



the pioneer

BHOPAL, THURSDAY FEBRUARY 20, 2025; PAGES 12 ₹2

www.dailypioneer.com

PUBLISHED FROM: DELHI | LUCKNOW | BHOPAL | BHUBANESWAR | RANCHI | RAIPUR | CHANDIGARH | DEHRADUN | HYDERABAD | VIJAYWADA

INSIDE

MONEY 10
INDIA-QATAR TRADE AGREEMENT
MUST BE APPROACHED WITH
CAUTION: GTRI



Trump bellows at India



President Donald Trump speaks at Mar-a-Lago in Palm Beach, Fla.

"Nobody can argue with me," President Trump insisted. "If I said 25 per cent, they'd say, 'Oh, that's terrible.' I don't say that anymore... Because I say, 'Whatever they charge, we'll charge.' And you know what? They stop."

During Modi's visit to the US, while responding to a question on reciprocal tariffs on India, Trump said, "India has been, to us, just about the highest tariffed nation anywhere in the world. They've been very strong on tariffs, and I don't blame them, necessarily, but it's a different way of doing business. It's very hard to sell to India because they have trade barriers and very strong tariffs."

"We are right now a reciprocal nation. We are going to - if it's India or if it's somebody else with low tariffs, we're going to have the same. We're going to have whatever India charges, we're charging them. Whatever another country charges, we're charging them. So, it's called reciprocal, which I think is a very fair way. We didn't have that. During his first term as the US president, Trump described India as a 'tariff king' and in May 2019, terminated India's preferential market access — Generalised System of Preferences (GSP) — to the US, alleging India has not given the United States "equitable and reasonable access to its markets."

Also, during the interview, Musk claimed that two NASA astronauts, including Indian-origin astronaut Sunita Williams, currently stuck in space, had been left there by the Biden administration "for political purposes." SpaceX, also founded and owned by Musk, has been contracted to bring Williams and Butch Wilmore home. Musk said the rescue attempts would be being made in less than a month.

"They were left up there for political reasons, which is not good," he said. "Okay, it's not good... Well, we don't want to be complacent, but we have brought astronauts back from the space station many times before, and always with success."

Trump chimed in "They didn't have the go-ahead with Biden. He was going to leave them in space."

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

US President Donald Trump has said that he made it clear to Prime Minister Narendra Modi that India will not be spared from Washington's reciprocal tariffs, emphasising that "nobody can argue with me" on tariff structure.

Trump made these remarks during an interview with Fox News' Sean Hannity recently. Fox News aired a joint television interview with President Trump and billionaire Elon Musk on Tuesday night.

On February 13, hours before Prime Minister Modi's bilateral meeting with Trump in the White House, the US President announced reciprocal tariffs.

Under the plan, the Trump administration "will work strenuously to counter non-reciprocal trading arrangements with trading partners by determining the equivalent of a reciprocal tariff with respect to each foreign trading partner."

During the interview with Hannity,

Trump reiterated his stance on existing tariff structures between the US and its partners, including India.

"I told Prime Minister Modi yesterday - he was here - I said, 'Here's what we're going to do: reciprocal. Whatever you charge, I'm charging,'" President Trump said.

"He (Modi) goes, 'No, no, I don't like that.' 'No, no, whatever you charge, I'm going to charge.' I'm doing that with every country."

India has very strong tariffs on certain imports from the US. Like in the automobile sector, India charges 100 per cent.

Musk said, "It's 100 per cent - auto imports are 100 per cent."

"Yeah, that's peanuts. So, much higher. And - and others too. I said, 'Here's what we're going to do: reciprocal. Whatever you charge, I'm charging,'" Trump said.

Under the reciprocal tariff system, the US would impose the same level of tariffs on Indian imports as India does on American goods.



BJP leader and Delhi Chief Minister-designate Rekha Gupta after BJP legislature party meeting, at the Delhi BJP party office

Rekha Gupta is Delhi Chief Minister

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

The suspense over Delhi's new chief minister ended on Wednesday as the BJP on Wednesday named first-time MLA Rekha Gupta, 50, as the new chief minister of Delhi, marking the BJP's comeback in the national capital after 27 years.

She will be the fourth chief minister of Delhi after Sushma Swaraj, Sheila Dikshit and Atishi and the only woman chief minister among the states being ruled by the BJP at present.

Gupta is an old Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), hand who was part of the Sangh's students' wing Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad.

The decision was taken at a meeting of the party's legislature party on Wednesday evening in the presence of Central observers Ravi Shankar Prasad and O P Dhankar where she was chosen as the Leader of the House in the Delhi Assembly.

The new BJP government, led by Gupta, will be sworn in at a grand ceremony at the Ramlila Maidan on Thursday afternoon in the presence of Prime

Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah, Union Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, chief ministers from the party-ruled states and many celebrities.

The formal announcement came from the X handle of the Delhi BJP. "Hearty congratulations and best wishes to Mrs. Rekha Gupta ji on being elected the leader of the Delhi BJP Legislative Party. We have full faith that the state will progress under your leadership," read a rough translation of their Hindi post.

After appointed as the Leader of the House of the BJP's legislative party, Chief Minister designate Gupta along with six ministers went to Raj Niwas to stake claim to form the government. She was accompanied by state BJP observers Ravi Shankar Prasad and OP Dhankar along with city BJP president Virendra Sachdeva, and Delhi MPs including Bansuri Swaraj, Praveen Khandelwal and Kamaljeet Sehrawat. BJP national vice-president Baijayant Jay Panda was also present at the Raj Niwas.

Wishes poured in from across the political spectrum for the 50-year-old advocate, with Union ministers and

political rivals extending their regards. Union Home Minister Amit Shah congratulated Gupta, backing the BJP government under her leadership to "work day and night to fulfill the hopes and expectations with which the mothers and sisters of Delhi have blessed the BJP". The senior BJP leader also reposed full faith that she will "work with dedication in the direction of the resolution taken by Prime Minister Shri @narendramodi ji to make Delhi one of the top capitals of the world".

Soon after the announcement, Gupta thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi and said she would work with full honesty, integrity and dedication for the welfare, empowerment and overall development of every citizen of Delhi. "I am fully committed to this important opportunity to take Delhi to new heights," Gupta said in a post on X. "I express my heartfelt gratitude to all the top leadership for trusting me and entrusting me with the responsibility of the post of chief minister. This trust and support of yours has given me new energy and inspiration."

Yogi counters pollution board claims of Ganga water unsafe

BISWAJEET BANERJEE/PNS ■ LUCKNOW/NEW DELHI

Amid claims by Central Government pollution body that the present condition of Ganga water in ensuing Maha Kumbh may contain high levels of faecal bacteria, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Wednesday countered by assuring the Sangam water in Prayagraj is safe for bathing and other rituals.

A sort of controversy erupted over the claims by Central government pollution body which reported the Ganga water at Triveni Sangam, where lakhs of people are taking a holy dip every day during the ongoing Maha Kumbh, is currently unsafe for bathing.

Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) data informed the National Green Tribunal that Sangam water at Maha Kumbh exceeds the prescribed limit for biological oxygen demand (BOD), a key parameter to determine water quality. BOD refers to the amount of oxygen required by aerobic microorganisms to break down organic material in a water body. A higher BOD level indicates more organic content in the water.

River water is considered fit for bathing if the BOD level is less than 3 milligrams per litre.

In a report submitted to the NGT the CPCB said the river water quality did not meet bathing standards during monitoring on January 12-13 at most locations in Prayagraj. According to Uttar Pradesh government officials, 10,000 to 11,000 cuces of water is being released into the Ganga to



Puja material and other waste being collected at the Sangam for their disposal, during the ongoing Maha Kumbh Mela 2025, in Prayagraj

ensure it meets bathing standards. Mahakumbh Nagar is the world's largest temporary city, accommodating 50 lakh to 1 crore devotees at any given time.

These pilgrims generate at least 16 million litres of faecal waste and 240 million litres of greywater daily from activities like cooking, washing, and bathing.

Yogi during the Budget Session in UP assembly countered and said water at the Sangam is fit for both bathing and ritual drinking (aachman) as confirmed by some recent reports. He informed the Uttar Pradesh Control Board and the CPCB are continuously monitoring the water quality at the Sangam.

He also trained his guns at Opposition Samajwadi Party, saying the condition of the Ganga and Yamuna rivers was so poor

while it was in power that the Prime Minister of Mauritius refused to take a dip during the 2013 Kumbh.

"This time, 81 drains have been tapped, treating 261 MLD (million litres per day) of sewage. In January and February, fecal coliform levels at the Sangam nose were found to be within the acceptable range, below 2,500 MPN per 100 ml, according to the UP Pollution (Control) Board," he said, according to an official statement.

"The Central Pollution (Control) Board has also confirmed this in its report. The UP and Central Pollution Control Boards are continuously monitoring water quality, and recent reports confirm that the water at the Sangam is now fit for both bathing and ritual use," Adityanath told the state Assembly.

MP to get airports every 150 Km under New Aviation Policy

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav on Tuesday announced that under the state's new civil aviation policy, a permanent helipad will be constructed within every 45-kilometer radius, while an airport will be built every 150 kilometers across the state.

Speaking at a dialogue with industrialists in Indore ahead of the Invest Madhya Pradesh - Global Investors Summit scheduled in Bhopal on February 24 and 25, Yadav highlighted key provisions of the newly approved Madhya Pradesh Civil Aviation Policy-2025.

As part of the policy, the state government will provide financial incentives to promote air connectivity. Aviation companies will receive a grant of Rs 7.5 lakh for each new domestic flight connecting Madhya Pradesh to other states and Rs 10 lakh for every new international flight introduced. Additionally, tenders will soon be invited for a helicopter service connecting Indore, Ujjain, and Omkareshwar.

The cabinet, chaired by Yadav, also approved a new Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSME) Development Policy aimed at fostering industrial growth. Under this policy, investments exceeding Rs 2.5 crore in small industries will be safeguarded, and privately developed industrial areas will receive the same benefits and facilities as those established by the state government.

HC slams railways over ticket sales

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Questioning the rationale of selling excess tickets, the Delhi High Court on Wednesday sought the response of Indian Railways on a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) seeking safety measures to prevent stampedes similar to the one which happened recently at New Delhi Railway Station. During the hearing of the PIL, the Bench of Chief Justice DK Upadhyay and Justice Tushar Rao Gedela questioned the Railways for selling tickets in excess of the number of passengers that can be accommodated in a coach.

"If you fix the number of passengers to be accommodated in a coach then why do you sell, why the number of tickets sold exceed that number? That is a problem," the Court said. The Judges also referred to Section 57 of the Railways Act which mandates that the administration shall fix the maximum number of passengers which may be carried in a compartment.

"If you implement a simple thing in a positive manner in letter and spirit, such situation can be avoided. On rush days you may increase that number to accommodate the rush depending on exigencies which keep on arriving from time to time. But not fixing the strength to be accommodated in a coach, this provision appears to have been neglected all along," Observed the Court.

The Court was hearing a petition moved by Arth Vidhi, an organisation of a group of lawyers, entrepreneurs and others professionals, in the backdrop of



Passengers at ticket counters of the New Delhi Railway Station

the recent stampede which resulted into death of at least 18 people at New Delhi Railway Station, overcrowded due to the ongoing rush of people to take part in the Maha Kumbh in Prayagraj.

The PIL filed through advocate Aditya Trivedi said that various legal provisions and rules under the Railways Act should be implemented properly to prevent such incidents in future. "This petition highlights mismanagement, gross negligence and complete failure of administration that caused the stampede that occurred on February 15 at New Delhi Railway Station," the counsel told the Court.

Justice Gedela pointed out that measures have been taken subsequently. "Are you aware of how many lakhs of people were at the station that day? Infrastructurally it may not be possible to control that kind of crowd. The subsequent measures were taken. It is not something like a railway accident to claim negligence."

The petitioner's counsel insisted on the seriousness of the issue and highlighted the failures of Railways. "We highlight Section 57 and 157 of Railways Act. Airports have mechanisms to know how many people are there. Indian Railways has no such mechanism. There is no notification or circular for unreserved class. If Railways is not following its own rules, then how can we expect security," he said.

"If we go to station right now, we will see a lot of crowd without platform ticket and train ticket. We don't see any compliance with the Railways Circular requiring platform ticket. If Railways had complied with its own rules, a lot of things could have been prevented. We have come in larger public interest. I am not commenting on infrastructure or any policy," he argued.

Maha economic Sangam at Kumbh raises UP's revenue

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

The Maha Kumbh festival in the holy city of Prayagraj is estimated to have generated over Rs 3 Lakh Crore (\$360 Billion) in business through goods and services, making it one of India's largest economic events.

According to the Uttar Pradesh government, more than 53 Crore devotees have already taken a holy dip in the sacred waters, with millions continuing to visit daily. It is projected that nearly 60 Crore people will participate in the ritual by February 26. The Mahakumbh, which occurs once every 144 years, is being held in

Prayagraj from January 13 to February 26, attracting millions of devotees over the six-week period.

According to the Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT) Secretary General and Chandni Chowk MP Praveen Khandelwal, the Mahakumbh is boosting local trade with a surge in demand for Maha Kumbh-themed products such as diaries, calendars, jute bags, and stationery. "Due to the unprecedented enthusiasm across the country, it is now expected that nearly 60 Crore people will participate in the Maha Kumbh by February 26, leading to a massive business turnover

exceeding Rs 3 Lakh Crore. Sales are reported to have increased due to meticulous branding. It also proves that India's sanatana economy has deep-rooted strength, playing a significant role in the country's overall economic framework," Khandelwal added.

This has provided a significant boost to Uttar Pradesh's economy and created new business opportunities. Before the commencement of the Maha Kumbh, initial estimates were projected the arrival of 40 Crore people and business transactions worth around Rs 2 Lakh Crore. According to the Uttar Pradesh government, over 53 Crore



Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath speaks during the Budget session of the state Legislative Assembly, in Lucknow

devotees have already taken a holy dip in the sacred waters, with millions continuing to visit daily. Highlighting the economic impact of the Mahakumbh, Khandelwal noted that several business sectors have witnessed large-scale economic activities, including hospitality and accommodation; food and beverage sector; transport and logistics; religious attire; puja samagri, and handicrafts, textiles, apparel and other consumer goods; healthcare and wellness services; media, advertising and entertainment; civic services; telecom, mobile, AI-based technology, CCTV cameras, and other equipment.

Khandelwal further pointed out that the economic benefits of Mahakumbh are not limited to Prayagraj. Cities and towns within a 150 km radius have also experienced a significant business surge, strengthening local economies.

Additionally, Ayodhya, Varanasi, and other religious destinations have seen an increase in pilgrim visits, as devotees travel for the darshan and worship of Lord Ram in Ayodhya, Lord Shiva in Varanasi, and others in the nearby districts. This has further fueled massive economic activities in these areas.

Significant milestone for the State in milk production

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

In the presence of Union Home and Cooperation Minister Amit Shah and Chief Minister Dr. Mohan Yadav, a collaboration agreement will be signed on February 25 at Kushabhau Thackeray International Convention Center in Bhopal between the M.P. State Co-operative Dairy Federation Limited, associated milk unions, and the National Dairy Development Board. This partnership marks a significant achievement for the state government in the field of milk production.

State Co-operative Dairy Federation Limited, associated milk unions, and the National Dairy Development Board (NDDB), which is now being formally executed. The agreement, will be in effect for five years, with the possibility of extension through mutual consent. Under this initiative, collection centers will be established in every Gram Panchayat, the processing capacity of milk unions will be expanded, and the number of milk committees will be increased. These measures are expected to result in a substantial increase in the income of milk producers across the state.

Chief Minister Dr. Mohan Yadav said that the state government has taken a significant step toward doubling the income of milk producers and promoting milk production. The Cabinet has approved the collaboration agreement between the M.P.

approximately one to three villages, allowing 9,000 committees to cover around 18,000 villages. As a result, daily milk collection is expected to increase from 10.50 lakh kg to 20 lakh kg. Additionally, the number of villages covered by the National Dairy Development Board (NDDB) through Milk Producer Organizations (MPO) will expand from 1,390 to 2,590, and milk procurement will rise from 1.3 lakh kg to 3.7 lakh kg per day.

Chief Minister Mohan Yadav said that the National Dairy Development Board will play a key role in further strengthening the Sanchi brand and expanding its presence at the national level. The brand name will remain unchanged, and no management fee will be charged for the operation and administration of milk unions. Additionally, no consultancy fee will be levied for the development of new processing facilities and infrastructure. To enhance efficiency, technical and management experts will be appointed to the milk unions as needed, ensuring smooth operations while safeguarding the interests of the existing staff. A complaint redressal system will also be established to address and resolve grievances of dairy farmers associated with milk cooperative societies.



Members of the Maharashtra community during a procession on the birth anniversary of Veer Chhatrapati Shivaji, in Bhopal on Wednesday. Pioneer photo

MP Transco organizes CPR training workshop

PNS ■ JABALPUR

In a collaborative effort between Madhya Pradesh Power Transmission Company (M.P. Transco), the Red Cross Society, and local district hospitals, training workshops on CPR and other life-saving techniques are being conducted across transmission line maintenance subdivisions and extra high-tension substations in district headquarters.

Executive Engineer and workshop convener Ajit Verma conveyed the message of M.P. Transco Managing Director Er. Sunil Tiwari, emphasizing the significance of the training. "If a worker succeeds in saving even a single life, the purpose of this training will be fully realized," he stated. The practical training session was conducted by Dr. Shilpa Agarwal, Head of Department and Co-Principal of the Signalous Department, and Dr. Niti Aggarwal, Co-Head of the Department of Surgery. Around 50 maintenance, operations, and security personnel of M.P. Transco actively participated in the program. CPR training was conducted

using human effigies, and instructional videos were utilized to enhance understanding. Each participant was given hands-on practice under expert supervision to ensure they effectively learned primary aid techniques. The training also covered other life-saving techniques, including rescuing a drowning person, responding to electric shocks, and managing choking incidents. Participants' queries were addressed, ensuring clarity and confidence in handling emergency situations. The workshop was successfully conducted under the continuous efforts of Executive Engineer Ajit Verma, reinforcing M.P. Transco's commitment to the safety and well-being of its employees and society at large.

Illegally transported liquor seized at Gandhinagar, destroyed

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

The Excise Department conducted a raid in the Gandhinagar area on Tuesday, seizing illegally transported liquor stored in multiple canes. Acting on the instructions of Assistant Excise Commissioner Deepam Raichura, the excise team confiscated and destroyed the illicit liquor by pouring it on the ground. Around 15 canes filled with liquor were disposed of during the operation. Excise Controller HS Goyal stated that strict action is being taken against those involved in the illegal sale and transportation of liquor in Bhopal. Multiple teams are actively conducting raids in different areas to curb such

activities. On Tuesday, three to four teams carried out operations at various locations. During the raid in the Naya Basti and Vikas Nagar areas of Gandhinagar, authorities recovered nine liters of hand-made liquor along with approximately 170 kg of raw materials used for its production. Samples were collected on-site before the illicit substance, known as lahan, was destroyed. Later in the evening, a man identified as Dishank Morandani, a resident of Shyampur, was caught transporting liquor on a scooter in Gandhinagar. The Excise Department has intensified its crackdown on illegal liquor operations, with officials vowing continued action against offenders.

Kidzee, Little Millennium Annual Fest

Bhopal: The annual function Aarohan of Kidzee Lambakhedha and Little Millennium Kolar concluded at Ravindra Bhawan late on Tuesday evening amid scenes of jubilation from the young scholars, parents, and teachers.



The event was graced by the Chief Guest, Additional DCP of Bhopal, Ghanshyam Malviya. The vibrant performances by the children captivated the audience. DCP Malviya said that keeping children entirely away from mobile phones and social media is impractical. Instead, parents should educate them on their positive use and provide proper guidance. This year's theme, 'Kashmir to Kanyakumari', showcased India's cultural diversity through traditional attire, folk art, and dance. Young performers, dressed in regional outfits, presented folk dances, promoting unity and

cultural richness. Children's performances, including dance, drama, and singing, won over the audience. Special guests appreciated their efforts and distributed awards. The event highlighted the importance of holistic development, combining education with art and culture to ensure a well-rounded growth experience for children.

BMC fines Baraat for fireworks

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

In a continued effort to curb air pollution and maintain cleanliness, the Bhopal Municipal Corporation (BMC) on Wednesday levied spot fines on those found violating environmental norms by bursting firecrackers outside Utsav Marriage Garden on Hoshangabad Road. BMC later said the act not only contributed to air pollution but also littered the service road, prompting immediate intervention by the municipal health department team. As part of its relentless drive to penalize violators, BMC collected Rs 1,07,430 in fines across 819 cases of cleanliness violations. Additionally, Rs 15,100 was collected from 19 cases of Construction and Demolition (C&D) waste violations, reinforcing the civic body's commitment to tackling pollution at multiple levels.



Police restrict engineering students as they march towards CM's residence against the Director of the Institute demanding for his resignation, for allowing police to enter the college campus and hostels thrashing students following a group clash at Maulana Azad National Institute of Technology (MANIT) in Bhopal on Wednesday.

Class 8 student ends life in pvt school hostel

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

A 14-year-old student of a private school in Tara Sewania allegedly committed suicide at the school hostel on Tuesday evening at around 7:30 pm. The Parwalia police handed over the body to the family after a post-mortem on Wednesday afternoon. However, the student's father suspects foul play, stating that his son was courageous and could not have taken such a drastic step. According to SHO Rohit Singh Nagar, the deceased, Vansh Kushwaha, was a resident of Naven Nagar, Aishbagh. He had been studying at the School for the past two years and was living in the hostel. On Tuesday evening, Vansh returned to his room after attending a yoga class and allegedly hanged himself using a towel tied to a window grill. The warden informed the police, following which the FSL team inspected the room. A torn page from a notebook was

found, containing a note written in English. The translated version reads: "I don't understand what will happen in my life in the future. How can someone cheat like this? However, no one is at fault in this. Everyone is good. Don't know what will happen next." Handwriting experts are analyzing whether the note matches Vansh's handwriting. Police checked hostel CCTV footage, which showed that Vansh attended yoga class and later returned to his room to fill a water bottle. Three of his roommates left for dinner, leaving him alone. When they returned, Vansh was found hanging, and the room door was open from the outside. No one else was seen entering the room before the incident. Vansh's father, Santosh Kushwaha, who runs a primary school in Aishbagh, has raised suspicions over the incident. He stated that his son was active in academics, sports, and yoga and was preparing to join Army

School with aspirations of becoming a scientist. He spoke to his son over the phone at 3:30 pm on Tuesday, during which Vansh did not mention any issues. "Everything seemed normal," he said. Santosh further questioned the circumstances of his son's death, pointing out that the window grill was too low for hanging, the towel used was thick and difficult to tie into a noose, the family was informed of the incident two hours late, around 9:30 pm, and upon reaching the hospital, the staff did not allow them to see or touch their son. He also alleged that the hostel authorities failed to take immediate medical action, and no school or hostel representatives were present during the post-mortem. Demanding an impartial investigation, Santosh said, "Something wrong has happened to my son. This incident should be thoroughly probed." The Parwalia police have registered a case and are investigating the matter.

Free urology camp to be Organized at Sewa Sadan Eye Hospital from March 24

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

The 100th free Urology Camp will be organized at Sewa Sadan Eye Hospital, Sant Hirdaram Nagar, in collaboration with Jeev Sewa Sansthan from March 24, 2025. The camp will provide free examination, treatment, and surgeries for patients suffering from urinary disorders such as kidney and bladder stones, enlarged prostate, hydrocele, and other urological conditions. Patient registration has already begun at the IHL Wing of Sewa Sadan Eye Hospital and will continue daily from 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM, except Sundays, until March 24, 2025. Patients can also register by calling 6260392547. The camp will accommodate a maximum of 100 patients on a first-come, first-served basis, with priority given to those from economically weaker sections. The camp will be conducted from March 24 to March 31, 2025. Free consultations and diagnostic tests will take place from March 24 to March 27, following which

patients requiring surgery will be admitted on March 27. Urology specialists will perform surgeries from March 28 to March 30, and post-operative patients will be discharged after receiving necessary medical care on March 31. The camp will cover all essential medical tests, including pathology tests, sonography, X-rays, and uroflowmetry, along with surgeries, hospitalization, medicines, food, milk, and fruits, all at no cost to the patients. To avail the benefits of the camp, patients must bring a photocopy of their Aadhar card and the mobile number of a family member or relative. Those who have undergone prior treatment for urinary conditions are required to bring their previous prescriptions and test reports. Since its inception in 1994, a total of 99 urology camps have been organized, benefiting over 52,000 patients and providing free surgeries to 11,300 individuals. The 100th Free Urology Camp continues this legacy, ensuring that quality medical care reaches those in need without financial burden.

Three women Maoists killed in Balaghat distt

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

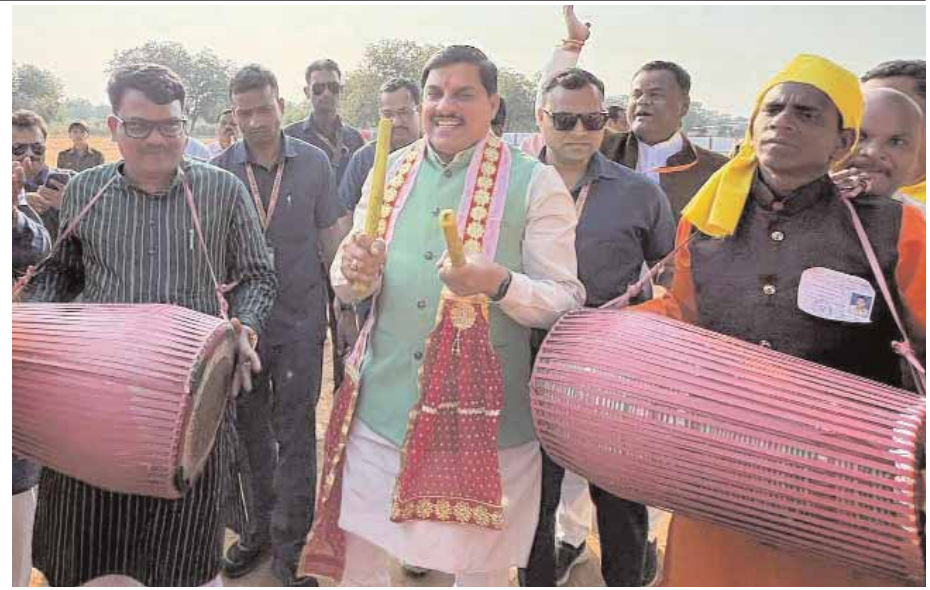
Three women Maoists were killed on Wednesday in an encounter with the police in Madhya Pradesh's Balaghat district, an official said. The anti-Maoist Hawk Force of the state police and local police teams took part in the operation that took place in a forested area near Chhattisgarh border, said additional superintendent of police Vijay Dabar. The gun battle took place in the morning, at a location some 90 km from the district headquarters, and more details were awaited, Dabar told. "Hawk Force and the police neutralized three hardcore Maoists in an encounter near Ronda Forest Camp in Supkhar Forest Range under Garhi Police Station area," an official statement said. Police recovered an INSAS rifle, a Self-Loading Rifle (SLR) and a .303 rifle besides essential daily-use items, it said, adding that some Maoists were injured in the encounter, but managed to escape. Twelve police teams are carrying out a combing operation to track them down, the statement added.

Emergency health services on standby during Global Investors Summit

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Drawing on resources from government-run hospitals, tertiary facilities, and private hospitals in the state capital, the district health administration on Wednesday outlined comprehensive preparations ahead of the Global Investors Summit. In a brief released to the media, the district health office said that extensive arrangements are in place for the well-being of attendees during the two-day summit. A fully equipped advanced medical unit is being set up at the summit venue, featuring ICU beds, cardiac defibrillators, oxygen support, ECG machines, multiparameter monitors, and other essential medical equipment. Pathological testing facilities will also be available at the venue and the tent city at Kaliyasot. Additionally, a team of senior doctors will be on standby to handle any emergency medical situations. Preparations have also been made at government and private medical institutions to support the summit. In coordination with the district administration and law

enforcement, medical teams, ambulances, and medical equipment will be strategically stationed at the airport, hotels, and event venue. Leading private hospitals, including Apollo Sage Hospital, Sagar Multispecialty Hospital, Bansal Hospital, LN Medical College, Chirayu Medical College, Nobel Multispecialty Hospital, Narmada Trauma Centre, RKDF Medical College, People's Medical College, and Career Hospital & Research Centre, will provide medical support for the event. Emergency medical facilities at the airport, hotels, tent city, and event venue have been integrated with nearby private hospitals, AIIMS Bhopal, and Hamidia Hospital. To further enhance emergency response capabilities, PM Shri Air Ambulance Services will be on standby from February 23 to 26. All 108 ambulance services in Bhopal have been tested for functionality, with additional ambulances from neighbouring districts placed on standby. Hospitals, both government and private, have ensured the availability of doctors, paramedical staff, and support personnel.



Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav being given a warm welcome by the Tribal Community at Nowrozabad in Umaria District, Madhya Pradesh on Wednesday. Pioneer photo

Three of a family killed in road accident at Maihar

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

A couple and their daughter lost their lives, while two other family members sustained injuries after their speeding car crashed into a parked truck near Narora village on National Highway 30, approximately 20 km from the district headquarters. Maihar Kotwali police station in-charge Animesh

Dwivedi stated that the accident occurred around 1:30 PM when the family was returning to Mumbai after attending the Mahakumbh in Prayagraj. The driver reportedly lost control of the vehicle, leading to a fatal collision with a stationary truck near Narora village on National Highway 30, approximately 20 km from the district headquarters. Three occupants of the car

died on the spot, identified as Sunil Kumar Upadhyay (62), his wife Sarojita Upadhyay (56), and their daughter Sneha Upadhyay (28). The two injured family members were rushed to the district hospital, where they are receiving treatment. Authorities have registered a case, and further investigation into the incident is underway.

Although every possible care and caution has been taken to avoid errors or omissions, this publication is being sold on the condition and understanding that information given in this publication is merely for reference and must not be taken as having authority of or binding in any way on the writers, editors, publishers, and printers and sellers who do not owe any responsibility for any damage or loss to any person, a purchaser of this publication or not for the result of any action taken on the basis of this work. All disputes are subject to the exclusive jurisdiction of competent court and forums in Bhopal only. Readers are advised and requested to verify and seek appropriate advice to satisfy themselves about the veracity of any kind of advertisement before responding to any contents published in this newspaper. The printer, publisher, editor and any employee of the Pioneer Group's will not be held responsible for any kind of claim made by the advertisers of the products & services and shall not be made responsible for any kind of loss, consequences and further product-related damages on such advertisements.

Participation and safety of women will be ensured in Tourism

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

To enhance the tourism sector and improve facilities in the state, the MP Tourism Board will sign significant agreements at the Global Investors Summit. Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) will be established with organizations such as India Hikes, Indigo Airlines, RedBus, and UN Women. These agreements will focus on key areas, including women's safety, cleanliness at tourist destinations, expansion of tourism facilities, and skill development. Principal Secretary of Tourism and Culture and Managing Director of the Tourism Board, Sheo Shekhar Shukla said that under the leadership of Chief Minister Dr. Mohan Yadav, special efforts are being

made to position the state as a safe, clean and modern tourist destination. As part of this initiative, the MoU with the United Nations Women's Organization (UN Women) aims to create employment opportunities for women in the tourism sector. New trekking routes will be developed in collaboration with India Hikes. A MoU will also be signed with RedBus India Private Limited to install pink toilets for women in Orchha. Additionally, tourism facilities at the historic Gwalior Fort will be expanded in partnership with Indigo Airlines. As part of initiatives like 'Safe Tourist Destinations for Women,' efforts are being made to enhance safety and inclusivity for women at tourist sites. In this context, an MoU is being signed between the Madhya Pradesh Tourism

Board and the United Nations Women Organization (UN Women). The objective of this partnership is to make tourism in the state more inclusive and sensitive towards women. Under this initiative, UN Women will provide technical support and assist in the development and implementation of policies, plans, and programs of the Tourism Board. The key goals include increasing women's participation in the tourism sector, promoting entrepreneurship, and facilitating access to economic resources for women. The initiative will also focus on making tourist destinations safer for women, conducting awareness programs, and encouraging positive social behavior. The Madhya Pradesh Tourism Board, in collaboration with

RedBus India Private Limited and the district administration, will construct pink toilets for women at Kanchan Ghat and Citadel Complex in Orchha. RedBus will be responsible for the design, construction, and installation of these modern toilets, which will be specifically designed for women's convenience. The company will also maintain these facilities for a period of three years. Additionally, the Tourism Board, in partnership with Indigo Airlines, will work on expanding tourism facilities and organizing cultural activities at the historic Gwalior Fort, further enhancing the visitor experience. Tourists and local women in Orchha will have access to modern and clean toilet facilities. These toilets will be equipped with a reliable water supply, electricity connection,

and proper sewage treatment arrangements. Local women will be actively involved in the operation and maintenance of these facilities, ensuring their sustainability. This project will further enhance Orchha's development as a modern tourist destination. The Tourism Board and the country's leading trekking organization 'India Hikes' will identify and develop five new trekking routes. 'India Hikes' has previously developed 'Moghliland Trek' in the buffer area of Pench National Park, in which 288 participants from 17 groups of the country have experienced trekking and camping. Similarly, Narmada Bank-Water Trek has been developed in Alirajpur district, in which 101 participants from 06 groups experienced



Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav unveils a statue of former Prime Minister late Atal Bihari Vajpayee during a programme at Nowrozabad in Umaria district, Madhya Pradesh on Wednesday. Pioneer photo



Minister for Minority Affairs Krishna Gaur being garlanded during the unveiling ceremony of a bust of Chhatrapati Shivaji on his birth anniversary at Saket Nagar in Bhopal on Wednesday. Pioneer photo

Tehsildar's apology ends sit-in protest

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

A district administration official found himself at the centre of controversy in the state capital on Wednesday when he ordered the microphone of a sound system to be switched off during Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj's birth anniversary celebrations. The officer, Tehsildar Kunal Raut, tendered an apology after his action triggered a protest with attendees, predominantly from the Maratha community, staging a sit-in at the statue of Shivaji Maharaj on Link Road No. 1. The event, a long-standing tradition held annually near the Red Cross Hospital, was disrupted when Raut ordered the removal of the sound system and tents, citing a lack of official permission.

The sudden intervention angered the attendees, including BJP councillor Pappu Vilas Ghadge, and prompted chants against the authorities. The presence of a youth dressed as Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj further intensified the emotional response from the crowd. As tensions escalated, police arrived to manage the situation and divert traffic. Raut, realising the gravity of the situation, returned to the scene to address the protesters. In an effort to restore calm, he publicly apologised in front of the statue, which led to the crowd dispersing. After the incident, Raut clarified that he had no intention of disrespecting the community's sentiments. He explained that his actions were based solely on the absence of required permissions for the event.

VD reviews PM visit preparations

Bhopal: Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) State President and Khajuraho MP Vishnu Dutt Sharma visited the Kushabhau Thakre Auditorium on Wednesday to inspect preparations for Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Bhopal. He provided necessary instructions to ensure smooth arrangements. Speaking on the occasion, Sharma stated that PM Modi, the world's most popular leader, will be visiting Madhya Pradesh on February 23. During his visit, he will lay the foundation stone for a cancer hospital at Bageshwar Dham, a significant religious and spiritual center in Bundelkhand. He further emphasized that it is a great privilege for all BJP workers that PM Modi will address senior party officials, MPs, and MLAs at Kushabhau Thakre Auditorium on the same day. Sharma criticized the Congress party, alleging that it is tarnishing Madhya Pradesh's progressive image, thereby insulting the people of the state. He remarked that Congress has a history of disrespecting Sanatan Dharma and saints, adding that its leaders, facing a political downfall, are making baseless statements. Sharma highlighted the immense excitement among BJP workers ahead of PM Modi's visit to Bundelkhand and Bhopal. He described it as a moment of great pride for the party that the Prime Minister will guide senior leaders, MPs, and MLAs. On behalf of Madhya Pradesh BJP and its workers, Sharma extended a warm welcome to PM Modi and assured that preparations for his grand reception were in full swing. Sharma further stated that PM Modi will inaugurate the Global Investors Summit in Bhopal on February 24, marking a significant milestone for the state. The summit, being hosted in Bhopal for the first time, will attract industrialists and investors from across the country and around the world, bringing investment opportunities worth lakhs of crores. He praised CM Mohan Yadav's leadership, asserting that under PM Modi's guidance, the state is making remarkable progress.

Haryana Governor calls on MP Gov

Bhopal: Governor Mangubhai Patel was paid a courtesy visit by Haryana Governor Bandaru Dattatreya at Raj Bhavan on Wednesday.

Governor Patel welcomed Shri Dattatreya by presenting him a shawl and shrial. Dattatreya greeted Patel by presenting Ang Vastram. There was a mutual exchange of souvenirs by the Governors of both the states.

Mayor seeks citizens' feedback on sanitation effort

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Mayor Malti Rai on Wednesday sought increased citizen participation in the feedback component of Swachh Survekshan-2024. To facilitate participation, the mayor issued official links and QR codes for easy feedback submission. She urged all residents to register their positive feedback and contribute to making Bhopal the cleanest city in the country. At a review meeting held at the Mayor's Office at ISBT, she assessed ongoing efforts to ensure maximum positive citizen responses on the Swachh Bharat Mission web-

site. She instructed municipal employees to proactively engage with residents, motivate them to submit feedback, and assist them wherever possible. During the session, she also reviewed the training provided to BCLL and Parking Cell employees regarding citizen feedback and directed them to inform citizens about the initiative and facilitate their feedback submission. Separately, the BMC anti-encroachment squad removed unauthorised structures and obstructions from public spaces in various parts of the state capital on Wednesday.

The municipal team conducted large-scale removal operations across the city. Illegally placed handcarts, kiosks, unauthorised sheds, parked vehicles, makeshift shops, and unauthorised cutouts and boards were dismantled and seized. During the operation, the anti-encroachment team confiscated six counters, 19 handcarts, three iron pipes, two sheets, four benches, two tables, one large kiosk, and two grills, among other items. The municipal staff also issued warnings to individuals, advising them to refrain from encroaching again, as stricter actions would be taken in the future.

Farmers to get incentive of Rs 2K per hect

Bhopal: Chief Minister Mohan Yadav said that the state government will transfer Rs 2000 per hectare to the bank accounts of paddy-producing farmers. Small farmers will also benefit from this. The state government first decided to give incentives for the production of Kodo-Kutki to the farmers. Produce will also be procured from wheat-producing farmers at Rs 2600 per quintal. The government will buy milk from the dairy farmers and will also give them bonuses. Solar pumps will be provided to the farmers freeing them from electricity bills. Yadav said that Gita Bhawans will be built in every urban body. A new bridge will be built on the Son river in Umaria at Rs 45 crore. Another bridge will also be

built at Rs 32 crore. Chief Minister Yadav on Wednesday unveiled the statue of former Prime Minister Bharat Ratna late Atal Bihari Vajpayee in Naurozabad of Umaria district and dedicated various development works and performed Bhoomi Pujan. Yadav said that Atal Ji was a great personality. His birth centenary is being celebrated this year. He was the first person in the country to consider the poor in the villages. Today, the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana has made transportation easy for villagers. Bharat Ratna Shri Atal Ji was the first person to connect villages with development and cities, who was much revered by leaders of the ruling and opposition parties alike in Parliament.

Three-day statewide vulture census concludes in Mandsaur

PNS ■ MANDSAUR

The three-day statewide vulture census for 2025, conducted under the Mandsaur Forest Division, concluded successfully. The census, held from February 17 to 19, was conducted daily between 7:00 AM and 9:00 AM in designated forest and revenue areas where vulture populations were observed. Officials, staff members, and volunteers actively participated in the survey, covering high rocky areas near the Chambal River and other identified zones. During the census, Mandsaur district recorded 728 vultures on the first day, 992 on the second day, and 1,007 on

the third day. The count focused exclusively on vultures observed in a resting position. The survey identified seven vulture species, including the Indian Vulture (Long-billed Vulture), White-backed Vulture, Red-headed Vulture, Egyptian Vulture, Cinerous Vulture, Himalayan Griffon, and Eurasian Griffon. Experts noted that three of these species migrate to the region during winter due to favorable environmental conditions. The increasing vulture population in the Gandhisagar Wildlife Sanctuary is attributed to ongoing conservation efforts, including the ban on harmful drugs like Diclofenac and Nimesulide, community awareness ini-

tiatives in surrounding villages, and habitat protection measures. Vultures play a crucial role in the ecosystem by consuming carcasses and preventing the spread of diseases. Local volunteers actively participated in the survey, helping raise awareness about the ecological importance of vultures and the adverse effects of their declining population. The rising numbers indicate a positive impact of conservation efforts, demonstrating that endangered species can recover with proper protective measures. The increasing vulture population in the Gandhisagar Wildlife Sanctuary is a promising sign for both the sanctuary and the region's overall ecosystem.

Man ends life by hanging in Aishbagh

Bhopal: A 34-year-old man committed suicide by hanging with the ceiling in Aishbagh area. The reason for the suicide could not be revealed as a suicide note was not found. His anniversary was on February 22. His wife has gone to Vidisha to attend a relative's wedding. On Tuesday night, the man was alone at home, he committed suicide. Nine months ago, his wife gave birth to a daughter. The police have registered a case and started investigation in the matter. According to the police, Ravi Jaduon (34) was originally a resident of Kararia village in Vidisha district. Currently, he was living in a rented room in Aishbagh area. For the last 10 years, the youth was living in Bhopal and working as a

delivery boy in a courier company. His wife went to Vidisha on Monday to attend a close relative's wedding. The youth was alone at home, when he made a noose of a towel and hanged himself with the help of a fan. The police got the FSL team to inspect the spot, from where the police have not found a suicide note. The police have registered a case and started investigation.

Luxury tent city takes shape at Kaliasot for GIS

ANKUSH SINGH ■ BHOPAL

The State capital is gearing up for the prestigious Global Investors Summit with an extraordinary addition—Bhopal's first-ever tent city at Kaliasot Ground. With 108 luxurious tents set against a scenic backdrop, the initiative promises to blend business with nature, offering a unique hospitality experience to guests from India and abroad. This is the first time a camp accommodation of this magnitude has been set up in Bhopal. Chakravarti Singh, the project's lead, highlighted the comfort and grandeur of the accommodations. He says that each of these Swiss tents is furnished with double beds, air conditioning, and elegant decorative lighting, ensuring a lavish stay. Additionally, all tents come with attached washrooms, reinforcing the project's commitment to luxury and convenience.



Singh assured that the tent city will rival the experience of four- and five-star hotels, providing guests with world-class amenities in a serene setting. The construction team is working tirelessly to meet the deadline, ensuring a flawless setup for the high-profile summit. The ambitious project is being executed by around 200 skilled professionals, most of whom hail from Mumbai and have extensive experience in building

elaborate film sets. The same team previously constructed a tent city in Kutch, Gujarat, demonstrating their expertise in high-quality temporary structures. While a Rajasthan-based company holds the contract, the hands-on work is being carried out by Mumbai's finest craftsmen. The tent city will be surrounded by a beautifully landscaped garden, adding to its visual appeal. A welcoming reception area will greet visitors, leading to an aesthetically designed dining space and lush greenery. These elements aim to create an inviting and peaceful ambience for guests attending the summit. Ensuring guests' safety and comfort is a top priority. The tent city will be equipped with Wi-Fi, telephone services, fire safety systems, and medical facilities. Additionally, robust security measures will be in place to ensure a hassle-free stay. A dedicated hospitality team will be on standby 24/7, attending to every need of the guests. The Global Investors Summit is expected to attract around 15,000 participants from across the world. The local administration and electricity department are actively supporting the project to ensure seamless execution. With Bhopal hosting both its first-ever tent city and this large-scale summit, the event is poised to be a landmark occasion in the city's history.

NORTH CENTRAL RAILWAY
Tender Notice
Open Tender No.: JHS-RCNK-M-AFL-24-25-16
E-Tenders are invited by Chief Workshop Manager, Rail Coach Naveenikaran Karkhana, Jhansi from experienced and/or interested contractors on behalf of the President of India for the under mentioned work-
Name of work: Provision for AMC for Forklifts and Platform Trucks.
Cost of work ₹ 49,26,612.05/- (Including GST) Bid Security ₹ 98,500/- Time of completion Twenty Four Months
Online tender closing date and time: 13.03.2025 at 11.00 Hrs.
Detailed information about tender and tender format is available at website www.ireps.gov.in. 328/25 FA
North central railways @CPRONCR www.ncr.indianrailways.gov.in

CM opens State Archery Academy

Bhopal: Chief Minister Mohan Yadav inaugurated the state-level archery sports academy in Jabalpur on Wednesday. He stated that players in the state will be provided with the same facilities that are available at the national level. The sports policy formulated by the Sports Ministry will be implemented in the state. Under the leadership of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, India has made remarkable progress in the field of sports to produce athletes for the Olympics, Asian Games, and international competitions. Chief Minister Dr. Yadav was addressing the inaugural ceremony of the State Archery Sports Academy, built at a cost of Rs 26.80 crores in Ranjhi, Jabalpur.

केनरा बैंक Canara Bank
Regional office -1st Floor, Sai Baba Complex, Near GDA Building, Phool Bagh, Gwalior Ph. 0751-2423126
POSSESSION NOTICE (Rule 8 (1)) For Immovable Property
The Understanding being the Authorised officer of the Canara Bank Under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002, in exercise of the power conferred under Section 13(12) read with rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002 issues a demand notice on below mentioned date to the following Borrowers/Guarantors, calling upon them to repay the amount mentioned in the respective Notice with in 60 days from the date of receipt of said notices. The borrowers having failed to repay the amount, Notice is here by given to the borrower and the public in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the property described here in below in exercise of powers conferred on him under Section (4) of Section 13 of the Act read with Rule 8 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 on dates mentioned below, the borrowers/Guarantors in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealing with the properties will be subject to the charge of Canara Bank, for an amount herein below mentioned & interest thereon. The borrower's attention is invited to provision of Section 13 (8) of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets.
Name and Address of Borrower/Property Owner Outstanding Amount (Rs.) Description of the Property
Branch : Canara Bank, Morar, Gwalior, Ph.: 8077065337, E-mail : cb5677@canarabank.com
Borrower - 1. Nitin Soni S/o Shri Ramesh Soni, Add: Tatade Bandhu Market, Sarata Bazar Gwalior (M.P.)-474001
2. Sandhya Soni W/o Nitin Soni Add: Manik Ka Bada, Nimbalkar Ki Goth, Lashkar Gwalior (M.P.)-474002
Guarantor: Devendra Singh Tomar S/o Mahendra Singh Tomar Add: Hanuman Ghati Shinde Ki Chawni, Lashkar, Gwalior (M.P.)-474001
Mortgagor-Sandhya Soni W/o Nitin Kumar Soni Nitin Soni S/o Late Shri Ramesh Kumar Soni
Rs. 7,53,561.02 + Interest and Other Expenses - Recovery
Demand Notice : 02.12.2024
Possession Date 14.02.2025
PLACE: GWALIOR DATE : 19/02/2025 AUTHORISED OFFICER CANARA BANK

ESAF REGD. OFFICE: ESAF Bhavan, Mannuthy, Thrissur - 680 651, Kerala.
ESAF SMALL FINANCE BANK
GOLD AUCTION NOTICE
Notice is hereby given for the information of all concerned that Gold ornaments pledged with ESAF Small Finance Bank and not redeemed by borrowers, despite repeated reminders and notices, of our branches, are listed below. This will be auctioned as per the details given below:
DATE OF AUCTION: 10-03-2025 TIME: 2 PM TO 5 PM
AUCTION VENUE: THROUGH E-AUCTION
AUCTION ADDRESS: https://gold.matexnet.org/ Contact Number: 9500173386/9962979770
To register as bidder for the e-Auction with terms and conditions, and full details of e-Auction please visit the above site.

BRANCHES & LOAN ACCOUNT NUMBERS

DHAR: 63240000577311, 594728, 599899, 610650, 75240000270611, 2405374, 2428751, 2479964, 2481609, 2519090, 2546388, 2546808, 2553374, 2478399, 2686624, AMLA: 75240000340410, 2510856, 2598259, ANUPPUR: 6324000033365, 75240000338844, 374045, 2464922, 2586762, 2612094, 2612374, 2652448, BEGAMGANI: 6324000042698, 65824, 575424, 601917, 75240000238143, 305757, 335350, 2423000, 2425656, 2487908, 2539622, 2556019, 2583887, 2668938, BETUL: 6324000062340, 69157, 70074, 555943, 568158, 609473, 613284, 6324000019444, 195872, 199614, 202511, 204007, 238673, 253534, 258224, 261028, 292199, 300216, 317384, 332685, 337556, 341698, 350971, 37121, 371291, 2629563, 2678192, BHOPAL: 63230000501524, 6324000060424, 581353, 584597, 589268, 590305, 602415, 603104, 75240002414907, 2439480, 2658807, BINA: 63240000558237, 564885, 569636, 572930, CHHATARPUR: 75240002652528, 2675304, CHHINDWARA: 63240000562829, 574806, 602095, 75240000384144, 2443522, 2523352, 2537445, 2545120, 2575073, 2602544, DEWAS: 63240000561851, 586944, 603054, 603374, 610610, 75240002457415, 2505126, 2520987, 2559674, 2578007, 2581861, 2680244, DINDORI: 6324000068959, 609273, 75240000401656, GADARWARA: 63240000600539, 75240000230777, 239091, 245299, 274924, 292909, 339323, 343324, 408004, 2386648, 2430926, 2454101, 2456291, 2486330, 2522754, 2557527, GARHKOTTA: 75240000164391, 246451, 247505, 2614921, GWALIOR: 63240000076324, 562899, 75240002437864, 2544062, 2687692, 63240000558197, 570544, 584117, 591804, 598721, 611878, 75240002441545, 2448443, 2488346, 2522414, 2525788, 2556869, 2615130, 2648806, 2668684, HATTA: 6324000068339, 75240000331667, 366701, 397974, 2411183, 2411313, 2639344, INDORE: 63240000167911, JABALPUR: 75240002433471, 75249923, 2473364, 2587630, 2605348, 2687829, KATNI: 6324000073159, 75240000175260, 242484, 269134, 263346, 367569, MAHAR: 6324000038566, 586274, 75240000167025, 213820, 218961, 247835, 379956, 2536907, 2616037, 2616057, MANDLA: 63240000604152, 606538, 75240000173854, 2515287, NAGOD: 63240000593410, 75240000266069, 26571169, NAINPUR: 752400002635621, NARMADAPURAM (HOSHANGABAD): 63240000057490, 75230002359139, 75240000260190, 295014, 323043, NASRULLAGANJ: 63240000597263, 604412, 75240002557317, 2560201, 2560491, 2566860, 2600317, 2622905, 2651530, 2653716, 2668318, 2669356, 2681003, 2687022, PANDHURNA: 63240000558977, 75240000197548, 201163, 354454, 2482667, 2502382, 2657699, PANNA: 6324000056262, 401634, 75240000379216, PAWAI: 75240000290773, RAJGARH: 75240002551828, RATLAM: 63240000214385, 564735, 598621, 75240002579695, REWA: 63240000596484, 75240000180970, 265101, 282828, 310057, 398760, 402854, 403953, 2617535, 2634873, SAGAR: 6324000070874, 75240000339723, 1571747, 2404606, 2417412, 2436345, 2443492, 2448683, 2468664, 2478285, 2518902, 2535919, 2594386, 2695997, 2610778, 2615989, 2658167, 2667760, 2669036, 2669416, 2680994, SAUSAAR: 63240000555793, 602735, 752400002409837, 2417842, SEONI: 752400002531946, SEONIMALWA: 6324000038996, 613944, 75240002425636, 2629783, 2646500, 26489936, SHAHDOL: 63240000606308, 606948, 75240002491160, 2557267, 260410, 2648326, 2678549, SIHORA: 63240000036230, 2246116, 411264, 585194, 75240000291521, 1158025, 2474223, 2554183, 2556069, 2610878, 2665484, 2680904, 2684097, 2686024, 2688900, SOHAGPUR: 63240000646351, 75240000299596, 324771, 342516, 2381977, 2391847, 2391258, 2410724, 2419238, 2431424, 2423313, 2432663, 2472596, 2481129, 2501824, 2501924, 2534431, 2539912, 2545500, 2556519, 2579055, 2618524, 2667790, 2681633, 2683959, TIKAMGARH: 752400002390300, 2573006, UJJAIN: 63240000556011, 562039, 562739, 606828, 75240002380909, 2381557, 2387246, 2415575, 2486030, 2583717, 2583777, 2645044, UMARIA: 63240000341484, 353013, 75240000220166, 25540409, 2554493, 2643145, 2663737, WIDISHA: 63240000579687, 75240002488776, 2547376, 2630030.

Customers who are interested to release the ornaments by paying the total due amount may do so, at the respective branches, on or two days before the date of the auction. Bidders who wish to participate in the auction shall produce their KYC documents. GST No. is mandatory for registered firms/companies. Bidders shall deposit a sum of Rs.50,000 as EMD before participating in the auction. Thrissur Sd/- Date: 20-02-2025 Authorized Signatory

Punjab CM opposes US deportee flights, government defends move amid row

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

With Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann taking exception to US flights carrying Indian deportees landing in Amritsar, government sources Wednesday defended the move, saying the state makes up for the biggest share of these illegal immigrants.

Sharing figures of the three flights that have arrived in India since February five, they said Punjab residents total 126 of the 333 people deported in US military aircraft, followed by 110 from neighbouring Haryana and 74 from Gujarat.

Eight of them were from Uttar Pradesh, five from Maharashtra, two each from Himachal Pradesh, Chandigarh, Rajasthan and Goa, and one each from Jammu and Kashmir, and Uttarakhand. Each of the three flights on February 5, 15 and 16 carried over 100 Indians and 333 of them have been deported so far, they added. The total includes 262 men, 42 women and 29 minors, the sources added.

As many as 23 flights carrying Indian deportees have arrived in the country since May 2020 and all of them landed in Amritsar, they said.

Since Donald Trump's inauguration as US President, whose



Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann

campaign promises included a crackdown on illegal immigrants, three military aircraft have arrived in India carrying the deportees.

Opposition parties protested the treatment meted out to the deportees, including them being shackled, and asked the Indian government to take up the issue with the US.

After the first flight landed on February 5, Mann accused the Centre of trying to defame Punjab and said a holy city like Amritsar should not be made a "deport centre". This flight had 30 deportees from Punjab and 33

each from Haryana and Gujarat. He kept up his attack and said on Tuesday that if another US plane carrying deportees arrives in India, it may not land in the state following strong objections raised by him.

The second flight had 65 deportees from Punjab, 33 from Haryana and eight from Gujarat. The corresponding numbers for the third flight were 31, 44 and 33. Following the opposition's protest, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar told Parliament on February 6 that the government was engaging with the US to ensure that deported Indians

are not mistreated.

The minister, however, added that the process of deportation is not a new one, and the standard operating procedure for deportation by aircraft provides for the use of restraints. Women and children were not restrained, he added.

Government sources said the rules of the US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), the agency tasked with such deportations, stipulate that the "detainees transported by ICE aircraft" will be fully restrained by the use of handcuffs, waist chains and leg irons.

Karge pulls up Congress socks

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

Days after a major organisational rejig in the party, Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge on Wednesday stressed that the top workers will be held accountable for future election results in States under their charge and asking them to be wary of ideologically weak turncoats.

Addressing general secretaries and in-charges, including those appointed last week, at a meeting held at the party's new headquarters at Indira Bhawan, Kharge emphasised the importance of promoting those people who are committed to the ideology of the Congress and stand with us like a rock even in adverse circumstances.

Kharge also hinted at some more changes in the organisation, saying some changes have already taken place and some more are in the offing. "I want to talk to you about the most important thing of accountability. You all will be held accountable for revamping the organisations in states and for all future election results," he told the office-bearers. The party recently brought in new office bearers in the revamped organisation. Among those who attended the meeting



Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge in the Lok Sabha arrives for a meeting of party's general secretaries and state in-charges, in New Delhi

were former Congress chief Rahul Gandhi, senior leaders Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, KC Venugopal and Jairam Ramesh, and all general secretaries and in-charges in various states.

At the meeting, Kharge also flagged the issue of alleged "voter list manipulation" and claimed that it is happening on a large scale in elections. He noted that Rahul Gandhi also raised a question about this in the Lok Sabha.

"All of you will realise that these days the names of our supporters are deleted from the voters list. Or the name is removed and added to the adjacent booth. New names are added by the BJP just before the election. This rigging has to be stopped at all

costs," the Congress chief asserted.

Kharge pointed out that earlier the Chief Justice was also included in the selection committee of Chief Election Commission (CEC) by the order of the Supreme Court but the CJJ was removed from the panel by the Modi government.

"The government does not even trust the impartiality of the Chief Justice of the country. This matter was to be heard in the Supreme Court, but the government announced the new CEC before that. Rahul Ji also said that what is the use of such a selection committee, where you are using Leader of Opposition only for certification?" he said.

External Affairs minister to visit South Africa for G20 meeting

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar will be on a two-day visit to South Africa beginning February 20 to participate in the G20 Foreign Ministers' Meeting, Ministry of External Affairs(MEA) announced on Wednesday. The minister is expected to hold a few bilateral meetings on the margins of the meet. South Africa is currently the chair of the influential grouping.

"External Affairs Minister (EAM) Dr S Jaishankar will be visiting Johannesburg, South Africa on 20 and 21 February 2025 to participate in the G20 Foreign Ministers' Meeting (FMM) at the invitation of the Minister of International Relations and Cooperation of the Republic of South Africa, Mr. Ronald Lamola," MEA said in a statement.

The minister's participation in the G20 FMM will "strengthen" India's engagement with G20 countries and "bolster the voice of the Global South" in this important forum, it said.

India raises commitment to rural transformation in Africa-Asia

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

India is committed to rural transformation in member nations of the African-Asian Rural Development Organisation (AARDO) and will increase its technical contribution to the forum, Rural Development Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan said here on Wednesday.

He was speaking at the inauguration of the 77th session of the executive committee of the African-Asian Rural Development Organisation (AARDO).

"India gives the highest yearly membership contribution to AARDO, which is around USD 1,55,300, and the Indian government has been providing organisation, technical, and financial support to AARDO from time to time," he said.

"India will keep playing its role in rural transformation in



Shivraj Singh Chouhan addresses inaugural Session of 77th Session of Executive Committee of African Asian Rural Development, in New Delhi

member nations. India will also continue its technical support through 2025-27. The technical contribution will be increased to USD 2,50,000 per year from USD 2,00,000," he said.

Chouhan also said capacity building will remain a priority. "Education, technology and inclusive development are the

foundation stones on which we will build the future for the rural population of Asia and Africa," he said.

While talking about the Rural Development Ministry's schemes and initiatives, he said the participating nations will share their success stories, and learn from each other's experience.

Delhi HC asks Home Ministry to explain delay in Rahul Gandhi's citizenship case

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday asked the Union Home Ministry why it has not responded to the petition of BJP leader Subramanian Swamy regarding the Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's British citizenship issue, where he is facing show cause notice from the Ministry.

Home Ministry in April 2019, issued show cause notice to Rahul Gandhi on Subramanian Swamy's complaint based on the documents filed by Rahul in British company register, declaring himself as British citizen between 2002 to 2009.

A Division Bench of Chief Justice Devendra Kumar Upadhyaya and Justice Tushar Rao Gedela asked Additional Solicitor General (ASG) Chetan Sharma, who was representing the Central Government, to obtain



Rahul Gandhi in the Lok Sabha arrives for a meeting of party's general secretaries and state in-charges, in New Delhi

instructions regarding the matter.

"The prayer is not to make decision on the substantive issues of the pending matter

in either of the matters pending here or in Allahabad. He is only seeking directions on his representations. Seek instructions then

regarding stage of the proceeding regarding the letter," the Court told ASG Sharma.

This was after Swamy told the Court that the Home Ministry had issued a show cause notice to Rahul in 2019 asking him to explain his British citizenship. But there was no reply on the part of Rahul Gandhi to the same and no action was taken by the government too after that.

"The Government of India, on my letter to the Home Ministry, wrote a show cause notice to Gandhi to explain the data brought on record to show that he is also a British citizen.

Under Indian Law, no Indian can have citizenship of any other country. This was never replied, no reminders sent, no action taken by the government. The Government must complete its responsibility," Swamy contended. He was assisted by Advocate Satya Sabharwal.

The High Court posted the case for further hearing on March 26 while asking the ASG to obtain instructions on the status of the proceedings with respect to Swamy's representation.

"List on March 26 to enable ASG complete their instructions, specially keeping in view the document enclosed as Annexure P2 in the petition, which is a 2019 letter issued by MHA," the Court said, directing MHA to reply in three weeks.

In 2015, Subramanian Swamy brought documents of British company Registry showing Rahul Gandhi's statements, declaring himself as British Citizen. The documents show that Rahul floated a company named as BackOps Ltd in London between 2002 to 2009. The documents also showed that Rahul was a resident in London during this period, though he was Member of Parliament from 2004.

Gyanesh Kumar takes over as 26th CEC, Vivek Joshi as Election Commissioner

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

Gyanesh Kumar on Wednesday took over as the 26th Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) while Vivek Joshi assumed charge as an Election Commissioner. An Election Commissioner since March 2024, Kumar was elevated as the CEC on Monday.

Gyanesh Kumar replaced Rajiv Kumar, who demitted office on Tuesday, as head of the poll panel. Sukhbir Singh Sandhu is the other election commissioner. Joshi, a former Haryana cadre IAS officer, was appointed as an Election Commissioner on Monday.

In his message to voters after assuming charge, Kumar said,



New Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar is greeted by Election Commissioner Vivek Joshi

"First step for nation building is voting. Therefore, every citizen of India who has completed 18 years of age should become an elector and should always vote." The CEC asserted that the "Election Commission was, is and will

always be with the voters". A mechanical engineer from IIT-Roorkee who has served as the chief secretary of Haryana, Vivek Joshi on Wednesday assumed charge as an election commissioner. At 58, Joshi is one

of the youngest members to be a part of the poll panel.

According to the law governing the appointment of CEC and ECs, the chief election commissioner and other election commissioners will hold office for a term of six years from the date on which they assume office or till they attain the age of 65 years, "whichever is earlier". Born on May 21, 1966, Joshi will turn 65 in May 2031, but as per the law, his term in the poll panel will end on February 18 of that year.

While CEC Gyanesh Kumar will demit office on January 26, 2029, the other election commissioner, Sukhbir Singh Sandhu will retire in July 2028. Joshi could possibly supervise the conduct of the Lok Sabha elections in 2029 as the next CEC.

Congress targets BJP in Gurugram civic polls

STAFF REPORTER ■ GURUGRAM

Encouraged by the better performance in the recently held Lok Sabha and Assembly elections by the Congress party, the party has prepared many local issues to surround the ruling BJP government in the civic elections.

The party leaders will uplift issues of waterlogging, dirt, the construction of the Sheelta Mata temple, and road construction in Gurugram. Since the announcement of civic elections in early February, the party has been engaged in its preparations on a war footing.

Following an announcement of the Municipal Elections, the congress formed various committees by holding meetings at various levels, and all the committees were given their responsibilities.

Senior leaders of the party were included in the campaign and manifesto committee. Information about the issues related to the civic elections was also taken from all the senior leaders of the district.

It was decided that the party would raise the issues of waterlogging, dirt, road construction and other city issues loudly during the campaign. Party workers will go door-to-door and tell about the failures of the ruling BJP government and the schemes of the Congress.

The Congress leader said that in this election, the Congress will raise the issues of waterlogging, dirt, construction of the civil hospital, construction of Sheelta Mata temple, road construction, traffic jams and parking problems in Gurugram.

India, Malaysia to enhance defence cooperation

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

India and Malaysia on Wednesday reviewed the entire gamut of their bilateral defence ties and identified steps to further enhance cooperation in emerging areas such as cyber security and AI during talks between Defence Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh Secretary General of Ministry of Defence, Malaysia Lokman Hakim Bin Ali, defence ministry said here.

Giving details, officials said the 13th meeting of Malaysia-India Defence Cooperation Committee (MIDCOM) took place in Kuala Lumpur. Both sides expressed happiness at the growing bilateral defence cooperation with regular engagements between the two Armed Forces in recent years. The two sides held wide-ranging discussions on effective and practical initiatives to further expand bilateral defence engagements and regional and global issues.

They identified ways to deepen existing collaboration, particularly in the defence industry, maritime security, and multilateral engagements. They agreed to form a joint focus group to address non-traditional maritime security threats.

Both sides reaffirmed their commitment to fully implement the new initiatives under the defence pillar of Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, as envisioned by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Malaysian counterpart Dato' Seri Anwar Ibrahim during the latter's visit to India in August 2024. India and Malaysia also exchanged the finalised Terms of Reference (ToR) on the establishment of Strategic

Affairs Working Group. This forum will act as a consultative mechanism intermediate between the MIDCOM and the two sub-committees to progress all aspects of bilateral defence cooperation.

Both sides also exchanged the finalised ToR on the establishment of Su-30 forum as an outcome of MIDCOM. Su-30 Forum will enable closer cooperation between the two Air Forces in exchanging expertise and best practices in Su-30 maintenance.

The Defence Secretary highlighted the capability of the Indian defence industry, particularly its potential to collaborate with the Malaysian companies and the Armed Forces in their capability enhancement and modernisation.

He congratulated Malaysia on assuming the chairmanship of ASEAN and ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting-Plus and wished MoD, Malaysia the best for conduct of ADMM Plus and ASEAN Defence Senior Officials' Meeting meetings this year. India supports ASEAN centrality and unity, which is a crucial element of India's Indo-Pacific Vision.

The Defence Secretary reiterated India's support to Malaysia's endeavours as ASEAN chair in promoting a stronger, unified, and prosperous ASEAN that plays a central role in shaping the evolving dynamics of the Indo-Pacific region.

India considers Malaysia as an important partner in the Indo-Pacific as Malaysia lies at the confluence of three key foreign policy visions i.e. Act East Policy, SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region), and the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative.

CVC issues new procedure for corruption complaints

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

The Central Vigilance Commission (CVC) has issued a new procedure for handling corruption complaints referred to it for conducting preliminary inquiry by the Lokpal, an official order said.

The Lokpal directs the chief vigilance officers (CVOs) - who act as a distant arm of the Central Vigilance Commission (CVC) - to conduct preliminary inquiry and submit reports in respect of certain complaints received by it.

"An instance has been noted by the Lokpal where the preliminary inquiry entrusted by it specifically to a CVO was submitted to the Lokpal under the signature of an authority other

than the CVO. "The CVOs are advised that any preliminary inquiry directed by the Lokpal should be submitted to it by the respective CVO concerned under his signature," the order issued on Tuesday by the probity watchdog said.

The Lokpal has the mandate to inquire into allegations of corruption against certain public functionaries.

As per the provisions contained under Section 20 (1) (b) of the Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013, complaints in respect of public servants belonging to Group A, B, C or D are referred by the Lokpal to the CVC for preliminary inquiry. The CVC forwards such references to the CVOs concerned for preliminary inquiry and report.

NHRC stresses balance between digital innovation and human rights

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) chairperson Justice (retired) V Ramasubramanian emphasised that safeguarding "privacy as a human right" in the digital world is necessary, even as he pointed out that there is a "significant decline" in value systems and one must bear its consequences.

The NHRC chief's remarks came during an open house discussion on "Ensuring privacy and human rights in the digital era: A focus on corporate digital responsibility" held at its premises, with some participants joining virtually, according to an NHRC statement on Wednesday.

Some of the important suggestions that emanated from the discussion include simplifying user agreements and policy frameworks to enhance consumer understanding and control over personal data; establishing "clear accountability" structures for data breaches, especially for research institutions and third-party data processors; and strengthening user consent frameworks for greater transparency and informed decision-making.

Having "explicit penal provisions for non-compliance"; need for bilateral agreements to address cross-border security and data-sharing concerns; addressing the challenges arising from strict data localisation mandates; and having clear guidelines for obtaining verifiable parental

consent for minors, were also suggested. Addressing the participants, the NHRC chairperson "emphasised that safeguarding privacy as a human right in the digital world is necessary", the statement said.

The technological advancements should "align with fundamental human rights and privacy protection". The responsibility must begin with the individual user, it said.

Justice Ramasubramanian highlighted that "maintaining digital hygiene is crucial". He also pointed out the "significant decline in value systems, cautioning that one must bear the consequences of this shift", it said.

The NHRC chairperson reaffirmed the Commission's commitment to fostering inclusive

discussions on digital rights and corporate accountability for developing a robust regulatory framework that balances innovation, security, and individual privacy.

The intensity of the problem that arises due to misuse of data and data breaches were extensively discussed during the meeting. Further, several key provisions of the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023 were also discussed, it said.

Many participants raised concerns over the "extensive control exerted by global technology companies on user data, which complicates regulatory enforcement". Law enforcement agencies often face challenges in accessing critical data due to data storage in offshore centres, the statement said.

CM Yogi slams Opposition for spreading rumours about Mahakumbh

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath strongly criticised the opposition for allegedly spreading misinformation about the ongoing Mahakumbh, stating that such actions insult the faith of millions. Addressing a brief discussion in the state assembly, he revealed that over 56 crore devotees have already participated in the holy event. "The Mahakumbh is not organised by any government; it is an event of Sanatan culture. Those spreading baseless allegations are insulting Sanatan beliefs. Politics should not be played over such a sacred event," he remarked. The CM also accused the Samajwadi Party (SP) of opposing the Mahakumbh from the beginning. He referenced statements by opposition leaders, including West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, who allegedly referred to the event as Mrityu Kumbh (death fair), RJD leader Lalu Prasad Yadav, who dismissed it as meaningless, and Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge, who claimed that stampedes

during the festival had resulted in thousands of deaths. "If following Sanatan traditions is a crime, then I will commit this crime a thousand times," Yogi asserted. Taking a dig at SP, he said, "A sick person can be treated, but not a sick mentality." He further mocked SP chief Akhilesh Yadav, claiming that despite his party's criticism, he secretly took a dip in the holy waters. **Opposition demands halt to power privatisation, Government stresses reforms** The opposition also raised concerns over privatisation of electricity, warning that it would increase tariffs and adversely impact consumers. They argued that the state electricity board has more experience than private firms, and called for an immediate rollback of privatization plans. Energy Minister A.K. Sharma defended the move, stating that privatisation is necessary for improving the power sector. "When BJP came to power in 2017, UP's electricity board was running a deficit of ₹1.42 Lakh Crore. Despite reforms, issues persist, and further improvements are needed," he explained. He



Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath speaks during the Budget session of the state Legislative Assembly, in Lucknow

assured that employees' interests would be protected and power rates would not be hiked. **UP Budget to prioritise poor and middle class: Finance Minister** Finance Minister Suresh Khanna assured that the UP Budget would be pro-people, addressing the concerns of the poor and middle class while focusing on infrastructure development. He also dismissed Mamata Banerjee's remarks about Maha Kumbh, stating, "People who lack knowledge make such statements." **Speaker urges Opposition to fulfill responsibilities** Assembly Speaker Satish Mahana urged opposition leaders to ensure smooth proceedings in the house, allowing constructive debates. "The opposition has every right to criticise the government where necessary, but they must also act responsibly. Every member will be given the opportunity to raise their concerns," he assured. With discussions heating up in the assembly, political tensions remain high as the Maha Kumbh and other pressing governance issues continue to

dominate the agenda. **Urdu in Assembly Proceedings Sparks Heated Debate** Leader of Opposition Mata Prasad Pandey opposed the inclusion of English in assembly proceedings while advocating for Urdu alongside regional languages like Awadhi, Braj, Bundeli, and Bhojpuri. He accused CM Yogi of branding SP leaders as kathmulla (a term often used derogatorily for conservative Muslims) and questioned whether celebrated Urdu writers like Premchand, Raghupati Sahai Firaq Gorakhpuri, and other scholars should also be labeled as such. CM Yogi retorted, accusing SP leaders of hypocrisy: "They want their children to study in elite English-medium schools while pushing others towards Urdu. SP is leading the country towards fundamentalism." Parliamentary Affairs Minister Suresh Khanna clarified the government's stance, asserting that Hindi remains the language of assembly proceedings but members are free to speak in regional languages. "We are not imposing English, nor are we weakening Hindi," he added.

Mahakumbh: 10 sewage treatment plants operational in Prayagraj

PNS ■ MAHAKUMBH NAGAR

Mahakumbh 2025 has transcended beyond a spiritual ritual; it has evolved into a mass movement dedicated to cleanliness and environmental conservation. Under the Namami Gange Mission, 10 sewage treatment plants (STPs) have been activated to preserve the purity and sanctity of the Ganga, while work is progressing rapidly on three new STPs in Salori, Rasulabad, and Naini. Additionally, 37 drains have been fully tapped and treated, ensuring the cleanliness of the Ganga and Yamuna rivers. To provide a clean and hygienic experience for devotees, the fair area has been equipped with 12,000 FRP toilets, 16,100 prefabricated steel toilets, 20,000 community urinals, and 20,000 garbage bins. Waste disposal is managed efficiently with 37.75 lakh liner bags,

ensuring the area remains spotless despite the massive footfall. A team of 1500 trained 'Ganga Sevadoots' is actively raising awareness among devotees about cleanliness and Ganga conservation. This mission is being reinforced through street plays, poster campaigns, and public dialogues, transforming cleanliness into a collective movement. **Namami Gange Communication Head, Najeeb Ahsan**, stated that efforts toward biodiversity conservation, cleanliness, and the Ganga's ecology are being presented innovatively at the Namami Gange Pavilion. The interactive biodiversity tunnel showcases the rich aquatic life of the Ganga, while the digital exhibition highlights the success stories of the Ganga cleanliness campaign. Real-time data on water levels and quality of the Ganga,

Yamuna, and their tributaries is being displayed on the Prayag platform. Additionally, models showcasing sewage treatment, riverfront development, and a replica of the Gangetic dolphin are inspiring devotees to contribute to environmental protection efforts. New ghats constructed under the Namami Gange Mission have been designed with eco-friendly technologies and solar lighting, modern changing rooms, and comfortable seating arrangements. Regular cleanliness drives at the ghats ensure the continuous preservation of the Ganga's sanctity. Under the 'Paint My City' campaign, the walls and public spaces of Prayagraj are adorned with vibrant artwork and messages promoting environmental conservation. This initiative blends cleanliness with cultural awareness, leaving a lasting impact on visitors.

UP inmates in 75 jails to bathe in Sangam's holy water

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ LUCKNOW

In an unprecedented move, the Uttar Pradesh jail administration is set to bring the sacred water from Prayagraj's Sangam to all 75 jails across the state, allowing inmates to experience the spiritual essence of the Mahakumbh. This initiative, overseen by the Office of UP Jail Minister Dara Singh Chauhan, aims to provide over 90,000 prisoners an opportunity to partake in the revered ritual. As per officials from the Prison Department, the event will take place on February 21 from 9:30 AM to 10 AM. The initiative underscores the administration's commitment to ensuring that even those behind bars can connect with their faith and traditions. Director General (DG) of Prisons PV Ramaswamy confirmed that preparations are being carried out under the supervision of the jail minister. The collected holy water will be



An aerial view of devotees on boats at the Sangam during the ongoing Maha Kumbh Mela, in Prayagraj

mixed with regular water and stored in dedicated tanks within each prison. Inmates will be allowed to bathe in this sanctified water following prayers, marking their symbolic participation in the Maha Kumbh.

Minister Chauhan, along with senior jail officials, is expected to attend the ceremony at Lucknow jail. Jailor AK Kushwaha of Gorakhpur District Jail revealed that prison guard Arun Maurya has been

dispatched to Prayagraj to collect the holy water from the Sangam. Similarly, Naini Central Jail Senior Superintendent Rang Bahadur stated that the arrangements are being replicated across various facilities to ensure inmates can partake in the sacred tradition. Prayagraj District Jail Senior Superintendent Amita Dubey noted that around 1,350 prisoners have expressed enthusiasm about the ritual, eager for the chance to engage in this spiritual event despite their confinement. The initiative has already been set in motion, with Unnao Jail leading the way by organizing a preliminary 'snan' for its inmates on February 17. Superintendent Pankaj Kumar Singh shared that the decision had been under consideration for some time and that Unnao Jail will host another bathing ritual on February 21, reinforcing the administration's dedication to prisoner welfare and spiritual upliftment.

Naga tribal organisations calls for unity amid growing factionalism

PTI ■ DIMAPUR

Expressing concern over growing factionalism among Naga groups, tribal organisations from Nagaland and Manipur representing the community have called for an urgent need for all Naga political groups to unite and cooperate with one another to preserve the spirit of oneness. The appeal was made during a meeting between Naga tribal organisations and Forum for Naga Reconciliation (FNR) on Tuesday. It was attended by representatives of 13 Naga tribes from Nagaland and Manipur, as well as leaders of FNR. "Representatives of various Naga tribes gathered in solidarity to express, in one voice, the urgent necessity for all Naga political groups to come together in unity and cooperation," a release issued by FNR said. During the meeting, it was resolved that Naga political groups must listen to the voice of the people, and that all efforts, without exception, must be made to ensure Naga unity in the spirit of oneness. On January 14, the Naga groups had agreed to implement the Council of Naga Cooperation and Relationship, a working mechanism, to advance unity. The Naga tribal organisations also urged all Naga political groups and the Naga people to participate in the Council of Naga Cooperation and Relationship. Furthermore, the meeting resolved to consciously promote and consolidate Naga solidarity by fostering a spirit of kinship without borders. The resolution was signed by three representatives each from the Chakhesang Public Organisation, Rengma Hoho and Sumi Hoho; two from Pochury Hoho, Phom Peoples' Council, Tikhir Tribal Council, Chang Khulei Setshang, and Mao Council; two from the Angami Public Organisation, Tangkhul Naga Long and Ao Senden and eight from FNR.

BJP knocks Governor's door as Mamata threatens Adhikari

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Bengal Opposition Leader Suwendu Adhikari on Wednesday accused Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee of trying to threaten him into silence, warning no amount of threats would cow him down. This even as his party BJP wrote a complaint to State Governor against Banerjee seeking action. Adhikari who earlier said that he was going to write a letter to Home Minister Amit Shah for trying to jeopardise his security said quoting Banerjee on how she was trying to incite members of a particular community against him. Adhikari wrote Adhikari on the social media about a "veiled threat" that the Chief Minister had issued against him during her speech inside the State Assembly on Tuesday. "The veiled threat that you made yesterday on the floor of the Assembly, is nothing but a sinister conspiracy to threaten my safety and security," adding

though Banerjee would not name anyone that butt of her rant was easily discernible. Adhikari also wrote that the Chief Minister had a wrong conception that she could silence him by holding out such threats. "If you think that you can scare me by saying that, you are wrong," he later said adding how Banerjee had desecrated the State Assembly on a number of occasions. "Everyone remembers how you vandalised and ransacked the Assembly with your party men before coming to power. This was another occasion that you desecrated the historic House by making such remarks against the Opposition Leader," he said. Adhikari's statement was coupled with a letter and an 18-minute video clipping of Banerjee's Assembly speech being sent to State Governor C.V. Ananda Bose for his action. The complaint in reference to the video clipping sent by State BJP leader and advocate Kaustav Bagchi read, "It is

clearly evident that the Chief Minister is trying to intimidate the Leader of Opposition. In the light of the aforesaid you are requested to call for the records pursuant to today's speech of Mamata Banerjee, and also call for an explanation pursuant to the nature and intent of the speech delivered by her." Earlier while delivering her speech inside the Assembly on Tuesday Banerjee had, besides raising issue of stampede deaths during the Maha Kumbh, roundly attacked Adhikari for using "slanderous words" against a particular religion. Referring to an alleged remarks made by Adhikari that the Trinamool Congress Government was encouraging terrorist activities in Bengal and that she could be hand in gloves with the Bangladeshi fundamentalists Banerjee warned that BJP leader that he will not be able to hold on to himself if the people against whom he was using foul languages rose up in revolt.

"You have been using bad and slanderous words and spreading propaganda regarding the members of a religion, will be able to withstand the impact if they hit the streets and revolt one day," Banerjee during his speech said. The Opposition was not inside the House during her speech as the entire battery of BJP MLAs had staged a walkout protesting the suspension of Adhikari and four other MLAs for alleged misdemeanor, even as the BJP was demanding a debate on alleged disruption of Saraswati Pujas in many places early this month. Referring to how Banerjee's Government had filed 73 FIRs against him and how he had to move the High Court to obtain immunity from arrests and how he had to move the courts 74 times seeking permission for holding events, Adhikari said, "you can't scare me into silence. I will keep on fighting democratically till your corrupt, dynastic, appeasement politics regime comes to an end."

Lokayukta reports lack of evidence in MUDA site allotment case

PNS ■ BENGALURU

The Lokayukta police probing the Mysore Urban Development Authority (MUDA) site allotment case on Wednesday said that the charges against Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and his wife Parvathi could not be proved for want of evidence. The probing officers said they have submitted the final report to the High Court. "Since the above allegations against accused one to accused four in the case have not been proven due to lack of evidence, the final report is being submitted to the High Court," the Lokayukta police said in a letter to activist Snehamayi Krishna who is a complainant in the MUDA case. Besides Siddaramaiah and his

wife, his brother-in-law Mallikarjuna Swamy and the land owner Devaraju are also the accused. The Lokayukta police said that further investigation will be conducted into the allegations of Mysore Urban Development Authority (MUDA) providing compensatory plots in the ratio of 50:50 from 2016 to 2024 and an additional final report will be submitted to the High Court under Section 173 (8) CrPC. In the MUDA site allotment case, it is alleged that compensatory sites were allotted to Siddaramaiah's wife in an upmarket area in Mysuru, which had higher property value as compared to the location of her land which had been "acquired" by the MUDA.

Marshals forcibly eject LoP in Council

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In a turbulent session of the Uttar Pradesh Legislative Council, Leader of Opposition Lal Bihari Yadav was forcibly removed by marshals after demanding extended discussion time on the Kumbh Mela. The incident occurred when Yadav, representing the Samajwadi Party (SP), led his party members into the well of the House, disrupting proceedings. Despite repeated directives from the Chairman to return to their seats, the protesting members continued their agitation.

UP government ensures cleanliness at Mahakumbh

PNS ■ PRAYAGRAJ

With over 55 Crore devotees already taken a dip during two months long congregation of extraordinary proportions at Mahakumbh, the Uttar Pradesh government has taken care of all efforts to ensure the cleanliness of the Sangam in Mahakumbh Nagar. Each day, an average of 10-15 Tonnes of floating waste is collected from the river and sent for recycling, demonstrating a strong commitment to maintaining environmental sustainability during this sacred event. But since this poses a complex array of logistical challenges, especially in managing the immense waste generated by such a gathering, deployment of trash skimmers at Prayagraj by the Urban Development Department as part of Swachh Bharat Mission is being executed by Cleantec Infra, and



Cleanliness drive at Mahakumbh mela in Prayagraj

focuses on the removal of floating debris. The trash skimmers patrol the Sangam 24 hours, collecting floral offerings, coconuts, discarded materials, and other debris left by pilgrims. While these offerings hold spiritual significance, their

accumulation can pose an environmental burden on the sacred waters. Amrit Abhijat, Principal Secretary, Urban Development Department, Government of Uttar Pradesh, in a social media post highlighted the significance

of the large-scale cleaning efforts underway at the Maha Kumbh. "Guided by the vision of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, the department was working towards giving best experience to devotees with a fine blend of technology and human resources," said Abhijat. He added that these skimmers were critical to ensure that all leftovers and offerings by devotees are captured in real-time the waste is dispatched to the recycle plant at Baswar. He also highlighted the recycling of 600 MT of waste so far, construction of 1.5 lakh toilets and deployment of 16,000 sanitation workers to ensure cleanliness and hygiene. "Managing waste at the Maha Kumbh requires a multi-faceted approach," notes Gaurav Chopra, managing director and co-founder of Cleantec Infra. "The UP Government has demon-

strated foresight in implementing this initiative, and we are pleased to provide the technology and operational support. The priority is to maintain the sanctity of the Ganga while ensuring responsible waste management practices." The trash skimmers are designed for efficient collection and removal of floating trash. Each machine has a 13 cubic meter capacity and a 3,600-kilogram holding capacity. The daily collection of 10-15 tonnes, and up to 20-25 tonnes on peak days such as Maaghi Purnima, highlights the scale of the waste management challenge and the importance of this operation. The collected waste is deposited near Naini and subsequently transported to a recycling facility at Baswar, ensuring responsible disposal and minimising environmental impact.

Assam CM denies 'witch hunt' in Gogoi's wife's alleged ISI links

PTI ■ GUWAHATI

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said he is not on a "witch hunt" over the controversy surrounding Congress MP Gaurav Gogoi's British wife Elizabeth Colburn's alleged links with the ISI. Reacting to a post on X by another Congress MP Pradyut Bordoloi, Sarma on Tuesday said he is driven by national security, which cannot be compromised. "You will be shocked in the coming months. Let me assure you, with all the responsibility vested in me, this is not a witch hunt. I, too, have served under Sri Tarun Gogoi, and I fully understand the gravity of such actions," the CM said. Sarma and the BJP have been

attacking Gaurav Gogoi, the Deputy Leader of Congress in Lok Sabha, over Colburn's alleged connection with Pakistan's spy agency. "What I am doing is driven solely by national security interests — an area where there can be no compromise. I have taken an oath to protect the security and sovereignty of our nation, and I will uphold it, no matter what," Sarma asserted. "This is a duty that transcends politics and personal ties - this is about our country," he added. Bordoloi had in a post on Sunday said, "People of Assam will never buy such a hypothesis of his Government and I would give a befitting reply to such Skulduggery politics of @himantabiswa in the earliest

opportunity they get in the near future." Earlier on Tuesday, Gogoi slammed Sarma, asserting that the BJP leader's fear of losing the 2026 assembly polls is the main reason behind the recent developments. The Assam Police on Monday constituted a Special Investigation Team (SIT) to probe a case against Pakistan national Ali Tauqeer Sheikh for his social media comments on Assam and India's internal affairs. Sheikh, an advisor of the Pakistan Planning Commission and a former colleague of Colburn, was charged under various sections of the Bhatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) and the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA).



www.dailypioneer.com

facebook.com/dailypioneer | @TheDailyPioneer | instagram.com/dailypioneer/

PAPER WITH PASSION

Towards strategic partnership

Qatar, India sign historic agreements to strengthen cooperation in trade, energy, investments, technology and culture

Qatar's Emir, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, recent two-day official visit to India marks a significant milestone in the bilateral relations between the two nations. During this visit, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Emir Al-Thani agreed to elevate their ties to a 'strategic partnership,' focusing on key areas such as trade, energy, investments, technology, food security, culture and people-to-people connections. India and Qatar have maintained a robust relationship for decades, characterised by strong economic, cultural and diplomatic ties. The Indian expatriate community in Qatar, is 830,000 strong and plays a pivotal role in the country's development and serves as a vital bridge between the two nations. A primary outcome of the Emir's visit is the ambitious goal to double bilateral trade to \$28 billion within the next five years. Both countries are exploring the possibility of signing a free trade agreement to facilitate this growth. Energy cooperation remains a cornerstone of the India-Qatar relationship. The discussions during the visit emphasised broadening energy ties, which could involve increased supply of liquefied natural gas (LNG) from Qatar to India, thereby enhancing India's energy security.



The visit underscored the importance of cultural exchange and strengthening people-to-people connections. Initiatives in this area are expected to foster mutual understanding and goodwill between the populations of both countries. But the biggest takeaway from this visit is the security cooperation. By elevating their relationship to a strategic partnership, India and Qatar have committed to a more structured and comprehensive engagement, addressing regional and global issues of mutual interest. This strategic alignment is anticipated to enhance their collaborative efforts on various fronts. Besides, both countries have agreed to take their trade to next level. The targeted increase in trade volume and potential free trade agreement are expected to stimulate economic growth, create job opportunities and attract investments in both nations. For India, securing a stable and diversified energy supply from Qatar is crucial for its growing energy needs. For Qatar, strengthening ties with a major economy like India offers new markets and investment opportunities. Enhanced cultural exchanges will promote mutual respect and understanding, enriching the social fabric of both societies. A closer partnership between India and Qatar can contribute to regional stability, with both countries collaborating on security and diplomatic initiatives. The Emir of Qatar's visit to India has set the stage for a deeper and more multifaceted partnership between the two nations. By focusing on strategic areas India and Qatar are poised to reap significant benefits, reinforcing their longstanding ties and contributing to regional and global stability.

partnership, India and Qatar have committed to a more structured and comprehensive engagement, addressing regional and global issues of mutual interest. This strategic alignment is anticipated to enhance their collaborative efforts on various fronts. Besides, both countries have agreed to take their trade to next level. The targeted increase in trade volume and potential free trade agreement are expected to stimulate economic growth, create job opportunities and attract investments in both nations. For India, securing a stable and diversified energy supply from Qatar is crucial for its growing energy needs. For Qatar, strengthening ties with a major economy like India offers new markets and investment opportunities. Enhanced cultural exchanges will promote mutual respect and understanding, enriching the social fabric of both societies. A closer partnership between India and Qatar can contribute to regional stability, with both countries collaborating on security and diplomatic initiatives. The Emir of Qatar's visit to India has set the stage for a deeper and more multifaceted partnership between the two nations. By focusing on strategic areas India and Qatar are poised to reap significant benefits, reinforcing their longstanding ties and contributing to regional and global stability.

PICTALK



A black-naped oriole bird perches on a bloomed cotton tree, in Birbhum

Confronting the escalating migration and refugee crises



SUDHIR HINDWAN

The refugee crisis is a perplexing issue for governments, requiring a delicate balance between maintaining national security and extending compassion to those in need

The paradoxes of rapid global changes are proving to be a contemporary reality, one that sheds light on the philosophical aphorism proposed by Samuel P. Huntington, that of "Political Decay." This concept is becoming increasingly evident in highly developed societies, particularly in the face of numerous challenges concerning security. The issue of illegal migration, human trafficking, and the plight of refugees has become a significant concern, with its implications stretching across borders, creating tension among nations, and fueling rising anxieties about national security.

A few years ago, the discovery of fifty refugees dead near eastern Austria, along the Slovakia-Hungarian border, prompted widespread discussion on the issue of illegal migration and related crimes. This tragic event highlighted a larger issue facing European countries-illegal migration and the security risks that come with it. Many individuals from underdeveloped regions, in their search for survival and opportunities, attempt to migrate to European countries, often taking illegal routes. The tragic drowning of more than 80 illegal migrants in a boat off the coast of Libya is just one example of the deadly risks faced by those desperate for a better life. In light of these challenges, it is imperative that European nations develop more sophisticated mechanisms to address this issue, one that has already caused significant tension between countries.

The broader problem of migration and refugees, particularly in regions such as Afghanistan and Central Asia, has created a complicated and often violent dynamic. As refugees flee war and persecution, they find themselves subject to not only economic exploitation but also social discrimination. According to reports, over 70 per cent of the 26 million refugees worldwide are women and children. These individuals are uprooted and displaced due to wars, ethnic conflicts, political instability and religious persecution. Since the mid-20th century, the number of



refugees has dramatically increased, driven by factors such as civil wars, regional conflicts, and natural disasters. The refugee crises have been particularly severe in regions like Africa, Southeast Asia and the West Asia, with countries such as Afghanistan, Rwanda, Vietnam, Bosnia and Iraq seeing millions displaced. These refugees often seek shelter in neighbouring countries, adding pressure to already fragile systems. While refugees are often subjected to exploitation and abuse, the refugee crisis has also attracted the attention of illegal and anti-social actors who exploit the vulnerability of displaced populations. The rise of global connectivity and the post-modernisation phase calls for new frameworks and models of governance to address these challenges.

The world is increasingly interconnected, and young generations must be equipped with the tools and understanding to overcome divisive and biased perceptions that arise from ignorance. It is essential that global societies shift their focus to new models that emphasise reforms in democracy, the environment, globalisation, and governance. These reforms should prioritise finding solutions that reduce manipulation and nepotism, addressing the core needs of vulnerable populations. The refugee problem is a com-



THE TRAGIC DROWNING OF MORE THAN 80 ILLEGAL MIGRANTS IN A BOAT OFF THE COAST OF LIBYA IS JUST ONE EXAMPLE OF THE DEADLY RISKS FACED BY THOSE DESPERATE FOR A BETTER LIFE

plex and multifaceted issue, and efforts have been made to create legal definitions and frameworks for addressing the crisis. The United Nations has provided a general consensus on defining refugees as individuals who are forced to leave their country due to war, foreign invasion, or other forms of aggression. However, individual nations often adapt this definition to suit their national interests, leading to inconsistencies in refugee treatment. For instance, Uganda's President Idi Amin's expulsion of foreign nationals in 1972 resulted in the displacement of over 38,000 people, highlighting the role of political instability in driving refugee crises. Several key factors contribute to the refugee crisis, including atrocities, civil wars, and regional conflicts. Over time, efforts have been made to improve the situation, with various organisations and countries attempting to address the economic and social needs of refugees.

To address the refugee crisis, it is crucial to develop local infrastructure that promotes refugees' self-sufficiency and to involve NGOs more extensively in the solution. Comprehensive training for staff involved in rescue operations and coordination between local governments and the UNHCR will enhance effectiveness. Increased financial support is needed to

implement new programmes for refugees. Challenges persist in addressing the refugee crisis, particularly due to inadequate infrastructure and logistical support in host countries. A global burden-sharing approach is needed to prevent undue strain on any single nation. Refugees often face detention based on illegal immigration suspicions, and camps are sometimes attacked, increasing their vulnerability. Governments, NGOs, and international bodies must ensure refugee protection, especially for women and children, while fostering long-term solutions like job creation and education. Though eliminating illegal migration entirely may not be possible, nations must manage migration while safeguarding refugees' rights. The rise in human trafficking and exploitation adds complexity, requiring swift action from governments. In regions like South Asia, the Rohingya refugee crisis has intensified security and humanitarian concerns, with policies often facing international criticism. A coordinated, inclusive approach is vital to meeting the needs of displaced populations without compromising national interests. (The author, a recipient of Bharat Gaurav award is a professor and an expert on strategic affairs; views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

SAM PITRODA SPARKS CONTROVERSY

Madam — The latest controversial statement of Indian Overseas President Sam Pitroda negating Chinese threats to India has stoked a fierce controversy. Though Congress has distanced himself, very obviously his statement is in tune with the Congress line on China and statements of Rahul Gandhi praising and advocating China. His statement may be seen in the light of the recent successful visit of PM Modi to the US, causing heartburn and discomfort in Congress leadership. His timing of the pro-China statement is very conspicuous and contradicts the foreign policy of India. The security threats from China need no elaboration. Sam Pitroda is no stranger to controversies. Sam Pitroda had ignited a firestorm while speaking on the diversity of India, referring to how people in the South "look like Africans and those in the East look like Chinese and those in the East look like Arabs."

In June 2023, amid anticipation for the grand opening of the Ram Mandir, Sam Pitroda sparked controversy by asserting that temples wouldn't address India's pressing issues such as unemployment, inflation, education, and health. In May 2019, Sam Pitroda drew ire by dismissively remarking, 'hua to hua, so what,' when questioned about the 1984 anti-Sikh riots. During the aftermath of the Pulwama attack in February 2019, Sam Pitroda ignited controversy by questioning the efficacy of retaliatory airstrikes conducted by the Indian Air Force on Balakot. His remarks stirred debate on India's response to terrorist incidents and the appropriate diplomatic approach to such crises. Despite all controversies, he continued to be Indian Overseas President. Congress is experimenting through Sam Pitroda but his controversies are maligning the country. Vinod Johri | Delhi

INDIA'S NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICY FAILS

Madam — Refers to the article 'Bangladesh wipes out history, shuns India at its own peril.' India's neighbour first policy is a

Gyanesh Kumar is new CEC



This refers to the main page headline "Gyanesh Kumar is the 26th CEC." Notwithstanding a dissenting note from the LoP Rahul Gandhi, Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar has been appointed as the CEC by a three-member panel headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, comprising Home Minister Amit Shah and LoP

Rahul Gandhi. The reason behind Gandhi's dissent was that the matter is still pending before the court, raising the question of why the appointment was rushed. Previously, the Chief Justice of India was part of the selection panel; however, this changed after the NDA government passed the Chief Election Commissioner and Other Election Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Service, and Term of Office) Act, 2023. Keeping this in mind, the Vice President recently voiced his support for excluding the CJI from the selection process. It appears that the power to choose the next CEC and other election commissioners is now tilted entirely in favour of the central government. Aarohi Gupta | Ujjain

MAMATA SLAMS KUMBH MANAGEMENT

Madam — West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has asserted that the Maha Kumbh has turned into a "Mrityu Kumbh" due to incidents of stampede, claiming that the actual toll at the mega religious gathering was suppressed by authorities. At least 30 people died and 60 were injured in a stampede in Uttar Pradesh's Prayagraj, while 18 people lost their lives in a recent stampede at an overcrowded New Delhi railway station. More than 54 crore people had so far taken a dip at the Sangam. During Maha Shivratri, a further surge of crowd is expected. More than half the total population of India, by that time, should have taken a dip. The discipline of the people, coupled with poor crowd management, led to the stampede. But her comment that it is a 'mirthy Kumbh' is unwanted and uncalled for. It is an attack on sanatana dharma and people's belief and faith. It is an attack on Hindus. N R Ramchandran | Chennai

Faith's double-edged sword: Reflections on the Mahakumbh



ASHA IYER KUMAR

The Mahakumbh presents a profound paradox: can a moment of divine immersion truly cleanse years of sin, or have we reduced the quest for spiritual evolution to mere ritual

In the predawn darkness, millions of pilgrims converge at the sacred confluence of the Ganges, their faith burning brighter than the stars above. The Mahakumbh, humanity's largest gathering of spiritual seekers, presents a profound paradox of our times — the sublime beauty of collective devotion juxtaposed against the perils of unquestioning faith. What compels ordinary men and women to undertake arduous journeys, risking life and limb in pursuit of divine grace?

The answer lies perhaps in our eternal quest for transformation — that deep-seated belief that a single moment of sacred communion can wash away the accumulated weight of our transgressions. The Mahakumbh's promise is alluring in its simplicity: A holy dip in the Ganges during this auspicious period can cleanse one's soul of sin. Yet, as tragedy strikes in the form of stampedes and accidents, we must pause to examine whether blind faith has led us astray from spirituality's true essence. These incidents are not merely statistical casualties; they



are poignant reminders of how religious fervour, when unchecked by reason, can transform the path to salvation into a road to suffering. There is something deeply moving about the unwavering conviction that draws millions to these sacred waters. Yet, as I watch the faithful immerse themselves in the river's embrace, I cannot help but wonder: Can the complex tableau of human actions, choices, and consequences truly be undone by a moment's submergence? Does spiritual transformation work in such absolute terms, where years of misconduct can be erased in an instant? The Ganges itself presents another layer of this spiritual paradox. In our rush to cleanse our souls, have we forgotten our duty to preserve the very source of that purification?

The question that haunts me is not whether faith has value — it undoubtedly does — but whether we have reduced the profound journey of spiritual evolution to mere ritual. True transformation, I believe, lies not in momentary acts of devotion but in the sustained practice of compassion, integrity and mindful living. The real pilgrimage is not to a geographical location but to the depths of our consciousness, where we confront our shadows and choose, day after day, to act with kindness and purpose. What if the purest form of spiritual practice is simply this: to live each day with such awareness and empathy that we leave every person and place better than we found them? To cultivate a heart so clear that no wily thought finds root there, to build relationships so genuine that they become temples of mutual growth?

Perhaps this daily practice of goodness is the true holy dip of our souls need. None of this is to diminish the power of faith or the beauty of religious tradition. The Mahakumbh remains a remarkable proof of human spirituality, a mirror reflecting our deepest yearning

for connection with the divine. But perhaps its greatest lesson lies not in the promise of instant release but in showing us how collective faith can move millions to action. Imagine if this same power could be channelled into sustained ethical living, into creating communities of care and consciousness.

As the sun sets over the Mahakumbh, casting long shadows over the devoted masses, I am reminded that faith, like the Ganges itself, must flow between the banks of reason and compassion. When it overflows these boundaries, it risks becoming a force of destruction rather than salvation. The challenge before us is not to abandon faith but to evolve it — to transform it from a series of external rituals into an internal compass that guides us toward genuine goodness. The true miracle, perhaps, is not in the holy dip but in the daily choice to live with such purity that our very existence becomes a prayer, our actions a continuous act of worship. (The author is a Dubai-based columnist and children's writing coach. Views are personal)



FIRST COLUMN

THE POWER OF FORGIVENESS

True forgiveness requires honesty, self-awareness, and the willingness to release resentment



RAJYOGI BRAHMA KUMAR NIKUNJ JI

People across the globe, from all cultures and traditions, embrace love and forgiveness in daily life. These values are universally viewed as central to the fabric of humanity. But is it as easy to forgive as it sounds to be? Forgiveness, like so many other things in life, is easier said than done. We all seek forgiveness when we do something wrong right? But our stance is quite different when someone seeks forgiveness from us. We find it hard to let go of what's happened to us. The ability to forgive others depends on how honest we are with ourselves. We must remember that forgiveness can only occur because we have been given the gift of the ability to make choices. Hence, if we want to forgive someone, no one can stop us, no matter how poorly they may act, because ultimately, it's our choice to forgive or not to forgive. This ability to forgive is a manifestation of the personal control we have over our lives. Hence each one of us should ask this question to ourselves: Have we journeyed through life pure, perfect, and clean, with never a wrong thought, a wrong word, or action? If we look at ourselves honestly, then how can we not forgive another? Most of us regret many



things that we have said or done in the past. It's a fact that we all have acted wrongly, either because of not knowing what is right, or out of fear or misunderstanding. However, with time and knowledge, we realize what is right and begin to make amends. Just by having this desire to change ourselves, we begin the process of forgiving ourselves, which in turn helps us to forgive others. If this process is to progress, we have to forgive others. We just cannot condemn others and excuse ourselves. This is cheating, and the universally applicable Law of Karma will not allow it. Remember! If we do not learn to forgive, resentment will poison us, and we will end up carrying a double burden: both the resentful thoughts of others' injustice and the hidden reality of our injustice. The power to forgive comes from compassion, which means we should compassionately and peacefully move forward with what is good, towards what is better. Forgiveness dissolves the compulsive need to prove ourselves right. It removes the indignation we feel at imagined injustice. It melts the hardness of another's heart. Our forgiveness, at first, may puzzle them. To forgive and forget is love in action. But we must first learn to forgive ourselves, as well as others, otherwise, the process of releasing this burden neither begins nor progresses.

Forgiving ourselves means letting go of the past. But it also means not making the same mistakes again and again; not inventing convenient ways to excuse ourselves. Remember! A person who has hardened his own heart against others cannot feel even God's forgiveness and compassion. Hence, if we want to be forgiven, then we must be willing to forgive first because the one who forgives first not only proves his justice but especially proves his love. That is why it is said that 'A life well lived is your best revenge.' So, instead of focusing on your wounded feelings, and thereby giving the person who caused you pain the power over you, learn to look for the love, beauty, and kindness around you. This will make the world a better place to live in.

A tribute to my Guru Dr Nalini Didi

With profound grief, I share that Rajyogini Brahmakumari Dr Nalini Didi, a Senior Functionary of the Brahma Kumaris and my revered teacher, passed away in Mumbai on February 9, 2025. A renowned columnist and spiritual mentor, she dedicated 66 years to the service of humanity, spreading spiritual wisdom to millions. Her journey began at 16 after a transformative lecture by Prajapita Brahma, inspiring her lifelong mission of world transformation through Rajyoga education. A gifted speaker, writer and artist, she tirelessly promoted social harmony and earned numerous accolades, including an honorary D.Litt. Her guidance profoundly shaped my spiritual path.

(The writer is a spiritual educator and columnist, views are personal)

Lord Dannatt's Chagos proposal: A testament to imperial arrogance



NILANTHA ILANGAMUWA

In a stunning display of imperial indifference, a former British Army chief has urged Keir Starmer to abandon plans to return the Chagos Islands to Mauritius and instead hand them over to the US



The call made by Lord Dannatt, former British Army chief, as reported by The Independent (UK), urging Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer to abandon plans to cede control of the Chagos Islands to Mauritius and instead consider handing the islands to the United States under the leadership of Donald Trump, is a moment of brutal clarity in the ongoing saga of colonial legacy, imperial arrogance and military hegemony. It is, perhaps, the most unambiguous and openly cynical articulation of an attitude that has plagued British foreign policy for decades: indifference to justice when the imperial or military agenda is at stake. In this shocking proposal, Lord Dannatt not only trivialises the long-standing historical injustice suffered by the Chagossian people but also reveals a chilling truth about the global order — one in which the rights of dispossessed peoples are inconsequential when the might of military power is involved.

The Chagos Islands, particularly Diego Garcia, remain a crucial outpost for both British and American military operations in the Indian Ocean, a key region for global military and economic dominance. The brutal truth is that the displacement of the Chagossians, the abduction of their homes, their lands, and their futures, was merely a strategic calculation by the British government, sanctioned and enabled by the United States.

These islands have been stripped of their rightful inhabitants, and instead of facing international condemnation, they remain a linchpin in the projection of military power. Lord Dannatt's proposal that the UK should relinquish control of the islands not to Mauritius, but directly to the US, serves as a blunt reminder that this military realpolitik is not just a policy but an ideology — one that continues to shape decisions about sovereignty, justice and human lives in ways that are both morally



THE TRUTH IS THIS: THE CHAGOS ISLANDS ARE NOT JUST A STRETCH OF LAND — THEY SYMBOLISE EVERYTHING THAT IS CORRUPT IN THE GLOBAL ORDER. A SYSTEM WHERE POWER ECLIPSES JUSTICE, AND HUMAN LIVES ARE SACRIFICED FOR THE SAKE OF GEOPOLITICAL DOMINANCE

bankrupt and legally indefensible. The truth is that the Chagossians were forcibly displaced, their families scattered across the world, and their right to return systematically denied. These are not mere footnotes in a distant history; this is an ongoing systematic injustice that has been buried beneath the murky layers of military necessity and imperial prerogative.

The United Nations and the International Court of Justice (ICJ) have ruled unequivocally that the separation of the Chagos Islands from Mauritius is illegal, that the Chagossians' forced expulsion violated fundamental human rights and that their right to return to their homeland must be respected. These rulings are binding principles of international law, upheld by the court of global conscience. Yet the British government, in collusion with the United States, has continued to flout these legal rulings, with a callousness that is matched only by the complicity of global institutions that have failed to hold them to account.

The UK and its allies continue to demonstrate a dissonance between the legal obligation to return the islands to Mauritius and the military significance of Diego Garcia. The £18 billion (approximately \$22.52 billion USD) leaseback deal designed to ensure that the UK retains control of the islands is a financial burden, a sum that could instead be better spent on bolstering Britain's own defence capacity. But here's the crux: the Chagos Islands, specifically Diego Garcia, are not just a military base. They are a symbol of the power dynamics that have defined the post-war world order — a world where military interests, not

human dignity or sovereignty, govern the actions of nations. It is worth noting that Lord Dannatt's rhetoric is not an anomaly.

He is merely the latest in a long line of British military and political figures who have justified colonial dispossession in the name of military expediency. Diego Garcia, a military outpost of unparalleled strategic importance, is where American bombers take off for strikes in the West Asia, where naval forces project power across the Indian Ocean, and where the surveillance apparatus of the global superpowers monitors and controls vast swathes of the world. In short, Diego Garcia is a symbol of global military dominance — a fortress built upon the foundation of historical dispossession, suffering, and legal nullification. The fact that the Chagossians' right to return to their homeland is still not respected is a contemptuous affront to international law. The UK government's refusal to comply with ICJ rulings, while continuing to enjoy a special relationship with the US, sends a clear message to the world: law and justice are subordinate to power and strategy.

The international legal community can issue as many judgments as it likes, but it is all for naught when the major powers choose to ignore or bypass those rulings in favour of military interests. The declassified documents from the 1960s and 1970s reveal the collusion between the US and the UK to create a military enclave on Diego Garcia, with the forcible removal of the Chagossians merely an administrative detail to be swept under the carpet. In those documents, we see the foundations of a dirty deal that placed

geopolitical strategy above the basic human rights of a people. It is colonialism dressed as military necessity, and those who challenge this narrative are dismissed as idealists, outliers, or irrelevant. This is not just a matter of the Chagossians' rights; it is a fundamental crisis of the global legal and moral order.

It is a scandal that has gone largely ignored, an injustice that has been swept under the rug of strategic necessity, and an entire people's history erased in the name of military convenience. How can anyone with even a hint of conscience ignore these flagrant breaches of international law, perpetrated by those who claim to champion human rights while posing as defenders of democracy? Our complicity, fuelled by willful indifference, contributes to the erosion of international law and the degradation of fundamental human dignity.

The truth is this: the Chagos Islands are not just a stretch of land — they symbolise everything that is corrupt in the global order. A system where power eclipses justice, and human lives are sacrificed for the sake of geopolitical dominance. The silence that surrounds this injustice is as damning as the apathy that sustains it.

The Chagossians have been denied their homeland for over half a century. It is high time that the world demands the return of their land, not just out of legal obligation, but out of a moral imperative to right the wrongs of the past and give these forgotten people the future they have been denied for so long.

(The writer is a journalist and policy analyst. Views expressed are personal)

Empowering India's workforce: The crucial role of upskilling and inclusive hiring

With evolving industry demands and a rising need for skilled labour, organisations must bridge skill gaps and create sustainable employment opportunities

In today's rapidly changing job market, skill development and inclusive hiring are more critical than ever, particularly for the blue-collar workforce. As industries evolve and the demand for skilled labour increases, organisations must focus on bridging skill gaps and creating pathways to meaningful employment.

By prioritising upskilling and inclusive hiring practices, companies can empower individuals, enhance service quality, and contribute to the overall growth of the economy.

Investing in Skill Development Continuous learning is essential for the blue-collar workforce, where technological advancements and changing industry standards require a skilled and adaptable labour



DHIRAJ SINGH

pool. According to a report by the Global Labor Market Conference (GLMC), 55 per cent of professionals fear their skills may become partially or fully obsolete within the next five years, prompting many to consider reskilling. Organisations are increasingly offering a variety of skill

development programmes tailored specifically for their blue-collar employees. These programs encompass technical training, crisis management, digital security and leadership development, equipping workers with the expertise necessary for career advancement. In recent years, many companies have implemented structured upskilling initiatives that have led to significant improvements in service quality, efficiency and employee satisfaction.

Empowering the Grassroots Workforce Blue-collar workers, who make up over 80 per cent of India's non-agricultural workforce, are essential to the country's economic growth across various sectors. According to McKinsey and Company, by 2030, 70 per cent of the 90 mil-

lion new jobs expected in India will be blue-collar positions. These roles account for about 80 per cent of jobs in both the organised and unorganised sectors, acting as the primary engine of the economy. Their fulfilment is crucial for the growth of key sectors such as manufacturing and logistics. Recognising the unique challenges faced by grassroots workers, many organisations have developed targeted skilling initiatives that address the specific needs of this demographic.

These programs are designed to empower individuals at the community level, providing them with the tools and knowledge necessary to thrive in their roles. Through hands-on training and mentorship, companies are fostering a cul-



ture of skill enhancement that encourages employees to take ownership of their career paths.

Success Stories: Behind every blue-collar worker is a story of ambition and determination. Many individuals have experienced transformative career journeys through upskilling initiatives. For instance, frontline workers have advanced to supervisory

roles after completing leadership training, while others have gained expertise in emerging technologies, securing higher-paying positions. However, a report by WorkIndia reveals that more than 40 per cent of blue-collar workers are employed but actively seeking new job opportunities. The drive for better salaries, career growth, and personal motivations are leading factors. Concerns over layoffs and financial instability also prompt job searches.

Expanding Opportunities: Inclusive Hiring Practices Organisations are not merely filling positions; they are creating futures. With a commitment to inclusive hiring, particularly in Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities where job opportunities can be limited, companies are

working to ensure that more individuals, regardless of gender or background, can build stable and rewarding careers. With an increasing focus on safety and a surge in residential security industry, the private security industry has become one of the biggest generators of jobs.

Women in the Workforce: Breaking Barriers Empowering women in the workforce is a crucial aspect of inclusive hiring. More women are stepping into roles as individual contributors, frontline managers, and even executive leadership positions, demonstrating that gender is no barrier to success.

These initiatives foster a workplace culture where women can not only succeed but thrive.

The Road Ahead: Looking ahead, organizations are set to expand their upskilling programs to cater to India's growing middle class and evolving job market needs. By integrating technology-driven training and fostering a culture of continuous learning, companies aim to set new standards in workforce development.

With strategic hiring approaches and robust skill enhancement initiatives, organisations are not just providing jobs; they are building careers and transforming lives. Investing in upskilling and creating employment opportunities at the grassroots level is not just a matter of social responsibility; it is also a key economic imperative.

(The writer is CEO SIS Ltd; views are personal)

Russia, US agree to work for ending Ukraine war in major diplomatic shift

PTI ■ RIYADH

Russia and the US agreed on Tuesday to start working toward ending the war in Ukraine and improving their diplomatic and economic ties, the two countries' top diplomats said after talks that reflected an extraordinary about-face in US foreign policy under President Donald Trump.

In an interview with AP after the meeting, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said the two sides agreed broadly to pursue three goals — restore staffing at their respective embassies in Washington and Moscow, create a high-level team to support Ukraine peace talks and explore closer relations and economic cooperation.

He stressed, however, that the talks — attended by his Russian counterpart Sergey Lavrov and other senior Russian and US officials — marked the beginning of a conversation, and more work needs to be done. Lavrov echoed Rubio's remarks and told reporters that "the conversation was very useful".

Trump's national security advisor Michael Waltz and special Mideast envoy Steven Witkoff joined Rubio at the table, along with Lavrov and Russian President Vladimir Putin's foreign affairs advisor Yuri

Ushakov. No Ukrainian officials were present at the meeting, which came as the beleaguered country is slowly but steadily losing ground against more numerous Russian troops in a grinding war that began nearly three years ago.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said his country would not accept any outcome from the talks since Kyiv didn't take part, and postponed his own trip to the kingdom scheduled for Wednesday.

European allies have also expressed concerns that they are being sidelined.

Trump showed little patience for Ukraine's objections to being excluded from the talks.

"Today I heard, 'Oh, well, we weren't invited.' Well, you been there for three years. You should have ended it three years ago," Trump said during a news conference at his Florida residence. "You should have never started it. You could have made a deal."

Ties between Russia and the US have fallen to their lowest level in decades in recent years — a rift that has been widening ever since Russia illegally annexed Crimea from Ukraine in 2014 and only worsened after Moscow's full-scale invasion.

The US, along with European

nations, imposed a raft of sanctions on Russia in an effort to damage its economy. And embassies in Washington and Moscow have been hit hard by expulsions of large numbers of diplomats, as well as other restrictions.

Rubio said on Tuesday that ending the war in Ukraine could "unlock the door" for "incredible opportunities" to partner with the Russians on issues of common interest "that hopefully will be good for the world and also improve our relations in the long term".

His comments were further evidence of the remarkable US reversal on Russia after years in which Trump's predecessor, Joe Biden, led international efforts to isolate Moscow.

Tuesday's meeting was meant to pave the way for a summit between Trump and Putin. After the talks, Ushakov and Waltz said no date has been set yet for that summit.

Speaking to reporters after the meeting, Lavrov mentioned the same three goals as Rubio and said that Washington and Moscow agreed to appoint representatives to carry out "regular consultations" on Ukraine. The meeting marked the most extensive contact between the two countries since Moscow's February 24, 2022, invasion.

The recent US diplomatic blitz on the war has sent Ukraine and key allies scrambling to ensure a seat at the table amid concerns that Washington and Moscow would press ahead with a deal that won't be favourable to them.

Kyiv's absence at Tuesday's talks rankled many Ukrainians, and France called an emergency meeting of European Union countries and the UK on Monday to discuss the war. Kyiv's participation in such talks was a bedrock of US policy under Biden.

US State Department spokeswoman Tammy Bruce said the talks were aimed at determining how serious the Russians are about achieving peace and whether detailed negotiations can start.

Rubio said Tuesday that there would be "engagement and consultation with Ukraine, with our partners in Europe and others. But ultimately, the Russian side will be indispensable to this effort".

US Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth said last week that NATO membership for Ukraine was unrealistic and suggested Kyiv should abandon hopes of winning all its territory back from Russia — two key items on Putin's wish list.

French President Emmanuel

Macron on Tuesday said he spoke by phone to Trump and Zelenskyy following Monday's European meeting.

The meeting at the Diriyah Palace in the Saudi capital of Riyadh also highlighted de facto leader Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's efforts to be a major diplomatic player.

Saudi state media described the talks as happening at the prince's direction. Like the neighbouring UAE, the prince has maintained close relations to Russia throughout its war on Ukraine, both through the OPEC+ oil cartel and diplomatically as well.

Saudi Arabia has also helped in prisoner negotiations and hosted Zelenskyy for an Arab League summit in 2023.

But Zelenskyy postponed his own trip to Saudi Arabia scheduled for this week, suggesting that he wanted to avoid his visit being linked to the talks since Ukrainian officials weren't invited.

Meanwhile, Russia continued to pummel Ukraine with drones, according to Kyiv's military. The Ukrainian air force said Russian troops launched a barrage of 176 drones at Ukraine overnight, most of which were destroyed or disabled by jamming.

Zelenskyy: Trump living in Russian 'disinformation space'

PTI ■ KYIV

Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Wednesday that US President Donald Trump is living in a Russian "disinformation space" regarding his previous day's comments about the Ukrainian leader's approval rating.

Trump said at Mar-a-Lago that Zelenskyy's rating stood at 4 per cent.

Zelenskyy replied in a news conference in the Ukrainian capital Kyiv that "we have seen this disinformation. We understand that it is coming from Russia."

He said that Trump "lives in this disinformation space."

Trump also suggested Ukraine ought to hold elections, which have been postponed due to the war and the consequent imposition of martial law, in accordance with the Ukrainian Constitution.

Public opinion polls and approval ratings haven't been reliable in Ukraine because of the fighting.

Zelenskyy made the comments shortly before he was expected to meet with Keith Kellogg, the US special envoy for Ukraine and Russia, who arrived in Kyiv on Wednesday.

Kellogg will meet Zelenskyy and military commanders as



the US shifts its policy away from years of efforts to isolate Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Trump suggested Tuesday that Kyiv was to blame for the war, which enters its fourth year next week, as talks between top American and Russian diplomats in Saudi Arabia sidelined Ukraine and its European supporters. Trump's comments are likely to vex Ukrainian officials, who have urged the world to help them fight Russia's full-scale invasion that began February 24, 2022.

The battlefield has also brought grim news for Ukraine in recent months. A relentless onslaught in eastern areas by Russia's bigger army is grinding down Ukrainian forces, which are slowly but steadily being pushed backward at some points on the 1,000-kilometre

front line.

Trump told reporters at his Florida residence Tuesday that Ukraine "should have never started" the war and "could have made a deal" to prevent it. Kellogg said his visit was "a chance to have some good, substantial talks." Zelenskyy cancelled his planned Wednesday trip to Saudi Arabia in what some analysts saw as an attempt to deny legitimacy to the US-Russia talks about the future of his country.

American officials have signalled that Ukraine's hopes of joining NATO in order to ward off Russian aggression after reaching a possible peace agreement won't happen. Zelenskyy says any settlement will require US security commitments to keep Russia at bay. "We understand the need for security guarantees," Kellogg said in comments carried by Ukrainian public broadcaster Suspilne Novyny on his arrival at Kyiv train station.

"It's very clear to us the importance of the sovereignty of this nation and the independence of this nation as well. ... Part of my mission is to sit and listen," the retired three-star general said. Kellogg said he would convey what he learns on his visit to Trump and Secretary of State Marco Rubio to "and ensure that we get this one right."

Federal judge won't immediately block Musk or DOGE from federal data or worker layoffs

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

A federal judge refused on Tuesday to immediately block billionaire Elon Musk and the Department of Government Efficiency from accessing government data systems or participating in worker layoffs. US District Judge Tanya Chutkan found that there are legitimate questions about Musk's authority but said there isn't evidence of the kind of grave legal harm that would justify a temporary restraining order.

The decision came in a lawsuit filed by 14 Democratic states challenging DOGE's authority to access sensitive government data. The attorneys general argued that Musk is wielding the kind of power that the Constitution says can only be held by those who are elected or confirmed by the Senate.

The Trump administration, for its part, has maintained that layoffs are coming from agency heads, and asserted that despite his public cheering of the effort Musk isn't directly running DOGE's day-to-day operations himself.

DOGE has tapped into computer systems across multiple agencies with the blessing of President Donald Trump, digging into budgets and searching for what he calls waste, fraud and abuse, even as a growing number of lawsuits allege DOGE is violating the law.

Chutkan recognised the concerns of the group of states, which include New Mexico and Arizona.

"DOGE's unpredictable actions have resulted in considerable uncertainty and confusion," she wrote. Their questions about Musk's apparent "unchecked authority" and lack of Congressional oversight for DOGE are legitimate and they may be able to successfully argue them later.

Still, at this point, it remains unclear exactly how DOGE's work will affect the states, and judges can only issue court orders to block specific, immediate harms, she found.

Chutkan, who was nominated by Democratic President Barack Obama, previously oversaw the now-dismissed criminal election interference case against Trump in Washington, DC.

Support to kids stopped

Washington (PTI): The Trump administration on Tuesday stopped support for legal representation in immigration court for children who enter the US alone, a setback for those fighting deportation who can't afford a lawyer.

The Acacia Center for Justice says it serves 26,000 migrant children under its federal contract. The Interior Department gave no explanation for the stop-work order, telling the group only that it was done for "causes outside of your control" and should not be interpreted as a judgment of poor performance.

The halt remains in effect until further notice.

White House says Elon Musk not in charge at DOGE but advising president

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

The White House says billionaire Elon Musk is not technically part of the Department of Government Efficiency team that is sweeping through federal agencies but is rather a senior advisor to President Donald Trump.

Musk's exact role could be key in the legal fight over DOGE's access to government data as the Trump administration moves to lay off thousands of federal workers. Defining him as an advisor rather than the administrator in charge of day-to-day operations at DOGE could help the administration as it pushes back against a lawsuit arguing Musk has too much power for someone who isn't elected or Senate-confirmed.

The declaration was filed on

Monday as the Trump administration fends off the lawsuit from several Democratic states that want to block Musk and the DOGE team from accessing government systems. The litigants say Musk is wielding "virtually unchecked power" in violation of the Constitution.

The Trump administration, on the other hand, says Musk is not a DOGE employee and has "no actual authority to make government decisions himself". Joshua Fisher, director of the White House Office of Administration, said in court papers. The documents do not name the administrator of DOGE, whose work Musk has championed in posts on his social-media platform X and in a public appearance at the White House.

White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt declined on



Tuesday to tell reporters at the White House who the DOGE administrator is, though minutes before she said in an interview with Fox News Channel that Musk has been tasked with overseeing the effort on behalf of the president.

Layoffs, she told reporters, are up to individual agency heads. "Elon Musk, just like everybody else across the federal

government, works at the direction of President Trump," Leavitt said.

The DOGE team has roamed from agency to agency, tapping into computer systems, digging into budgets and searching for waste, fraud and abuse, while lawsuits pile up claiming Trump and DOGE are violating the law. At least two are targeting Musk himself.

Last week, Musk called for the US to "delete entire agencies" from the federal government as part of the push to radically cut spending and restructure its priorities. US District Judge Tanya Chutkan seemed sceptical in a hearing on Monday when Justice Department lawyers asserted that Musk has no formal authority.

"I think you stretch too far. I disagree with you there," Chutkan said.

Trump administration gives schools deadline to end DEI programmes or risk losing funds

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

The Trump administration is giving America's schools and universities two weeks to eliminate diversity initiatives or risk losing federal money, raising the stakes in the president's fight against "wokeness".

In a memo on Friday, the Education Department gave an ultimatum to stop using "racial preferences" as a factor in admissions, financial aid, hiring or other areas. Schools are being given 14 days to end any practice that treats students or workers differently because of their race.

Educators at colleges nationwide were rushing to evaluate their risk and decide whether to stand up for practices they believe are legal. The sweeping demand threatens to upend all aspects of campus operations, from essays on college applica-

tions to classroom lessons and campus clubs. It's meant to correct what the memo described as rampant discrimination in education, often against white and Asian students.

"Schools have been operating on the pretext that selecting students for diversity or similar euphemisms is not selecting them based on race," said Craig Trainor, acting assistant secretary for civil rights. "No longer. Students should be assessed according to merit, accomplishment and character."

The guidance drew sharp backlash from civil rights groups and university groups. Some believe its vague language is meant to have a chilling effect, pressuring schools to eliminate anything touching on the topic of race even if it may be defensible in court.

"Creating a sense of risk around doing work that might promote

diverse and welcoming campuses is much more of the goal than a clear statement of existing law," said Jonathan Fansmith, senior vice-president of government relations at the American Council on Education, an association of college presidents.

The memo is an extension of President Donald Trump's executive order banning diversity, equity and inclusion programmes. As legal justification, it cites the 2023 Supreme Court decision barring race as a factor in college admissions.

"Put simply, educational institutions may neither separate or segregate students based on race, nor distribute benefits or burdens based on race," it said. On Monday, the Education Department announced it also cut USD 600 million in grants for organisations that train teachers. The programmes pro-

moted "divisive" concepts like DEI, critical race theory and social justice activism, the department said.

Confusion around the implications of Trump's anti-DEI order was apparent at last week's confirmation hearing for education secretary nominee Linda McMahon. Asked whether classes on African American history would run afoul of the president's order, McMahon said she wasn't certain.

The California School Boards Association is awaiting legal guidance so it can advise schools on the Trump administration's deadline, spokesman Troy Flint said. "At this point there is not enough information for a step-by-step playbook that tells school districts if you were doing A then now you should do B, or perhaps eliminate the whole programme entirely," he said.



A photo of Pope Francis stands in front of Priest Nicolas Angelotti as he leads a Mass to pray for the pope's health in Buenos Aires, Argentina. AP/PTI

Nearly 300 deportees from US held in Panama hotel

PTI ■ PANAMA CITY (PANAMA)

Panama is detaining in a hotel nearly 300 people from various countries deported under US President Donald Trump, not allowing them to leave while waiting for international authorities to organise a return to their countries.

More than 40 per cent of the migrants, authorities say, won't voluntarily return to their homeland. Migrants in the hotel rooms held messages to the windows reading "Help" and "We are not save (sic) in our country".

The migrants hailed from 10 mostly Asian countries, including Iran, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Afghanistan, China and others. The US has

difficulty deporting directly to some of those countries so Panama is being used as a stopover. Costa Rica was expected to receive a similar flight of third-country deportees on Wednesday.

Panama's Security Minister Frank Abrego said Tuesday the migrants are receiving medical attention and food as part of a migration agreement between Panama and the US. The Panamanian government has now agreed to serve as a "bridge" or transit country for deportees, while the US bears all the costs of the operation.

The agreement was announced earlier this month after US Secretary of State Marco Rubio's visit. Panamanian President Jose

Raul Mulino, who faces political pressure over Trump's threats of retaking control of the Panama Canal, announced the arrival of the first of the deportation flights last Thursday. The confinement and legal limbo the deportees face has raised alarm in the Central American country, especially as images spread of migrants peaking through the windows of their rooms on high floors of the hotel and displaying the notes pleading for help. Abrego denied the foreigners are being detained even though they cannot leave the rooms of their hotel, which is being guarded by police.

Abrego said that 171 of the 299 deportees have agreed to return voluntarily to their respective

countries with help from the International Organisation for Migration and the UN Refugee Agency. UN agencies are talking with the other 128 migrants in an effort to find a destination for them in third countries.

Abrego said that one deported Irish citizen has already returned to her country. Those who do not agree to return to their countries will be temporarily held in a facility in the remote Darien province through which hundreds of thousands of migrants have crossed on their journey north in recent years, Abrego said.

The Panamanian Ombudsman's Office was scheduled to provide more details on the deportees' situation later Tuesday.

Border arrests plummet

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

Arrests for illegal border crossings from Mexico plummeted 39 per cent in January from a month earlier, authorities said on Tuesday, an early gauge of President Donald Trump's immigration crackdown. The Border Patrol made 21,593 arrests during the month, down from 47,316 in December and the lowest mark since May 2020 near the peak of the COVID-19 epidemic, according to US Customs and Border Protection. "Call it the Trump effect," the White House said in a statement. Border arrests fell sharply well before Trump took office from an all-time high of 2,500,000 in December 2023. Mexican authorities increased enforcement within their own borders and then-president Joe Biden introduced severe asylum restrictions in June. Arrests sank even further after Trump was sworn in on January 20 and issued a slew of orders on immigration, including one to suspend asylum on grounds that the US is under "invasion" at the southern border.

Man who attacked Japan's ex-PM sentenced to 10 years

PTI ■ TOKYO

A Japanese court on Wednesday convicted a man who threw a homemade pipe bomb at Japan's former Prime Minister Fumio Kishida at a 2023 campaign event, sentencing him to 10 years in prison, according to local media reports.

Ryuji Kimura, 25, was charged with attempted murder for the April 15, 2023 attack on Kishida at a small fishing port in the western city of Wakayama, as well as four other charges including violations of laws on explosives and other weapons.

In the ruling, the Wakayama District Court sentenced

Kimura to 10 years in prison, according to Japan's public television and other media, without specifying which of the five charges he was found guilty of. The court did not immediately confirm the ruling by phone. Kimura, at an opening session of the trial in early February, pleaded not guilty to attempted murder, saying he didn't intend to kill Kishida.

The then-prime minister was unhurt, but two people sustained minor injuries. Kimura was arrested on the spot.

The attack came about a year after the assassination of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe during a campaign speech in Nara, another city in western Japan.

Imran offered deal to overturn disqualification, claims ally

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD
A key ally of Imran Khan has said that an offer was being made to the jailed former prime minister for the nullification of his disqualification...

process and views Gandapur as the central figure who could make it happen. So far, there is no indication that the other side is willing to engage.



House but no progress was made due to his insistence on the release of all detained workers before his transfer.

a power show in Swabi on February 8, party founder Khan — who has been in jail since August 2023 — has written multiple letters to the country's military top brass...

Migrant workers say racist attacks increase in German city

PTI ■ MAGDEBURG (GERMANY)
When Haben Gebregergish first immigrated to the German city of Magdeburg seven years ago, the Eritrean immigrant was walking to the supermarket with her child...

sentiments. "We are the same as you," Gebregergish said earlier this month. "We are not different. Just like you, we have feelings."

today as authorities investigate him. Just one day after December 20 violence, there was a large right-wing demonstration in Magdeburg...

racist attacks in the city often do not feel support from politicians or police. "The hatred has always been there, people just didn't dare to say it so clearly before," said Asatiani-Hermann...

Seven passengers killed in Pakistan's Balochistan

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD
Unidentified gunmen killed at least seven passengers of a bus on Wednesday after checking their identity cards in Pakistan's troubled Balochistan province, officials said.

The bodies have been transported to a nearby hospital in Rakni, according to the Levies force. Quoting one passenger, Geo News reported that the assailants took his brother away after checking his identity card.

ple is a coward and heinous act. The terrorists are the enemies of peace and humanity. They want to mar the peace in Balochistan," the president said.

PUBLIC NOTICE
We SH ANIL KUMAR S/O MAKHAN LAL & SHARDA AGGARWAL W/O ANIL KUMAR R/o H.No. 1770, Nai Basti Rewari Haryana declare that we disown our son BRIJESH and his wife ISHITA from all our movable or immovable properties...

PUBLIC NOTICE
To be known to all that I, Sunil Saxena S/o Late Prem Prakash Saxena Flat No.-42-D, J/C LIG Flats, G-8, Rajouri Garden, Delhi-110064 have lost my Original Power of Attorney, Receipt of Payment made to DDA by me, Affidavit given by me while purchasing this flat, Registration cum Allotment letter issued by DDA, Will and Deed issued by Seller, Possession Slip, Possession Letter, Electricity and Water NOC issued by DDA against LIG Flat No.-42-D, J/C LIG Flats, G-8, Rajouri Garden, Delhi-110064 against Title No. F-2/228/83/HB/NP/LIG An NCR to this effect has been lodged in the police station Delhi (LR No.-1162837/2023 Dated : 23.11.2023) Any person claiming any rights, interest, having any objection or found in possession of original documents may write/contact me/us at the above address/phone : 9999451865 within 15 days from the publication of this notice...

CHANGE OF NAME
I, Smt Roopali, W/o No.15782240A Hav (OPR) Ganapati Chavhan, R/o-Siddewadi, Teh- Athani, Dist-Belagavi, Karnataka- 591232, have changed my name from Smt Roopali to Roopali Chavhan, vide affidavit dated 19/02/2025 before Notary Public Delhi.

PD(1541)C I, Indumati, Mother of No.15782240A Hav (OPR) Ganapati Chavhan, R/o-Siddewadi, Teh- Athani, Dist-Belagavi, Karnataka- 591232, have changed my name from Indumati to Indumati Chavhan, vide affidavit dated 19/02/2025 before Notary Public Delhi.

PD(1542)C I, No.15782240A Hav (OPR) Ganapati Chavhan, R/o-Siddewadi, Teh- Athani, Dist-Belagavi, Karnataka- 591232, have changed my name from Indumati to Indumati Chavhan, vide affidavit dated 19/02/2025 before Notary Public Delhi.

PD(1543)C I, No.15782240A Hav (OPR) Ganapati Chavhan, R/o-Siddewadi, Teh- Athani, Dist-Belagavi, Karnataka- 591232, have changed my name from Indumati to Indumati Chavhan, vide affidavit dated 19/02/2025 before Notary Public Delhi.

PD(1544)C I, Mahadev, Father of No.15782240A Hav (OPR) Ganapati Chavhan, R/o-Siddewadi, Teh- Athani, Dist-Belagavi, Karnataka- 591232, have changed my name from Mahadev to Mahadeva Appasab Chavhan, vide affidavit dated 19/02/2025 before Notary Public Delhi.

Baba Farid University of Health Sciences, Faridkot
Ph: 01639-256232-256236
ADVT. No. BFU-25/07
Vacancies
Online applications are invited w.e.f. 21-02-2025 to 27-02-2025 from eligible candidates through University website i.e www.bfuh.s.ac.in for the recruitment to the posts of AC System Operator-07, Electrician-11 on regular basis under of Baba Farid University of Health Sciences, Faridkot.

BEFORE MS. GLADYS DANIEL, ADVOCATE SOLE ARBITRATOR
Under the Arbitration and Conciliation Act, 1996
Arb. O. P. (Comm. Div.) No. 06 of 2023
M/s. Hi Tech Engineering Solution, Claimant
Vs.
M/s. Digital Smart Solutions, Respondent

PUBLIC NOTICE
This is to inform to all concerned that Mr. Mehraj Chand S/o Late Sh. Chhatr Singh R/o 13/12, Schedule-B, Rashtrapati Bhawan, New Delhi who is the original allottee of property No. EWS Flat No. 175F, Block-D-20, Sector-71, Noida (Scheme Code: 1999-2000(H) (01) Dist. Gautam Budh Nagar, (U.P.) had sold the said property on General Power of Attorney basis to the following person(s).

FORM NO. 1 (PAPER PUBLICATION)
HON'BLE DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL, LUCKNOW
(Are of jurisdiction and part of Uttar Pradesh), 600/1, University Road, Near Hanuman Setu Mandir, Lucknow-226007.
DR. NO. 1043/2023
(NOTICE UNDER RULE 2 OF SECOND SCHEDULE TO THE INCOME TAX ACT, 1961 READ WITH SECTION 29 OF THE RECOVERY OF DEBTS DUE TO BANKS AND FINANCIAL INSTITUTION ACT, 1993)
ICICI BANK LTD
Versus
Mr. Vinod Kumar & Others.

PIRAMAL CAPITAL & HOUSING FINANCE LIMITED
Registered Office: Unit No.601, 6th Floor Piramal Amity Building, Piramal Agastya Corporate Park, Kamani Junction, Opp Fire Station, BLS Marg, Kuria (West), Mumbai- 400 070.
Branch Address: Dhiraaj Buid Building "A" Ground & 1st Floor, Behind Axis Bank, Opp. Monalisa Building, Agar Road, Hari Niwas Circle, Naupada, Thane (West) - 400 602.
Demand Notice
Under Section 13(2) of the Securitisation And Reconstruction of Financial Assets And Enforcement Of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with Rule 3 (1) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002. The undersigned is the Authorised Officer of Piramal Capital & Housing Finance Limited (PCHFL) under securitisation of Financial Assets And Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 (the said Act). In exercise of powers conferred under Section 13(2) of the said Act read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002, the Authorised Officer has issued Demand Notices under Section 13(2) of the said Act, calling upon the following Borrower(s) (the said Borrower(s)), to repay the amounts mentioned in the respective Demand Notice(s) issued to them that are also given below. In connection with above, notice is hereby given, once again, to the said Borrower(s) to pay to PCHFL, within 60 days from the publication of this Notice, the amounts indicated herein below, together with further interest as detailed in the said Demand Notice(s), from the date(s) mentioned below till the date of payment and/or realization, payable under the loan agreement read with their documents/writings, if any, executed by the said Borrower(s). As security for due repayment of the loan, the following assets have been mortgaged to PCHFL by the said Borrower(s) respectively.

Table with columns: Name of the Borrower(s)/ Guarantor(s)/ Loan Code, Demand Notice Date and Amount With NPA Date, Property address. Contains multiple entries for various borrowers and their properties.

छत्तीसगढ़ पर्यावरण संरक्षण मंडल
पर्यावास भवन, सेक्टर-19, नवा रायपुर अटल नगर, जिला- रायपुर (छ.ग.)
// सर्व संबंधित को सूचना //
भारत सरकार, पर्यावरण, वन एवं जलवायु परिवर्तन मंत्रालय द्वारा जारी आई.ई.आई.ए. नोटिफिकेशन, 2006 (स्था - संशोधित) के तहत सर्व संबंधित को सूचित किया जाता है कि मेसर्स श्री राधे शक्ति स्पेज एण्ड पॉवर प्राइवेट लिमिटेड, ग्राम-चापा एवं कोटा, तहसील-तिरुवा, जिला - रायपुर (छ.ग.) में प्रस्तावित ग्रीनफील्ड परियोजना के तहत DRI based Steel plant to produce Sponge Iron - 2,45,000 TPA (350 TPD x 2 Nos.), Mild Steel Billets - 2,74,400 TPA, Rolled Steel Products - 2,66,168 TPA (through Hot Charging- 2,01,684 and thru BRF (based on Coal Gasifier) - 64,484 TPA, SAF-9 MVA x 2 No to produce SiMn-34,000 TPA and/or FeMn - 43,000 TPA and/or FeSi - 19,000 TPA and/or Pig Iron - 68,000 TPA), Captive Power of - 25 MW (16 MW through WHRB and 9 MW through FBC) and Fly Ash Bricks - 39,800 TPA के पर्यावरणीय स्वीकृति बावत लोक सुनवाई दिनांक 21/02/2025 को प्रातः 11:00 बजे से स्थल- ग्राम चापा, तहसील तिरुवा, जिला- रायपुर (छ.ग.) स्थित परियोजना स्थल के प्रस्तावित रिक्त भूमि खपरा क्रमांक 429/1 में निवृत्त की गई थी, जिसे कालविय कवरेज एवं जिला वडाधिकारी, रायपुर (छ.ग.) के ज्ञापन क्रमांक 120/अ.जि.व./एस.डब्ल्यू/ 2025 रायपुर, दिनांक 18/02/2025 के अनुसार परियोजना प्रस्तावक के आवेदन तथा त्रिस्तरीय पंचायत स्तरीय को दृष्टिगत रखते हुये पूर्व निवृत्त लोक सुनवाई दिनांक 21.02.2025 को स्थगित किया जाता है।
सदस्य सचिव
छत्तीसगढ़ पर्यावरण संरक्षण मंडल,
नवा रायपुर अटल नगर, रायपुर (छ.ग.)

ESAF SMALL FINANCE BANK
REGD. OFFICE: ESAF Bhavan, Mannuthy, Thrissur- 680 651, Kerala.
GOLD AUCTION NOTICE
Notice is hereby given for the information of all concerned that Gold ornaments pledged with ESAF Small Finance Bank and not redeemed by borrowers, despite repeated reminders and notices, of our branches, are listed below. This will be auctioned as per the details given below:
DATE OF AUCTION: 10-03-2025 TIME: 2 PM TO 5 PM
AUCTION VENUE: THROUGH E-AUCTION
AUCTION ADDRESS: https://gold.matenext.org/
Contact Number: 9500713386/9962979770
To register as bidder for the e-Auction with terms and conditions, and full details of e-Auction please visit the above site.
BRANCHES & LOAN ACCOUNT NUMBERS
FARIDABAD: 75240001600854
Customers who are interested to release the ornaments by paying the total due amount may do so, at the respective branches, on or two days before the date of the auction.
Bidders who wish to participate in the auction shall produce their KYC documents. GST No. is mandatory for registered firms/companies. Bidders shall deposit a sum of Rs.50,000 as EMD before participating in the auction.
Thiruv: Sd/-
Date: 20-02-2025 Authorized Signatory

Google to settle tax probe in Italy

PTI ■ MILAN
Italian prosecutors said Wednesday they will seek to drop a tax evasion investigation against Google after the tech giant agreed to pay a 326 million Euro (USD 340 million) settlement.

The investigation focused on revenues from the sale of advertising, and cited the presence of servers and other infrastructure in Italy. Google acknowledged the settlement in statement, saying it resolves "a tax audit ... without litigation."

Tech giant Google previously paid over USD 1 billion to French authorities to settle a yearlong dispute over allegations of tax fraud.

कार्यालय नगर पालिक निगम, (यांत्रिक विभाग) भोपाल
निविदा आमंत्रण सूचना
क्रमांक.190/यां.वि./2025
निम्न कार्य हेतु म.प्र. लोक निर्माण विभाग में पंजीकृत ठेकेदारों से ऑनलाईन निविदा आमंत्रित की जाती है। विस्तृत विवरण Website https://www.mptenders.gov.in पर है।
क्रमांक निविदा क्रमांक कार्य का संक्षिप्त विवरण अनुमानित लागत (रु. में) निविदा क्रय करने का आंतिम समय दिनांक समय
1 2025 UAD_403639_1 CONSTRUCTION OF SCHOOL BUILDING, BOUNDARY WALL AND OTHER DEVELOPMENT WORKS FOR KALKHEDA GOVT SCHOOL WARD 26 ZONE 21 4,23,44,974/- 24-MAR-2025 05:30 PM
नोट:- संशोधन वेबसाइट पर ही देखे जा सकेंगे समाचार पत्रों में प्रकाशित नहीं होंगे।
अधीक्षक यंत्र (सिविल) नगर निगम भोपाल
निम्नलिखित कार्य हेतु केन्द्रीयकृत प्रणाली में पंजीकृत ठेकेदारों से ऑनलाईन निविदा आमंत्रित की जाती है। निविदा का विस्तृत विवरण वेबसाइट https://mptenders.gov.in पर देखा जा सकता है।
क्र. टेंडर नं. कार्य का नाम एवं विवरण अनुमानित लागत निविदा प्रपत्र का मूल्य अमानत राशि समयावधि निविदा की तिथि
1 2025 UAD_403679_1 CM URBAN AREA INFRASTRUCTURE CONSTRUCTION WORK GROUP-5 100.75 लाख 12500 50400 06 माह 24.03.2025
2 2025 UAD_403681_1 ROAD AND DRAIN WORK UNDER KAYAKALP 2.0 CM MONIT SCHEME. 151.76 लाख 12500 75900 12 माह 24.03.2025
नोट :- 1. इच्छुक निविदादाता विस्तृत निविदा एवं अन्य समस्त जानकारी ई-टेंडरिंग पोर्टल www.mptenders.gov.in पर Key-Date अनुसार देखी जाकर निविदा प्रपत्र ऑनलाईन क्रय किये जा सकते हैं। 2. निविदा में यदि कोई संशोधन होता है तो केवल ऑनलाईन प्रकाशित किया जावेगा समाचार पत्र में नहीं। 3. समस्त करों की कटौतियों शासन निमानानुसार को जायेगी।
मुख्य नगर पालिका अधिकाारी नगर पालिका परिषद दमोह

Mysuru layoffs: Infosys denies force, intimidation

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

IT services company Infosys on Wednesday said it did not use force or intimidation tactics when it laid off trainees at Mysuru campus over performance-related issues, and that it was explaining the circumstances to the labour department authorities. Shaji Mathew, Chief Human Resources Officer at Infosys, however, conceded that assessment failure percentages this time around have been "slightly higher" than in the past but dismissed charges that the tests had been designed for failure. On whether the layoffs would severely dent Infosys' brand as the company goes out to campuses for FY26 hiring, he said that plans to hire 20,000 freshers for next fiscal are on track and they should have nothing to worry about as they will get one of the best corporate training. Responding to allegations that testing parameters, assessment criteria and syllabus were altered and intimidation tactics

were resorted leading to the 300 plus terminations at Mysuru campus recently, Mathew said that given that the company invests money and effort to select and put trainees through the training program "it is in the interest of Infosys to see that all these people are successful, and that is when we are able to put them into our projects". "There is training investment that goes in and we also pay them salary during the training. It is not in the interest of the company to let any of these people go...It is a loss to them of course, it is a loss to us as well," he said adding that the particular batch of trainees had not cleared internal assessments after three attempts. On the Labour Ministry's direction to Karnataka state labour department to take action, and reports that the Labour Department officials had followed up with visits to Infosys campuses in Bengaluru and Mysuru, Mathew said the Labour Department is in touch with the company and Infosys

is cooperating with the authorities. "Yes, the Labour Department has been in touch with us, they wanted to understand our training process and the assessment etc and we have taken (them) through the entire training process, the assessment, and how this is a critical part of developing the future talent, not just for Infosys, but even for the entire IT industry. "They have been quite supportive, and I think they understand the entire process that we have been going through in terms of training and assessment, all of that. So we have cooperated with them so far. And there has been no further ask from their side," Mathew said. Asked if Infosys will consider taking the trainees back and reinstating them, he added "There has been no further ask in terms of taking them back". Earlier this month, India's second largest IT services company faced a backlash after it laid off over 300 freshers who underwent foundational

training at its Mysuru campus but could not clear internal assessments. The trainees after a two-year wait had been onboarded just a few months ago in October 2024. IT employee union NITES had sought urgent intervention of Ministry of Labour and Employment urging authorities to take strict action against the company. Nascent Information Technology Employees Senate (NITES) had, in fact, alleged that employees were summoned to meeting rooms at Infosys' Mysuru campus, and asked to sign "mutual separation" letters. Mathew countered allegations claiming that at no point were 'bouncers' brought in, nor were intimidation tactics used. This is not what Infosys stands for, he emphasised. "I can't even imagine us thinking about 'bouncers' and so on so forth. These are our trainees, and we don't need to bring in bouncers. So that is absolutely not correct. There was also concern that we did

not allow people to stay on the campus. Again, there are people who wanted to stay on the campus, and we allowed them to stay on the campus," he said. Infosys has now postponed, by a week, internal assessments scheduled for another set of trainees, reportedly 800 of them are slated to take their tests. The company has, however, asserted that the deferment is aimed at giving them additional time for preparation. "It is in our interest to see how we can help these set of trainees to get through the training program, and that they come out successful at the end of the training so we can continue with them as employees in the company. We have seen the failure rate, and therefore we wanted to give them an additional opportunity and time to prepare," he said. The additional time will help them in the doubt-clearing, and subject matter experts will be made available so they can actually work with trainees to prepare them well.

US tariffs on India to have limited impact

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India will be less impacted by the proposed United States (US) reciprocal tariff as the country's economy is mainly driven by domestic demand, and has substantial services exports, which is not going to be targeted by the Trump Administration, S and P Global Ratings said on Wednesday. US President Donald Trump has announced he will impose reciprocal tariffs on its trading partners, including India. S&P Global Ratings, Economist Asia-Pacific, Vishrut Rana said the reciprocal tariff will hurt countries like Vietnam, South Korea, Taiwan more as they have high trade surplus with the US. The Indian economy has two mitigating factors - greater reliance on domestic economy and larger services trade with

the US, which is not likely to be tarified. In Japan also, there are similar mitigating factors - greater reliance on services trade, and domestically-driven economy. "Which means (US) trade measures might be less impactful there (India and Japan)," Rana said at the S&P Asia-Pacific Credit Focus webinar. He also said that reciprocal tariffs may fuel inflationary expectations, thus leading to higher interest rates globally. S and P Global Ratings, Director, Sovereigns (Asia-Pacific) YeeFarn Phua also said India's economy is largely still domestic-oriented and the nature of the exports to the US is more on the services side, which is less prone to tariffs. "India's dependence on exports for growth is not that great. So, therefore, I think the impact (of US tariffs) will be more or less limited," he said, adding on the goods side the

sectors which could be exposed to higher tariffs are jewellery, pharmaceutical, textiles and chemicals. Phua said the US may not impose higher tariffs on pharmaceuticals, which are basically generic drugs, from India as it would drive up healthcare costs in its own country. However, textiles and to some extent chemicals are most at risk of higher tariffs. "If we were to reimagine that scenario for the first Trump administration to unfold again, I think overall, the impact on India should be quite minimal," Phua added. Earlier in 2018 under the Presidency of Donald Trump, Washington had imposed an additional 25 per cent import duty on steel products and 10 per cent on certain aluminium products. In retaliation, India in June 2019, imposed additional customs duties on 28 American products.

Efforts to serve complaint on Gautam Adani, Sagar Adani ongoing: SEC

PTI ■ NEW YORK

The United States (US) Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) has told a federal judge here that its efforts to serve its complaint on Gautam Adani and Sagar Adani in the alleged bribery scheme are "ongoing", including through a request for assistance to the Indian authorities. The SEC submitted a status update Tuesday to Judge Nicholas Garaufis at the United States District Court, Eastern District of New York regarding its efforts to serve its complaint on Gautam Adani and Sagar Adani. The SEC said that both Gautam Adani and Sagar Adani "are located in India, and the SEC's efforts to serve them there are ongoing, including through a request for assistance to the Indian authorities to effect service under the Hague Service Convention for Service Abroad of Judicial and Extrajudicial Documents in Civil or Commercial Matters." The SEC said that its complaint dated November 20 last year

alleges that Gautam Adani and Sagar Adani violated the antifraud provisions of the federal securities laws by "knowingly or recklessly making false and misleading representations concerning Adani Green Energy Ltd in connection with a September 2021 debt offering by Adani Green. It said that because the "defendants are located in a foreign country, Rule 4(f) of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure (FRCP) governs service of the Summons and Complaint. FRCP 4(f) contains no set time limit for service, and the SEC may serve Defendants "by any internationally agreed means of service that is reasonably calculated to give notice", such as the Hague Service Convention." The SEC update, submitted by its Counsel Christopher Colorado, cited a case which notes that service via the Hague Service Convention is one permissible means of serving defendants located in India. "Since the filing of its Complaint, SEC staff has been

working to serve Defendants in accordance with FRCP 4(f). SEC staff has contacted Defendants or their counsel (to the extent SEC staff is aware of such counsel) and has sent them Notices of Lawsuit and Requests for Waiver of Service of Summons, including copies of the Complaint. "Additionally, under Article 5(a) of the Hague Service Convention, the SEC has requested assistance from India's Ministry of Law and Justice, the Central Authority for India under the Hague Service Convention." "That process is ongoing, and the SEC will continue its efforts to serve Defendants in India by the methods prescribed by FRCP 4(f)-including under the Hague Service Convention-and will keep the Court apprised of its progress," the SEC said. In November last year, the Securities and Exchange Commission had charged Gautam Adani, Sagar Adani and Cyril Cabanes, an executive of Azure Power Global Ltd., for conduct arising out of a massive bribery scheme.

Australia's Federation University acquires Employability.life

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Federation University Australia on Wednesday announced its expansion in India with the strategic acquisition of Employability.life, reaching 10 Million students in higher education to make them work-ready. Federation University, which dates back to 1870 when the School of Mines in Ballarat was established, has evolved into Victoria's leading regional university, and established local and global partnerships, and produced over 123,000 graduates. The university is ranked number 175 in the Times Higher Education World's Young Universities. It is ranked number one in Victoria and number two in Australia for full-time postgraduate employment. New Delhi headquartered Employability.life, a workplace readiness company, has partnerships with several colleges and universities across Maharashtra, Karnataka, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi,

and Punjab. Through this acquisition, Employability.life will be integrated into Federation University's ecosystem, helping to bridge the gap between academic learning and workplace readiness. Commenting on the acquisition, Professor Duncan Bentley, Vice Chancellor, Federation University Australia said, "Federation University Australia is thrilled to announce the acquisition of Employability.life as part of our mission to deliver a world-class education that combines academic excellence with practical, real-world experience. Federation University's mission is to transform lives and enhancing communities, and the acquisition of Employability.life will help us deliver on that commitment on a global scale. It will also expand our presence in India where our expertise in supporting regional communities has helped us forge many valuable partnerships in education and research."

Coal ministry plans to offer extra incentives in mine auctions

PTI ■ KOLKATA

The Coal Ministry is planning additional incentives to boost underground (UG) commercial coal block auctions in India, a senior government official said on Wednesday. The push for UG mining aligns with India's drive for sustainable coal production. The proposed incentives are in an advanced stage of discussions and are expected to be announced soon, Coal Secretary Vikram Dev Dutt said at a roadshow for commercial coal mine auctions in the city. Additional Secretary and nominated authority Rupinder Brar clarified that any new incentives and policy relaxations are expected to be applicable prospectively. The coal ministry's policy evolution has involved multiple stakeholders, including industry players. "We have consistently refined the auction framework based

on industry feedback, ensuring an investor-friendly environment," Dutt said. The ministry was discussing demands for reclassification, as underground mining faces inherent challenges. Of the 113 commercial mines successfully auctioned, 37 are underground, officials said. The ministry is also working to secure environmental concessions with the Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change. The ministry believes the next two-three years are crucial for commercial mines to rapidly begin production. Currently, production from auctioned commercial mines is 20 million tonnes, but combined with captive production, it totals 157 Million Tonnes and is expected to reach 170 Million Tonnes by the end of the fiscal year, an official said. In 2025-26, this production is projected to rise to 210 Million Tonnes.

MREI facilitates cultural exchange for UK students

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Manav Rachna Educational Institutions (MREI) facilitated an enriching sport, cultural and academic exchange for over 50 students and faculty members from Havant and South Downs College (HSDC) and Park Community School (PCS) under the UK Government's Turing Scheme, a prestigious international mobility grants programme initiated by the UK government. The exchange featured a thoughtfully designed academic schedule incorporating interactive sessions, hands-on projects, and industry-relevant learning experiences. Participants engaged in discussions with subject matter experts, attended specialised workshops, and explored innovative solutions in these fields, ensuring a well-rounded and immersive educational experience. The program focused on providing domain-specific insights into sports, sustainability, environmental science, and culinary arts and a deeper appreciation of diverse cultural perspectives. "Such initiatives play a vital role in expanding students' academic horizons and preparing them for a globally connected world. Through this journey, we hope to broaden their perspectives, enhance their skills, and build lasting friendships," said Dr. Amit Bhalla, Vice President, MREI. "At Manav Rachna, we are committed to creating transformative learning experiences that empower students with knowledge beyond textbooks," he added. Julio Carrillo, Turing Coordinator and Team Leader, HSDC said, "I am delighted to be a part of this enriching exchange program between MREI and our institution in the UK. The opportunity for our students and faculty to engage with the vibrant academic and cultural landscape of India is truly invaluable."

India-Qatar trade agreement must be approached with caution: GTRI

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India should tread cautiously on a potential free trade agreement (FTA) with Qatar, particularly in the petrochemical sector as both countries are strong in this segment, economic think tank GTRI said on Wednesday. The Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI) added that India should ensure that tariff concessions on petrochemicals and energy-related imports do not undermine domestic industries. According to a joint statement issued after the meeting of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Amir of Qatar Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, the two sides agreed to explore the possibility of entering into a bilateral comprehensive economic partnership agreement (CEPA) with an aim to double bilateral trade to \$28 Billion by 2030. Normally in a CEPA, a kind of free trade agreement (FTA), two trading partners either eliminate or significantly reduce customs duties on the maximum number of goods (90-95 per cent) traded between them. Besides, they ease norms to promote trade in services and boost investments. Given the trade structure between the two nations, a trade agreement "must be approached with caution," the Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI) Founder Ajay Srivastava said. India has a well-developed domestic petrochemical industry that could face challenges if tariff reductions lead to an influx of cheaper Qatari imports, he said, adding that India already has a significant trade deficit with Qatar, which could widen further post-trade pact if market access benefits are

not balanced. "A careful evaluation of sectoral impacts, particularly in energy and manufacturing, will be essential before proceeding with such an agreement," he said. India's trade with Qatar is marked by a significant imbalance. In 2023-24, the country's imports from Qatar stood at \$12.34 Billion, while its exports were only \$1.7 Billion. A large portion (85 per cent) of India's imports from Qatar comprises LNG (\$6.3 Billion), butane, propane mostly for LPG production (\$3.1 Billion), and petroleum crude (\$1.1 Billion). Meanwhile, India's primary exports to Qatar include Basmati rice (\$124 Million), articles of iron and steel (\$200 Million), and machinery (\$106 Million). According to the GTRI, as of 2024, Qatar has a gross domestic product (GDP) of \$221.4 Billion, and a population of about 3.1 Million. India has a GDP of \$4 Trillion and a population of 1400 Million. The bilateral trade has declined to \$14 Billion in 2023-24 from \$18.77 Billion in 2022-23. India received \$1.5 Billion of foreign direct investments from that country between April 2000 and September 2024. Qatar's key exports to India include LNG, LPG, chemicals and petrochemicals, plastics, and aluminium articles, while India's key exports include cereals, copper articles, iron and steel articles, vegetables, fruits, spices, processed food products, electrical and other machinery, plastic products, construction material, textiles and garments, chemicals, precious stones and rubber.

Markets end marginally lower in volatile trade

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty ended marginally lower in a volatile trade on Wednesday dragged by blue-chip IT stocks. The 30-share BSE benchmark Sensex dipped 28.21 points or 0.04 per cent to settle at 75,939.18. Intraday, it hit a high of 76,338.58 and a low of 75,581.38, gyrating 757.2 points. The NSE Nifty skidded 12.40 points or 0.05 per cent to 22,932.90. From the Sensex pack, Tata Consultancy Services and Infosys fell over 2 per cent each. Hindustan Unilever, Bharti Airtel, Sun Pharma, Power Grid, Bajaj Finserv, HCL Tech, Mahindra & Mahindra, and Tech Mahindra were also among the laggards. Among the gainers, Zomato jumped nearly 5 per cent. Larsen & Toubro, Axis Bank, ICICI Bank, IndusInd Bank

and Kotak Mahindra Bank were also among the gainers. "The national benchmarks exhibited a range-bound performance with a slight downward bias, though selective buying in the broader market was evident, driven by bargain hunting in beaten-down stocks. "A reversal in FII flows also influenced market dynamics; however, the durability of this trend remains uncertain. Despite concerns over potential US tariff impositions and delays in anticipated interest rate cuts, market sentiment remains optimistic about a rebound in India's Q3 GDP growth," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services, said. In Asian markets, Seoul and Shanghai settled in the positive territory while Tokyo and Hong Kong ended lower. European markets were trading mostly lower.

US markets ended in positive territory on Tuesday. "While markets ended flat with a slightly negative bias due to selling in IT stocks, broader markets witnessed a lot of optimism as mid and smallcap stocks rallied after the recent sell-off. "Despite the uncertainty over rising FII selling, falling rupee, and the ongoing tariff war, the recently beaten sectoral stocks from banking, automobile, telecom, metals attracted significant buying interest," Prashanth Tapse, Senior VP (Research), Mehta Equities Ltd, said. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) turned buyers on Tuesday after unabated selling. They bought equities worth ₹4,786.56 Crore, according to exchange data. The BSE smallcap gauge jumped 2.41 per cent and midcap index climbed 1.30 per cent.

Ola Electric renegotiates registration agency contracts

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Ola Electric on Wednesday said it is renegotiating contracts with its vehicle registration agencies, which will temporarily affect registrations on government's VAHAN portal but not the actual sales, while adding that consumer rights protection authority CCPA has sought additional documents related to over 10,000 consumer complaints against the company. In a stock exchange filing, Ola said it is discussing revising existing agreements with Rosmerta Digital Services Private Ltd and Shimmit India Private Ltd as part of a sales overhaul. This will "temporarily affect" registration numbers reflecting on the VAHAN portal in February. "We are renegotiating the terms of agreement with our agencies,

namely Rosmerta Digital Services Private Ltd and Shimmit India Private Ltd, to reduce cost and enhance registration process efficiencies. Due to ongoing negotiations and optimisation of the registration process, our registration numbers for the month of February 2025 (on VAHAN portal) will be temporarily impacted. Our sales continue to be strong through February 2025 and the dip in registration will be streamlined in the next few weeks," it said. According to the company's exchange filing, the negotiations aim to reduce costs and modify the registration process. Ola Electric works with the registration agencies as it does not operate through automobile dealerships but only through company-owned stores as part of a direct-to-consumer strategy.

How Tesla's investment will strengthen economy



BINOD ANAND ■ NEW DELHI

As India embraces sustainability and innovation, a cooperative economic framework becomes essential to address G-local challenges through responsible Business. This ensures shared growth by fostering collaboration between multinational corporations, small and medium enterprises (SMEs), and government bodies.

Establishing a Cooperative Economic Zone (CEZ) for green manufacturing will create an ecosystem where industries like Tesla thrive while benefiting local businesses and workers in India's transition to a net-zero emissions economy. A CEZ dedicated to electric vehicles (EVs) and clean energy will integrate research, development, and production under a single umbrella, facilitating knowledge sharing and resource optimization. With streamlined policies, incentives, and sustainable infrastructure, India can accelerate its ambitions to become a global hub for EV manufacturing, battery technology, and renewable energy solutions. For years, Indian consumers have awaited a future where

advanced technology, affordability, and sustainability coexist. The dream of cleaner air, reduced fuel dependency, and premium EV accessibility seemed distant-untill now. With Tesla coming to India and in future can be explored as investing in India under the 'Make in India' initiative, the nation may undergo a transformative shift. This is not merely a business expansion; it is a revolution redefining mobility, generating employment, and positioning India as a global leader in EV manufacturing. A major advantage for Indian buyers will be cost-effective Tesla vehicles. High import duties have kept EV prices elevated, making them inaccessible to many. Local manufacturing eliminates these costs, allowing Tesla to offer

premium EVs at competitive prices, promoting mass adoption. Additionally, Tesla's advancements in battery technology will reduce operational costs for consumers. The expansion of Tesla's energy storage solutions in India could also lead to more affordable home and business energy solutions, reducing reliance on conventional power sources and promoting sustainability. Eastern India presents a unique opportunity for Tesla to establish a world-class manufacturing hub like those in Germany. With Elon Musk's capability to invest through a cooperative economic framework, this region, rich in natural resources and labor availability, can provide Tesla with economies of scale.

IN BRIEF

RECPDCL HANDOVERS TWO NUMBER OF SPVS OF TRANSMISSION PROJECTS TO PGCIL

NEW DELHI: REC Power Development and Consultancy Limited (RECPDCL) handed over two number of project specific Special Purpose Vehicles (SPV) of ISTS Transmission Projects to Power Grid Corporation of India Limited

CLW TURNED OUT 581 ELECTRIC LOCOMOTIVES OF THE FY 2024-25

NEW DELHI : Chittaranjan Locomotive Works (CLW) turned out the 581st Electric Locomotive for the financial year 2024-25, surpassing its highest ever production of 580 locomotives achieved in the financial year 2023-24. This is the highest ever production in any financial year.



Narendra Modi, Prime Minister | **Dr. Mohan Yadav, Chief Minister**

Madhya Pradesh

Logistics Policy 2025

Boosting Investment & Job Creation

Infinite Possibilities



- Aims to reduce logistics cost as per global benchmarks by 2030 and establish data driven ecosystem
- Up to 30% investment support for Gati Shakti Cargo Terminal, Container Freight Station, Air Freight Station and Air Cargo Complex
- Up to 30% financial support for Logistics Park
- Financial support up to 50% for Green Certification and External Infrastructure Development



INVEST MADHYA PRADESH
GLOBAL INVESTORS SUMMIT
24 & 25 FEBRUARY 2025, BHOPAL

www.investmp.in

Released by the Department of Public Relations, M.P. | Designed by : M.P. Madhyam/2025

Feyenoord knocks AC Milan out of Champions League

PTI ■ MILAN

Seldom has a player's sending off had such an influence on a game. AC Milan was to left rue Theo Hernandez's second yellow card — for diving — as Feyenoord advanced to the Champions League last 16 at the former European champion's expense with a 1-1 draw in the second leg of their playoff on Tuesday, giving the Dutch team a 2-1 win on aggregate.

Bayern Munich, Club Brugge and Benfica also won their playoffs, eliminating Celtic, Europa League winner Atalanta, and French team Monaco, respectively.

"In soccer everything changes in a second," said Milan forward Santiago Gimenez, who scored one of the competition's fastest goals against his former team, Feyenoord, in the first minute. Hernandez was sent off for a dive in



the 51st when Milan was dominating after Gimenez's opener had leveled the tie. Feyenoord had won the first leg of the playoff 1-0 last week.

But Milan's defense looked anything but assured after referee Szymon Marciniak showed Hernandez another yellow card for his dive. The France defender had earned his first before the break for lashing out at a Feyenoord player after a foul on teammate João Félix. Hugo Bueno crossed for Julián Carranza to head Feyenoord level on the night in the 73rd, enough to put the Dutch team into the next phase.

"We're very disappointed. We started well and scored straight away. It seemed like Feyenoord couldn't hurt us," Gimenez said of the game's pivotal moment. "Today it happened to Theo but it can happen to anyone, this is soccer. We

have the utmost respect for Theo. We will give him all our support." Feyenoord's Givrao Read was shown a red card following another melee after the final whistle. Feyenoord will play either Inter Milan or Arsenal in the round of 16.

Davies to Bayern's rescue
Alphonso Davies scored in the fourth minute of stoppage time for Bayern to reach the last 16 with a 1-1 draw against Celtic.

Davies, a substitute, bundled the ball over the line after Leon Goretzka's effort was kept out, saving Bayern the ordeal of extra time after German player Nicolas Kühn had scored against his former club to draw Celtic level on aggregate.

Davies' goal gave Bayern a 3-2 win over two legs.

Next for the Bavarian powerhouse is either Bundesliga rival Bayer Leverkusen or Atlético Madrid.

Atalanta's efforts in vain
Club Brugge eliminated Atalanta with a 3-1 win in Bergamo for a 5-2 win on aggregate. The 19-year-old forward Chemsidine Talbi scored twice as the visitors gave Gian Piero Gasperini's team a lesson in efficiency.

Atalanta had 29 efforts at goal, compared to seven from the visitors, and tried 89 attacks compared to 16 from Brugge.

Half-time substitute Ademola Lookman scored seconds after the restart to unleash hopes of a miracle — Atalanta just needed three more goals to level the tie — but Simon Mignolet saved Lookman's penalty in the 61st as those hopes gradually faded.

Benfica reached the last 16 with a 3-3 draw against Monaco in Lisbon, giving the Portuguese team a 4-3 win on aggregate.

Gopi T, Ashwini return to Apollo Tyres New Delhi Marathon

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Defending men's and women's champions Gopi Thonakal and Ashwini Madan Jadhav will headline in the 10th edition of Apollo Tyres New Delhi Marathon scheduled to take place here on February 23. Recognised by Athletics Federation of India (AFI) as a national event, the marathon will also see participation from the country's top runners including Anish Thapa, Belliyappa, Man Singh, Akshay Saini and Vikram Bangriya the men's section. The likes of Laxmi KM, Nirmban Thakor Bharatjee and Disket Dolma will feature in the women's field. The event, which is also recognised by World Athletics, is a qualifying race for International Amateur races.

Runners will compete across four categories — full marathon, half marathon, 10k and 5k. Former Indian cricket team captain Ajinkya Rahane and head badminton coach Pullela Gopichand will flag off the marathon.

"The Apollo Tyres New Delhi Marathon is not just a race; it's a celebration of human spirit, perseverance, and unity. As the organisers, we are thrilled to see the incredible participation from athletes across the world, and we are proud to continue fostering an inclusive, inspiring event," said Nagaraj Adiga, Race Director and CMD - NEB Sports.

The marathon will focus on reducing plastic waste by offering eco-friendly hydration stations, minimising single-use plastic bottles and encouraging the use of reusable water containers.

The event will also implement waste segregation and promote recycling throughout the venue.

Gujarat's Priyank plays solid knock against Kerala Ranji Trophy semifinal

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

Gujarat's seasoned batter Priyank Panchal played a solid knock, remaining unbeaten on 117, as the former champions reached 222 for 1 at stumps on Day 3 of their Ranji Trophy semifinal against Kerala, here on Wednesday.

Trailing by just 235 runs with two full days remaining, Gujarat's batting unit showed resilience and intent on a placid Motera surface, where it seemed Kerala found themselves 100 runs short, having scored at snail's pace.

Resuming their first innings at 418/7, Kerala added 39 more runs before being bowled out for 457 just 10 overs into the morning session.

Mohammed Azharuddeen remained stranded on a magnificent 177 off



341 balls, his career-best knock featuring 20 fours and a solitary six.

His innings provided the backbone to Kerala's total as wickets tumbled around him. Gujarat skipper Chintan Gaja

provided the first breakthrough of the day, dismissing Aditya Sarwate with a delivery that straightened from middle stump to clip the off-stump. Sarwate managed just one run before becoming Gaja's 200th first-class victim in his 59th match. Sensing the urgency to add quick runs, Azharuddeen took Kerala past 450 with a boundary off Arzan Nagwaswalla.

However, with wickets falling at the other end, the Kerala wicketkeeper-batter was left stranded as Nidheesh MD (run out) and Nedumankuzhy Basil (bowled by Gaja) perished in quick succession.

In response, Gujarat began their innings with a positive intent as openers Panchal and Aarya Desai put together a solid 131-run stand in 36.4 overs. Desai, aggressive yet composed, scored 73 off 118 balls, striking 11 boundaries and one six.

न्यायालय अपर कलेक्टर, जिला-निवाड़ी (म.प्र.)
आर.सी.एम.ए.स. क्र. 00-40/सी-121/2024-25

बैंक ऑफ बड़ौदा शाखा टीकमगढ़ द्वारा अविश्वसनीय भौमवस्तु शर्मा कनक ख. मुद्रयाल शर्मा अम 47 क्व निवासी SARB शर्मा BSNL राजनत विविंग फर्स्ट फ्लोर 808 राजनत ऑफिस फ्लोर, ग्वालियर (म.प्र.)

प्रति सम्बन्धित शर्मा कनक ख. निवासी

- श्रीमति विमला खरे पति श्री अश्विनेश खरे, निवासी निवेदक बैंक ऑफ बड़ौदा शाखा टीकमगढ़ म.प्र., एम. पी. ई. रो. कायालय के सामने झाली रोड स्थित लॉन्ड्री टीकमगढ़ म.प्र. द्वारा अविश्वसनीय भौमवस्तु शर्मा कनक ख. मुद्रयाल शर्मा निवासी SARB शर्मा BSNL राजनत विविंग फर्स्ट फ्लोर 808 राजनत ऑफिस फ्लोर, ग्वालियर (म.प्र.)
- श्रीमति शशि प्रभा खरे पति श्री वीरेंद्र खरे निवासी जेनेस रोड नंबर 02 फुलीपुर जिला निवाड़ी मध्यप्रदेश
- श्रीमति कल्याण खरे पति राजाराम खरे निवासी ग्राम समरौ कसील खण्डगांव वसना जिला-टीकमगढ़, मध्यप्रदेश

प्रति विज्ञापित/नोटिस (दिनांक 17 फरवरी, 2025)

आवेदक बैंक ऑफ बड़ौदा शाखा टीकमगढ़ म.प्र., एम. पी. ई. रो. कायालय के सामने झाली रोड स्थित लॉन्ड्री टीकमगढ़ म.प्र. द्वारा अविश्वसनीय भौमवस्तु शर्मा कनक ख. मुद्रयाल शर्मा निवासी SARB शर्मा BSNL राजनत विविंग फर्स्ट फ्लोर 808 राजनत ऑफिस फ्लोर, ग्वालियर (म.प्र.)

न्यायालय में स्वयं अथवा अभिभावक के माध्यम से उपस्थित होकर प्रकरण में अपना पक्ष प्रस्तुत करें। आपकी अनुपस्थिति की वशा में प्रकरण में आपके विरुद्ध एकपक्षीय कार्यवाही की जाकर निर्णय किया जायेगा। आज दिनांक 17 फरवरी 2025 को मेरे हस्ताक्षर एवं न्यायालयीन परमपत्र से जारी।

अपर कलेक्टर जिला-निवाड़ी (म.प्र.)

Chola CHOLAMANDALAM INVESTMENT AND FINANCE COMPANY LIMITED
Corporate office: Chola Crest, Super B, C54 & C55, 4, Thiru Vi Ka Industrial Estate, Guindy, Chennai-600 032

E-AUCTION SALE NOTICE (SALE THROUGH E-BIDDING ONLY)

E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 8(6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002.

Notice is hereby given to the PUBLIC IN GENERAL and in particular to the Borrower(s) and Guarantor(s) indicated in COLUMN (A) that the below described immovable property(ies) described in COLUMN (C) Mortgaged / Charged to the secured creditor the CONSTRUCTIVE / PHYSICAL POSSESSION of which has been taken as described in COLUMN (D) by the Authorized Officer of Housing CHOLAMANDALAM INVESTMENT AND FINANCE COMPANY LIMITED Secured Creditor, will be sold on "As is Where is", "As is what is" and "Whatever there is" as per details mentioned below:-

Notice is hereby given to Borrower / Mortgagee(s) / legal heir, legal representatives (Whether Known or unknown), executor(s), administrator(s), successor(s) and assign(s) of the respective Borrower(s) / Mortgagee(s) (Since deceased), as the case may be indicated in COLUMN (A) under Rule 8(6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002.

For detailed terms & conditions of the sale, please refer to the link provided in CHOLAMANDALAM INVESTMENT AND FINANCE COMPANY LIMITED secured Creditor's website i.e. <https://www.cholamandalam.com> and www.auctionfocus.in

SR. NO.	[A] LOAN ACCOUNT NO. NAMES OF BORROWER(S) / MORTGAGER(S) / GAURANTOR(S)	[B] O/s. DUES TO BE RECOVERED (SECURED DEBTS)	[C] DESCRIPTION OF THE IMMOVABLE PROPERTY/ SECURED ASSET	[D] TYPE OF POSSESSION	[E & F] RESERVE PRICE (IN ₹) EARNEST MONEY DEPOSIT (IN ₹)	[G] DATE OF AUCTION & TIME
1.	Loan A/c. No(s). : HL04IND000061128 1. Mr./Mrs. PHOOL SINGH MARKAM 2. Mr./Mrs. MOHANTI MARKAM Both at : Plot No. 55-A (CM II) paiki (South Part) Pandit Dindayal Upadhyay Nagar Sector C Sukhliya Indore - 452010	Rs. 28,13,968/- (Rupees) Twenty-Eight Lakhs Thirteen Thousand Nine Hundred and Sixty-Eight Only) due as on 17-02-2025	As per site - Plot no. 55-A (CM II) Paiki (South Part) Pandit Dindayal Upadhyay Nagar Sector C Sukhliya Indore 452010. As per documents - Vikhriya chauhuan, Sukhliya, Pandit Dindayal Upadhyay Nagar, Sukhliya Indore 452010. BOUNDARIES : As per plan/ deed/layout - East- Road, West - Kankad/Aadarsh Molik (Nagar), South- H.No. 74 Kankad/Aadarsh Molik (Nagar), North - Rest part of this plot. As per Actual site - East-Road, West- House of Meera And Krishna Bai, South -H.No.74 of Ramprasad yadav/Aadarsh Molik (Nagar), North- Under-construction House on rest part of this plot.	POSSESSION	Rs. 35,47,500/- (Rupees) Thirty-Five Lakhs Forty-Seven Thousand Five Hundred Only) Rs. 3,54,750/- (Rupees) Three Lakhs Fifty Four Thousand Seven Hundred Fifty Only)	26-03-2025 FROM 02.00 P.M. TO 04.00 P.M (with automated extensions of 5 minutes each in terms of the Tender Document).

1. INSPECTION DATE & TIME : 24-03-2025
2. MINIMUM BID INCREMENT AMOUNT : ₹ 10,000/-
3. EMD AMOUNT SUBMISSION ON OR BEFORE : 25-03-2025 till 5 PM

* Together with further interest as applicable in terms of loan agreement with, incidental expenses, costs, charges etc. Incurred up to the date of payment and / or realisation thereof.

For any assistance related to inspection of the property, or for obtaining the Bid document and for any other queries, please get in touch with Mr. Vinay Sankhre Contact Number 9737317135 and Email : vinaysb@chola.murugappa.com / Mr. Mohd Abdul Qawi on 7305990872. official of CHOLAMANDALAM INVESTMENT AND FINANCE COMPANY LIMITED to the best of Knowledge and information of the Authorized Officer of CHOLAMANDALAM INVESTMENT AND FINANCE COMPANY LIMITED there are no encumbrances in respect of the above immovable properties / Secured Assets.

Date: 18.02.25
Place: Indore

SD/- AUTHORIZED OFFICER
For CHOLAMANDALAM INVESTMENT AND FINANCE COMPANY LIMITED

बैंक ऑफ बड़ौदा Bank of Baroda

POSSESSION NOTICE [RULE 8(1)] FOR IMMOVABLE PROPERTY
Branch: City Centre, Gwalior-474011 (Madhya Pradesh)
Ph. 72477-16423, Email : vjccgw@bankofbaroda.com

Whereas, the Undersigned being the Authorised officers of the Bank of Baroda Under the securitisation and reconstruction of Financial assets and Enforcement of security interest Act 2002 and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13(12) read with rule 3 of the security interest (Enforcement) rules 2002, issued demand notice upon the Borrower calling to repay the amount mentioned in the Notice being within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice. The borrower having failed to repay the amount, Notice is hereby given to the borrower and the public in general that the undersigned has taken the possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him under section 13(4) of the Act read with Rule 8 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 on this the borrower in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealing with the property will be subject to the charges of Bank of Baroda For an amount as shown below and Interest thereon.

Name & Address of Borrower	Outstanding Amount	Description of the Property
Borrower - Mr. Pramod Kumar Tiwari W/o Mrs. Kanchan Tiwari Guarantor: Pradeep Kumar Tiwari	Rs. 16,74,776.72 + Interest & other expenses Demand Notice Date 10.12.2024 Possession Date 14.02.2025	Owner - Smt. Kanchan Tiwari - All that part and parcel of the property consisting residential house situated at House No. A-167, Situated at Anand Nagar Awasiya Yogana, Anand Nagar, Bahodapur, Gwalior (M.P.) admeasuring 105 Sqmt. Boundaries: East: Plot No. 166, West: Plot No. 167-A, North: Road, South: Plot No. 156.

Place: Gwalior Date: 19/02/2025 Authorised officer, Bank of Baroda

इंडियन बैंक Indian Bank

Indian Bank, Branch - Galgala, Jabalpur (M.P.)
Ph: 7978736254, Email: galgala@indianbank.co.in

अलहाबाद ALLAHABAD APPENDIX IV [Rule-8(1)] POSSESSION-NOTICE (For Immovable Properties)

Whereas the undersigned being the Authorized Officer of the INDIAN BANK under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act 2002 (54 of 2002) and in exercise of Powers conferred under Section 13(12) read with rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002 issued a Demand Notice on below mentioned date as calling upon the Borrower(s) to repay the amount mentioned in the notice and interest thereon within 60 days from date of the receipt of the said notice. The borrower/s/guarantor/s having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrower/s/guarantor/s and the public in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the properties described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him/her under sub section (4) of section 13 of the Act read with rule 8 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002 said rules on this the date mentioned below. The borrower/s/guarantor/s in particular and the Public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the properties and any dealings with the properties will be subject to the charge of INDIAN BANK for amount mentioned below and interest thereon.

The borrower/s/guarantor's attention is invited to provisions of sub section (8) of section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets.

S. No.	Branch Name Name and Address of the Borrower/Guarantor /Proprietor/Mortgagor	Description of the Immovable Property and Boundaries	Date of Demand Notice Date of Possession Notice	Amount Outstanding as per Demand Notice
1.	Branch - City Office Borrower - 1. Shri Deepak Chouksey S/o Lt. Shri Ram Milan Chouksey, 2. Smt. Sushila Chouksey w/o Lt. Shri Ram Milan Chouksey 241, New Ram Nagar, Amkera Road, Jabalpur - 482001, Madhya Pradesh	All that part and parcel of the Residential house situated at Village- Amkhera, N.B. No. 04, F. H. No. 22/26 (New 80), R.N.M. - Jabalpur 02, New Ward No. 74, part of Kh. No. 223 (New Kh. No. 223/1) Tehsil-Adharthal, Dist.- Jabalpur (M.P) area 1215 Sq.ft. in the name of Smt. Sushila Chouksey and Shri Deepak Chouksey Boundaries: North: Road, South: House of Komal Prasad and Land, East: House of Chandan Singh, West: House of Ramesh Prasad Kushwaha	08.11.2024 15.02.2025	Rs. 24,07,735/- (Rupees Twenty Four lakh Seven thousand Seven hundred Thirty Five only) + interest and other expenses

Date : 20.02.2025 Authorised Officer, Indian Bank

बैंक ऑफ महाराष्ट्र Bank of Maharashtra

Bank of Maharashtra, Madhav Mahavidhyalaya Branch, Gwalior Nai Sadak, Lashkar, Gwalior, M.P.-474001.

NOTICE

The under mentioned person is hereby informed that he has failed to pay off the liability in the loan account. Notices sent to them by Registered Post has been delivered to him. He is therefore requested to pay off the liability and other charges and redeem the pledged securities on or before 28.02.2025 failing which the said securities will be sold by the Bank in public auction at the cost of the borrower at the Bank's premises at 1:00 P.M. on 28.02.2025 or on any other convenient date thereafter without further notice at the absolute discretion of the Bank. Parties interested in purchase of the Gold Ornaments may participate in the auction.

S. No.	Date of Loan	Loan A/c No.	Name & Address of the Borrower	Description of Jewels	Net Weight (in gram) (excluding weight of stone & gems)	Reserve Price of Auction
1	04.11.2023	60466024694	Shri Ajay Rana S/o Shri Bhup Singh Rana R/o. Infront of B.P. Nagar, Padampur, Morar, Kheriya Road, Morar, Gwalior, M.P.-474001.	Ring-4 Ear rings- 11 Pandel-01 Total-16	08.000 17.000 02.500 Total-27.500	Rs. 146000.00
2	28.07.2023	60454258537	Shri Sumit Mishra S/o Shri Ranji Mishra R/o. Kati Ghati, A.B. Road, Lashkar, Gwalior, M.P.-474001.	Necklace-1 Chain-1 Pandel-01 Total-3	18.500 19.500 5.000 Total-36.900	Rs. 240000.00
3	29.09.2023	60390004331	Shri Ranjeet Kushwah S/o Shri Bhagwan Singh R/o. Ganesh Mandir, Behind Janakpuri, Lashkar, Gwalior, M.P.-474001.	Necklace-1 Ring-2 Ear rings- 2 Total-5	18.500 05.100 10.000 Total-33.600	Rs. 178500.00

For further details, please contact Bank of Maharashtra Gwalior MMV Branch.
Date: 19.02.2025 Branch Manager

Shubman Gill becomes No 1 ODI batsman

PTI ■ DUBAI

India vice-captain Shubman Gill on Wednesday dethroned Babar Azam of Pakistan from the Number one spot in the ICC ODI Rankings for batters on the back of his strong show against England in the recent home series. The ICC issued the latest rankings just ahead of the start of the eight-team Champions Trophy (CT) in Karachi with the match between Pakistan and New Zealand. "India right-hander Shubman Gill overtakes former Pakistan captain Babar Azam to become the top ranked ODI batter in the world," the ICC said. Gill, who scored two fifties and a century in the recent three-match ODI series against England at home which India won 3-0, jumped one place to the No. 1 spot. He now has 796 rating points compared to Babar's 773.

India skipper Rohit Sharma is placed at the third spot with 761 points followed by South Africa's Heinrich Klaasen and New Zealand's Daryl Mitchell at fourth and fifth respectively.

"It's a major shake-up at the top of the rankings just prior to the start of the Champions Trophy and leaves an interesting sub-plot to what will transpire over the coming



weeks during the eight-team tournament in Pakistan and Dubai," the ICC said.

"This is the second time Gill has held the No.1 ranking in ODI cricket, with the India batter having also gone past Babar to claim top

spot midway through the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup in 2023. "Gill has been in excellent form of late, with his century against England in Ahmedabad during the third ODI of the recently concluded series enough to

catapult the 25-year-old to the top of the rankings," the global governing body added.

Sri Lanka's Maheesh Theekshana, meanwhile, has taken the first position in the ODI rankings for bowlers as he replaced Afghanistan

captain Rashid Khan.

"While Sri Lanka won't be featuring at the Champions Trophy, Theekshana earned the top spot following his exploits against the Aussies that included an excellent four-wicket haul in the opening match of that series in Colombo," the ICC said.

Sri Lanka had recently handed a 2-0 whitewash to Australia with Theekshana taking four wickets. The Sri Lankan spinner has 680 rating points, followed by Rashid at second, Namibia's Bernard Scholtz at third, India's Kuldeep Yadav at fourth and Pakistan's Shaheen Shah Afridi at fifth.

"Meanwhile, Afghan spin wizard Rashid drops to second and will be keen to regain the No.1 spot as he trails his Sri Lankan counterpart by just 11 rating points," the ICC said. "While a trio of spinners in India's squad Kuldeep Yadav (up one place to fourth), South Africa's Keshav Maharaj (re-enters the rankings in sixth) and New Zealand's Mitchell Santner (up four rungs to seventh) are all inside the top 10 after making ground this week."

Afghanistan veteran Mohammad Nabi remains the top ranked all-rounder in ODIs, followed by Sikandar Raza, Azmatullah Omarzai, Mehidy Hasan Miraz and Rashid.



Ex-Mumbai captain, selector Milind Rege passes away at 76

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Former Mumbai captain and selector Milind Rege, a highly respected figure in domestic cricket, died after suffering a heart attack on Wednesday, just days after turning 76.

Rege, who turned 76 last Sunday, was admitted in the intensive care unit of the Breach Candy Hospital here and passed away around 6am on Wednesday morning. He is survived by his wife and two sons.

The all-rounder had suffered a heart attack at the age of 26 but returned to the cricket field and even captained Mumbai in the Ranji Trophy. He played 52 First-Class matches between 1966-67 and 1977-78, taking 126 wickets with his right-arm off-break bowling. He also contributed with the bat, scoring 1,532 runs at an average of 23.56. Legendary batter Sachin Tendulkar recalled Rege's contribution in the early days of his career.

"Sad to hear about Milind Rege Sir's passing. He was a true Mumbai cricketer with immense contributions to the city's cricket. He and other CCI members saw potential in me and asked me to play for CCI, which, as I look back now, was a landmark moment in my career," Tendulkar wrote on 'X' in a tribute. "He could pick out a talented player from a sea of hardworking hopefuls. He had a special sixth sense to pick talent at all levels, but especially at junior levels. "He leaves behind a void, one that's tough to fill. He may not be around, but his imprint on people's lives will always live on. He made a difference to so many lives and definitely made a difference to mine. Thank

you, Sir, for everything. Heartfelt condolences to his friends and family," Tendulkar added.

The Indian cricket board also conveyed its condolence message.

"The BCCI mourns the passing of Milind Rege, former Mumbai captain and selector. A pillar of Mumbai cricket, he played a key role in its growth and legacy. His keen eye for talent and contributions as a commentator earned admiration across the cricketing fraternity," it said. "The Board extends its heartfelt condolences to his family, friends, and the @MumbaiCricketAssoc," the BCCI added.

Former India all-rounder and coach Ravi Shastri described Rege as a "true champion". "Really sad to hear about the demise of a dear friend Milind Rege. A true Champion in his contribution to Mumbai and Tata's cricket all-round. A Mentor Par Excellence. Heartfelt condolences to Raj and family. God bless his soul," he said.

A childhood friend of former India captain Sunil Gavaskar, Rege attended the same school and college as Gavaskar and played alongside him at the Dadar Union Sporting Club.

As one of the most revered figures in Mumbai as well as domestic cricket, Rege held several roles through his career and was also associated with the Mumbai Cricket Association as a cricket advisor.

The Mumbai cricket team, which is currently playing their Ranji Trophy semifinal against Vidarbha in Nagpur, took the field on the third day wearing black armbands to honour Rege.



Raducanu loses to Muchova in Dubai Championships

PTI ■ DUBAI

Emma Raducanu lost to Karolina Muchova after an emotional first set in which a spectator was ejected at the Dubai Championships.

The 2021 US Open champion appeared to be in tears as she went to the umpire's chair after the second game Tuesday and her second-round match was briefly paused on Court 2.

After speaking to the umpire, who immediately called tournament organizers, Raducanu stood in a small space between the official's chair and court-side screening before Muchova moved over to console her. Raducanu then picked up a towel, wiped her face, nodded and continued the match.

The British player rallied from 4-0 down to force a tiebreaker but eventually lost 7-6 (6), 6-4 to Muchova.

Organizers of the women's tour issued a statement later saying Raducanu was approached in a public space Monday "by a man who exhibited fixated behavior" and "this same individual was identified in the first few rows during Emma's match on Tuesday... And subsequently ejected."

"He will be banned from all WTA events pending a threat assessment. The WTA said it was working with Raducanu and her team "to ensure her well-being and provide any necessary support."

A man who stalked Raducanu while she was still a teenager was sentenced to an 18-month community service order and given a five-year restraining order after appearing in a British court in 2022.

Amrit Magar, a former delivery driver from London, went to Raducanu's home on three separate dates, loitered outside, left unwanted gifts and cards, and stole property. Raducanu rose to fame in 2021 by winning the US Open as a qualifier, one of the most unlikely achievements in tennis. She hasn't been past the third round at a major since then and has spent long stints recovering from injuries.

The 14th-seeded Muchova advanced to a meeting against No. 53-ranked McCartney Kessler, who upset 2023 U.S. Open champion Coco Gauff 6-4, 7-5.

Third-ranked Gauff hadn't fallen to an opponent ranked outside the top 50 since a loss to Sofia Kenin (128th) at Wimbledon in 2023.

Earlier, second-seeded Iga Swiatek beat Victoria Azarenka 6-0, 6-2 and will next face Dayana Yastremska for a spot into the quarterfinals.

Top-seeded Aryna Sabalenka eliminated Veronika Kudermetova 6-3, 6-4, and defending champion Jasmine Paolini defeated Eva Lys 6-2, 7-5.

Ranji Trophy semifinal: Vidarbha lead by 260 runs against Mumbai

PTI ■ NAGPUR

Yash Rathod and Akshay Wadkar shared an unbroken 91-run partnership as Vidarbha recovered from a mini collapse to lead by 260 runs against Mumbai at stumps on day three of their Ranji Trophy semifinal here on Wednesday.

After Vidarbha dismissed Mumbai for 270 to take a first-innings lead of 113 runs, the hosts found themselves in trouble after being reduced to 56 for four, thanks to Shams Mulani's (2/50) two-wicket burst.

However, Rathod (59) and Wadkar (31) steadied the ship, guiding Vidarbha to 147 for four in 53 overs.

At stumps, the duo, who train at the same academy in Nagpur, remained at the crease, but with Mulani and the spinners making the ball talk, Vidarbha are aware that the job is far from over, with



two full days of play remaining. With a 113-run first innings lead in hand, the hosts had a solid foundation, but Mumbai all-rounder Shardul Thakur (1/14) gave them a glimmer of hope with an early breakthrough in the second over.

Thakur, who is set to join Essex for the County Championship, removed Atharva Taide for a duck, trapping him in front with an inswinger. Danish Malewar (29), who

scored a vital 79 in the first innings, looked in good touch, hitting five boundaries before Mulani dismissed him off his own bowling with a sharp caught-and-bowl effort, leaving Vidarbha at 40 for two. Karun Nair (6), in scintillating form, joined opener Dhruv Shorey (13) at the crease, but Tanush Kotian (1/33) made an impact, dismissing Shorey LBW after he missed a classic off-break delivery. Much was expected of Nair,

but he too fell, sent back by Mulani, as Vidarbha slumped to 56 for four. Nair was rapped on the pads while trying to defend and although he challenged the on-field umpire's decision, he lost the appeal. Wadkar and Rathod then regrouped, building a steady partnership to bring Vidarbha back on track.

Earlier, Akash Anand completed his second first-class century and shared a 69-run stand with Tanush Kotian (33) to lead Mumbai's recovery after they ended the second day at 188 for seven. Anand, who resumed his innings on 67, played a gritty knock, facing 256 balls and hitting 11 fours. His partnership with Kotian took Mumbai close to the 250-mark before left-arm spinner Parth Rekhade broke the stand, removing Kotian with a delivery that drifted in from around the stumps to bowl him out.

Djokovic loses to Berrettini in Doha

PTI ■ DOHA

Novak Djokovic was upset by Matteo Berrettini 7-6 (4), 6-2 on Tuesday at the Qatar Open in the Serb's first match since exiting the Australian Open with a hamstring injury.

The 37-year-old Djokovic, ranked No. 7, lost to the Italian for the first time in five career matches and will have to wait to join Jimmy Connors (109) and Roger Federer (103) as the only players in the ATP Tour's 100-win club.

The 24-time Grand Slam champion reached the

Australian Open semifinals but retired from the last-four match against Alexander Zverev because of a hamstring injury. Djokovic said he didn't have "any pain or discomfort."

"I was outplayed by just a better player today," he said. "I wasn't at my desired level, and it could be that I'm still not moving the way I want to move, but ... I played without pain, so there is no excuse in that."

Berrettini won for the 10th time in his career against a top-10 player and will face Tallon Griekspoor in the second round.

Always liked Champions Trophy as tournament: Virat

PTI ■ DUBAI

Indian superstar Virat Kohli has always liked the format of Champions Trophy (CT) as it demands the eight participating teams to be at their best from the get go. The Champions Trophy is taking place for the first time since 2017 when India lost the final to Pakistan.

India open their campaign against Bangladesh here on Thursday.

"The tournament is happening after a long time. I have always liked this tournament. It represents consistency as you have to be in the top 8 of the rankings (to qualify). The level of competition is



always good," Kohli told Star Sports.

Kohli, who has played three editions of the 50-over event in 2009, 2013 (when India won) and 2017, likened the tournament to the fast-

paced T20 World Cup. "In ODI format, it creates the pressure of a T20 World Cup. There also you have three or four games in the league stage. If you don't start well, you are under

pressure. The pressure is from the first game itself and that is why I like it, you have to be at your best from game one," said the former India captain. India will play their remaining league games against Pakistan on February 23 and New Zealand on March 2. While the tournament host is Pakistan, India will be playing all the games in Dubai as part of the event's hybrid model. Kohli will be aiming for a bagful of runs in the tournament after a tough Test tour of Australia. He was back amongst the runs in the preceding ODI series against England, scoring a half-century in the final game in Ahmedabad.

Bangladesh can beat any team in Champions Trophy: Shanto

PTI ■ DUBAI

Heading into their Champions Trophy (CT) opener against formidable neighbours India, Bangladesh skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto was filled with optimism. He was particularly emboldened by the rise of pace sensation Nahid Rana, who has added a new dimension to their bowling attack.

The 22-year-old Rana holds the record for the fastest ball (152kph) bowled by a Bangladesh cricketer, hits 150kph on occasion, and averages 145kph for most of his spells.

Besides the presence of Rana and experienced pace colleague like Taskin Ahmed, the team also has few useful all-rounders and spinners, and some good batters. "Obviously, all-rounders always balance the team and we have got some good all-rounders. I hope they will perform tomorrow," Shanto said in the pre-match press conference here on Wednesday. "If you look in this format, our

team is quite balanced and we believe we can beat any team in this tournament. All teams are capable of winning this trophy but I am someone who is not thinking about the opponents much. If we execute our plan properly we can beat any team in any day," Shanto said.

After years of struggle, Bangladesh are now in a position to boast a good pace-bowling attack, feels Shanto.

"Yes, obviously, I think we always struggle with our seam attack, but last couple of years we have got some quality fast bowlers. Now we have got Nahid Rana, Taskin the way they are bowling. I think it helps a lot.

"As a captain, we love to see them bowling fast. So, I'm really happy that we have got a good fast bowling unit and under lights the ball might swing. So, if they bowl in the good areas, it will help our team."

Rana has done well in his nascent career, having taken 20 wickets in six Tests and four scalps in three ODIs. Bangladesh are in a group in



India, Pakistan, New Zealand, which the spotlight is on traditional rivals India and Pakistan, and Shanto was asked if this is a favourable position to be in before a big tournament. "Yeah, obviously, I think if you look at all eight teams - they are quality teams. And against

we play well tomorrow and execute our plan, we will have a good match tomorrow," he said. Shanto refused to read much into the absence of India's pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah and Bangladesh's star all-rounder Shakib al Hasan.

we play well tomorrow and execute our plan, we will have a good match tomorrow," he said. Shanto refused to read much into the absence of India's pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah and Bangladesh's star all-rounder Shakib al Hasan.

The conditions in the UAE are familiar to both the teams but for Bangladesh to have any chance against India, Shanto knows that they will have to have one of the best days in all departments.

"We have to play well in all departments - batting, bowling, fielding - because I think the way we played the last few years in this format, I think we have a good side and as you mentioned the conditions are quite similar. I'm really confident that we will prepare ourselves well."

When asked about Rana, Shanto said he was looking to leading the pace attack on Thursday and that his emergence has motivated the whole bowling unit.

"I think last few matches he bowled really well and bowled fast. And when we see in the ground bowling like this, it helps our whole bowling unit. And it's motivated us. "He needs to be fit and he can continue his bowling form. We have got another two-three fast bowlers as well," he said.

After their opener in Dubai, Bangladesh will be playing their last two group games in Pakistan, and the conditions there are going to be different.

"Yes, here I think we need to adjust, because if you look at this wicket, probably it's not that high scoring if you compare to Pakistan. So, we have to adjust. "Recently we played against Pakistan in a Test match in Rawalpindi. We have that experience how the wicket will behave. But as a cricketer, I think we all understand when we need to adjust and how to play the game. I don't think it will be difficult."

Talks around fast-bowling unit With Rana linking up with the likes of Taskin, a lot of people have started talking about Bangladesh's fast bowling department, and Shanto said factors such as switching to Duke balls and arrival of experts from overseas have contributed to the improvement in the country's pace attack.

"I think the important thing is the wicket and the ball has been changed in first class cricket. We play with the Duke ball, so the fast bowlers wanted to bowl a lot of overs and we get a little bit charged. "And obviously there is a lot of local coaches and obviously overseas coaches there, so they helped and they motivated the fast bowlers, how they can compete in the international arena."

"So that is one thing... The ball has changed and the wicket, and thanks to BCB the way they think about our fast bowlers," he said.

Shanto is also expecting a lot of crowd support for his team in Dubai. The Bangladesh skipper added that he is not solely relying on his pacers to power their bowling attack, but they also have experienced spinners in their ranks.

"I am not just depending on our pace bowling attack, to be very honest. What I mentioned is that we did not have a lot of pace bowlers now unlike earlier times. We have always had spinners, so we now have good balance of pace, and spin."