linked.

Team assesses Heart Attack Care Project

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Varanasi

s per the instructions of the Principal Secretary, it was decided to establish the STEMI Care Network in Varanasi on the basis of a 'hub and spokes' model. The Heart Attack Care Project known as STEMI Care Project is being operated at the government hospitals and community health centres (CHCs) of the district. Following instructions of the Director General, a two-member team of Joint Director (Training) Dr Kamlesh Yadav and State Nodal Officer of STEMI Project Dr Aman Khan visited the Cardiology department in Banaras Hindu University (BHU), Swami Vivekananda Memorial (SVM) Hospital Bhelupur and Shri Shiv Prasad Gupta (SSPG) Divisional Hospital on Sunday to know the process of the Heart Attack Care Project being run n the district and got to know the status of the project.

Under this project, electro cardiography (ECG) and thrombolysis procedures are proving to be a boon for heart attack patients. Hundred per cent of the heart attack patients who came during the window period at the heart centres functioning in the district have been saved. Under the project, BHU is working as the 'hub' and all the government hospitals and CHCs of the district are working as 'spokes'. ECG and loading dose for heart attack patients are available at all community and primary health centers.

Chief Medical Officer (CMO) Dr Sandeep Chaudhary said that detailed information about this project was given to the two-member team by Superintendent Dr Kshitij Tiwari of SVM Government Hospital. While making



Joint Director (Training) Dr Kamlesh Yadav inspecting a hospital in Varanasi on Sunday

aware of the processes being conducted under the Heart Attack Project, he said that heart attack patients are examined through ECG

In case of sudden severe pain in the chest if one reaches the hospital within an hour in the golden hour, then he can be stabilised by giving a special type of injection under the thrombolysis process.

"If the person is having continuous chest pain and reaches the hospital within four to six hours, then the thrombolysis process can be completed in that window period and the patient's life can be saved. If the patient is having continuous chest pain, then even in such a situation, if the patient reaches the hospital within 12 hours, then in that period also he can be stabilised by giving a special type of injection under the thrombolysis process, he said, adding that the injection given under the thrombolysis process completes the process of removing the blocked flow of blood in the patient's veins. This stabilises the patient and saves his life. In case of a heart attack or a heart attack problem in the patient, he is given thrombol-

Mega MSME outreach camp organised

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Kanpur

→he Union Bank of India (UBI) organised a mega MSME outreach camp at IIA Bhavan, Dada Nagar. Legislator Neelima Katiyar, in presence of the Executive Director Pankaj Dwivedi, Area Head Rajat Kumar Nanda and customers inaugurated the programme by lighting the ceremonial lamp. Deputy Area Head Sunil Singh Negi, Prashant Desai, MLP Head Mahesh Navnath Bangale, branch and office staff and customers were also present. The chief guest highlighted the important role and contribution of banks in the development of the Indian economy. She said, "Various government schemes are being delivered to every person in the country through banks only. Government benefits and subsidies etc. are received by the beneficiaries through banks only. We should emphasise on adopting digitalization and transparency. To encourage the youth in the state, more and more people are



Legislator Neelima Katiyar along with bank officials inaugurating the MSME outreach programme of Union Bank of India.

Udyami Vikas Abhiyan Yojana, under which a loan of up to ₹5 lakh is being provided by the Uttar Pradesh government with the aim of providing self-employment to the unemployed youth of the state". Executive Director Pankaj Dwivedi emphasised that MSMEs contribute 50 per cent to the country's exports. As employment generation opportunities are also being obtained through MSMEs, we should promote them. Union Bank of India has provided MSME loans to maximum citizens

to make them financially independent and contribute to the country's economic progress. Financial assistance for selfemployment generation of citizens through various government schemes is being provided through banks only. He encouraged them to take advantage of these schemes. Area Head Kanpur Rajat Kumar Nanda said, "in the budget passed by the govern-ment recently, MSME has been given great importance. MSME is such a broad sector through which employment opportunities can be provided to more and more people. We should promote all schemes started by the government so that more and more people can take advantage of these schemes".

During the programme, cheques of ₹2 lakh were also given to the nominees of the account holders under the insurance scheme in the accounts opened under the Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana. MSME loans worth ₹85 crore were sanctioned and loans worth ₹18 crore were disbursed. The programme concluded with a vote of thanks by Deputy Area Head Prashant Desai.

Study provides insight into legacy of migration

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Varanasi

recent genetic study has called into question the 150-year-old linguistic connection between Kurukh and Brahui. An international team of researchers, led by experts from Banaras Hindu University (BHU) in India, proposed that the genetic similarities observed in the Brahui population of Balochistan, Pakistan and the Kurukh language of Central India are genetically more aligned with their neighbouring groups rather than with each other. Under the co-leadership of Prof Gyaneshwer Chaubey from BHU and Dr Nurun Nahar Gazi Sultana from Dhaka University, Bangladesh, this study generated data from 248 individuals. İt utilised 6,50,000 genetic markers in a highresolution genetic analysis to investigate the mutations and haplotypes shared between the Brahui and the Kurukhspeaking Oraon populations. This remarkable study was published this week in the International Journal Human Population

torical perception of a linguistic connection between Brahui and other Dravidian populations of the Indian subcontinent, Dr Prajjval Paratap Singh, the study's first author, said this study has not confirmed this link genetically. This latest research, for the first time, fills a critical gap by including populations that have largely been overlooked, such as the Kurukh-Malto speakers, who are linguistically closest to the Brahui, said the renowned linguistic expert Prof George van Driem. The study's findings revealed that while the Oraon population exhibits genetic distinctiveness from neighbouring Indian Mundari (Austroasiatic) populations, they show a surprising genetic affinity with more geographically distant groups like the Mawasi (North Munda) and Gond (South Dravidian). However, no direct ancestral genetic signal related to the Oraon was detected in Brahui, suggesting that extensive admixture with neighbouring populations may have erased any original genetic connections. This study has also found a common genetic stock for

lations. "Our findings challenge existing assumptions regarding the linguistic structure of South Asian populations," said renowned archaeologist Prof Vasant Shinde. The genetic history of the Brahui appears to have been significantly shaped by their interactions with surrounding groups, leading to a loss of any direct genetic signature associated with other Dravidian languages." The complexity of South Asian ethnolinguistic history and the interplay between genetic and societal factors underscored the need for a comprehensive approach to understanding population histories. This study contributes valuable insights into the legacies of migration, language shifts and social dynamics that have influenced genetic diversity in the region.

Workshop concludes

A six-day workshop on 'Training of Trainers: Integration of AI in Teaching-Learning and Research' concluded on Saturday at the Inter-University Centre for Teacher Education (IUCTE), BHU.

Anthology explores dichotomy of women's status



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Prayagraj

¬he book "Sita to Abhaya: Have Things Changed?" by Ravi Valluri, former Principal Chief Operations Manager (PCOM), North Central Railway (NCR), was released during a function organised at India Habitat Centre, Delhi. The function was attended by eminent author Mamta Kalia, first Woman Chairperson and CEO of Railway Board Jaya Verma Sinha IRTS (retd), Amarendra Khatua (IFS retd) and others. Author Ravi Valluri briefed the audience about the content of the book. He said, "This anthology reflects the ever-evolving status of women in Indian society and explores the status of important popular mythological figures like Sita, Draupadi and Andal. Each of these characters, while being strong indi-

viduals in their own right, had to bear the weight of patriarchal judgement and moral scrutiny at various stages in their life. In the context of the contemporary society, the anthology explores the homemaker vs working woman stereotypes and the attendant appellations often associated with them. The anthology also explores the dichotomy of the status of women in our country, where on the one hand the Mother Goddess is deeply venerated in various parts of the country and yet women continue to be at the receiving end of patriarchal and abusive treatment both at a personal and societal level."

He said "The book also highlights the fact that though not uniform nor complete, transformation and progress have taken place. The section on women achievers highlights the battles against cultural bar-

riers and systemic constraints that women achievers have had to overcome to secure their spot under the sun. The fiction segment drives home the point that though women-achievers are often trailblazers in their fields, it need not necessarily be so in the conventional sense. It could be something as simple as a grandmother spreading happiness all around her, through every situation in life."

Two arrested

With the arrest of two persons, including the son-in-law of the deceased, Kareli police in association with Crime Branch on Sunday claimed to have worked out the murder of a contractor Salahuddin (55) which took place in Andhipur village of Kareli on March 6. Three people were involved in the murder and hunt for the third one is also underway. Reports received here said that the contractor was a resident of Lakhanpur village of Airport area and his body was found in a newly constructed house in Andhipur village of Kareli. He was killed by stabbing him with a knife and then hitting him on the head with a hammer. Meanwhile an advocate of Meja Bar Association lost his life in a head-on collision between two bikes near Dharawal village in Meja. Two others were seriously injured in the accident. The deceased was identified as advocate Anoop Mishra, of Madraha Nidhi Ka Pura village.

Post-Maha Kumbh, devotees continue to visit Sangam area

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Prayagraj

evotees continue to visit the Sangam area here even after the Maha Kumbh Mela has officially concluded. Some of the arrangements will be retained throughout the year, officials said. Neeraj Kesariwani, a resident of Prayagraj's Colonelganj locality, who visited the Sangam area said, "We couldn't visit the Maha Kumbh due to the massive crowd, which was a disappointment. However, the pleasant evening weather and the LED lights adorning the Sangam area make it feel like the fair is still going on."

Many people who refrained from visiting the Maha Kumbh due to heavy crowds are now making their way to the Sangam area. Among them is Dr Deeksha from Delhi who said

"We hesitated to come earlier due to reports of overcrowding. Now, having taken a holy dip at the Sangam, I feel blessed. The only regret is that we missed the sight of Naga Sadhus."

She further praised the beautification efforts by the government, stating, "The entire city of Prayagraj looks splendid with its well-maintained and decorated surroundings." PTI correspondent toured

the former Maha Kumbh Mela site and observed a large number of workers dismantling the temporary structures across

Triveni Šangam, Ārail Ghat, and Jhunsi. Mela Officer Vijay Kiran Anand informed PTI that given the massive influx of devotees during the Maha Kumbh, several facilities in the Sangam area will be retained year-round.

These include LED lighting, changing rooms, and well-maintained ghats.

He added that within a fortnight, all tents will be removed, while pontoon bridges will be partially retained for the Magh Mela, with the rest being redeployed to other districts. Regarding the pontoon bridges, Anand stated that 30 such bridges, comprising 3,600 pontoons, were constructed across the fairgrounds. Superintending Engineer (Maha Kumbh) Manoj Gupta said that to enhance the experience of devotees and tourists, 485 designer streetlights were installed at a cost of ₹8 crore across the Mela area. Besides, over 40,000 rechargeable bulbs and approximately 48,000 LED lights were installed, ensuring uninterrupted illumination. To provide 24-hour electricity supply, 85 substations of 400 kV, 14 substations of 250 kV, and 128 substations of 100 kV were set up, he said. The Maha Kumbh Mela, which spanned 4,000 hectares from January 13 to February 26, witnessed an estimated 66 crore devotees taking a dip in the sacred waters. Dignitaries including the President, Prime Minister, and foreign leaders were among the attendees.

Indian Railways invested around Rs 5,000 crore for the event, constructing over 21 flyovers and underpasses while running 16,000 special trains to facilitate the travel of approximately 50 million passengers. Similarly, the Uttar Pradesh Roadways

operated 8,850 buses, setting a record.
For sanitation, over 150,000 temporary toilets were maintained by a workforce of 15,000 sanitation workers, while approximately 2,000 Cango Sava volunteers were

imately 2,000 Ganga Seva volunteers were deployed for ghat cleanliness. Mahakumbh Nagar was the 76th district of Uttar Pradesh, formed on December 1, 2024, which will remain in existence until March 31, 2025. It was overseen by a dis-

of Uttar Pradesh, formed on December 1, 2024, which will remain in existence until March 31, 2025. It was overseen by a district magistrate, three additional district magistrates, 28 sub-divisional magistrates, one tehsildar, and 24 naib tehsildars.

For security, 56 police stations, 155 police outposts, a cyber cell, a women's police station and three water police stations were established in the district.

Mahila Samman programme held

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Kanpur

ank of India, Kanpur Zone, organised a Mahila Samman programme to express respect for the courage, dedication, hard work of women staff members and their important contribution and role in the society.

Women staff members participated it with great enthusiasm. They were felicitated with bouquet and by cutting a cake. Social worker Nirmal Kapoor congratulated and wished the women bank employees a very Happy Women's

Social worker Sandhya Singh said all women employees working in the bank are regularly providing better customer service despite facing every challenge.



The BOI organised a Mahila Samman programme on Saturday.

Many women bank employees and officers, including social worker Sunita Singh

Signification contribution of women in various fields acknowledged

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Kanpur

TPC Northern Region Headquarters celebrated International Women's Day with great enthusiasm under the theme "Accelerate Action." The theme highlights the urgency of advancing gender equality by empowering women and promoting education. Regional Executive Director, Northern Region NS Rao warmly welcomed and extended his best wishes to the women employees of NRHQ. He emphasised that woman empowerment starts at home and gradually extends to society. Rao acknowledged the significant contribution

of women in various fields, including NTPC, where many areas are now led by women, showcasing the organisation's commitment to gender equality. General Manager (OS) Amreek Singh Bhogal also conveyed his good wishes to the female employees present. Regional Head of HR Samiran Sinha Ray shared his dream of having a region/station or department entirely run by women, which will serve as a remarkable example of women empowerment. The event concluded with an interactive session by the Regional Executive Director (NR) with female employees. During the discussion, many employees shared their experiences.

Emphasis on holistic education

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE - Kanpur

◄he Seth Anandram Jaipuria School, Kanpur, celebrated its Golden Jubilee ■ Grand Finale 'Swarn Utkarsh', with a spectacular closing ceremony on Saturday, in the presence of Chief Guest Aman Gupta, co-founder and CMO of boAt. The celebrations were led by Shishir Jaipuria, Chairman of Seth Anandram Jaipuria Group of Educational Institutions and family members along with school principal, Shikha Banerjee, vice-principal junior school, Madhushree Bhaumik, viceprincipal senior school, Ganesh Tiwari and members of the leadership team from the head office. The evening commenced with the lighting of the ceremonial lamp followed by a yoga display by students.



In his address, Shishir Jaipuria said, "As we reflect on this historic milestone, we also look ahead with renewed ambition and purpose. Our vision is to deliver holistic education with a focus on technology integration and 21st century skills and values for nurturing future-ready learners and global citizens."



Sangam water fit for bathing: CPCB

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA New Delhi

new report by the Central Pollution Control Board(CPCB) submitted to the National Green Tribunal has said that as per statistical analysis, the water quality during the recently concluded Maha Kumbh in Prayagraj was fit for bathing.

The CPCB report said the statistical analysis was necessitated because of "variability of data" in the samples collected from the same locations across different dates and on different locations on the same day, because of which these did not reflect the "overall river water quality throughout the river stretch".

The report dated February 28 and uploaded on the tribunal's website on March 7 said the board had conducted water monitoring twice a week from January 12 onwards, including on auspicious bathing days, at five locations on Ganga river and two locations on Yamuna river.

'There is a significant variability in the values on various parameters, viz pH, dissolved oxygen (DO), biochemical oxygen demand (BOD) and fecal coliform count (FC) for the samples taken from the same location on different dates. The values of the afore-mentioned parameters also vary at different locations for the samples collected on the same day," the report said.

The DO or the amount of oxygen in water, BOD, which measures the amount of oxygen needed to break down organic



Sadhus take holy dip at Triveni Sangam during Maha Kumbh in Prayagraj

sewage contamination, are key indicators

The report said that an expert committee examined the issue of "variability in data" and said that "the data represents a snapshot of water quality at a specific location and time and may vary significantly depending upon factors such as upstream anthropogenic activities (human actions), rate of flow, depth of sampling, time of sampling, river current and mixing of currents, sampling location and such other

matter in water, and FC, a marker of multiple factors". "As a result, these values reflect water quality parameters at the exact time and place from where these water samples were collected, and may not fully represent the overall characteristics of the river, therefore, not necessarily reflecting the overall river water quality throughout the river stretch," it said.

The report also said that because of the variability, a statistical analysis of water quality data of various monitoring locations for the key parameters was undertaken from January 12 to February 22 at 10 locations of "mass bathing" and that 20 rounds of monitoring were done.

"It is submitted that as per the abovementioned statistical analysis, the median value (central tendency of the data) of pH, DO, BOD and FC for the monitored stretches is within the respective criteria/permissible limits," the report noted.

According to the report, the median value for FC was 1,400 as compared to the permissible limit of 2,500 units per 100 ml, while the DO was 8.7 vis-a-vis the stipulated norm of being greater than 5 milligram per litre, and the BOD was 2.56 against the stipulated limit of less than or equal to 3 mg per litre.

On February 17, the CPCB had informed the tribunal through a report that various locations in Prayagraj during the Maha Kumbh were not conforming to the primary water quality for bathing with respect to the level of faecal coliform.

'The river water quality was not conforming to the primary water quality for bathing with respect to faecal coliform at all the monitored locations on various

"A large number of people bathe in the river at Prayagraj during the Maha Kumbh Mela, including on auspicious bathing days, which eventually leads to an increase in faecal concentration," the report had said. At present, the matter has been posted for hearing on April 7. Advocate Saurabh Tiwari appeared for the petition-



India and Kyrgystan Army personnel during the exercise Khanjar-XII 2025

India-Kyrgyzstan special drill to start on March 10

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA New Delhi

he 12th edition of the India-Kyrgyzstan Joint Special Forces Exercise Khanjar-XII is set to take place in Kyrgyzstan from March 10 to 23. Since its inception in 2011, the exercise has evolved into an annual training event, Defence Ministry said here on Sunday.

Giving details, officials said the alternating venues between India and Kyrgyzstan reflect the unique dimension of the thriving strategic relationship. The last edition of the same exercise was conducted in India in January 2024. The Indian contingent is represented by troops from the parachute regiment (special forces) and the Kyrgyzstan contingent is represented by Kyrgyz Scorpion Brigade. Aim of the exercise is to exchange expe-

riences and best practices in counter terrorism and special forces operations in urban and mountainous high altitude ter-

The exercise will also focus on developing advanced special forces skills of sniping, complex building intervention and mountain craft. Beyond rigorous training, the exercise will feature vibrant cultural exchanges, including celebration of the Kyrgyz festival Nowruz. This interaction will further cement the bond of friendship between the two nations.

The exercise will provide an opportunity for both sides to fortify defence ties while addressing common concerns of international terrorism and extremism. The exercise reaffirms the commitment of India and Kyrgyzstan to fostering peace stability, and security in the region.

Rajnath Singh calls for increased R and D in aerospace medicine

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Gurugram

efence Minister Rajnath Singh on Sunday highlighted the growing need for expertise in aerospace medicine in view of the continuous increase in air and space traffic.

He made this assertion after visiting Institute of Aerospace Medicine (IAM) of

the Indian Air Force (IAF) in Bengaluru. He is the first defence minister to visit the institute, defence ministry said here. He was briefed about the unique role of IAM in pilot training, their medical

evaluation and aeromedical research. Rajnath Singh said "From the defence perspective, space has emerged as a major domain in warfare. We have taken a step forward in this direction and mastered the most-advanced technologies such as anti-satellite. India has also become the fastest growing aviation market in the world.

As we are touching new heights in space, we need to explore more possibilities in aerospace medicine. There is a need for increased R and D as research in any high-end complex technology pro-

vides benefits to many fields," he said. importance of aerospace medicine, terming it as critical for dealing with challenges such as micro-gravity, radiation, and isolation faced by a human being in space, while also addressing physical and mental changes.

"Whether it is an issue related to neurons, bone loss or mental problems, it is the responsibility of aerospace and space medicine to tackle these challenges. The field must prepare itself for bigger responsibilities in the future," he said

The defence minister also said the aerospace sector is going to witness an unprecedented growth in the times to come and it will be pivotal in realising Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led government's vision of Viksit Bharat by 2047. "The sector is going to play a crucial role in deciding technological advancements, national security, and economic growth. In addition, it will be central in achieving milestones such as satellite launching, inter-planetary missions and commercial space services," he said. Rajnath Singh also inspected the Dynamic Flight Simulator and High Performance Human Centrifuge used for high-G training of fighter pilots and the Spatial Disorientation Simulator for training the pilots of the Armed Forces to avert the risk of spatial disorientation in flight.

Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind protest against Waqf Amendment Bill

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA New Delhi

≺he Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind on Sunday extended support to the protest called by All India Muslim Personal Law Board and other organisations against the Waqf (Amendment) Bill, claiming that Muslims are being forced to come out on the streets to reclaim their rights.

Jamiat chief Maulana Arshad Madani said in the working committee meeting of the organisation on February 12, 2025, it was decided that if the Bill is passed, all state units of Jamiat Ulemae-Hind will challenge this law in their respective state high courts.

Additionally, the Jamiat will also approach the Supreme Court with the confidence that justice will be served, as "courts remain the final recourse for

Supporting the protest of the All India Muslim Personal Law Board and other national organisations at Jantar

Mantar here on March 13, Madani said of the community, and therefore, we inet has approved it, which clearly that Muslims are being forced to come out on the streets to reclaim their

Muslims have shown great patience and

"However, now, when the concerns of Muslims regarding Waqf properties are being disregarded, and an unconstitutional law is being forcibly imposed, there remains no other option but to protest," Madani said in a statement.

He emphasised that peaceful protest for one's religious rights is the democratic right of every citizen in the

The Jamiat chief further stated that since the introduction of the Waqf (Amendment) Bill, "we have been making every possible effort in a democratic manner to convince the government that Waqf is a purely religious matter".

"Waqf properties are donations made by our ancestors for the welfare

cannot tolerate any government interference in them," he said.

"Muslims cannot compromise on He said that for the past 12 years, their Shariah at all, as this is a matter of their rights, not just their existence. The current government wants to take away the rights granted to Muslims by the country's Constitution by bringing a new Waqf Amendment Act," he alleged.

We are going to protest to reclaim the rights and powers granted to us by the Constitution. By bringing legislations like the Waqf Amendment Bill, there is an attempt to infringe upon these very constitutional rights," he

Maulana Madani said Jamiat has made efforts to make those parties in the government, which call themselves secular and in whose success Muslims have also played a part, that what is happening is very wrong.

"However, now even the central cab-

means that these parties have openly supported this Bill," he said.

The Jamiat president claimed that this is a betrayal of the Muslims, and playing with the country's Constitution

These parties value their own political interests more than the secular Constitution of the country and the Muslims. Therefore, the parties that claim secularism are equally responsible for what is happening in the country today," he said

"By assisting openly in pushing the country toward destruction and ruin, their role is far more dangerous than that of the communal forces because they are acting like friends while stabbing people in the back," Madani said.

He appealed to people to join the demonstration in large numbers to not only make it successful but also to show their awareness and commitment to the

PM Modi, Nadda visits VP **Dhankhar at AIIMS**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA New Delhi

rime Minister Narendra Modi and Health minister J P Nadda on Sunday visited AIIMS here to enquire about Vice President Jagdeep

He was admitted there early morning after complaining of uneasiness and chest pain. He is stable and under

In a social media post, Modi said, Went to AIIMS and inquired about the health of Vice President Shri Jagdeep Dhankhar Ji. I pray for his good health and speedy recovery."

Dhankhar (73) was taken to the hospital around 2 am.

He was admitted to the Critical Care Unit (CCU) under Dr Rajiv Narang, Head of Department of Cardiology at AIIMS, sources said.

Japanese woman falls to death from 14th floor

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Gurugram

n a shocking incident a Japanese woman was found dead after she fell an upscale residential society in Gurugram, police said. The body was handed over to the family after an autopsy on Saturday and further investigation is under way, police said. In connection with the matter the police have informed the embassy for further pro-

According to the police, the victim Madoko Thamano (34) had come to Gurugram with her husband in September last year. She was living in a society here with her husband and two children. The deceased's husband works in a branch of a foreign bank operating in Gurugram. The incident occurred on Friday morning when the police received a call from society guards regarding a woman's body being found lying on the ground, a police officer privy to the mat-

Following information a police team was immediately dispatched to the incident spot. "The reason behind the incident is yet to be known. We are investigating the matter from all possible angle. The matter is under investigation," said Inspector Sandeep Kumar, SHO of Sector

Congress pushes for simplified GST 2.0

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA New Delhi

TA7ith Finance Minister Nirmala **V** GST rates will come down further, the Congress on Sunday said any changes in the tax must be more comprehensive than a mere rate reduction and stressed the need for a radically simplified and less punitive GST 2.0.

Congress general secretary in charge of communications Jairam Ramesh said his party had envisaged a GST 2.0 a truly "Good and Simple Tax" in its manifesto Congress general secretary in charge of for the 2024 Lok Sabha polls, and it remains committed to that vision.

"The ball is now in the Union government's court- will they take this historic opportunity?" Ramesh asked in a statement. "The finance minister has declared that GST rates will be reduced soon.

The Indian National Congress reiterates that any changes in GST must be more comprehensive than a mere rate reduction," he said.

Reducing the tax on caramel popcorn, without fundamentally reforming a system that has three rates of tax for popcorn, is just window-dressing, the former Union minister added. The need of the hour is a radically simplified and less punitive GST 2.0, he said. "The first objective of GST 2.0 must be to simplify the tax slabs. The three-slab tax system for popcorn and the differential tax rates for cream buns and regular buns are only the



communications Jairam Ramesh PIONEER PHOTO

tip of the iceberg," he said. As the Narendra Modi government's

former chief economic advisor, Arvind Subramanian, has acknowledged, the Goods and Services Tax (GST) has up to 100 different rates, including cesses, the Congress leader pointed out. "This complexity increases the compliance burden on businesses and the government bureaucracy. The multiplicity of rates has facilitated alarming GST evasion of ₹2.01 Lakh Crore, almost double the ₹1.01 Lakh Crore reported in FY23," he claimed, adding that "18,000 fraudulent entities have been uncovered; many more are likely undetected".

The complexity of the current GST regime reflects a lack of seriousness on the government's part to enforce a truly Good and Simple Tax", Ramesh said.

Second, a key issue in recent months has been the slowdown in GST net collections due to high refunds. Data from December d that net GST after adjusting for refunds, slumped to 3.3 per cent growth partly due to the 45.3 per cent increase in refunds to taxpayers," he said.

While some part of this increase in refunds is certainly credible, a significant component of these refunds is likely fraudulent, he claimed. "The complexity of the GST system especially when combined with a software system that is ridden with loopholes has allowed for large-scale fraud," the Congress leader alleged. Input Tax Credit (ITC) fraud is particularly common, with more than 5,132 Crore worth of fraud identified, amidst a recovery rate of just 12 per cent,

Weak supply-chain tracking means that buyers can claim ITC without receiving supplies, often using false invoices or inflating turnover to secure fraudulent refunds, Ramesh said. "Minimal validation and the lack of physical checks during online registration also enables the creation of fake companies who seek refunds without actual operations.

Firms have also claimed refunds on exports that are ineligible for such benefits," he said. The inadequate enforcement mechanism for GST needs to be one of the key targets of any reforms, the Congress leader said.

Government yet to receive proposals from **HCs to appoint** ad-hoc judges

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA New Delhi

ver a month after the Supreme Court cleared the decks to appoint ad-hoc judges in high courts to deal with rising pendency of cases, the government is yet to receive proposals from respective HCs naming candidates. Considering a backlog of over 18

lakh criminal cases, the Supreme Court on January 30 allowed the high courts to appoint ad-hoc judges, not exceeding 10 per cent of the court's total sanctioned strength. Article 224A of the Constitution

allows the appointment of retired judges as ad-hoc judges in high courts to help deal with pendency. Sources said the Union law min-

istry is yet to receive any recommendation from respective high court collegiums for appointing ad-hoc judges.
As per the laid down procedure,

the respective high court collegiums send recommendations or names of candidates to be appointed as HC judges to the Department of Justice in the law ministry. The department then adds inputs

and details on the candidates before forwarding the same to the Supreme Court Collegium.

The SC Collegium then takes a

final call and recommends to the government to appoint the selected persons as judges.

The president signs the 'warrant of appointment' of the newly-appoint-

The procedure to appoint ad- hoc judges will be the same except that the president will not sign the warrant of appointment. But the assent of the president will be sought for appointing ad-hoc judges.

Except in one case, there is no precedence of appointing retired judges as ad-hoc HC judges, sources pointed out.

In a judgement on April 20, 2021 on the appointment of ad-hoc judges in the high courts, the top court had imposed certain conditions.

However, later a special Supreme Court bench comprising Chief Justice Sanjiv Khanna, justices B R Gavai and Surya Kant had relaxed certain conditions and kept some in abeyance.

Climate change to intensify, cooling effects may weaken: Scientists Further, temperatures during March

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA New Delhi

limate change is growing stronger and more robust and the cooling, counter effects of La Nina may not be effective in a warmer future, climate scientists said, assessing current heat trends seen in large parts of the country.

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has predicted an early summer this year, with above-normal temperatures and intense, long heat wave spells.

The country experienced its warmest

February since 1901, with the fifth lowest rainfall since 2001, it said. While human-caused climate change is increasingly driving a 'new normal' marked by a warmer winter and shorter

spring, scientists also draw attention to the

yearly changes in weather patterns,

termed 'year-to-year variability' "For example, updates from the IMD this year suggest that it was an unusually dry winter," Arpita Mondal, associate professor at the Centre for Climate

Studies at IIT Bombay, said. She explained that rain is a natural cooling process that helps bring temper-

Raghu Murtugudde, an earth system scientist and professor at IIT Bombay, said, "I see a global wave of warm and cold temperature anomalies (deviations from expected patterns) during Dec-Feb that are related to the swings of jet streams."

Jet streams are strong winds blowing in the upper levels of the atmosphere and influence weather by shifting north

and south Mondal said, "Our study finds that a northward shift in these winds during pre-monsoon is directly linked with heatwave character, such as its duration and temperature."

Further, El Nino and La Nina phases of the 'ENSO' natural climate driver also contribute to the overall trends, Vimal Mishra, chair professor of civil engineer-

ENSO-neutral conditions that began in ing at IIT Gandhinagar, said. "So, under El Nino-like conditions, you

will see warm springs or hot temperatures just after winter, whereas if La Nina prevails, you will find more number of cool or cold days," Mishra said.

Much of the world's weather is significantly influenced by the 'El Nino-Southern Oscillation' (ENSO), involving changes in temperatures and atmospheric pressures in the Pacific Ocean. An ENSO cycle oscillates between the

'El Nino' warm phase linked with warmer ocean temperatures and its counterpart 'La Nina', transitioning each time via a neutral phase. A cycle typically lasts between 2-7 years. This week, the World Meteorological

Organisation (WMO) notified that the "weak" La Nina that emerged in December 2024 "is likely to be short-lived". The UN agency had predicted the La Nina a 60 per cent chance of emerging

during July-September, following

2024-February 2025 were 0.71 degrees Celsius above the 1990-2020 average, and 1.59 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels, Europe's Copernicus Climate Change Service said this week. Sea surface temperatures remained

unusually high in many ocean basins and Murtugudde said, "It's not really a La

Niña at all. It has some cold waters in the tropical Pacific (Ocean), but in the critical eastern Pacific, some warm anomalies have persisted. And this only emerged at the end of the year, as opposed to peaking during December-February." The patterns are a bit unexpected, but

likely related to the record warming of 2023 which is still continuing. We haven't really explained the level of warming yet," he added. Studies have projected that in a warmer

future, El Nino events are likely to become more common and intense, with every one in two of these being an

extreme one. The 2023-24 El Nino, one of the strongest five on record, is said to have fuelled rising temperatures and extreme weather events around the world in the period. India experienced 536 heatwave days

during summer 2024, the highest in 14 years, with the northwestern region seeing the warmest June since 1901, accord-Mishra said, "The most robust, impor-

tant signature is that of climate change. Therefore, even under ENSO-neutral conditions very much likely this year we cannot ignore harsh heatwaves, given that we have already started with quite warm temperatures in March. In its update this week, the WMO has

predicted a 60 per cent chance of ENSO-neutral conditions during March-May 2025. Further, under climate change, "an El Nino will cause a lot of problems for us,

comfort to us," Mishra added.

but La Nina may not be able to provide





A promise is a promise!

Delhi Government approves ₹2,500 aid for women despite PM Modi's opposition to freebies

elhi Government, powered by Chief Minister Rekha Gupta, has approved the Mahila Samridhi Yojana, a scheme aimed at providing financial assistance of ₹2,500 per month to women from economically weaker sections. The initiative, a key promise made during the BJP's election campaign in Delhi, is expected to cost the exchequer ₹5,100 crore. The eligibility criteria for the scheme include an annual income cap of Rs 2.5 lakh and an age range of 18 to 60 years. The Delhi Chief Secretary, along with other officials, has finalised these conditions, ensuring that the financial aid reaches the most deserving beneficiaries. However, the announcement understandably will concretise over a period of time as no date for disbursement has been declared yet, despite earlier promises of payments beginning on March 8. Besides, it has also been pointed out that the eligibility criteria were not communicated to voters during the election campaign. In its layout, the Mahila Samridhi Yojana seeks to ward off any criticism of the so-called "freebie culture," which political parties across the spectrum accuse each other of.

Indeed, Prime Minister Narendra Modi himself has often warned of excessive populist schemes could that burden State finances and harm longterm economic stability. He has advocated for welfare measures that promote self-reliance rather than direct cash benefits. It is hoped that the Delhi Government would acknowledge the Prime Minister's warning and ensure that welfare measures are not just a tool to secure electoral victories.

BJP national president JP Nadda himself launched the scheme, congratulating the Chief Minister for allocating the funds for its execution. Ms Rekha Gupta has a tight financial rope to walk on, considering she bemoaned the appalling fact of Delhi's empty coffers when she assumed office. Admittedly, Delhi has already allocated itself subsidies which are worth thousands of crores, a probe into which the Government must initiate post haste. The subsidies given by the Kejriwal Government in the past decade have increased manifold, inquiries into which ought to be the present Government's utmost priority. The highest subsidies have been allocated to the power, water and transport sectors. Delhi's power subsidies rose from ₹292 crore in 2014-15 to a shocking ₹3,600 crore by 2024-25. The free water provided by the Kejriwal Government was another big drain on the exchequer. The past decade has spawned an invincible Water Mafia culture in Kejriwal's erstwhile strongholds which merits an independent action. Water subsidies rose from ₹21 crore in 2014-15 to ₹500 crore projected for 2024-25. Free bus travel for women cost a whopping ₹115 crore in 2019-20. In 2014-15, the total subsidy doled out was ₹1,555 crore. This figure nearly doubled in 2015-16, soaring to ₹3,018 crore. While it remains to be seen how Ms Gupta delivers on her promise to fellow women citizens, what needs to be clearly factored in is the figure of ₹5100 crore and how best to manage the resources for it.

The approval of the Mahila Samridhi Yojana initiative is expected to strengthen the BJP's party's appeal among women voters, a crucial demographic in electoral politics. Therefore, the real success of the scheme will depend on its swift and transparent implementation. With opposition parties already raising concerns over delays and additional conditions. the Delhi Government must ensure that the scheme does not remain a mere electoral promise and delivers tangible benefits to the intended beneficiaries. As the political landscape of Delhi continues to evolve, the implementation of welfare schemes such as this will play a pivotal role in shaping the public's perception of the ruling party. The question remains whether the BJP can balance its ideological opposition to freebies with the electoral necessity of welfare measures. Indeed, the politics is the art of possible.



I urge the CM of Tamil Nadu to draw inspiration from other states that have taken steps to offer medical and engineering education in their native languages. It is my sincere wish that Tamil Nadu also introduce such courses in Tamil.

AMIT SHAH, MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS, GOVERNMENT OF INDIA



Judiciary under malicious attack by influential groups

In a democracy, some criticism of the judiciary is inevitable. However, unless there is a measure of restraint, judicial institutions will be damaged and judicial integrity stand debilitated

andit Jawaharlal Nehru once remarked, "Events crowd in upon us in such quick succession that we are apt to miss their true significance. This is particularly true of the unhealthiest drift of recent events in the Supreme Court of India. The customary reverence formerly paid to judges of the Supreme Court is being systematically deflated. Pernicious attacks on the judiciary have become commonplace. Many are made by political parties and politicians. Some politicians who are distinguished members of the Supreme Court Bar, see enormous mileage in pursuing that course. But even beyond politicians, the attacks have been made with impunity by the media, academicians and limbs of the law. The recent spate of malicious attacks on our former most respected Harvard educated Chief Justice of India DY Chandrachud, particularly after he hung up his gloves on November 10, 2024, has shocked the conscience of all right thinking people who cherish and value democracy, the rule of law and the independence of the Judiciary. All I can say is that that the vicious attack of calumny and vilification set in motion against Chief Justice Chandrachud in the print, visual, broadcast and internet media, and that too without any cogent basis or tangible evidence, by vested political interests and ventilated by unscrupulous lawyer politicians (who ostensibly owe their allegiance to the Supreme Court) is a most ignominious development that deserves to be condemned by one and all in the strongest possible language. It is indeed lamentable that such personal and political attacks, led by politicians, politician lawyers and lawyers, have gone too far, nay crossed the 'Lakshman Rekha'.

They have sometimes been devised to undermine the fundamental independence of judges of the highest judiciary, even to attempt to daunt judges or to sway the outcome of cases and to depreciate their irrepressible impartiality and integrity. The unconquerable power of democracy and the Rule of Law are being sought to be subverted and subjugated in a most sinister and malicious manner.

Behind the façade of the attacks on the judiciary, I see the evil hand of certain political parties (even invisibly supported by foreign forces inimical to India's interests) to dislodge the smooth functioning of the highest court of the land by means foul rather than fair. In a democratic society, some criticism of the judiciary is inevitable. This is especially so at a time when there is a grow-



ing understanding of the inescapable choices which are open to judges. Just as decisions of the other branches of the government attract criticism, important and controversial decisions of the courts will inescapably

Into this ambience has been impregnated the technology of the modern media of communications. Unless there is a measure of restraint, the judicial institutions will be damaged and judicial integrity debilitated. The following features of the recent attacks on the judiciary have been distinctly intemperate. The personal targeting of identified judges. The attempt to intimidate them or to deflect them from fidelity to their oath of office to decide each case strictly on its merits. The unrelenting character and partisan political aspect of the attacks. A censurable feature of the barrage which cannot pass unnoticed is how a woman judge, who was the first lady judge to have been honoured with a well-deserved elevation straight from the Bar to the Bench, was singled out for a studied attack by a senior lady member of the Bar in April, 2018 before her swearing in. In April, 2018, there was also an unholy attempt to impeach another former Chief Justice of India supported by seven disgruntled opposition parties. Targeting judges, identifiable because of their sex, race or other minority considerations, attacking them by over-simplified and inaccurate generalisations, caters to public prejudice.

Such conduct is unworthy of our country that indefatigably claims to uphold fundamental rights and the rule of law. In the face of the onslaught, and under fire, there are a few strategies available to the judiciary. It would be a reprehensible judicial response to cave in to the pressure and to do exactly what the politicians, editorialists or other powerful interests desire. This would be a complete abdication of the judicial system. It, therefore, rests increasingly on the organised legal profes-

sionals to defend the judiciary, to correct blatant misinformation and to remind politicians, the media and others of the precious heritage of judicial neutrality and independence which we have enjoyed so proudly. In India, independence and conscientiousness are cherished features of the judiciary. Institutional protection for those features must be sustained.

Political attempts to undermine them should be spurned. Leaders of the legal profession, irrespective of their personal political leanings, should speak up where judges are unjustly assailed by politicians and others for carrying out their independent role. The increasingly adversarial and belligerent nature of our public discourse should not become contagious to the erosion of the balanced relationship of the judiciary with other branches of the government.

Legislators, members of the Executive Government and the judiciary should realise that each branch has its distinct part to play, without which constitutional government would falter and fail. But a genuine desire to protect and preserve the rule of law and the dignity and majesty of the highest court of the world's largest working democracy. In this context, it would not be out of place to mention that our first President Dr Rajendra Prasad, himself an outstanding lawyer, described this "noble edifice" as the 'Temple of Justice' on the occasion of the inauguration of the new Supreme Court building on August 4,1958 in the august presence of Prime Minister Nehru, Vice President Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, Chief Justice Sudhi Ranjan Das, his son-in-law Asoke Kumar Sen, the Union Law Minister and my senior and guru, Lok Sabha Speaker Ananthasayanam Ayyangar, and Attorney

General Motilal Chimanlal Setalvad. In conclusion, I am highly emboldened to commend to readers the stern message delivered by Justice Jamshed Burjor Pardiwala of the Supreme Court at the Second Justice HR Khanna Memorial Symposium on July 3, 2022, "Personal attack on judges for their judgements lead to a dangerous scenario where the judges have to think about what the media thinks, rather than what the law says.

This puts the rule of law on the burner, social and digital media are primarily resorted to expressing personalised opinions more against the judges, rather than a constructive critical appraisal of their judgments. This is what is harming the judicial institution and lowering its dignity. This is where digital and social media need to be regulated throughout the country to preserve the rule of law under our Constitution in India, which cannot be defined as a completely mature or defined democracy, social media is employed frequently to politicise purely legal and constitutional issues."

(The author is an internationally reputed senior lawyer practising in the Supreme Court of India and various High Courts and Tribunals in India.

Whither the women of this country?

SECOND **Opinion**

ccelerate Accelerate action is a call for urgency, inclusion, and transformative Aurgency, inclusion, and transformative change. It underscores that equality cannot wait and that all sectors of society must work together to hasten progress toward women's rights and empowerment. The responsibility for accelerating this change primarily lies with institutions, particularly the government. Effective policy changes and awareness campaigns that challenge deeply ingrained societal norms are crucial.

While the Government of India has placed women's education and empowerment at the forefront of its agendaan effort worthy of commendation — the critical question remains: What about their security? According to the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), a total of 4,32,256 cases of crimes against women were registered across India in 2022-an alarming statistic that translates to nearly 51 FIRs being filed every hour. These cases include rape, sexual assault, domestic violence, and dowry-related violence, marking a four per cent increase from the previous year. However, the NCRB also clarified that the rise in registered cases does not necessarily indicate an increase in crime but rather a greater willingness among victims to report incidents.

While urban areas have witnessed increased awareness



of support systems. A report by the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) revealed that 151 sitting MPs and MLAs have declared cases related to crimes against women in their elec-

West Bengal has the highest number of lawmakers (25) facing such cases, with 16 sitting MPs and MLAs accused of rape. While the BJP leads in such cases, Congress and other parties are not far behind. These numbers are not just

statistics-they represent silent battles fought daily by women at home, on the streets, in workplaces, and even within political corridors.

Protecting the dignity of women is the Government's dutv. yet it is deeply ironic that political parties, both at the State and Central levels, sometimes shelter individuals accused of crimes against women for electoral gains. Whether it is Sheikh Shahjahan of TMC or Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh of BJP, such instances raise serious concerns about political accountability.

The BJP Government claims significant progress in empowering women, yet the party itself has 134 sitting MPs and MLAs facing charges of crimes against women. Congress follows with 25, with AAP close behind. India ranked 128th out of 177 countries in the 2023 Women, Peace, and Security Index, which assesses women's status based on three dimensions: Inclusion (economic, social, and politi-

and reporting, rural regions still struggle with cal), Justice (formal and informal discrimination), and ranking reinforces the urgent need to accelerate action. In response to growing concerns, the Central Government has extended its flagship

women's security scheme until 2025-26 to curb crimes against women. However, ensuring women's safety requires a multi-pronged approach, including stringent laws, robust security measures, swift justice, timely redressal of complaints, and accessible institutional support for victims.

At its core, the persistence of gender-based violence is deeply rooted in India's complex social fabric, where patriarchal norms, economic disparities and cultural traditions intersect to perpetuate inequality. This systemic injustice not only denies women their right to live with freedom and dignity but also hinders societal progress. Meaningful change requires a shift in mindset-starting at home. As the saying goes, "Gender equality begins at home," and by fostering a culture of respect and equality, we can empower the next generation to build a fairer world. According to the World Economic Forum, at the current pace of progress, achieving full gender parity will take until 2158 — approximately five generations from now. The question we must ask ourselves is: Can we afford to wait that long, or will we take action now to accelerate change?

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Letters to the Editor

Unique ID for voters

Madam — India's democracy is set to create a new milestone in its journey toward becoming more robust and transparent. Under the initiative of the Election Commission, nearly one billion voters in the country will now be assigned a unique identity, making the electoral process more transparent, secure and error-free. This step will not only simplify voting but also eliminate issues like fraudulent voting and duplicate voter names. In today's digital era, it was essential to make voter identification more effective. By adopting a digital system, the Election Commission is ensuring that duplicate names are removed from voter lists and each voter is assigned a distinct identity, thereby strengthening the democratic framework. This initiative will enhance voter credibility, ensuring fair and impartial elections.

Eliminating the problem of duplicate EPIC numbers will provide every voter with a unique identity, preventing any misuse of voting rights. Moreover, this initiative will pave the way for future advancements such as e-registration and digital voting, making the electoral process more transparent and convenient. This historic step will further deepen public trust in democracy. Now, every citizen will be able to exercise their voting rights without any doubts or obstacles. This initiative will serve as a milestone in steering Indian democracy towards the digital era.

RK JAIN | BARWANI

Russian strikes on Ukraine

Madam— US President Donald Trump on Friday, March 7, 2025, threatened serious sanctions against Russia for attacking Ukraine. Russia launched a wave of aerial bombings early Friday, hitting Ukraine with 67 missiles and 194 drones, according to Kyiv. Most of them were intercepted, but some did make it through, hitting gas and power facilities. These threats were the first strong warnings for Russia from Trump, who had, during the election campaign 2024, claimed the war would be over on the day he took office and even before.

He had then, as now, also claimed Russia would have never invaded Ukraine if he was still president. The second claim cannot be tested, but the first, his confidence in finishing the war, is being tested, as the war has been on for two months now after the start of his second term. Trump has managed to strong-arm Ukraine into getting ready for a ceasefire and a final settlement. After a heated exchange with President Volodymyr Zelensky at an Oval Office meeting, he announced a pause in all US aid to Ukraine, stopping even the exchange of intelligence. Mollified by a "regret" letter from Ukraine, Trump has said he is ready to work with Zelenskyy towards peace. Officials of the two sides are to meet next week for talks, including on a US-Ukraine agreement that will grant Washington rights in Ukraine's rich reserves of rare earth minerals

BHAGWAN THADANI I MUMBAI

Unfair criticism of Shami

Madam —The statement from the All India Muslim Jamaat President Maulana Shahabuddin Razvi Barelvi's criticism against the Indian cricketer Mohammed Shami is quite shocking. The cleric stated that fasting during Ramadan is an obligatory duty in Islam, and anyone who deliberately avoids it is committing a sin. The Indian cricketers have been held in high esteem worldwide not just for their passion towards the game but also for their patriotism towards the nation when it comes to delivering their best on the field. I can bring up the incident of the past when Mohammed Siraj lost his father in November 2020 while he was with the team on his tour of Australia. Though he was given the option of returning home, the pacer chose to stay back with the team for the series.

It was such an emotional moment even for the fans when he shared later that he went to his father's graveyard straight after landing in Hyderabad. The traumatic state was fought out by Siraj then because of his commitment towards national duty. The same is the case here with Mohammed Shami, whose commitment towards the game is well known and who is delivering his might in the absence of Jasprit Bumrah in the ongoing ICC Champions Trophy. When the game of cricket unites all religions, it is unfortunate that the cleric, by his remark, has brought out unreasonable division among religions and is unpardonable as per Islam.

TRUMP IMPOSES RECIPROCAL TARIFF

he United States of America is all set for rolling out the reciprocal taxation policy for the world. And his particular taxing targets are China, Brazil and India, all the major BRICS countries, along with Canada, the EU and Mexico.

Donald Trump claims their tariff rates are unfair for US products. Trump claims that India charges more than 100 per cent tariff rates, whereas South Korea charges four times higher tariffs on the USA. This is a clear indication of the fact that this time Trump 2.0 is actually trying to establish fair trade conditions, at least from the American domestic perspective. His wish to play fair on the tariff ground against those nations that have charged tremendously higher amounts of tariffs on America will become a costly affair for the respective targeted countries. Although Trump achieving this trade fairness is definitely a challenging task. As the nation will feel, it is challenging to adjust themselves to the new reciprocal tariff system.

The opinion of Trump to achieve this trade fairness is welcoming, as every country has the right to bargain, compete and charge

the tariff for protecting their local businesses. But at the same time, the US must not forget that the world is still on the juggernaut of unfair competition, resource and income divide. Still, the developing countries stand nowhere in comparison to the trade figures of the developed nations. In such a trade paradox milieu, the idea of tariff fairness and equity seems a little vague. Trump must pave the way for fair trade opportunities before initiating the idea of tariff fairness and reciprocity.

Trump must understand that no nation can grow unilaterally; we all need each other for our holistic development altogether. Trump must understand that America is a hegemonic state, and it holds its accountability for setting a balanced world order. It just can't do tit for tat with the world, calling it fairness. At the same time, Trump must stop taking help from Elon Musk, a smart capitalist. Since the administration of America is not like the running of a company, where risk-bearing is conditioned for profit only. Sometimes, our loss is the genuine profit of others, and we have to do so to pave the way for an equivalent and just

Kirti Wadhawan | Kanpur



Bangladesh's National Citizen Party: A new dawn or fleeting revolution?

On February 28, 2025, Bangladesh witnessed the birth of the National Citizens Party (NCP), or Jatiya Nagorik Party (NJP) in Bengali. Emerging from the embers of the Anti-Discrimination Students Movement (ADSM)—the very force that toppled former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on August 5, 2024, the NCP represents both hope and uncertainty

he National Citizens Party (NCP) or Jatiya Nagorik Party (NJP) in Bengali, was born in Bangladesh on February 28, 2025. It is a progeny of the student leaders who spearheaded the Anti-Discrimination Students Movement (ADSM) that ousted former prime minister Sheikh Hasina from power on August 5, 2024, and the National Citizens Committee (NCP) or the Jatiya Nagorik Committee (JNC), that emerged from the same political cradle on September 8, 2024.

The country was pregnant with it for almost seven months. A report by Reuters, datelined August 16, 2024, and issued under the heading 'Student protesters plan new party to cement their revolution, quoted Mahfuz Alam, who then chaired a committee charged with liaising between the interim government, which had assumed office on August 8, and groups like teachers and activists, that the decision to form such a party would be known in about a month. It further quoted Alam, who had been a key leader of the ADSM and is now an adviser to the interim government, as saying, "People are tired of the two political parties (obviously the Awami League and the Bangladesh Nationalist Party). They trust in

According to the report, Nahid Islam, another of ADSM's important leaders, who resigned as an adviser on February 25 and is now the convener and leader of the NCP, said that the spirit of the students' movement was to build a new Bangladesh where no fascist or autocrat could return. He had added, 'To achieve that, we need structural reforms, which will undoubtedly require some time.' Nahid further stated that the government was not heeding calls by the Awami League and BNP to hold new elections as early as the fall (of 2024). Another Reuters' report by Ruma Paul, Krishn Kaushik, Devjyot Ghoshal and Krishna N Das, carried under the headline "Insight: Bangladesh student protestors eye new party to cement their revolution" and datelined August 16, 2024, however, cited Alam as having said on Facebook that his statement to Reuters "had come out wrong" and that "We are not thinking about political organisations right now."

The main focus was to maintain the spirit of the mass uprising and to consolidate the government. Others also expressed the

Statements, denials and volte faces-nothing new in politics-often reflect tensions and conflicts kept under wraps. Was Alam under pressure to retract or deny his statement? One does not know. There, however, have been indications of differences among both leaders-called coordinators-and rank-and-file of the Students Against Discrimination (SAD), the moniker given to even in the heady immediate aftermath of the formation of the interim government led by Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus.

Thus, a report in The Daily Star, datelined August 16, 2024, stated that a coordinator and four assistant coordinators of Chittagong University's ADSM had resigned from their posts, alleging that the central coordinators took unilateral decisions and ignored their demands. According to another report in the Daily Star datelined January 3, 2025, eight persons were injured in Khulna town in a clash among ADSM supporters.

There have been several reports of internal conflicts and tensions. According to a report in Prothom Alo English, adherents of the ADSM blocked the Dhaka-Aricha highway for an hour on February 24, 2025, demanding the dissolution of the organisation's new district committee announced earlier in the month. Not surprisingly, though a consensus was subsequently achieved, there have been reports of arguments and tensions over the naming of the NCP's office-bearers and members of the central convening



Wrangling and power struggles seem programmed into the genes of all political parties. In the case of the NCP, however, factional fissures are accompanied by the presence of incompatible ideologies.

The NJP includes alumni of the Shibir, Jatiotabadi Chhatradal (Bangladesh Nationalist Students Party) affiliated with the BNP, several students' organisations of both leftist and fundamentalist Islamist outfits and those without any political involvement prior to joining the ADSM. They seem to be sticking together because they feel that the future belongs to the new party. What would happen when the latter loses its sheen with time? igns of trouble are already manifest.

Questions have been asked as to how the enormous amounts of funds needed to mobilise for the gargantuan rally that marked the NCP's formation were found. According to a report in The Daily Star datelined March 2, 2025, the Pirojpur district administration had requisit eral privately owned buses to facilitate local students joining the NJP's inaugural rally on

It was a partisan act and a grim pointer of this becoming a regular factor if the NJP comes to power.Besides, the declaration of the party's vision for Bangladesh raises questions. It talks of a "cruel fascist" regime-obviously referring to Sheikh Hasina's-ruling for 15 years, destroying state institutions and democracy, and making all-encompassing corruption and money laundering a part of state culture.

A lot of what it says-relief to marginalised and disadvantaged communities, the protection of fundamental rights, preserving ethnic, social, gender, and cultural diversity, and ensuring strong safeguards against poverty, inequality, and abuse of power-is unexcep-

One, however, wishes that it said more about the 'Second Republic,' which, and the enactment of a new constitution, are the party's overarching goals. Also, one wonders as to how seriously are pronouncements to

HIRANMAY **KARLEKAR**

because it says that the party is committed to a culture where justice replaces vengeance. It is liable to make the dead rise up laughing given the interim government's relentless and savage persecution of Awami League leaders and supporters, conducted in blatant disregard of all

be taken, particularly

juridical fairness.

Will the NCP come to power following the next parliamentary elections? It might have enjoyed a sweeping victory if an election had been held immediately after Sheikh Hasina's ouster, when its popularity was at its peak.

Since then, issues like a steep decline in the law-and-order situation, runaway inflaeconomic inetability has eroding the public's confidence in the interim government. Given the latter's links with the founders of the new party, they too have started attracting a measure of cynicism, which is bound to be transferred to the NCP.

The latter will also meet growing challenges from parties like the BNP, which had their backs to the wall during Sheikh Hasina's second innings as prime minister but are now flexing their political muscles.

Further, the NCP lacks a nationwide, grassroots-level political infrastructure and a leader with charisma and gravitas. Its leaders' demands for not holding parliamentary elections until the reforms are completed and Sheikh Hasina is on the gallows are obviously ploys to gain time to build up its organisation. Time, however, takes its own toll even on the most resplendent of shrines. It cannot be otherwise with the NCP. Its leaders will do well to remember the saying, "Sic transit gloria mundi," which literally translates as "thus passes the glory of the world" but is generally meant to convey that earth-

Bangaldesh: A backgrounder

A 17-member interim government, led by Nobel laureate Professor Muhammad Yunus as its chief advisor, took charge in Bangladesh on August 8, following the ouster of Sheikh Hasina. Hasina resigned as prime minister on August 5, following weeks of deadly student-led protests. Her ouster was followed by a chaos in Muslim-majority country of over 170 million people and it reverberated in neighbouring India.

Sheikh Hasina's departure from Dhaka to neighbouring India resulted from months of growing anger in Bangladesh. After the January 2024 general election, perceived as flawed, critics accused Hasina's government of becoming increasingly arrogant and serving its minions.

The turning point came in June 2024, when Bangladesh's High Court re-instated a quota reserving 30 per cent of government jobs for relatives of veterans from Bangladesh's 1971 war of independence. to elevated graduate unemployment, students protested the quota, which they also viewed as favouring supporters of Hasina's Awami League party.

The Supreme Court eventually reduced the quota in late July to 5 per cent. The reversal was too little, too late. Violence between the protestors and the police increased, further fuelled by Hasina's refusal to release detained student leaders.

The protesters, viewing Hasina as responsible for the deaths of some 600 people killed in the clashes with the police, began seeking her overthrow.

To control the protests, Hasina announced a curfew, repeatedly shut down internet and jailed over 11,000 protesters. The army eventually withdrew its support after refusing Hasina's order to open fire on civilians to enforce the curfew. On August 5, 2024, with a large number of angry protestors heading to her official residence, Hasina resigned and fled to India.

(The author is Consulting Editor, The Pioneer. The views expressed are personal)

Breaking Free from Cloth Clutter

n today's fast-paced and consumer-driven society, the accumulation of clothing has become a significant issue, leading to what is commonly referred to as cloth clutter. The ease of online shopping, the rise of fast fashion, and the influence of social media have all contributed to an excessive and often unnecessary collection of garments.

Unlike previous generations who have always valued durability and longevity in clothing, today's generation - the Gen Alpha born between 2010 and 2025, is caught in a cycle of overconsumption, leading to cluttered wardrobes, financial waste and severe environmental conse-

Cloth clutter or fashion hoarding refers to the excessive accumulation of clothing, often resulting in disorganised spaces filled with unused or rarely worn garments. With trends changing rapidly, many individuals feel pressured to keep up with fashion, leading to impulsive purchases contributing to a growing pile of clothes.

Unlike past generations who owned fewer but high-quality garments, today's generation is surrounded by cheap, trendy options that encourage frequent buying. Moreover, the convenience of online shopping, where clothes are just a click away, has made it even easier to accumulate unnecessary clothing. The result is overcrowded closets, confusion in outfit choices, and a constant feeling of having nothing to wear despite an overflowing wardrobe. There is no denying that the fast fashion industry thrives on quick production cycles, offering new styles almost every week at an

This rapid turnover has created a sense of urgency among consumers to buy more before trends change, leading to excessive clothing accumulation. Above all, online shopping platforms such as Amazon, Myntra, Meesho and many more offer constant discounts such as buy-one-get-one deals, and fast delivery, making it incredibly tempting to buy clothes even when they are not needed. Subscription-based shopping models and exclusive online sales have also encouraged unnecessary purchases, filling wardrobes with items that may never be worn.

Today, with the increased stress, boredom or emotions imbibed among many individuals, the concept of mindless shopping is being used, leading to impulsive buying decisions. This has resulted in wardrobes filled with clothes that were purchased out of momentary excitement but have

Various studies and research have shown that a cluttered environment negatively affects mental wellbeing, making it harder to focus and feel at ease. Today, the textile industry is one of the largest contributors to pollution.

Overproduction of clothing has led to increased carbon emissions, water consumption and waste. Many discarded clothes end up in landfills, as most fast fashion items are made from synthetic fabrics that take decades to decompose. Constantly buying new clothes without fully utilising existing ones results in unnecessary expenses.

As a result, many individuals end up spending large amounts on fashion while struggling to save money for essential needs. Adopting a minimalist approach to fashion will encourage owning fewer but high-quality, versatile pieces that can be mixed and matched.

significantly reduce the impact of fashion waste.

This will not only reduce the clutter but also promote mindful consumption. Choosing sustainable brands, buying second-hand clothes, and donating unused garments can

Supporting ethical fashion brands that prioritise durability over trends can help break the cycle of overconsumption. Donating, selling, or repurposing clothes instead of hoarding them can also free up space and prevent unnecessary purchases.

Asking questions like "Do I need this?" or "Will I wear this at least 20 times?" before making a purchase can help in avoiding impulsive buying. Cloth clutter is a growing problem among today's generation, fuelled by fast fashion, digital influence, social media influencers and impulsive shopping habits.

While the allure of trendy and affordable fashion is strong, it comes at a high cost—both personally and environmentally. By embracing mindful consumption, adopting sustainable fashion choices, and prioritising quality over quantity, individuals can break free from the cycle of cloth g to a more organised, stress-free, and eco-cons There are various reasons for it.

Cloth clutter can arise from various factors, such as: Buying more clothes than needed, holding onto clothes that no longer fit or are out of style and above all reluctance to ward off the old clothes.

It may look innocuous but cluttering can have a negative impact on your well being and mental state. It also has practical issues arising from the problem of plenty.

One can have reduced storage space and difficulty accessing clothing and one can experience the a sense of being overwhelmed and disorganised. It often leads to stress and anxiety which can impact your overall wellbeing. But there is solution to it. To combat cloth clutter, you may start declutter your wardrobe regularly and get rid of the items you no longer wear or need.

Besides, organising your clothing storage, using bins, shelves, and drawers effectively declutters your storage space.

One of the easiest way to declutter is to avoid mindless purchasing and buying only what you need and love. Indeed it is not a big problem or something which cannot be dealt with but it must be acknowledged and taken into stride.

It is a lifestyle problem arising from our inability to be mindful of our actions. And don't forget there are people who need your clothes so why not give it to people who need them and experience the feeling of gratitude

Let your wardrobe smile!

(The writer is an educator; views are personal)

A trade deal between India and the US remains a strong possibility

¬he strategic partnership and geopolitical compulsions of both India and the United States could significantly contribute to clinching a long-awaited trade deal, laying the foundation for future cooperation. While President Donald Trump has positioned himself ideologically closer to Xi Jinping, Vladimir Putin and Kim Jong Un-thus isolating European nations-his administration saw the need to counter China's growing influence in the Asia-Pacific, making India a crucial ally.

US Demands and India's Position

US Commerce Secretary, Howard Lutnick has stressed the necessity of India opening its agriculture market, asserting that this sector could not be "off the table" in trade negotiations. He advocates a broad, macro-level trade pact rather than product-specific agreements, arguing that aligning India's tariff policies with the US would be more beneficial for both nations.

Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal recently concluded productive trade discussions in Washington with US counterparts, including Trade Representative Jamieson Greer and Secretary Lutnick. The talks hold significance as both nations move towards negotiating a bilateral trade deal. During Prime Minister Modi's recent US visit, India and America committed to doubling bilateral trade to \$500 billion by 2030, targeting the completion of the first phase of a trade pact by fall 2025.

In 2023, US-India trade in goods and services reached \$190.08 billion, with India enjoying a \$43.65 billion trade surplus. Trump, echoing Lutnick's optimism, emphasised that a trade deal is within reach, underlining its strategic importance.

The Indian Diaspora's Growing Influence

Reports suggest that the Indian diaspora in the US has emerged as a significant economic and political force, subtly shaping US-India trade policies. Indian-Americans, one of the most prosperous and educated ethnic groups in the US, have wielded considerable influence in strengthening bilateral ties. In a shift, a notable portion of the Indian diaspora supported Trump in the November elections, affecting the political calculus. As of 2021, the average household income for Indian-Americans was \$123,700-surpassing all other ethnic groups.
Between 1995 and 2005, they founded more tech-

nology and engineering companies than immigrants from the UK, China, Taiwan, and Japan combined, contributing significantly to innovation and job creation.

The Indian-American population has grown from 2.3 million in 2005 to approximately 4.4 million by 2023, making them the second-largest immigrant group in the US. Their increasing economic and political clout has played a pivotal role in strengthening US-India relations, including current on-going

trade deal dialogue.

TOMAR

Trump's Foreign Policy and Its Impact on India Trump's foreign policy has been defined by an "America First" approach, often at the cost of traditional alliances. His controversial actions-isolating European allies, supporting Russia in the UN by refusing to name it as an aggressor, and potentially attempting to pull Russia

away from China-signal a major shift in global geopolitics. These moves could have far-reaching consequences, impacting not just Europe and Asia but also India's strategic positioning.

If Trump successfully distances Russia from China, India stands to benefit. Moscow has historically been a key defense and energy partner for New Delhi. Europe's Strategic Shift

under Trump Trump's presidency has been marked by tensions with European allies over defense spending, trade policies, and multilateral agreements like the Paris Climate Accord. His criticism of NATO and demands for Europe to shoulder more security costs have strained US-Europe ties

Trump's questioning of NATO's Article 5 (the

mutual defense clause) could leave Eastern European ing any reference to Russia's invasion. nations vulnerable. Europe might be forced to increase defense spending and coordination, but a lack of American support would weaken the alliance's deterrence against Moscow.

Indo-Pacific Security Dynamics

In the Indo-Pacific, key US allies like Japan, South Korea, and Australia rely on Washington to counterbalance China. If Trump reduces support for alliances like AUKUS and Quad, these nations may strengthen security ties with India and European powers like France and the UK. Trump's retreat from alliances could create a vacuum that China might exploit. Beijing has been expanding its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), offering economic and military incentives to countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. If US allies feel abandoned, China might step in, further eroding American influence.

Trump's Alignment with Russia

On the third anniversary of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, US support for Moscow at the UN exposed a growing rift with European allies. Washington sided with Russia, North Korea, and Belarus in opposing a Europe-backed resolution condemning Moscow. The motion still passed 93-8, with 73 abstentions, including China. Furthering this shift, the US pushed a UN Security Council resolution calling for an end to the war-conspicuously avoid-

Trump's alignment with Moscow signals a potential unravelling of America's transatlantic security commitments. His pivot to Russia, ostensibly to end the war, side-lines Kyiv and Brussels, making lasting peace unlikely, though pressure tactics may yield results. Meanwhile, China sees a strategic advantage in this shift, hoping to mend its strained ties with Europe and Washington as the global order tilts towards an authoritarian axis.

The Future of India-US Trade Relations

While Trump may attempt to realign US-Russia relations, Russia's deep economic and strategic ties with China make a complete pivot unlikely. However, his policies could still reshape global trade and security dynamics in ways that affect India. A trade deal between India and the US remains a strong possibility, driven by economic and geopolitical

The Indian government will need to carefully navigate these complexities to safeguard its trade interests while ensuring strategic autonomy. As the global power balance shifts, India's ability to leverage its relationships with the US, Russia and China will determine its long-term geopolitical and econom-

(The writer is a political analyst; views are personal)



Security situation worsening in J and K: Congress state chief

he Congress' Jammu and Kashmir chief Tariq Hameed Karra on Sunday accused the Centre and the lieutenant governor-led administration of being clueless over the "deteriorating security situation" in Kathua dis-

Addressing party workers in Samba district as part of the Congress' ongoing campaign for statehood restoration, Karra said the "shocking incidents" in Kathua's Billawar-Bani belt, in the backdrop of terror incidents in the recent past, exposed the false claims of normality

"Such is the state of affairs that the (central) government is clueless about the recent deaths of five persons -- three on Saturday and two on February 16 -- under mysterious circumstances while the administra-

tion is behaving in a biased manner instead of seeking cooperation to deal with the situation," he said.

Questioning the lieutenant governor-led administration's "inept handling" of the situation, Karra said senior Congress leaders Choudhary Lal Singh and Manohar Lal Sharma, who were heading separate teams, were not allowed to visit Billawar to meet the victims' families.

On the contrary, BJP MLAs and leaders were allowed to go, he alleged.

The bodies of 15-year-old Varun Singh, his paternal uncle Yogesh Singh (32) and maternal uncle Darshan Singh (40) were found from the Ishu nullah in the remote Malhar area in the higher reaches of Kathua on Saturday. They had gone missing on March 5 while attending a wedding

On February 16, the bodies of Shamsher

(37) and Roshan (45) were found at Kohag village in Billawar, with their post-mortem revealing that they were strangulated.

Karra also slammed the alleged attempt to assault Bani MLA Rameshwar Singh and said, "It is unfortunate that a public representative was treated like this while performing his duty towards the people.

Earlier, a two minutes' silence was observed to mourn the three people whose bodies were recovered on Saturday.

Karra asked the BJP to explain its position over the delay in statehood restoration despite repeated promises by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah.

'Most unfortunate is the complete silence of BJP MLAs over the restoration of statehood, which is a basic right and a question of identity and status of all people of Jammu and Kashmir," he said.

Four held for duping man ₹44.50 Lakh

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

elhi Police has arrested four cyber fraudsters for allegedly duping a man of Rs 44.50 Lakh under the guise of 'digital arrest' by posing as CBI officers, officials said on Sunday.

The scam came to light when the victim, Virender Kumar Indora, a resident of Mayur Vihar Phase-1, lodged a police complaint on

'In his complaint, Indora said he received a call from a man posing as a CBI officer, falsely accusing him of involvement in criminal activities. Threatening legal action, the fraudsters coerced him to transfer Rs 44.50 Lakh to avoid arrest," Deputy Commissioner of Police (East), Abhishek Dhania, said in a

Digital arrest is a cybercrime wherein scammers pose as law enforcement officers to falsely accuse people of breaking the law and force them into paying money or disclos-

ing personal information. During probe, a forensic audit of bank accounts revealed that Rs 38 Lakh was transferred to a private bank in the name of Dinesh Singadhiya, a resident of Jaipur. The funds were subsequently withdrawn via cheque from the bank, the

Acting on the inputs, a police team conducted a raid in Jaipur on March 5, leading to the arrest of Dinesh Singadhiya. During interrogation, Singadhiya disclosed the involvement of five other people in the scam. Based on his disclosures, Prashant Verma, who helped set up the fraudulent bank account, was arrested.

Further investigation led to the arrest of Prakash Choudhary, a key player linked to Mahesh Nehra, the mastermind behind the operation who allegedly maintained direct contact with international cybercriminals, the

Choudhary assisted Nehra in laundering the scammed funds by communicating with

mule account providers through social media. On Saturday, police arrested a person named Gajender Kumar from his rented accommodation at Kuchaman City in Rajasthan for assisting Singadhiya in withdrawing Rs 38 Lakh from the bank. Police also recovered four mobile phones used for coordinating the gang's illegal activities.

The probe revealed that the arrested persons were in touch with international scammers who orchestrated similar frauds across India, the DCP said in the statement. Their primary role was to facilitate the transfer of the defrauded funds through bank withdrawals using cheques and ATMs before passing them on to their foreign handlers.

The officer said Dinesh Singadhiya (26) was a DJ helper and daily wage worker from Jaipur. Prashant Verma (24) also from Jaipur, worked as a DJ, while Prakash Choudhary (21) was a college dropout from the same city. Gajender Kumar was a BSc graduate preparing for government exams, the officer said.

Punjab's anti-drugs campaign: 875 FIRs registered in 12 days

PTI ■ Chandigarh

◄he Punjab government has registered 875 FIRs and arrested 1,188 drug traffickers in the last 12 days as part of a special campaign, Minister Harpal Singh Cheema said on Sunday.

The 'Yudh Nashian Virudh' (war against drugs) campaign was launched on February 25 and has yielded "extraordinary results", the minister asserted.

Cheema, who is the state's finance minister and chairman of the anti-drug campaign cabinet sub-committee, underscored the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government's commitment to eradicating drugs from

According to the minister, 875 FIRs have been registered, 1,188 drug traffickers arrested, Rs 35 lakh in drug money seized and narcotics, including 68 kg of heroin, 873 kg of poppy husk, 42 kg of opium and over 6.74 lakh intoxicating tablets confiscated, till March 8.

"Additionally, a widespread awareness campaign is actively mobilising citizens to contribute towards building a drug-free and prosperous Punjab," he was quoted as saying in a statement.

Cheema criticised the previous governments led by the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD)-BJP alliance and the Congress for 'creating and fostering the drug epidemic in Punjab". He accused these parties of pushing Punjab's youth into drugs "as part of a deliberate strategy".

"Before 2007, Punjab had never heard of synthetic drugs like heroin or 'chitta.' It was during the SAD-BJP regime that these drugs entered Punjab and destroyed our

"Instead of providing jobs and opportunities, they designed a system to trap Punjab's young generation into addiction," Cheema alleged

Taking on the previous Congress government, he said, "Captain Amarinder Singh (former Congress leader who is now with the BJP) took a false oath in 2017, promising to eradicate drugs within four weeks. "Instead, his (Congress) government

deepened ties with drug peddlers. Even during the COVID-19 lockdown, while basic necessities were inaccessible, drug trafficking flourished under the Congress rule. This is why the people of Punjab rejected them in 2022 (assembly polls)," he

Cheema emphasised that the "AAP's historic mandate in 2022 was a rejection of the SAD-BJP and the Congress' corrupt and anti-people policies". "Since assuming office, Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann's government has prioritised modernising the police force and strengthening law enforcement systems to ensure justice," he said. Cheema highlighted the "stark" differences in conviction rates under the NDPS Act, emphasising the efficiency of the AAP government. He said that while the conviction rate under AAP's tenure stands at an impressive 86 per cent, it was significantly lower during the Congress regime at 58 per cent and even worse under the SAD-BJP government at just 40 per

Cheema also pointed out that some districts have achieved conviction rates exceeding 90 per cent, such as Sangrur at 93 percent, Nawanshahr at 99 per cent, and Ropar at 95 per cent.

Under the SAD-BJP government, drug traffickers often escaped punishment due to delayed charge sheets," he added.

The government has also undertaken several proactive measures to tackle the drug crisis, he said.

Over 1,028 meetings have been conducted with students in universities and colleges to raise awareness. Additionally, village outreach programmes have been rapidly expanded, including the formation of defense committees composed of retired officers and teachers to address drug-related issues locally.

"In a bold move, the government has also taken action against drug peddlers by demolishing the homes of 22 major drug dealers," he said. Cheema assured that the war against drugs" will not stop until every drug trafficker is either in jail or driven out

Brick kiln labourer suspected of stealing goats lynched in Jharkhand's Latehar

40-year-old labourer from Madhya Pradesh suspected of stealing goats was lynched allegedly by a group of people in Jharkhand's Latehar district, a police officer said on Sunday.

The incident happened at Goa village under the jurisdiction of Sadar police station around 11 pm on Saturday, he

The deceased, identified as Salim Khan, was a resident of Datia district in Madhya Pradesh.

He has been working as a labourer at a brick kiln for the past three months, the officer-in-charge of Sadar police station, Dular Chowde, said.

The police reached the spot after getting information about the incident and rescued the labourer from the clutches of the people who were beating him, Chowde said.

"Khan was taken to Latehar Sadar Hospital where the doctors declared him dead on arrival," he said.

interrogation in connection to the case, the police officer said. A section of villagers alleged that Khan broke into some houses to steal

Six people have been detained for

goats on Saturday night. Khan's younger brother Jamil Khan told police that his elder brother had gone to the Goa village to consume

The villagers then accused him of being a goat thief and started beating

Police team formed to investigate Kathua killings

PTI Jammu

team has been formed to probe the death of three persons whose bodles were found near a waterfall in a remote forested area in Jammu and Kashmir's Kathua district, a senior police officer said on Sunday.

Deputy Inspector General of Police, Jammu-Kathua-Samba Range, Shiv Kumar said all aspects of the case will be looked into and the results of the investigation will be shared with the public soon.

The bodies of Varun Singh (15), his pateruncle Darshan Singh (40) were found from the Ishu nullah in the remote Malhar area in the higher reaches of Kathua on Saturday. The trio had gone missing on March 5 during a wedding function.

Accompanied by Senior Superintendent of Police, Kathua, Shobit Saxena and Additional Deputy Commissioner Vinay Khosla, the DIG met the protesting locals of Malhar, Malad, Marhoon, Deota and adjoining areas in Billawar, and assured them that the security arrangements will further be strengthened.

"A team has been constituted for the investigation of the case, while the Village Defence Guards (VDGs) will be strength ened to make people feel secure. Those willing to be part of the security grid will be given training," Kumar told reporters in

He said several police and Special Operations Group (SOG) personnel are ready on the ground to secure the area, along with Army and paramilitary forces.

"The teams are working on every aspect of the case and keeping a close watch (on the situation). We are hopeful that the results officer said.

He said what exactly happened is a matter of investigation and as the probe progresses, information will be shared accordingly. Meanwhile, the postmortem of the deceased was conducted by a specially-constituted doctors' team at a Kathua hospital and the bodies were handed over to their families for the last rites

The bodies reached the homes of the deceased late on Sunday evening and the cremation will take place on Monday, officials

SAD warns party leaders against breaching discipline orchestrating the jathedars' removal at the

PTI ■ Chandigarh

¬he SAD on Sunday warned against breaching party discipline, a day after senior Akali leader Bikram Singh Majithia and a few others strongly condemned the dismissals of the jathedars of the Akal Takht and the Takht Sri Kesgarh Sahib. Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) working

president Balwinder Singh Bhundar took serious note of statements and videos issued by some leaders against the decisions of the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) and the Maiithia and a few other leaders had on

Saturday strongly condemned the disthe Akal Takht and the Takht Sri Kesgarh Sahib, hinting at a rift in the SAD. Their joint statement had drawn a

accused Majithia of "back-stabbing" party leader Sukhbir Singh Badal. Majithia was the first senior SAD leader to question the SGPC's decision to remove Giani Raghbir Singh from the post of Akal

strong reaction from Bhundar, who

Takht jathedar and Giani Sultan Singh as jathedar of the Takht Sri Kesgarh Sahib. The reaction assumed significance amid behest of a section of SAD leaders, led by "This issue was discussed in the meeting of the party's parliamentary board in

Chandigarh on Sunday," according to a statement issued by SAD. The meeting was attended by senior SAD leaders Gulzar Singh Ranike, Janmeja

Singh Cheema. Bhundar said indiscipline would not be

Everyone is free to express their views at the party forum but no one is allowed

party's disciplinary committee and showcause notices will be issued to all. Action will be taken on merit after consideration of their replies."

leader Harsimrat Kaur Badal, who is married to Badal.

In a related development, former SGPC chief and rebel SAD leader Bibi Jagir Kaur on Sunday dubbed the two jathedars' dismissals as a move to "torpedo" the December 2 "hukamnama (edict)" prorebel party leaders accusing the SGPC of nounced from the Akal Takht.

who inaugurated the valedictory session,

said the recently concluded state confer-

ence in Kollam would mark a milestone

in the party's struggle to defend the rights

of the people of Kerala and establish an

alternative path for the state's development.

ernment, under the leadership of Pinarayi

Vijayan, has pioneered and pursued var-

ious alternative policies and measures for

the welfare of different sections of the peo-

ple and has sought to outline an alterna-

ond term, has come under attack from the

Modi-led Union government, which, he

alleged, is attempting to "financially crip-

ple Kerala to prevent it from implement-

ing its policies and fulfilling its promises

ple of such a totally partisan and cruel

approach by the central government

toward the people of a state. Even for

Wayanad's disaster relief programmes, the

Centre has refused to provide any finan-

cial aid. This is the extent of hostility and

discrimination that the BJP government at

the Centre is imposing on Kerala," Karat

parties, Congress and the UDF, to stand

up in defence of the interests of the peo-

ple of Kerala and to oppose all anti-demo-

cratic and authoritarian attacks on the

been happening. On the contrary, the

Congress and the UDF have been joining

hands with the BJP," Karat said.

The government, now in its sec-

You will not find another exam-

He urged the major opposition

That, however, is not what has

tive path for development.

to the people."

Karat added that in Kerala, the LDF gov-

Removing Giani Raghbir Singh from the post of Akal Takht jathedar on Friday, the SGPC had said his leadership was deemed "inadequate in guiding the 'panth (Sikh community)" in the face of growing challenges and that his "inconsistent approach weakened 'panthic' unity".

While pronouncing religious punishment for Badal and other leaders for "mistakes" committed by the SAD and its government in Punjab from 2007 to 2017, the Akal Takht had also directed the party's working committee to accept his resignation as party chief.

Giani Raghbir Singh, Giani Sultan Singh and Giani Harpreet Singh were part of the five Singh Sahibans (Sikh clergy)

who had pronounced the edict. from his post of Takht Sri Damdama Sahib

jathedar on February 10.

Reacting to the development, Kaur told reporters, "The December 2 'hukamnama' was to bring the entire 'quam (Sikh community)' on one platform and strengthen the SAD, the SGPC... First Giani Harpreet Singh, now Giani Raghbir Singh and Giani Sultan Singh have been removed without any reason, only to torpedo the 'hukamnama'. We strongly con-

demn and oppose it." She was also asked to comment on the

statement of Majithia and some other leaders and Bhundar's accusation that he had "back-stabbed" Badal and the party.

Kaur said Majithia would be better suited to provide an answer and added, "Anyone who talks about the 'quam' is treated as having stabbed the party in the

A majority of members of the SGPC's general house belong to the SAD.

Giani Harpreet Singh has already condemned the two jathedars' dismissals, calling it a "black day" for the Sikh commu-

On Sunday, he described the method used to remove the two jathedars as unfortunate.

"And the reason was the December 2 revive the Akali Dal, not damage it.. Whatever happened (jathedars' removal) is unfortunate," he said.

Asked to comment on the joint statement by Majithia and some others, Giani Harpreet Singh said everyone who understood the Akal Takht's dignity were sad.

...When we strengthen our institutions, only then can we become strong," he said. Several politicians have also criticised the SGPC's move, saying some leaders had 'openly challenged" the Akal Takht for "political interest".

Rahul Gandhi's mochi steps into global shoes

ntinued from >> P1

"While the Modi government struggles to generate employment, Rahul has demonstrated how empowering local entrepreneurs can create opportunities," said Amarnath Agarwal, a Congress

leader in Lucknow. For Ramchet, the dream is no longer just about survival. With his brand taking shape, he envisions a future where local artisans are recognized for their craftsmanship. He hopes his journey will inspire others to believe in their skills, embrace innovation, and strive for greater success, proving that small businesses can flourish with the right support and vision.

Terror continues unabated in Jammu

He added that a clear picture will emerge once the postmortem report comes. The Congress demanded a high-level investigation to clear the apprehensions of locals and overcome the current situation of "great fear" and sense of insecurity in the entire belt.

Speaking to The Pioneer over telephone local BJP MLA Satish Sharma said police is also investigating the role of any OGW who may have leaked information about the marriage of an army jawan in the remote area after which the terrorists targeted them to incite tensions in the otherwise peaceful area of Billawar.

Kerala has become most investmentfriendly state in country: CM Vijayan

hief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Sunday outlined the ruling CPI(M)'s policies on attracting investments, stating that the party's vision has made Kerala the most investmentfriendly state in the country.

Addressing a public meeting as part of the four-day CPI(M) state conference, Vijayan emphasised the need for resource mobilisation to drive Kerala's progress.

'Some are spreading propaganda that the CPI(M) is planning something detrimental to the state," he said. Clarifying the party's stance, he stated,

We welcome any capital that does not harm the interests of the country. However, we will not accept investments with conditions that are harmful to our interests. Kerala should attract such investments."

He claimed that Kerala has emerged as the number one state in investmentfriendliness, a fact acknowledged across the

"As part of this, various companies are bringing investments to our state, as witnessed at the recently held Invest Kerala Global Summit. In the first phase alone, over Rs 1.5 lakh crore was invested, and now the total investment has exceeded Rs 1.75 lakh crore. This signifies a shift. If managed effectively, this transformation will have a large-scale impact across various sectors, significantly contributing to the state's development.'

Highlighting job creation, the CM said that large investments would generate employment opportunities and that steps are being taken to enhance the skill levels of Kerala's youth pursuing higher educa-

They have put in place systems to equip Polit Bureau coordinator Prakash Karat, students with the necessary skills, ensuring they are prepared to enter the workforce. The LDF envisions a Kerala where youth are not merely waiting for jobs but are acquiring skills to actively participate in the economy," he said.

Vijayan stressed that investment is essential for the country's development and that Kerala offers a favourable environment for investors. The success of the investment summit

is proof of this. We must explore how idle investments can be effectively utilised for the state's benefit," he added. Taking a swipe at the Centre, Vijayan accused the BJP-led Union government of

adopting an "anti-Kerala stance." 'This attitude stems from the BJP's perception that Kerala is alien to them. Since Kerala has consistently rejected the BJP, they are disappointed. But does that justify treating the state and its people as adversaries... Unfortunately, that is the

stance they have taken," he claimed. Vijayan accused the Congress-led UDF of justifying the Centre's stance on various issues, except for the Wayanad landslide rehabilitation.

'We have faced multiple disasters, yet the Centre has denied assistance. The opposition has remained silent and has not raised its voice against this injustice," he claimed. The chief minister also criticised the

media, claiming, that Kerala has been "con-

sistently deprived of central aid, but the

media has failed to expose this openly.' The media is unwilling to criticise and call out this neglect," he added. Presenting the party's stance, CPI(M) Singh Sekhon, Mahesh Inder Singh Grewal, Heera Singh Gabhria and Daljit

tolerated at any cost.

to breach its discipline, he warned. He said, "All such anti-party statements

Majithia is the brother of senior SAD

ITLF said, "Yesterday, the Government of India's decision to allow the movement of Meiteis through Kuki-Zo areas led to agitation and protest in Kangpokpi... The security forces used

excessive force on the protesters." Endorsing the indefinite shutdown called in all Kuki-Zo areas, ITLF asked everyone to "adhere to the shutdown in solidarity"

'We respect everyone who came out

to protest yesterday," the ITLF said. Manipur Police, in a statement, said 27 security personnel were injured in the attacks by the Kuki protesters who pelted them with stones, and barricaded roads by putting up huge boulders, setting tyres on fire and felling trees.

Amid the protests, there were incidents of firing from amongst the protesters towards the security forces, to which the security forces retaliated," the statement said. "Due to heavy pelting of stones, use of catapults and random firing by

armed miscreants from amongst the protesters, 27 security forces personnel suffered injuries, including two critical injuries," it said. The security forces showed tremendous restraint while trying to control

the unruly and violent mob and used minimum force to control and counter the anti-social elements. During the skirmish, 16 protesters were reportedly injured and one protester succumbed to injuries," it said.

According to the police, it all started when a Manipur State Transport bus plied along the Imphal-Kangpokpi-Senapati route, a mob started pelting the vehicle with stones at Gamgiphai in Kangpokpi district prompting security forces to use tear gas and minimum

Manipur far cry from normal

mission

force to disperse the crowd The protest was also directed against a peace march by the Federation of Civil Society (FOCS), a Meitei organisation. The procession, involving over 10 vehicles, was halted by security forces at Sekmai before it could reach Kangpokpi district. Police claimed that the procession was stopped as those taking it out did not have requisite per-

Shah had on March 1 directed security forces to ensure free movement of people on all routes in Manipur from March 8 and also called for strict action against those creating obstructions.

The order bore significance as unhindered travel throughout the state has remained affected since ethnic violence broke out between the two communities in May 2023. The violence left over 250 people killed and thousands homeless since then.

The Centre had imposed President's rule in Manipur on February 13, days after Chief Minister N Biren Singh resigned from his post leading to political uncertainty in the northeast-

The Manipur Assembly, which has a tenure till 2027, has been put under suspended animation, according to a notification issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs.

Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla had on February 20 urged the people of the state to voluntarily surrender looted and illegally held weapons within seven days, assuring no punitive action would be initiated against those giving up arms during this period. He later extended the deadline till 4 pm on March 6, following demands by people from both hill and valley areas for addi-





Russian forces walk inside gas pipeline to strike Ukrainian troops from rear

ussian special forces walked inside Ragas pipeline to strike Ukrainian units from the rear in the Kursk region, Ukraine's military and Russian war bloggers reported, as Moscow moves to recapture parts of its border province that Kyiv seized in a shock offensive.

Ukraine launched in August a daring cross-border incursion into Kursk, in what marked the largest attack on Russian territory since World War II. Within days, Ukrainian units had captured 1,000 square kilometers (386 square miles) of territory, including the strategic border town of Sudzha, and taken hundreds of Russian prisoners of war.

According to Kyiv, the operation aimed to gain a bargaining chip in future peace ern Ükraine.

But months after Ukraine's thunder run, its soldiers in Kursk are weary and bloodied by relentless assaults of more than 50,000 troops, including some from Russia's ally North Korea. Tens of thousands of Ukrainian soldiers run the risk of being encircled, open source maps of the battlefield show.

According to Telegram posts by a Ukrainian-born, pro-Kremlin blogger, Russian operatives walked about 15 kilometers (9 miles) inside the pipeline, which Moscow had until recently used to send gas

Some Russian troops had spent several days in the pipe before striking Ukrainian units from the rear near the town of Sudzha, blogger Yuri Podolyaka claimed. The town had some 5,000 resi-

invasion of Ukraine, and houses major gas transfer and measuring stations along the pipeline, once a major outlet for Russian natural gas exports through Ukrainian territory. Another war blogger, who uses the alias Two Majors, said fierce fighting was underway for Sudzha, and that Russian forces managed to enter the town through a gas pipeline.

Russian Telegram channels showed photos of what they said were special forces operatives, wearing gas masks and moving along what looked like the inside of a large pipe. Ukraine's General Staff confirmed on Saturday evening that Russian "sabotage and assault groups" used the pipeline in a bid to gain a foothold outside Sudzha. In a Telegram post, it said Russian troops were "detected in a timely manner" and that Ukraine responded with rockets

"At present, Russian special forces are being detected, blocked and destroyed. The enemy's losses in Sudzha are very high," the General Staff reported. The Associated Press could not independently verify these accounts, and there was no immediate comment from Russian officials.

Meanwhile, French Defense Minister Sébastien Lecornu said Sunday that France will use profits from frozen Russian assets to finance an additional 195 million euros package (USD 211 million) in arms for Ukraine, the latest in a series of military aid deliveries funded through the mechanism. In an interview with the La Tribune Dimanche newspaper, Lecornu said that Paris will send new 155-mm artillery shells and glide bombs for Mirage 2000 fighter jets it previously gave to

2 days of clashes in Syria leave over 1,000 dead

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Beirut

he death toll from two days of clashes between Syrian security forces and loyalists of ousted President Bashar Assad and revenge killings that followed has risen to more than 1,000, a war monitoring group said on Saturday, making it one of the deadliest acts of violence since Syria's conflict began 14 years ago.

The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said in addition to 745 civilians killed, mostly in shootings from close distance, 125 government security force members and 148 militants with armed groups affiliated with Assad were killed. It added that electricity and drinking water were cut off in large areas around the city of Latakia.

The clashes, which erupted Thursday, marked a major escalation in the challenge to the new government in Damascus, three months after insurgents took authority after removing Assad from power.

The government has said that they were responding to attacks from remnants of Assad's forces and blamed "individual actions" for the rampant violence.

Retribution killings between Sunnis and Alawites: The revenge killings that started Friday by Sunni Muslim gunmen loyal to the government against members of Assad's minority Alawite sect are a major blow to Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, the faction that led the overthrow of the former government. Alawites made up a large part of Assad's support base for decades.

Residents of Alawite villages and towns spoke to The Associated Press about killings during which gunmen shot Alawites, the majority of them men, in the streets or at the gates of their homes. Many homes of Alawites were looted and then set on fire in different areas, two residents of Syria's coastal region told the AP from their hideouts. They asked that their names not be made public out of fear of being killed by gunmen, adding that thousands of people have fled to nearby mountains for safety.

Residents speak of atrocities in one town: Residents of Baniyas, one of the towns worst hit by the violence, said bodies were strewn on the streets or left unburied in homes and on the roofs of buildings, and nobody was able to collect them. One resident said that the gunmen prevented residents for hours from removing the bodies of five of their neighbours killed Friday at close range.

Ali Sheha, a 57-year-old resident of Baniyas who fled with his family and neighbors hours after the violence broke out Friday, said that at least 20 of his neighbors and colleagues in one neighbourhood of Baniyas where Alawites lived, were with the new authorities were killed.

killed, some of them in their shops, or in their homes. Sheha called the attacks "revenge killings" of the Alawite minority for the crimes committed by Assad's government. Other residents said the gunmen included foreign fighters, and militants from neighbouring villages and

"It was very very bad. Bodies were on the streets," as he was fleeing, Sheha said, speaking by phone from nearly 20 kilometers (12 miles) away from the city. He said the gunmen were gathering less than 100 meters from his apartment building, firing randomly at homes and residents and in at least one incident he knows of, asked residents for their IDs to check their religion and their sect before killing them. He said the gunmen also burned some homes and stole cars and robbed homes.

Death toll has multiplied: The Observatory's chief Rami Abdurrahman said that revenge killings stopped early Saturday. "This was one of the biggest massacres during the Syrian conflict," Abdurrahman said about the killings of Alawite civilians.

The previous figure given by the group was more than 600 dead. No official figures have been released. A funeral was held Saturday afternoon for four Syrian security force members in the northwestern village of Al-Janoudiya after they were killed in the clashes along Syria's coast. Scores of people attended the funeral.

Official reports say Syrian forces regaining control: Syria's state news agency quoted an unnamed Defense Ministry official as saying that government forces have regained control of much of the areas from Assad loyalists. It added that authorities have closed all roads leading to the coastal region "to prevent violations and gradually restore stability."

On Saturday morning, the bodies of 31 eople killed in revenge attacks the day before in the central village of Tuwaym were laid to rest in a mass grave, residents said. Those killed included nine children and four women, the residents said, sending the AP photos of the bodies draped in white cloth as they were lined in the mass grave. Lebanese legislator Haidar Nasser, who holds one of the two seats allocated to the Alawite sect in parliament, said that people were fleeing from Syria for safety in Lebanon. He said he didn't have exact numbers. Nasser said that many people were sheltering at the Russian air base in Hmeimim, Syria, adding that the international community should protect Alawites who are Syrian citizens loyal to their country. He said that since Assad's fall, many Alawites were fired from their jobs and some former soldiers who reconciled

Israel will send delegation to Qatar to try to 'advance' ceasefire negotiations

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Deir Al-Balah

srael said that it would send a delegation to Qatar on Monday "in an effort to advance the negotiations" around the ceasefire in Gaza, while Hamas reported "positive signals" in talks with Egyptian and Qatari mediators on starting negotiations on the truce's delayed second phase.

The statement from Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office gave no details except to say it had "accepted the invitation of US-backed mediators." Hamas spokesman Abdel-Latif al-Qanoua also gave no details. Talks on the second phase should have started a month ago.

There was no immediate comment from the White House, which on Wednesday made the surprise confirmation of direct US talks with Hamas.

Over the past week, Israel has pressed Hamas to release half of the remaining hostages in return for an extension of the first phase, which ended last weekend, and a promise to negotiate a lasting truce. Hamas is believed to have 24 living hostages and the bodies of 35 others.

Israel last weekend cut off all supplies to Gaza and its more than 2 million people as it pressed Hamas to agree. The militant group has said that the move would affect the remaining hostages as well.

The ceasefire has paused the deadliest and most destructive fighting ever between Israel and Hamas, sparked by the Hamasled attack on southern Israel on Oct. 7, of 25 living hostages and the remains of eight others in exchange for the release of nearly 2,000 Palestinian prisoners.

Israeli forces have withdrawn to buffer zones inside Gaza, hundreds of thousands of displaced Palestinians have returned to northern Gaza for the first time since early in the war and hundreds of trucks of aid entered per day until Israel suspended supplies. Before their weekly rally in Tel Aviv, relatives of hostages appealed to U.S. President Donald Trump, who met with eight former hostages on Wednesdav.

'Mr. President, a return to war means a death sentence for the living hostages left behind. Please, sir, do not allow Netanyahu to sacrifice them."

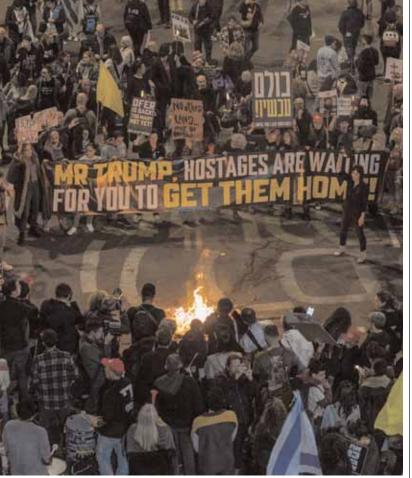
Muslim countries reject moving Palestinians from Gaza: Also on Saturday, foreign ministers from Muslim nations rejected Trump's calls to empty the Gaza Strip of its Palestinian population and

backed a plan for an administrative committee to govern the territory to allow reconstruction to proceed.

The foreign ministers gathered in Saudi Arabia for a special session of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation to address the situation in Gaza. The OIC has 57 nations with largely Muslim populations. They supported a plan to rebuild Gaza put forward by Egypt and backed by Arab states, including Saudi Arabia and Jordan. Without mentioning Trump, the ministers' statement said that they rejected "plans aimed at displacing the Palestinian people individually or collectively ... as ethnic cleansing, a grave violation of international law and a crime

They also condemned "policies of starvation" they said aim to push Palestinians to leave, a reference to Israel's cutting off all supplies to Gaza. Trump has called for Gaza's population to be resettled elsewhere permanently, so that the United States can take over the territory and develop it for others. Palestinians have rejected calls to leave. The ministers at the OIC gathering supported a proposal that an administrative committee replace Hamas in governing Gaza. The committee would work "under the umbrella" of the Palestinian Authority, based in the occupied West Bank. Israel has rejected the PA having any role in Gaza, but hasn't put forward an alternative for postwar rule.

The foreign ministers of France, Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom the Arab initiative for a Gaza reconstruction plan, calling it "a realistic path." They added that "Hamas must neither govern Gaza nor be a threat to Israel anymore," and they support the central role for the PA. Early Saturday, an Israeli strike killed two Palestinians in the southernmost city of Rafah, the Health Ministry there said. The Israeli military said that it struck several men who appeared to be flying a drone that entered Israel. Israel's military offensive has killed more than 48,000 Palestinians in Gaza, mostly women and children, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which doesn't say how many of the dead were militants. Hamas' attack in October 2023 killed around 1,200 people, mostly civilians, inside Israel and took 251 people hostage. Most have been released in ceasefire agreements or other arrangements. The militants also hold the remains of a soldier killed in the 2014 war.



People take part in a protest in Tel Aviv, Israel, on Saturday, demanding the immediate release of

Pope thanks volunteers for 'miracle of tenderness'

thanking volunteers for the "miracle of tenderness" they offer the sick, as he continued his recovery from double pneumonia and doctors reported positive news. After more than three weeks in the hospital, the 88-year-old pope is responding well to treatment and has shown a "gradual, slight improvement" in recent

For the fourth Sunday in a row, the 88year-old Francis didn't appear for his weekly noon blessing, but he met with his top deputies and the Holy See distributed the text he would have delivered if he were well enough. In it, the Argentine pope thanked all those who were caring for him and others who are sick and experiencing a "night of pain."

Brothers and sisters, during my prolonged hospitalisation here, I too experience the thoughtfulness of service and the tenderness of care, in particular from the

doctors and health care workers, whom I ed", meaning thank from the bottom of my heart," read he's not out of

"And while I am here, I think of the many people who in various ways are close to the sick, and who are for them a sign of the Lord's presence. We need this, the miracle of tenderness' which accompanies those who are in adversity, bringing a little light into the night of pain," he wrote.

Francis, who has chronic lung disease and had part of one lung removed as a young man, has remained in stable condition at Gemelli, with no fever and good oxygen levels in his blood for several days, doctors reported in a Vatican statement Saturday. The doctors said that such stability "as a consequence testifies to a good response to therapy." It was the first time the doctors had reported that Francis was responding positively to the treatment for the complex lung infection that was diagnosed after he was hospitalised on

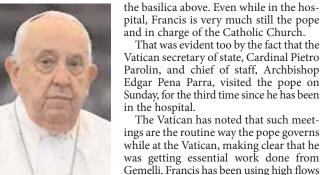
February 14. But they kept his prognosis as "guardSunday morning, the Vatican reported he was resting after a

quiet night. In absence, the Vatican's dayto-day operations continued alongside celebrations of its Holy Year, the

once-every-quarter-century Jubilee that brings millions of pilgrims to Rome. On Sunday, Canadian Cardinal Michael

Czerny, who is close to Francis, celebrated the Holy Year Mass for volunteers that Francis was supposed to have celebrated.

During the Mass in St. Peter's Square, the giant banner bearing Francis' papal coat of arms fluttered from the loggia of



Edgar Pena Parra, visited the pope on Sunday, for the third time since he has been in the hospital. The Vatican has noted that such meetings are the routine way the pope governs

That was evident too by the fact that the

while at the Vatican, making clear that he was getting essential work done from Gemelli. Francis has been using high flows of supplemental oxygen to help him breathe during the day and a noninvasive mechanical ventilation mask at night. Francis was hospitalised February 14 for

what was then just a bad case of bronchitis. The infection progressed into a complex respiratory tract infection and double pneumonia that has sidelined Francis for the longest period of his 12-year papacy and raised questions about the

Man with Palestinian flag who climbed London's Big Ben tower arrested

London (AP): A man was arrested early Sunday after he climbed the Big Ben tower at the Palace of Westminster in central London while barefoot and holding a Palestinian flag. The man, who appeare $\bar{\bf d}$ to be staging a protest on a ledge several metres (yards) up Elizabeth Tower, which houses Big Ben, stepped off the building after midnight and onto a cherry picker following a long conversation with negotiators. He got into a waiting ambulance.

Traffic around the Palace of Westminster in London had come to a standstill for much of Saturday as emergency crews tried to reach the man. Negotiators were lifted up on a fire brigade ladder platform several times before eventually talking him down. Westminster Bridge and a nearby street were closed for much of the day and several emergency services vehicles were at the scene as crowds looked on. Police also blocked off all pedestrian access to Parliament Square. A small group of supporters shouted "Free Palestine" from behind a police cordon nearby. Officials said tours of the Houses of Parliament were cancelled because of the incident. The Metropolitan Police confirmed that the man has now been arrested. "This has been a protracted incident due to the specifics of where the man was located and the need to ensure the safety of our officers, in a statement.

Wu says Chinese military faces tough challenges in safeguarding sovereignty, territorial integrity

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Beijing

hina on Sunday defended its USD 249 billion defence budget, which is next only to the US, saying it faces tough challenges in safeguarding sovereignty and the increased amount will be used to develop new-domain forces with the latest combat capabilities and joint strikes by its armed forces. Chinese Premier Li Qiang announced on Wednesday in the parliament that the planned defence expenditure for the country this year is 1.784665 trillion yuan (about USD 249 billion).

The Chinese military faces tough challenges in safeguarding national sovereignty and territorial integrity," Defence Spokesperson Sr. Co. Wu Qian said during the ongoing annual parliament session.

Last year, China increased its defence budget by 7.2 per cent to about USD 232 billion (1.67 trillion yuan).

China has the world's second-largest military budget after the US, whose latest defence spending amounted to over USD 890 billion as proposed by President Donald Trump. While China cites the heavy US budget, its increasing defence spending is putting pressure on neighbours, especialthe individual and the wider public," it said | ly India. The Chinese defence spending

amounted to three times that of India's Rs 6,81, 210 crore (about USD 78.8 billion).

China's defence budget figures are viewed by critics with scepticism in light of massive military modernisation, including building aircraft carriers, rapid construction of advanced naval ships and modern stealth aircraft being carried out at a feverish pitch by the Chinese military.

Wu said the increased expenditure will be mainly used to develop new-domain forces with new combat capabilities and to enhance systems and capacity for reconnaissance and early warning, joint strikes, battlefield support and integrated logistics support. The spending will also be put into improving military training under combat conditions and deepening national defence and military reform, Wu said. Compared to major military powers like the US, China's defence spending remains relatively low in terms of the spending's share in GDP, its share in national fiscal expenditures, the country's per capita defence spending, and expenditure per service member, he added. On Tuesday, Lou Qinjian, spokesperson for the National People's Congress, also defended China's increasing defence expenditure, saying that "peace needs to be safeguard-

China learned from Trump's first trade war, changed tactics when tariffs came again

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Washington

→he leaders of both Canada and Mexico got on the phone with President Donald Trump this past week to seek solutions after he slapped tariffs on their countries, but China's president appears unlikely to make a similar call soon. Beijing, which unlike America's close partners and neighbours has been locked in a trade and tech war with the US for years, is taking a different approach to Trump in his second term, making it clear that any negotiations should be conducted on equal footing.

China's leaders say they are open to talks, but they also made preparations for the higher US tariffs, which have risen 20 per cent since Trump took office seven weeks ago. Intent on not being caught off guard as they were during Trump's first term, the Chinese were ready with retaliatory measures — imposing their own taxes this past week on key US farm imports and more.

"As Washington escalates the tariff, Beijing doesn't see other options but to retaliate," said Sun Yun, director of the China programme at the Stimson Centre, a Washington-based think tank. "It doesn't mean Beijing doesn't want to negotiate, but it cannot be seen as begging for talks

As the world's second-largest economy,

China aspires to be a great power on both the regional and global stage, commanding respect from all countries, especially the United States, as proof that the Communist Party has made China prosperous and strong.

After the US this past week imposed

another 10 per cent tariff, on top of the 10 per cent imposed on February 4, the Chinese foreign ministry uttered its sharpest retort yet: "If war is what the US wants, be it a tariff war, a trade war or any other type of war, we're ready to fight till the end

The harsh rhetoric echoed similar comments in 2018, when Trump launched his first trade war with China and it scrambled to line up tit-for-tat actions. Beijing's leaders have since developed a toolkit of tariffs, import curbs, export controls, sanctions, regulatory reviews and measures to limit companies from doing business in China. All are designed to inflict pain on the US economy and businesses in

response to the American measures. That allowed the Chinese government to react swiftly to Trump's recent acrossthe-board doubling of new tariffs on Chinese goods by rolling out a basket of retaliatory measures, including taxing many American farm goods at up to 15 per cent, suspending US lumber imports and blacklisting 15 US companies.

Beijing showed restraint in its response to leave room for negotiation, analysts say. Xi Jinping's leadership of the ruling Communist Party spans both of Trump's terms, giving Beijing more continuity in its planning. He is the one who decided it's not yet time to speak with Trump, said Daniel Russel, vice president for international security and diplomacy at the Asia Society Policy Institute.

'That's not a scheduling issue, it's leverage for China," said Russel, who previously served as the assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific Affairs. "Xi won't walk into a call if there's a chance he'll be harassed or humiliated and for both political and strategic reasons, Xi won't play the role of a supplicant."

"Instead, China is hitting back prompt-— but judiciously — to each set of tariffs," Russel said. At his annual press conference Friday, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said that "no country should fantasize that it can suppress, contain China while developing good relations with China".

'Such two-faced acts not only are bad for the stability of bilateral relations but also will not build mutual trust," Wang said. He added that China welcomes cooperation with the US, but noted that "if you keep pressuring, China will firmly

IPO activity slows down, listings pulled

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA New Delhi

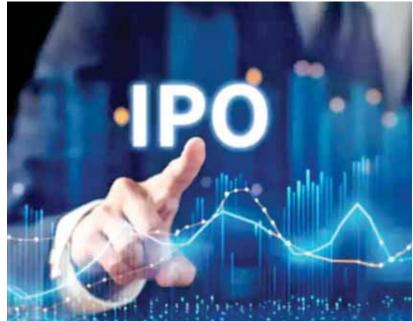
fter heightened activity in 2024, there has been a slowdown in new listings, with no mainbourse Initial Public Offerings (IPO) hitting the market in the past three weeks due to a correction in the secondary market.

This slowdown in IPO activity is reflected in the numbers, as only five companies went public in January and four in February, compared to 16 listings in December 2024.

Quality Power Electrical Equipment Limited was the recent IPO—which opened for three-day bidding on February 14. However, the trend of slower activity is evident as at least three companies— Advanced Sys-tek, SFC Environmental Technologies, and Viney Corporation withdrew IPO plans by pulling their draft papers in January and February.

This shift follows a remarkable 2024 in which 91 maiden public issues collectively raised ₹1.6 Lakh Crore, driven by robust retail participation, a resilient economy, and booming private capital expenditure.

Bhavesh Shah, Managing Director and Head of Investment Banking at Equirus, said that the slowdown is largely a result of the secondary market correction, especially in January and February, which negatively impacted the share prices of several listed companies.



As a result, investors have shifted focus to their existing portfolios rather than exploring new listings.

Shah emphasised that the diminished investor attention on new IPOs has contributed to the slowdown in market

Despite this caution, V Prashant Rao, Director and Head of ECM Investment Banking at Anand Rathi Advisors, pointed out that the longer-term outlook remains positive, with a strong IPO

pipeline. We are seeing an impressive number of documents getting filed and waiting for market conditions to stabilise. Currently, 45 companies with Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) approval are looking to raise over ₹67,000 Crore and 69 companies are awaiting SEBI-approval, aiming to raise over ₹1.15 Lakh Crore. Notably, out of the 69 companies, 45 companies filed DRHPs in the last couple

In the last two months alone, close to 30 companies have filed preliminary IPO papers with SEBI, and in addition, Knowledge Realty Trust sponsored by Sattva Group and Blackstone last week filed documents to launch its maiden REIT public issue to raise more than ₹6,200 Crore.

This influx of filings suggests that while market conditions are currently subdued, the IPO market is not stagnant.

Looking ahead, Equirus' Shah remains optimistic, forecasting a revival of the IPO market in the next few months as market conditions stabilise.

He believes that investors will eventually return to fresh investments in new companies, supported by strong mutual fund inflows, which continue to show resilience despite some impact from market volatility.

To maintain investor interest amid these fluctuating conditions, Shah suggests that issuers may need to recalibrate their IPO valuations in line with the current market realities, potentially offering more attractive pricing to entice investors.

'To sustain investor interest amid this volatility, the companies may do some adjustments in the IPO pricing, potentially offering more attractive valuations," Ánand Rathi Advisors' Rao said.



High demand for Indian products in Holi, says BJP MP

RAJESH KUMAR ■ New Delhi

■ he festival of colour 'Holi' this year is all set to bring cheer to business communities in the country as it is expected to generate business worth around ₹60,000 Crore for traders and

For playing Holi with colors, people are demanding white T-shirts, kurta-pajamas, and salwar suits. At the same time, T-shirts with "Happy Holi" written on them are also witnessing steady demand in the market.

According to the Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT) Secretary General and BJP MP from Chandni Chowk, Praveen Khandelwal, only Indian-made herbal colors, gulal, water guns (pichkari), balloons, sandalwood, puja materials, apparel, and other items are being sold

"Along with these, sweets, dry fruits, gift items, flowers and fruits, clothing, furnishing fabrics, groceries, FMCG products, consumer durables, and many other products are also in high demand across markets. Due to increased consumer spending, various business sectors are witnessing a sharp rise in Holi-related sales," he said.

Holika Dahan will be held on March 13, while the festival of colors will be celebrated on March 14.

According to CAIT data, the Holi festival this year is expected to generate business worth over ₹60,000 Crore, reflecting a nearly 20 per cent increase compared to the previous year's figure of

In Delhi alone, an estimated business of over ₹8,000 Crore is anticipated. Khandelwal further mentioned that

large-scale Holi celebrations are taking place across Delhi and the entire coun-

try, leading to a high demand for venues. As a result, banquet halls, farmhouses, hotels, restaurants, and public parks are fully booked for Holi events.

More than 3,000 Holi Milan celebrations of varying scales are being organisd in Delhi alone, bringing visible joy and enthusiasm among the people. Several business, social, cultural, and religious organisations are actively hosting Holi Milan events.

The BJP MP Praveen Khandelwal said that similar to previous years, this time too, both traders and customers have boycotted Chinese goods during Holi sales.

Praveen Khandelwal emphasised that India is a land of festivals, and every festival or religious occasion inevitably boosts trade. Holi is expected to stimulate economic activities, benefiting local businesses, small traders, small-scale industries, and the MSME sector in particular. This Holi festival will also prove to be highly beneficial for traders and retailers across the country.

As the festival of Holi approaching, Delhi's wholesale and retail markets are completely decorated and stocked.

Shops are witnessing heavy footfall, especially for gulal, pichkaris, and other festive items as expected, sweets shops are experiencing a massive surge in sales, particularly for Holi-special gujiyas and other festive treats. Markets are already embracing the festive spirit with colorful gulal, water guns, gujiya garlands, and dry fruits filling shop displays.

The increasing number of shoppers indicates a strong festive buying trend.

Praveen Khandelwal also noted that it is customary for people to gift dry fruit garlands along with sweets and fruits to their relatives, which has further boosted market activity.

ONGC's OPaL exits

eyes local market

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA New Delhi

NGC PetroAdditions Limited, a

subsidiary of the state-owned Oil and Natural Gas

Corporation (ONGC), has relinquished

its 'only-for-export' unit status as it aims

to tap into the booming local petro-

chemical market to drive a turnaround.

said OPaL has received the final

approval for its exit from the Dahej Special Economic Zone (SEZ).
"Accordingly, OPaL shall operate as

a Domestic Tariff Area (DTA) unit with

effect from March 8, 2025," ONGC said.

"Further, this exit from SEZ will

improve the competitiveness of OPaL

In a stock exchange filing, ONGC

from Dahej SEZ,

SRM University's collaboration with Carnegie Mellon

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Amaravati

RM University-AP (SRM-AP), Andhra Pradesh announced a transformative five-year collaboration with Carnegie Mellon University's School of Computer Science (CMU SCS), US- one of the world's foremost institutions in artificial intelligence (AI) and cutting-edge research. This strategic collaboration aims to push the boundaries of knowledge, innovation and education in AI-related including machin natural language processing, computer vision, infrastructure and systems, and AI

At the heart of this collaboration is a shared vision to foster an ecosystem that nurtures groundbreaking research, cultivates exceptional talent and accelerates advancements in AI-driven technologies.

"CMU's School of Computer Science is excited to work with SRM University-AP on this landmark collaboration to advance research and bolster AI education. Together, we will shape the future of AI and empower the next generation of researchers, educators and industry leaders to push the frontiers of technology and drive meaningful change in society," said Professor Martial Hebert, Dean of CMU's School of Computer Science.

As part of this collaboration, SRM University-AP's research faculty and researchers will have the opportunity to engage directly with the esteemed faculty and researchers at CMU's School of

Computer Science. They will immerse themselves in CMU SCS's pioneering AI labs, working alongside global experts in key research domains.

This will facilitate research, knowledge sharing and the development of state-ofthe-art AI innovations that address realworld challenges.

Dr P Sathyanarayanan, pro-chancellor of SRM University-AP said that "To furcollaboration will also pave the way to universities.

establish advanced AI labs at SRM

Carnegie Mellon University, USA

University-AP. These labs will be incubators for novel AI research, fostering a stimulating environment that promotes academic rigor, interdisciplinary collaboration and technological innovation".

Beyond research, this collaboration is designed to enrich the academic experience of SRM-AP's teaching faculty and research scholars.

Selected faculty members and scholars CMU's School of Computer Science as visiting participants.

This exposure will allow them to engage with CMU SCS faculty and contribute to developing robust AI curricula at SRM-AP.

They will also gain hands-on experience in designing assignments, worksheets and examinations that mirror real-world AI problem-solving scenarios, enhancing the quality of AI education at SRM University-AP.

Professor Manoj K Arora, Vice Chancellor of SRM University-AP expressed that "In a move that underscores its commitment to nurturing future AI leaders, the collaboration will offer SRM-AP students the opportunity to undertake research internships at CMU's School of Computer Science."

Selected students will spend approx. six weeks each summer immersed in a worldclass research environment, gaining firsthand experience in tackling complex AI challenges alongside leaders in the field.

This experience will provide students with unparalleled insights and exposure to global research methodologies, setting them apart in the highly competitive AI landscape.

By leveraging Carnegie Mellon University's SCS's expertise and SRM-AP's commitment to academic excellence, this collaboration will drive innovation, expand knowledge horizons and create a lasting ther strengthen research capabilities, this impact on the AI ecosystem between the

Chhattisgarh FM presents 100-page handwritten Budget

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Raipur

n an age where even court rulings are drafted using AI-powered chatbots, ▲ Chhattisgarh's Finance Minister OP Choudhary showcased his personal dedication by presenting a 100-page hand-written Budget in Hindi, reflecting his hands-on approach and commitment to the budget preparation process.

Choudhary, a former IAS who quit service to join politics as he saw it as a bigger medium to serve the public, literally burnt midnight oil, hardly sleeping for a couple of hours in the day's leading to the March 4 presentation of the Budget for the fiscal year starting April 1 in the Chhattisgarh Assembly.

The rare act that displayed a sense of ownership and dedication to the state's financial planning and goals stood out, especially since most Budget documents are typically prepared by a team of offi-

cials or typed out on computers. ister has presented a handw "I was writing my own (Budget) al Budget in the Assembly.

speech and I realised that a handwritten document expresses my feelings, my emotions, my vision, my commitment, and my attachment more. And so, I thought, I should write in my own handwriting," he said.

A handwritten document reflects the attachment and emotions better, he said, displaying his handwritten 100-page document. Asked how long it took to write the entire document, he said the Budget had been in the works for fivesix months but the actual writing on the components of the Budget started about a week or 10 days before the presentation.

"I literally did not sleep for four nights (prior to the Budget presentation). I hardly slept one to one-and-a-half hours in those four nights. And this is when I wrote the Budget," he said. The act, he said, about his personal involvement and commitment to the state's finances. This is perhaps the first time a finance minister has presented a handwritten annu-

India, European Union to hold next round of free trade agreement talks amid tariff threats



Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen at the Hyderabad House

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

ndia and the 27-nation European Union (EU) bloc will start the tenth round of negotiations for a proposed free trade agreement from Monday in Brussels amid Trump tariff threats, according to an official.

The talks are expected to focus on ficial trade pact.

resolving remaining issues so that the agreement can be finalised by the end of

During the recent visit of EU Commissioner for Trade and Economic Security Maros Sefcovic, the two sides have discussed ways to accelerate efforts towards a balanced and mutually bene-

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and European Commission President Ursula von der Leven last month agreed to conclude the ambitious India-EU free trade deal by this year amid fears of the Trump administration's threat of higher tariffs.

"The two sides are scheduled to hold the tenth round of negotiations for the FTA from March 10-14 in Brussels," the official said.

In June 2022, India and the 27-nation EU bloc resumed the negotiations after

a gap of over eight years. It stalled in 2013 due to differences over the level of opening up of the markets.

The two sides are also negotiating an investment protection agreement and an agreement on Geographical Indications (GIs). According to the think tank Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI), key sticking points include agricultural tariffs, especially on dairy and wine import duties, automobile tariffs, and regulatory barriers affecting labour-intensive goods. India is reluctant to lower auto import duties and is cautious about committing to EU demands on sustainability and labour standards, it said,

security recognition under the EU's

GDPR framework (European Union's

General Data Protection Regulation).

for supplies to be made to the DTA". This essentially means primarily catering to the domestic Indian market instead of focusing on exports, which is the primary purpose of an SEZ unit. It will now not have to pay customs duty on products sold within India, helping improve margins. The move is primarily to gain access adding that services trade remains another contested area, with India seeking easier mobility for professionals and data

to the wider domestic market and potentially benefit from the lower corporate tax regime. ONGC's C2C3 project extracts ethane (C2) and propane (C3) from the liquefied natural gas (LNG) imported from Qatar. C2 and C3 the basic building blocks of petrochemicals - are provided to OPaL which uses them to make polymers and chemicals like benzene and butadiene. High debt and unlucractive exports

had pushed OPaL into the red. It made a loss of ₹3,546 Crore in the 2023-24 fiscal year and ₹2,392 Crore loss in the first nine months of the current year. To mitigate the situation, ONGC extended financial support. It infused additional equity capital upto ₹10,501 Crore, converted back stopped compulsorily convertible debentures (CCDs) amounting to ₹7,778 Crore and paid ₹86 Crore with respect to share warrants, totaling ₹18,365 Crore. This has led to its stake in the company rising from 49.36 per cent to 95.69 per cent. OPaL dealt with global geopolitical uncertainties "by focusing on the strategic pillars of cost-efficiency programs, innovation, brand building, and distribution in order to sustain growth and profitability and a judicious improvement in the petrochemical export market share," according to its latest annu-

US tariffs to hit pharma sector, auto minimal effect

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA New Delhi

nhanced tariffs on pharma imports in the United States (US) can severely impact Indian drug manufacturers as it would lead to higher production costs, making shipments less competitive against products from other countries.

Smaller drug firms operating on thin margins can face severe pressure poten-

tially forcing consolidation or closure. The automobile sector, on the other hand, is expected to have a very minimal impact owing to the US being a small export market.

Terming India as a very high tariff nation, US President Donald Trump has said that reciprocal tariffs on countries that impose levies on American goods will

kick in on April 2. India currently levies around 10 per icines from Indian companies provided

cent import duty on American drugs, while the US does not charge any import duty on Indian drugs. Shardul Amarchand Mangaldas and Co

Partner Arvind Sharma said as of recent history, the US has been a net importer of pharmaceutical products to meet its domestic demand.

"In the event the US decides to impose substantial tariffs on pharmaceutical imports from India, the impact could send noticeable ripples through the Indian pharma sector and simultaneously disrupt its own domestic consumption," he noted.

Indian pharmaceutical companies supply a substantial proportion of drugs to US residents, with four out of ten of all prescriptions filled in the US in 2022 being supplied by Indian companies.

Ās per industry sources, overall, med-

\$219 Billion in savings to the US health-care system in 2022 and a total of \$1.3 Trillion between 2013 and 2022.

Generics from Indian companies are expected to generate an additional \$1.3 Trillion in savings over the next five years. Sharma stated that India's pharmaceu-

tical industry, at present, significantly relies on the American market, with the US accounting for roughly a third of its total exports.

"A sudden tariff increase could significantly raise the cost of medicines manufactured in and exported from India to the US, making them less competitive against products from other countries," he

By imposing tariffs, the US might inadvertently increase its domestic healthcare costs, burdening consumers and, in turn, making healthcare access scarcer,

Sharma stated.

Additionally, in the situation where substantial tariffs are imposed by t\\he US on Indian pharmaceutical products, then that might encourage Indian pharma companies to diversify their export markets, possibly shifting focus to Europe, Latin America or Africa, he said.

Elaborating on the automobile sector, Shashi Mathews, Partner, IndusLaw, said the recent announcements and pushback by the Trump Administration on India's tariff, especially in the auto sector, will have a very minimal impact.

"Reason being that while entry into India may be well protected and thus, heavily taxed, a reciprocal tariff for importing into the US, which is a smaller export market for the Indian automotive sector will not affect us much," he

Delhi, plans to deploy 100 buses

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

remium app-based commute service Cityflo has launched operations in Delhi, aiming to transform daily travel for corporate professionals. Founded in 2015 by IÎT Bombay alumni, the Mumbaibased company has already served over 2.5 Million commuters in Mumbai and

Cityflo will initially operate on key routes like DLF Cyber City, targeting 100 buses and 80,000 riders in its first year. The expansion is expected to add ₹25 Crore to its topline.

Backed by marquee investors, Cityflo promises a reliable, comfortable alternative to existing transport options.

Cityflo expands to

Holistic Beauty in a Hectic

Lifestyle

In a conversation with **ABHI SINGHAL**, renowned ayurvedic beauty expert Shahnaz Husain offers vital advice on self-care, achieving radiant skin, and inner balance for women juggling with the relentless

pressures of modern life

to provide the skin with ample nourishment and rejuvenate the skin, restoring its elasticity. The Ash of Diamond and Pearl Powder acts as a stimulant and awakens dormant cells, giving life and restoring the natural dynamics of a youthful appearance.

With the abundance of skincare products available, what are the key ingredients women should look for, especially those dealing with stress-related skin issues?

These days, the beauty industry is booming, with numerous new brands coming up overnight, and it is hard to choose the right one that is suitable for your skin. Therefore, you must check the labels that state ingredients like extracts of almonds, apricots, cabbage, Carrot, Wheat Germ, essential oils, Vitamins and other botanical extracts. While choosing creams for skincare and treatments, you must keep a lookout for these ingredients suitable for your skin type.

Many women suffer from stress-related skin issues. What natural remedies do you recommend for healthy skin?

I would like to remind you that our kitchen is a natural pharmacy that is full of countless herbs useful in treating skin-related issues and healthy skin. For instance, Turmeric is anti-inflammatory & antiseptic and helps in maintaining healthy, glowing skin. Mixing a pinch of Turmeric with 1 tbsp of curd will help achieve an even skin tone, remove tan. However, you need to keep it on for 15 minutes and then rinse off your skin with water. Also, honey has excellent moisturizing properties. Apply raw honey on your face and let it sit for 20 minutes, and then rinse it off with water. Those who have oily skin can use honey with Rose water and a few drops of Lemon juice. It naturally moisturizes your skin without making it greasy.

Since women get less time for themselves, what are some affordable and natural skin care routines that women can perform at home?

Neem is the best skin ingredient that comprises natural sulphur compounds that are good for hair and skin. Prepare Neem water by adding Neem leaves to 5 cups of water, bringing it to a boil, and straining the water. This water is a potent elixir for soothing skin, you can rinse your face with this water daily or use it on your hair to keep your hair and skin healthy. For moisturising and cleansing your skin, milk is the best. Use a cup full of milk and add a few drops of Olive oil to it. Use it on your face for cleansing and moisturizing.

What are some of the biggest skin health mistakes that you see women make, and how can they be



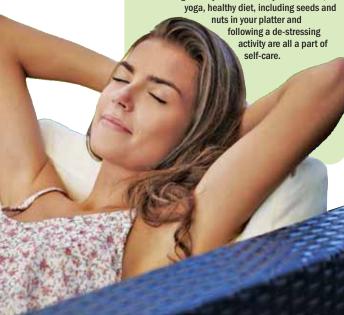
How can women in their 30s and 40s maintain youthful skin while managing work and family life?

ness 11

Managing your skincare schedule between your 30s and 40s is difficult. You can begin with including Vegetable Peel and a Thermoherb mask These are two specialised skin rejuvenating treatments that have produced good results. Some plant extracts used in the formulation of skincare products are powerful rehydrants like Cactus, Aloe Vera, Seaweed and Ginseng.

On this Women's Day, what message would you like to give to women who struggle to prioritise self-care?

I would like to emphasise that self-care is not limited to surface beauty but comprises of maintaining healthy mind and body. Meditation,





very morning is a hectic morning in a woman's life. The alarm blares, and before the

snooze button is even considered, the day

begins. After waking up, there is a quick breakfast, a hurried school drop-off, a barrage of work emails, and a mental checklist that grows every

minute. This is the reality for countless women

today. In all this hurricane responsibilities self-

care often takes a backseat. But amidst this chaos,

women are reclaiming their well-being, recognising that nurturing themselves is not a luxury but a neces-

To illuminate the path to healthy skin, we turned

to Shahnaz Husain, a luminary in Ayurvedic beau-

ty. She offers invaluable guidance for the time-

pressed woman, revealing swift self-care practices,

nature's potent remedies, and crucial skincare com-

ponents. Husain champions a holistic approach,

advocating for herbal solutions and stressing the

imperative of prioritising per-

sonal wellness amidst

life's relentless

Skin and Hair: Pre and Post Holi Care

IN CONVERSATION WITH

SHAHNAZ HUSAIN

Women today are often overwhelmed by their

recommendations for quick self-care practices

Exposure to sunlight, pollution and irregular diet-

ing results in premature skin ageing. It appears tired,

dull, dry and flaky, so regular facials are recommend-

ed to help manage the symptoms. The Diamond

Facial or Pearl

Facial are

designed

multiple roles. What are your top

for a busy schedule?

colours, Holi, brings excitement, happiness, and a burst of colour. However, your skin and hair may suffer from the harsh chemicals in synthetic colours, extended sun exposure, and frequent water splashes. This is your go-to resource for preserving your attractiveness throughout this colourful festival. **Pre-Holi Care for Skin** Moisturize Generously Colours are more difficult to remove from dry skin because it absorbs them more quickly. Apply a thick layer of moisturizer, coconut oil, or almond oil. Particular atten-

tion should be paid to the hands, elbows, neck, and face. Apply sunscreen Since Holi is celebrated outside, exposure to the sun can cause skin damage and tanning. At least half an hour before leaving the house, apply a broad-spectrum sunscreen with an SPF of 50 or higher. "A

waterproof sunscreen is ideal, as

water splashes are inevitable." Use Very Little Makeup

Steer clear of excessive makeup as it may cause skin discomfort due to colour reactions. To keep your lips nourished, use waterproof lip balm and a mild, tinted moisturizer if needed.

Guard Vulnerable Areas

Use petroleum jelly on your lips, ears, and nails to keep colour from getting stuck in nooks and crannies that can be difficult to remove later.

Pre-Holi Care for Hair



Cover Your Hair

To build a barrier against colours, apply coconut, almond, or olive oil to your scalp and hair. Colours are easier to remove from oiled hair since they can't penetrate the cuticles.

Tie Your Hair Up To reduce exposure, wear your hair in a ponytail, bun, or braid.

Putting on a cap, bandana, or scarf helps shield your hair from colour fading and keep it from being dry and brittle. Avoid Heat Styling

Refrain from using heat styling tools like straighteners and curling irons a day before Holi, as they can dry out your hair, making it more vulnerable to colour penetration.

Post-Holi Care for Skin

Use Gentle Cleansers

Do not scrub your skin vigorously to remove colours, as this can cause irritation. Instead, use a mild cleanser or oil-based makeup remover to break down colours before washing your face.

Exfoliate with Natural Remedies Use a homemade scrub of gram

flour (besan) and yogurt or a mixture of honey and oatmeal to gently exfoliate your skin and remove residual colour.

Apply a Soothing Mask

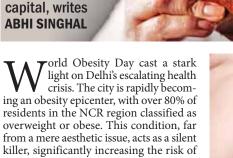
Aloe Vera gel, curd, or mashed banana masks can help soothe any redness or irritation caused by colours. They also help in restoring the skin's natural moisture.

Hydrate and Moisturize

After cleansing, apply a hydrating serum followed by a thick moisturizer. **Avoid Harsh Chemicals**

Do not use alcohol-based toners or harsh face washes immediately after Holi, as they can dry out the skin further and increase sensitivity.





Growing Waistline

Delhi faces a critical

health challenge as

obesity rates surge,

transforming the city it into a obesity

severe health problems. The consequences are devastating. Obesity fuels heart disease, high blood pressure, type-2 diabetes, and various cancers. Breathing difficulties, infertility, and osteoarthritis are also common. Beyond physical ailments, it takes a toll on mental well-being, contributing to depression and anxiety.

Experts identify a confluence of factors driving this epidemic. Processed foods, sugary drinks, and large portions have become dietary staples. Stress-induced overeating and a sedentary lifestyle, propelled by excessive screen time and limited physical activity, further compound the problem. Urban areas like Punjabi Bagh, Rohini, and South Extension are particularly affected.

"Obesity is not merely a cosmetic concern but a severe medical condition that



can lead to diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, and even various types of cancer," stated Dr Sachin Ambekar, Medical Director and Director of Minimal Access Surgery at MASSH Hospital. Modern medical advancements, including minimally invasive surgical techniques, offer effective solutions. Tackling this issue requires a collective effort. Promoting healthy eating habits, encouraging exercise, and reducing screen time are crucial.



POST-HOLI CARE FOR HAIR

of its natural oils, use a shampoo without sulfates. To prevent injury, lightly massage you

Before applying shampoo, rinse your hair

from further settling into the hair shaft.

thoroughly with cold water to remove as much

To gently cleanse your hair without depleting it

colour as possible. This prevents the colours

To replenish hydration and nutrients, use coconut or argan oil for an oil massage or a deep conditioning hair treatment

After washing, let your hair air dry naturally. To give your hair time to heal, refrain from using curling irons, straighteners, or blow dryers for

- By Dr Shweta Mishra, Facial Cosmetic & Aesthetic surgeon

WPL: Mumbai Indians to face Gujarat Giants



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA Mumbai

ith two games left in the league stage, Mumbai Indians will look to make the most of the opportunity and push for a first-place finish on the WPL points table, starting with the clash against in-form Gujarat Giants here on Monday.

UP Warriorz's win over Royal Challengers Bengaluru by 12 runs knocked the defending champions out from the race entry into the final and MI, who play back-

qualification for Delhi Capitals, Mumbai Indians and Gujarat Giants in the process.

But what remains is the final classification of the points table. Harmanpreet Kaur's MI, who return to the Brabourne Stadium here for the final leg of the third WPL — their home ground where they had won the inaugural edition in 2023

will look for a top-place finish. The team that tops the points table at the end of the league round will get a direct to the playoffs on Saturday, confirming the to-back matches on Monday and Tuesday,

will aim to go past DC who are currently at the first spot with 10 points and a Net Run Rate of 0.396.

For MI, topping the table will also help them avoid a possible fourth game in a span of six days — the Eliminator — which could test the squad to the hilt in hot and humid conditions here.

MI are currently third with 8 points and NRR of 0.267 and if they win both these matches — against GG and RCB — they can finish at the top with a maximum of

The Giants, currently placed second 8 points and NRR of 0.334, can finish at best with 10 points provided they beat Mumbai Indians, which would place them at even keel with DC. In such a scenario, the NRR will determine how teams are placed on the points table.

The teams that finish second and third will meet in the Eliminator on Thursday, with the summit clash slated to be played on Saturday.

But it won't be an easy task to begin with for MI as the Giants have been on a roll recording three heavy wins on the trot to make it to the final three.

Not only have the Giants' batters been firing in unison, their bowlers have also found their rhythm which makes them a team to beat in this knockouts round.

A maiden appearance in the WPL playoffs would certainly inspire the Giants, who turned things around after a dismal start that had them losing three of their first four matches.

On the other hand, MI have four wins and two defeats in six outings so far which has helped them to make their third WPL playoffs. Once again, overseas stars Nat Sciver-Brunt (309 runs and 8 wickets, Havley Matthews (181 runs and 9 wickets) and Amelia Kerr (10 wickets) have been at the forefront of their charge with skipper Harmanpreet (126 runs) in tow.

For the Giants, the troika of skipper Ashleigh Gardner (235 runs, 7 wickets), Beth Mooney (224 runs) and Harleen Deol (200 runs) in the batting line-up have found strong backing from their bowlers.

West Indies' all-rounder Deandra Dottin (132 runs, 9 wickets) hasn't really put a foot wrong but the revelation has been India's uncapped Kashvee Gautam (9 wickets) this season. Tanuja Kanwer (7 wickets) is not



Paris Saint-Germain wins 4-1 at Rennes in Ligue 1

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Paris

usmane Dembélé came off the bench to score twice and help a shaky Paris Saint-Germain win 4-1 at Rennes to stay unbeaten in Ligue 1.

Bradley Barcola got one goal and set up another as PSG moved 16 points ahead of second-placed Marseille, which conceded a stoppage-time goal in a 1-0 home defeat to Lens in the late game on Saturday.

Third-placed Nice can move level on points with Marseille if it beats Lyon at home on Sunday.

PSG coach Luis Enrique rested captain Marquinhos ahead of the return leg at Liverpool in the last 16 of the Champions League next Tuesday. PSG lost the first leg 1-0 despite dominating.

Dembélé was joined on the bench by right back Achraf Hakimi, winger Khvicha Kvaratskhelia and goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma.

 ${\rm PSG}\,\bar{\rm controlled}$ the first half but made many mistakes after the break as Rennes attacked strongly, before Dembélé wrapped up the win late on.

Barcola put PSG ahead in the 28th minute when he placed the ball through goalkeeper Brice Samba's legs. Ludovic Blas almost equalised moments later and 17-year-old striker Mohamed Meïté headed against the crossbar.

Barcola broke down the left again and picked out striker Gonçalo Ramos in the 50th for 2-0. Three minutes later, sloppy defending allowed defender Lilian Brassier to pull one back and it galvanized Rennes, which came close to equalising several times. An awful mistake from PSG defender Lucas Beraldo saw him

pass to Meïté, giving him an easy chance from six meters. But the young striker hesitated to shoot with his weaker left foot and his tame shot with his right was

Dembélé's stoppage-time brace took him this season to 20 league goals for the first time.

Canada striker Jonathan David moved onto 14 league goals — third in the Ligue 1 scoring charts — after scoring in Lille's hard-fought 1-0 win against rock-bottom Montpellier.

The win moved fifth-placed Lille level on 44 points with Monaco, which is ahead on goal difference, in the race for one of the four Champions League spots.

Marseille loses to Lens

Marseille's Mason Greenwood — second in the scoring charts with 15 goals - was named as a substitute along with Brazilian winger Luis Henrique. Both players came on at the start of the second half at Stade Velodrome.

Luis Henrique's close-range volley was expertly stopped by Lens goalkeeper Mathew Ryan in the 83rd. Moments later, he made a superb one-handed save low to his right to deny forward Neal Maupay. Marseille paid the price when Lens launched a counterattack in the fourth minute of stoppage time and Colombia defender Deiver Machado teed up Neil El Aynaoui for a fine finish as Lens moved up to eighth.

All the players in Saturday's games had "WO=MAN" written on the back of their jerseys instead of their names as part of the French league's initiative centered around International Women's Day.

Jeneath Wong becomes first Malaysian to win WAAP

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Da Nang

Caanvi Somu was the best Indian golfer at tied 38th while compatriots Guntas Kaur Sandhu and Mannat Brar finished way behind at the Women's Amateur Asia-Pacific (WAAP) Championship here on Sunday.

Somu, who made the cut for the second year running, shot her second straight 1-under par 70. With rounds of 72-74-70-70, she totalled 2-over for the week.

The 14-year-old debutant Sandhu, who impressed by becoming the youngest Indian to make the cut at WAAP, had a tough final round with a 7-over 78 and was 9-over to finish 47th.

Her aggression and some good putting helped her pick up 14 birdies, the most among the Indians, but she was held back by lack of experience of playing in strong windy conditions.

Brar, who made the cut after three unsuccessful attempts, had a very rough day when things just did not go her way. She shot 78 and with cards of 67-76-73-78, she finished at 10-over and in 48th

Meanwhile, Jeneath Wong, who moved to Australia when she was ten years old and now plays at Pepperdine University in college golf in the United States, became the first Malaysian to win the Women's Amateur Asia-Pacific Championship.

She turned in a superb finish which included a clutch par putt on the 16th, a perfect tee shot to within six inches on the 17th and a great pitch for a 8-foot birdie on the 18th for a round of 68.

Wong, who now gets to play three Women's Majors and a host of other iconic events, totalled 18-under, and won by one shot over Korea's Soomin Oh (66), who made a great charge with a bogey-free 66, but fell short in the face of a nerveless fin-

ish from Wong. Wong finished 18th in her only previous experience in 2022, when she also had a hole in one on the second day. In the final round here in Vietnam, she almost had another one on the Par-3 17th, when her tee shot came inside six inches.

Three Koreans finished in top-four as Sumin Hong (68) was sole third while another Korean Yunseo Yang (66) and Australian Jazy Roberts (66) were tied

The 2026 Women's Amateur Asia-Pacific Championship will be held in Wellington, New Zealand.



Morikawa birdies final hole for a 1-shot lead at Bay Hill

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Orlando

ollin Morikawa made a 12-foot birdie putt on the 18th hole on a baked out Bay Hill course for a 5under 67, giving him a one-shot lead in the Arnold Palmer Invitational and a chance to win for the first time in 17 months.

Russell Henley on Saturday holed a long bunker shot for birdie on the opening hole, ran off four in a row to start the back nine and had a 67 to finish one shot behind. Corey Conners of Canada missed the 18th fairway, chipped out and made bogey for a 69 and was two back. Even without much wind and occasional cloud cover, the heat and three days of sun brought a yellow shine to fairways and greens. Birdie putts from a reasonable range rolled out past the hole sometimes 8 feet or more away.

Shane Lowry, the 36-hole leader, got a taste of that at end. His tee shot on the 18th ran so far that only the collar of the rough kept it from rolling out into the water. He had a birdie chance just inside 25 feet and watched that roll 7 feet by the hole.

He managed to hole that for a 76, leaving him six shots behind. Rory McIlroy made bogey on three of his last four holes for a 73 to fall seven shots behind.

Scottie Scheffler tried to stay in range, except that birdies were hard to come by. He came up short on the 13th — a front pin and a crispy green — and went into the rocks. He managed to salvage bogey from that but he could only manage a 71

to fall eight shots back.

Collin Morikawa was at **10-under 206**

"You have to hit good shots out there," he said. "It can get you from any direction."

The final hour had Morikawa, Henley and Conners trading spots or sharing time at the top. Morikawa was the only one to avoid a bogey over the final four-hole stretch. He laid up on the par-5 16th and hit lob wedge and let a 6-foot birdie trickle and swirl into the cup.

He barely touched his 12-foot birdie putt on the final hole. Every shot — trying to keep it in the fairway, on the green and putting — required respect. "Some of these pin locations, I feel I'm having to putt very defensively," Henley said.

Jason Day, who opened with a 76, put himself back in the mix with a tournament-low 64 on Friday and a wild round of 69 on Saturday. He was briefly tied for the lead until closing out the front nine with three straight bogeys. He was losing ground until making three straight birdies at the end, including a 20-footer on the 17th.

His measure of how firm it was from waiting his turn to putt.

"Any time you put your putter down and you start sliding on your putter, that's when you know the greens are getting pretty slick," Day said.

"They're changing colour and you can kind of start to see the change in color."

Leverkusen loses to Werder Bremen

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA Berlin

undesliga leader Bayern Munich Squandered a two-goal lead and lost at home to struggling Bochum 3-2, but Bayer Leverkusen was unable to

Leverkusen on Saturday lost 2-0 at home to Werder Bremen, a team that lost its previous five games across all competitions. The Champions League weighed heavily across the league on a day of upsets.

Borussia Dortmund lost at home to Augsburg 1-0, leading to a chorus of whistles from home fans before the "Black and Yellows" go to Lille for the second leg of their Champions League last 16 tie on Wednesday. The teams

drew the first leg 1-1 last Tuesday.
Also, Stuttgart was held to 2-2 by
Holstein Kiel, and Wolfsburg drew with

St Pauli 1-1. Freiburg drew with Leipzig 0-0 in the

Champions League qualification. Both Munich since 1991. It was also Bayern's needed a win to keep pace with Mainz, first defeat at home this season. which won Friday to boost its qualification prospects.

Wirtz injured

I everkusen's loss - its second blow this week after Wednesday's 3-0 defeat to Bayern in Munich in the first leg of their Champions League last 16 tie - was compounded by an injury to star player Florian Wirtz early in the second half.

Wirtz, who had only gone on after the break as a substitute, was unable to continue after a foul from Bremen's Mitchell Weiser in the 52nd minute.

Weiser, who was booked, connected with Wirtz's right foot. Both Leverkusen and Bayern had rested players before they meet again for the second leg of their Champions League in Leverkusen on Tuesday.

Bochum wins in Munich

Bochum is celebrating its first win in

Raphaël Guerreiro got Bayern off to a flying start in the 14th minute, but Serge Gnabry missed a penalty shortly afterward when his effort crashed off the ed, usually takes Bayern's penalties. Kane hasn't missed any of his last 30.

Guerreiro made the most of his rare start with his second goal in the 28th, only for Jakov Medic to pull one back three minutes later.

The game tipped in Bochum's favor when Palhinha was sent off in the 43rd for a studs-up challenge on Georgios Masouras' ankle.

Ibrahima Sissoko equalized in the 51st and Matus Bero put the visitors in front in the 71st. It proved to be the winner, but Bochum needed goalkeeper Timo Horn at his best to grab its first away win of the season. Leverkusen's loss means Bayern still leads by eight points with nine rounds remaining.

Real Kashmir FC beats Aizawl FC 2-1 in I-League

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Srinagar

eal Kashmir FC moved to third spot in the I-League standings with a In the 1-League standings hard fought 2-1 win over relegationbattling Aizawl FC at the TRC Turf Ground here on Sunday.

Real Kashmir's fifth straight home win, and fourth in the last five overall, took their tally to 32 points in 18 matches, two behind both Churchill Brothers and Inter

With just four matches to go, the title race is set to go down to the wire. On the other hand, Aizawl missed the chance to climb out of the relegation zone. The Reds remained in 11th place with 16 points, one behind SC Bengaluru.

Senegalese Karim Samb (31st minute) put the Snow Leopards ahead before Lalrinzuala (58th) equalised for Aizawl with his ninth goal of the season. Brazilian Paulo Cézar (77th), who came on as a substitute, scored the winning goal for the hosts, who also saved a penalty late on to

grab all three points. It was an end-to-end start with both goalkeepers making some routine saves in

the early minutes. Gradually, Real Kashmir began to boss possession and took the game to the visitors. In the 21st minute, Aizawl almost scored an own goal as Samuel Lalmuanpuia, intending to clear an Ocran Idan corner, flicked a header that went just wide of the far post.

The breakthrough for the hosts arrived through a defensive mix-up from Aizawl in the 31st minute. Karim Samb capitalised on it, burst into the box and slotted it past Md Rafique Ali Sardar to score his fifth goal of the season.

Aizawl began the second half better and found the equaliser in the 58th minute despite it coming due to a goalkeeping

Laltlanzova cut inside from the left but shot directly at Mohd Arbaz. What should've been a routine save was spilled by the Real Kashmir custodian and Lalrinzuala, the top Indian scorer of the I-League, was on hand to tap it in from two yards out and restore parity.

The contest became more equal after that and both teams came close to scoring again but were let down by poor

late game, denting their hopes of Barcelona's Spanish league game

postponed after death of team doctor

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Barcelona

Barcelona's home game against Osasuna in the Spanish league was postponed after the death of first-

team doctor Carles Miñarro Garcia. Fans were informed of the decision around 15 minutes before the game was scheduled to kick off at 9 pm local time (2000 GMT) in Barcelona at Lluís Companys Olympic Stadium on Saturday.

Barcelona said in a statement that it was "deeply saddened to announce the passing of first-team doctor Carles Miñarro Garcia this evening" and extended its "heartfelt condolences to his family and friends during this difficult time.

Barcelona did not immediately provide any details on the cause of death, which local media reports said was due to medical reasons. "I can't believe it," Barcelona defend-

"Rest in peace, Doc." The 50-year-old Miñarro Garcia joined the medical staff of Barcelona's

er Ronald Araújo wrote on X.



first team last season after having previously worked with its futsal team.

Osasuna said it agreed to the request by Barcelona to postpone the match. The Spanish soccer federation confirmed that ne decision was official.

Barcelona club president Joan Laporta said that Miñarro Garcia had died "suddenly" as the team gathered hours before the game. Unconfirmed local media reports said the death occurred at a team hotel.

"The players, staff and coach were all

incredibly sad because he was a man loved by everyone," Laporta said.

"We thought it was best to ask for the game to be postponed." Laporta thanked Osasuna and La Liga for their understanding. Barcelona leads the league by one point over Atletico Madrid. The Osasuna game will be rescheduled.

Winning with nine

Alaves held on to upset fifth-placed Villarreal 1-0 despite having two players sent off and an injury scare to goalkeeper Antonio Sivera.

Sivera was one of the Alaves players sent off — in the 58th minute — when he fouled Ayoze Pérez during a one-onone situation that ended in a frightening collision. Sivera seemed to lose consciousness momentarily when his body went limp on the turf before he recovered and

was able to walk off the field. Alaves also lost Antonio Blanco with a second yellow card during 15 minutes of second-half injury time.

Manu Sánchez scored the game's only goal in the 11th minute for Alaves' first home win since November 1.

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