



the pioneer

Established 1865

INSIDE

MONEY 10
INDIA IMPORTED 49 BILLION EURO WORTH OF RUSSIAN OIL IN 2024

CHANDIGARH, WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 26, 2025; PAGES 12 ₹2

www.dailypioneer.com

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

AAP WIPED DELHI'S MONEY: CAG

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Exposing a string of wrong decisions and omissions, a report by the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) has revealed the Delhi government incurred a massive loss of ₹2,026.91 Crore because of alleged irregularities in the implementation of the now-scrapped excise policy in 2021-22.

Titled 'Performance Audit on Regulation and Supply of Liquor in Delhi', (Audit Report No 1 of the year 2024)", the CAG report is one of 14 on the previous Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government's performance, which was tabled in the Delhi Assembly by the new Rekha Gupta-led dispensation. The report also flagged violations in the process of issuing licences. AAP leaders, including then chief minister Arvind Kejriwal and former deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia, were arrested in the case lodged by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and the Enforcement Directorate (ED).

The report estimated a revenue loss of ₹941.53 Crore, citing failure to obtain timely permissions for opening liquor vents in non-conforming municipal wards — areas not designated for liquor sales under zoning laws. This led to a significant financial impact on the Delhi government's earnings. Additionally, the Excise Department lost ₹890.15 Crore due to surrender of licences and the department's failure to re-tender liquor zones. The report also flagged an irregular waiver of ₹144



The CAG report was tabled by Chief Minister Rekha Gupta in the Assembly. It revealed Delhi incurred a loss of ₹2,026.91 Crore because of irregularities in the implementation of the now-scrapped excise policy in 2021-22. Photo: The Pioneer

crore granted to licence holders, citing COVID-19 restrictions, a decision personally approved by Sisodia despite finance department objections. The department also failed to collect proper security deposits from zonal licences to the tune of ₹27 Crore. Overall, implementation issues of the new policy led to a loss of revenue of approximately ₹2,026.68 Crore.

The CAG report sparked fresh war of words between AAP and the BJP. While AAP stood firm in support of the discontinued new liquor policy, the BJP asserted that the report demonstrated how AAP had deceived and defrauded Delhi residents. The BJP has alleged that the CAG reports will reveal the

'black deeds' of the previous AAP government in the national capital. The CAG Audit has covered a period of four years from 2017-18 to 2020-21 to examine Regulation and Supply of Indian Made Foreign Liquor and Foreign Liquor in Delhi, in detail. Audit observed several discrepancies in the way Excise Department monitored and regulated the supply of Liquor in NCT of Delhi.

The liquor policy was an albatross around the neck of the previous AAP government and had led to several of its leaders, including then chief minister Arvind Kejriwal and deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia, landing behind bars. The corruption allegations

surrounding the policy are also seen as having played a key role in the AAP being defeated in this month's Assembly elections and the BJP forming a government in Delhi after a gap of 27 years. The report on the alleged liquor scam, a hot button issue in the run-up to the elections, claimed a loss of revenue to the tune of ₹941.53 Crore, saying timely permissions were not taken for opening the liquor vents in "non-conforming municipal wards". Non-conforming areas are areas which do not conform to land use norms for opening of liquor vents. "The excise department suffered a loss of approximately ₹890.15 Crore on account of licence fee from these zones owing to their surrender and failure of the

department in re-tendering," the report, tabled by the chief minister, added.

The CAG report also points to serious violations in policy implementation. It highlights the Delhi Excise Department's failure to enforce Rule 35 of the Delhi Excise Rules, 2010, which prohibits a single entity from holding multiple liquor licences across different categories such as wholesale, retail, and HCR (hotels, clubs, and restaurants). Sources indicate that this lapse benefited select individuals. An increase of wholesaler margin from 5 per cent to 12 per cent was justified as necessary to compensate for a quality checking system involving setting up government-approved labs at warehouses. However, no labs were set up. Thus, the profit margin of wholesale licences increased, while revenue went down, the report noted.

The AAP government awarded retail liquor licences without proper checks on solvency, financial statements, and criminal records, the report observed. Running a liquor zone required an initial investment of over ₹100 crore, yet no qualifying financial criteria was set. Thus licences were given to financially weak entities, with multiple bidders reporting minimal to zero income in the last three years. These measures suggest proxy ownership, raising questions about political favouritism and backdoor deals. The AAP government disregarded recommendations of its own Expert Committee while drafting the 2021-22 Excise Policy, with no justification recorded.

Stalin accuses Centre fuelling language war



Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin with his deputy Udayanithi Stalin and others at the opening of 'Kalaigarr Centenary Boxing Academy' in Chennai. PTI

DMK president and Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin on Tuesday accused the Centre of 'sowing the seeds of language war' by thrusting Hindi upon the State and said the domination of that language will not be allowed. Addressing media, Stalin said that DMK is ready for another language war.

Though the state was not against any language in particular and would not come in the way of anyone desiring to learn any language, it was determined not to allow any other language to dominate and destroy the mother tongue Tamil, he said. "This is the reason why we are adhering to the bilingual policy (of Tamil and English)," said Stalin in a letter addressed to his party workers.

Many states in India including the neighbouring states have realised the path laid down by Tamil Nadu on language policy and its firm stance, and they started to express

their concerns, he claimed. Assuring that the struggle against the domination of Hindi would continue until it was ended, Stalin said. "We are descendants of a movement with a principled army that sacrificed its life to protect Tamil."

The DMK has a history of defending the mother tongue from Hindi through numerous sacrifices since 1965. In 1971, at the anti-Hindi conference organised by the DMK students' wing in Coimbatore, he had stated that he was ready to make sacrifices. "Opposing dominance and protecting the mother tongue is a feeling ingrained in the blood of DMK members. That feeling will not subside until the end of my life," Stalin said.

Recalling his visit to Cuddalore on February 21 and 22, the Chief Minister said while addressing a parents-teachers conference, he had said that the state would not accept the National Education Policy (NEP) even if the Centre offered to give ₹10,000 crore funds to Tamil Nadu. At this, a little girl from Cuddalore, Nanmukhi, had said, "What if the Union Government does not provide funds? Then I will give it," the CM said and added that the girl sent her savings of ₹10,000.

Like her there were one crore young Nanmukhis in Tamil Nadu who were willing to defend their mother tongue, he said accusing the Union Government of sowing seeds of language war. "We are ready for it... We will not allow the domination of any other language," Stalin said. Meanwhile, the DMK members continued their agitation against the imposition of Hindi through the NEP. A few party cadres defaced the Hindi letters on the name board of the Ulundurpet railway station. Reacting to the DMK protest, BJP state chief K Annamalai sought to know from the Chief Minister why the opportunity to learn the third language, provided to students of CBSE and Matriculation schools, was being denied to government school students. "There is no ban on learning the third language. But if you want to learn, is Mr. Stalin saying that you should enroll your children in CBSE or Matriculation schools run by the DMK?" Annamalai asked in a post on the social media platform X.

MARKETS

SENSEX 74,602.12 ↑ +0.20%

1 US\$ = 87.23 INR

WEATHER

AQI 208
MAX 29.1°C (+3.0)
MIN 11.7°C (-0.8)

Sajjan Kumar convicted for life



Congress leader Sajjan Kumar. File Photo: PTI

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Former Congress MP Sajjan Kumar has been sentenced to life imprisonment in connection with 1984 anti-Sikh riots. Kumar was convicted in the murder of Jaswant Singh and his son Tarundeep Singh in November 1984 anti-Sikh riots in Delhi's Saraswati Vihar. This marks the second life sentence for Kumar, who is already serving time for his involvement in the Delhi Cantonment riots case. The three-time parliamentarian was found guilty of leading and inciting a mob that targeted Jaswant Singh and his family. Last week, the public prosecutor submitted that the death penalty should be imposed, citing Nirbhaya case and similar rulings.

"From the evidence on record, it has been established that the victims in the present case not only witnessed the brutal killings of their family members at the hands of the rioting mob which the Convict was a part of, but they were also witness to the burning and destruction of their dwelling house and looting of their belongings. The helplessness of the victims and the lack of any support whatsoever from the neighbours and also the police has also been established from their uncontroverted depositions. In these circumstances, I am of the considered opinion that this is a fit case where the Convict must also be awarded life imprisonment for the

offence punishable under Section 436 I PC r/w Section 149 IPC in addition to fine," special judge Kavari Baweja said in the 20 pages order. Pronouncing the order, the judge said his (Kumar) old age and illness weighed in favour of a lesser sentence instead of death penalty. The minimum punishment for murder is life imprisonment whereas the maximum is death. The judge said the offences committed by Kumar were undoubtedly brutal and reprehensible but underscored certain mitigating factors, including his age of 80 years and illnesses that "weigh in favour of imposing a lesser sentence, instead of death penalty."

The judge said, though the killings of two innocent persons in the present case is no less an offence, however, the above noted circumstances, in my opinion, do not make this a 'rarest of rare case' warranting imposition of death penalty for the offence punishable under Section 302 r/w Section 149 IPC. The offence of murder attracts a maximum of death penalty whereas the minimum punishment is life imprisonment. The court's verdict came amid intense protests by members of the Sikh community, who gathered outside the court demanding the death penalty for Kumar. Calling the 1984 riots one of the "darkest and most shameful" episodes in India's history, the protesters emphasised the need for justice and accountability. The riots had erupted following the assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi by her Sikh bodyguards on October 31, 1984, leading to widespread violence against Sikhs across the country. The Rouse Avenue Court had reserved its verdict on January 31 after hearing additional arguments from Public Prosecutor Manish Rawat.

The court on February 12 convicted Kumar for the offence and sought a report from Tihar Central Jail authorities on his psychiatric and psychological evaluation in view of a Supreme Court order asking for such a report in cases attracting capital punishment.

Crowds swell into night at Kumbh on Shivratri eve

PTI ■ MAHAKUMBH NAGAR

Pilgrims thronging river banks through the clock, vendors selling 'puja' ware and security staff everywhere to manage the crowds converging at confluence point — the Triveni Sangam is where the lines between day and night blur.

From morning till dusk and midnight till dawn, the cycle of spiritual bathing at the mega gathering of humanity in this holy city goes on without a break.

The religious festival, billed to be the largest gathering of people in the world, ends on Wednesday with the final



The Sangam area illuminated on the eve of Mahashivratri festival during the ongoing Maha Kumbh Mela 2025 in Prayagraj. PTI

Around 1.30 am on Tuesday, when much of the country was sleeping, the ghats facing the Sangam nose, where the Yamuna, Ganga and the mythical Saraswati meet, and near the spot were buzzing with life with a surge of humanity rushing in with just one purpose — 'Kumbh Snan'.

The crowd swelled hour after hour. Pilgrims jostled with each other to reach the river bank, and those having taken the holy dip struggled to find a spot to change their clothes. The banks were literally choked with devotees, young and old, rural and urban, men and women.

VIT CHENNAI
Vellore Institute of Technology

VITSOL
VIT School Of Law

VITLEE 2025
VIT Law Entrance Examination

BE THE VOICE OF JUSTICE

APPLY NOW FOR OUR UNDERGRADUATE LAW PROGRAMMES

• B.A.,LL.B. (Hons.) • B.B.A.,LL.B. (Hons.)

ADMISSIONS FOR UG LAW PROGRAMME THROUGH

CLAT/VITLEE Scores

Exams in 50+ cities across India

HIGHLIGHTS

FREE LEGAL AID CLINIC | COLLABORATION WITH FOREIGN UNIVERSITIES | CLINICAL & RESEARCH-BASED LEARNING

OTHER PROGRAMMES OFFERED

- B.Tech. • M.Tech. • B.B.A. (Hons.)
- B.Com. (Hons.) • B.Sc. Computer Science
- B.Sc. Economics (Hons.) • B.Sc. Fashion Design
- Integrated M.Sc. Applied Psychology
- M.Sc. (Physics, Chemistry & Data Science)
- B.Tech. Fashion Technology • Integrated M.Tech. CSE (Data Science) • Integrated M.Tech. Software Engineering • M.B.A. • M.C.A. • Ph.D.

VITLEE EXAM DATE
20
April 2025

044-3993-1555, 044-3993-1003 | chennai.vit.ac.in

VITChennai | vit.chennai | in/vitchennai | ChennaiVit | VITChennai

Classifieds

BEDKHALI NOTICE

I, Pawan Kumar S/o Lachhi Ram R/o #80, Ward No.3, Mohalla Narayan Das Sadhaura, District-Yamuna Nagar declare that my son Amardeep is out of my control. So, I disown him from my all movable/immovable properties. If anybody deals with him shall do their own risk in future.

I, Umesh Kumar S/o Om Prakash R/o near City Police station, Tohana, tehsil Tohana Distt Fatehabad, Haryana declare that my son Ankit Jain and his wife Radhika Gupta are not in my control. Hence I debar from all my movable and immovable properties. Anybody dealing with them will do so at their own risk. I will not be responsible for any of their conduct in future.

I, Satish Kumar S/o Mohan Lal R/o House No. 3978, Sector 25-D, Chandigarh declare and inform that my son Davinder Kumar (Buggar) and his wife Shivani are out of my control. I disown them from my all moveable and Immoveable Properties. Anybody deal with them will do at their own Risk.

I, Santosh Rani W/o Late Surjit Singh R/o H. No. 71/1, Barara Road, Shahabad (M.), Kurukshetra, declare that my son Gurvinder Singh and his wife Kanchar, Avis & Asni Grandsons/Grand daughters are out of my control, and do not even behave well with us. So I disinherit them from my all moveable/immovable Properties. If anybody deals with them in any manner, they will deal on his own responsibility.

I, Anita W/o Late Sh. Raj Kumar R/o H.No. 4434, Mali Jagran, kaloni Chandigarh, declared that I disown my son Anuj Kumar R/o H.No. 88 Victoria city, Zirakpur SAS Nagar Mohali, from my moveable immovable properties due to out of my control, anybody dealing with him at their own risk.

I, Baldev Singh S/O Bhula Singh R/O Village Pipal Mangoli Tehsil Rajpura Distt Patiala Declare That My Son Vikram Singh Is Out Of My Control. So I Disowned Him From All My Moveable And Immoveable Properties. Anybody Dealing With Him On Their Own Risk.

I, Tej Ram S/o Amin Chand R/O Vill. Dhakola Sub Tehsil Sahas distt. Ambala that my daughter Sakshi is out of my control so I disown her from all my moveable immovable properties. In future anybody dealing with her at their own risk, me and my family will not be responsible.

I, Bachcha Yadav S/o Heera Yadav R/o village Gumti Postoffice Mandanpur, Tehsil Shahabad Markanda District Kurukshetra, have evicted my son Vikas, his wife Pooja from all my moveable- immovable properties, as they are out of my control.

We Baldev Singh S/O Gurdial Singh and Kawaljit Kaur W/O Baldev Singh R/O Jujhar Singh Avenue, Gali No.10, Link Road, Village Gumtala Tehsil an District Amritsar have declare that our son Ranvir Singh is out of our control we disinherit him from our all moveable and immovable properties anybody deal with him is his own risk and responsibility.

I, Gurdev Multani S/o Surain Singh R/O VPO Siana Saidan, Pehowa, Distt Kurukshetra. My son Shubhpreet Multani and his wife Simranjeet Kaur are out of my control. I, disown them from my all moveable and immovable properties. If anybody deals with them at his own risk.

I, Harbhajan Singh S/O Kartar Singh R/O Ward No.4, Pehowa, Kurukshetra My Daughter Harvinder Kaur is out of my control. I, disown them from my all moveable and immovable properties. If anybody deals with him at his own risk.

I, Bobby S/o Balbir Singh R/O 164/6, Guga Madi, Pehowa, Kurukshetra My Son Ankit is out of my control. I, disown him from my all moveable and immovable properties. If anybody deals with him at his own risk.

I, Satinder Saini S/O Rattan Saini R/O #17 Guru Teg Bahadur Nagar Rupnagar (Pb.) declare that my son Sandeep Saini and his wife Kirti Saini are out of my control. I disown them from movable & immovable property. If anybody dealing with them at their own risk.

I, Bobby S/o Balbir Singh R/O 164/6, Guga Madi, Pehowa, Kurukshetra My Son Ankit is out of my control. I, disown him from my all moveable and immovable properties. If anybody deals with him at his own risk.

PUBLIC NOTICE

I, More Priti Ajit legally spouse of No.15753700N Rank L/NK Name Jamdade Ajit Vitthal Unit 14(l) ABSC C/o 56 APO Bathinda cantt. (Punjab) permanent resident of Gujjar Mala, Manerajuri, PO Manerajuri, Distt. Sangli, State Maharashtra-416408 declare That I have changed my name from More Priti Ajit to Jamdade Priti Ajit vide affidavit dated 25.02.2025

I, No.6946867X Rank HAV Name Bodade Kunal Umesh Unit 668 Army Avn Sqn C/o 56 APO Bathinda cantt. (Punjab) permanent resident of D-2 851, Gaurakshan Road, Near Bizy Bee School, Niryanand Nagar, Akola, Distt. Akola, State Maharashtra-444001 declare That I have changed my daughter name from Ananniya to Ananniya Kunal Bodade vide affidavit dated 25.02.2025

I, Aneeta Devi legally spouse of No.3207914Y Rank NK Name Vikram Singh Choudhary Unit 22 JAT C/o 56 APO Bathinda cantt. (Punjab) permanent resident of Meena Basti, Ganv-Sodawas, Teh-Mundawar, Distt. Alwar, State Rajasthan-301427 declare That in my husband army record my name wrongly entitled as Aneeta Devi but my actual name is Anita Devi please correct this error, vide affidavit dated 25.02.2025

I, Vinit kaushal S/o Sh. Sarvan Kumar R/o H.No. 2625 Sec. 23 Sonapat hereby declare that in my all documents Pan card, Aadhar card, pass book, and cheque book my father's name is Sarvan Kumar but in my matriculation certificate my father's name wrongly written as Sarwan Kumar. My father's real & correct name is Sarvan Kumar. Sarvan Kumar and Sarwan Kumar is one and same person.

I, Gaurev Singgla S/O Tarsem Kumar Singla R/O Flat no. 934 A.T.S Golf Meadows (Prelude) Barwala road, Derabassi Distt. Mohali, declared that in my daughter (Saria Singla) documents my name mentioned as Gaurav Singla, where as my correct name is Gaurev Singgla.

I, No. 4480485L Ex Hav Jagdeep Singh S/o Nirmal Singh R/O Village Kotla Bajwara PO: Mannupur Tehsil & Distt. Fatehgarh Sahib (Pb.) That I have served in the SIKH LI Regiment from 18 Jan 2001 to 31 Jan 2025 and I have transfer to pension establishment on 01 Feb 2025 vide PCDA Prayagraj {UP} PPO No 230202500138.

I, Aasha Rani W/o Ashok Kumar R/O 393, Ward no. 29/15, Police Chowki wali Gali, Anand Colony, Old Hamidia, Yamuna Nagar have changed my name from Kamla Rani to Kamla Devi and dated of birth changed from 01.01.1963 to 29.08.1956.

I, Isha Rani W/o Amritpal Singh R/O Village & PO Bahawal Tehsil Garhshankar Distt. Hoshiarpur Punjab have changed the name of my minor daughter from Richal to Richal Mahay. Concerned note.

I, Asha Rani W/o Amritpal Singh R/O Village & PO Bahawal Tehsil Garhshankar Distt. Hoshiarpur Punjab have changed the name of my minor son from Aryan to Aryan Mahay. Concerned note.

I, Sukvinder D/O Radhesh Kumar R/O # 297, Madhukar Colony, Tehsil Jagadhri, Distt Yamunanagar, state that in my 10th class certificate, my father's name is written as Radish Kumar, which is wrong. Whereas his correct name is Radhesh Kumar.

I, Kumari Madhu D/O Radhesh Kumar R/O # 297, Madhukar Colony, Tehsil Jagadhri, Distt Yamunanagar, state that in my 10th class certificate, my mother name is written as Menu Devi & Father's name is Radish which is incorrect, Whereas their correct name is Meenu Devi & Radhesh Kumar.

I, am Reenu Rani Lahot, w/o Sachchan Deep, R/O Jio Mobile Tower, Sarai Mohalla Ward-6 Tehsil Samalkha District Panipat, in my some documents my name is Reenu Rani Lahot, which is wrong, correct name is Reenu Rani.

I, Ricky Jain S/O Vinod Kumar Jain R/O # 1825, Sector 22 B, Chandigarh have changed the name of my minor daughter from Drishti Jain to Drisshti R Jain.

I, Rajinder Kumar S/o Sh. Jaibhawan R/o Village Didwari-72, Distt. Panipat, I have changed my name from Rajinder to Rajinder Kumar, for all future purposes.

I, Mohit Garg Son of Vinod Kumar Resident of Ward 10, Kothi Number 237, Model Town Ratalia, District Fatehabad Haryana declared that I have changed my Son's Name From Reyansh To Reyansh Garg.

I, K N Semwal S/O Purshtolam Dutt R/O 19 Doon Ghati Samiti Mdda Kedarpuram Dehradun-Uttarakhand. I Have Changed My Name From K N Semwal To Kushla Nand.

I, Kamla Rani W/o Ashok Kumar R/O 393, Ward no. 29/15, Police Chowki wali Gali, Anand Colony, Old Hamidia, Yamuna Nagar have changed my name from Kamla Rani to Kamla Devi and dated of birth changed from 01.01.1963 to 29.08.1956.

I hitherto known as Kusum Kalra W/O Hukam Chand Kalra R/O H. No. 17/75, Thapar Colony, Tehsil Jagadhri, Distt. Yamuna Nagar - 135001, Haryana, India have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as Kusum Lata.

I, Sachin Tyagi S/o Sh. Satish Tyagi R/O H. no. 260, ward no. 4, Near Old Sadar Thana, Sonipat have changed my name from Sachin Kumar Tyagi to Sachin Tyagi for all future purposes.

I, Preeti Bhandari W/o Ashwani Malhotra R/O House No 535, Sector 18-B, Chandigarh have changed my name from Preeti Bhandari to Preeti Malhotra.

I, Deepika Kamboj W/o Nishan Singh R/O 1736-A, Vishnu Garden, Jagadhri, Distt Yamuna Nagar have changed my name from Deepika to Deepika Kamboj.

I, Kunal Sharma S/o Ajay Sharma R/o Gali Boarding Wali, Rodi Bazar, Tehsil and District Sirsa, have changed my name from Kunal to Kunal Sharma. In future I should be known and recognized by the name Kunal Sharma.

I, Parminderjit Kaur W/o Jagwinder Pal Singh R/O #2200, Pipli Wala Town, Manimajra, Chandigarh, have changed my name to Parminder Jeet Kaur.

I, No.10710703N Rank - CFN Nagendran G s/o Ganapathylingam K presently residing at Village-Kuchanur Tehsil-Uththamapalayam Distt-Theni State -Tamilnadu declared that in my service EME record my father's date of birth is wrongly mentioned as 24/02/1965. My father's correct date of birth is 14/09/1965. And in my army record my mother Annakamu G DOB is wrongly mentioned as 30.7.1968. Her correct DOB is 7.10.1967

I, Tennison son of Sh. P3351, Sector 47-D, Chandigarh has changed my name from Tennison to Tennyson.

I, Bhano W/o Sh. Dariyao R/O Village Garhi Bala, Teh. & Distt. Sonipat. In my Aadhaar card, my name is written as Bhagwan Dei and in my Voter card, my name is written as Bhano, while in the revenue records Mauja Garhi Bala & Abbaspur, Sonipat, my name is written as Bhano and Bhani. Bhagwan Dei, Bhano and Bhani, all three are my names.

I, Asha Rani W/o Amritpal Singh R/O Village & PO Bahawal Tehsil Garhshankar Distt. Hoshiarpur Punjab have changed the name of my minor daughter from Richal to Richal Mahay. Concerned note.

I, Asha Rani W/o Amritpal Singh R/O Village & PO Bahawal Tehsil Garhshankar Distt. Hoshiarpur Punjab have changed the name of my minor son from Aryan to Aryan Mahay. Concerned note.

I, Sukvinder D/O Radhesh Kumar R/O # 297, Madhukar Colony, Tehsil Jagadhri, Distt Yamunanagar, state that in my 10th class certificate, my father's name is written as Radish Kumar, which is wrong. Whereas his correct name is Radhesh Kumar.

I, Kumari Madhu D/O Radhesh Kumar R/O # 297, Madhukar Colony, Tehsil Jagadhri, Distt Yamunanagar, state that in my 10th class certificate, my mother name is written as Menu Devi & Father's name is Radish which is incorrect, Whereas their correct name is Meenu Devi & Radhesh Kumar.

I, am Reenu Rani Lahot, w/o Sachchan Deep, R/O Jio Mobile Tower, Sarai Mohalla Ward-6 Tehsil Samalkha District Panipat, in my some documents my name is Reenu Rani Lahot, which is wrong, correct name is Reenu Rani.

I, Ricky Jain S/O Vinod Kumar Jain R/O # 1825, Sector 22 B, Chandigarh have changed the name of my minor daughter from Drishti Jain to Drisshti R Jain.

I, Rajinder Kumar S/o Sh. Jaibhawan R/o Village Didwari-72, Distt. Panipat, I have changed my name from Rajinder to Rajinder Kumar, for all future purposes.

I, Mohit Garg Son of Vinod Kumar Resident of Ward 10, Kothi Number 237, Model Town Ratalia, District Fatehabad Haryana declared that I have changed my Son's Name From Reyansh To Reyansh Garg.

I Paramjeet Kaur W/O Dhir Singh R/O 3604, Ward No 3, Uklana Road, Bhuna, District Fatehabad, State Haryana - 125111 Have Changed my Name From Paramjeet Kaur To Paramjeet Kaur Bhullar.

I, Dhir Singh S/O Narinder Singh R/O Ward No 4, Model Town, Bhuna, District Fatehabad, State Haryana - 125111 Have Changed My Name From Dhir Singh To Dhir Bhullar.

I, Shakuntala Rani W/o Anoop Kumar Majoka R/O B-23, Ward no.16, NFL Colony, Panipat (Haryana) have changed my name from Shakuntala Rani to Shakuntala Rani Majoka.

I, Anoop Kumar Majoka S/o Bihari Lal R/O B-23, Ward no.16, NFL Colony, Panipat (Haryana) have changed my name from Anoop Kumar S/O Bihari Lal to Anoop Kumar Majoka S/o Behari Lal.

I, Shakunta W/o Gurcharan Ram Chaudhary R/O Village Kheri Gujjarin, Po Dera Bassi, District SAS Nagar have changed my name to Shakuntla Chaudhary

I, Seneri wife of No. 6814337, Sep (Late) Dharam Singh, resident of H.No. 4386, Gali No. 9, Shiv Colony, Karnal, Teh- Karnal, Distt-Karnal (Haryana)-132001 have changed my name from Seneri to Sheela Devi vide Affidavit dated 13 Feb 25 sworn in before Notary, Karnal.

I, Manisha Kumari W/O Narinder #163, Abheypur Industrial Area Phase 1 Panchkula, Declare That I Have Changed My Name Manisha Kumari To Anjali Kumari.

I, Seema wife of sh. Anup Kumar R/o House No. 1211 sector-7 Panchkula Haryana have changed my name from Seema to shil Mati.

I, Rulda Ram S/o Bachna Ram R/O Village Dhandyo, PO Baladawal, Panchkula Haryana have Changed my name from Rulda Ram to Suresh.

I, Mamchand Gupta S/o Som Parkash R/O 190, Village Ramgarh, Distt. Panchkula Haryana have Changed my Name from Mamchand Gupta to Mam Chand Bindal.

I, Amit S/o Sh. Kamlesh Kumar R/O #716 B-2 Near M.C. Office, Pinjore Tehsil Kalka Distt. Panchkula, Haryana, I have changed my name from Amit to Amit Kumar.

I, Akshat Garg S/o Sh. Amit Kumar R/O #716 B-2 Near M.C. Office, Pinjore Tehsil Kalka Distt. Panchkula, Haryana, I have changed my name from Akshat Garg to Akshat.

I, Gitanjali Bansal W/O Manni Baansal R/O #587- Gurinder Avenue Behind Pseb Kot Kapura Road Sri Muktsar Sahib Have Changed My Name Manni Baansal.

I, Manni Bhushan Bansal S/O Brij Bhushan Bansal R/O #587- Gurinder Avenue Behind Pseb Kot Kapura Road Sri Muktsar Sahib Have Changed My Name Manni Baansal.

I, Virender S/o Prem Singh R/O VPO Baghru Kalan Tehsil Saffidon District Jind Haryana Pin Code 126112 have changed my name from Virender to Virender Singh.

I, No. 14568727-H Ex Hav Virinder Singh S/o Sh. Kartar Singh R/O Vill. & P.O. Bishan, Teh. Beri, Distt. Jhajjar (Haryana) declare that my daughter name Varsa Rani is wrongly mentioned in my Army record. But my daughter correct & actual name is Varsha.

I, Mukesh Devi W/o No. 14568727-H Ex Hav Virinder Singh S/o Sh. Kartar Singh R/O Vill. & P.O. Bishan, Teh. Beri, Distt. Jhajjar (Haryana) declare that my name Mukesh Suhag and my DOB 20.07.1971 are wrongly mentioned in my husband Army record. But my correct & actual name is Mukesh Devi and my correct DOB is 05.05.1970.

I, Rahul Goyal S/o Shri Rajesh Kumar R/O 143 Near Jagmohan Motors Vikas Nagar Rohtak, declare that I have changed the name of my daughter from Soumya to Soumya Goyal. In future she should be known as Soumya Goyal.

I, Manoj Kumar S/O Nand Lal R/O 1345-P, Urban Estate, Sec-8, Kurukshetra, Haryana-136118 have changed name of my minor daughter Ruhani aged 13 years to Ruhani Rani.

I, No. 15453978W NK Sumit Kumar S/O Rambhaj OF 403 FD HOSP C/O 56 APO R/O Alipura, Tehsil-Uchana, Distt.Jind have changed my mother name from Angarejo to Angrejo.

I, Gohsmit Kaur R/o H.No. 1957, Gali No. 05, Sultanwadi Road, New Jaspal Nagar, Amritsar have changed my name from Gohsmit Kaur to Gurmit Kaur. All concerns should be noted.

I, Mukesh S/o Balbir Singh R/O Village and post office Mehmoodepur district Ambala Shaik R/o 1-128, Kondaveedu, Kondaveedu, Guntur, Andhra Pradesh-522529 declare that in my husband's service record my name was wrongly mentioned as Khasimbee. My correct name is Shaik Khasimbi.

I, Kamala Bisht Mother of No. 15703041N Rank Hav Paras Singh Bisht R/O Kharau, Almora Kharau, Almora, Uttarakhand-263601 declare that in my son's service record my name and date of birth was wrongly mentioned as Kamla Bisht and DOB 01-07-1962. My correct name is Kamala Bisht and correct DOB is 11-07-1960.

I, Sarita Kumari Yadav W/O No. 15733757F Rank Sigman Krishan Kumar R/O Village & Post Office Hingwahera, Tehsil Tijara, District Alwar, Rajasthan-301411 declare that in my husband's service record my name was wrongly mentioned as Sarita Kumari. My correct name is Sarita Kumari Yadav.

I, hitherto known as Rekha W/O Sanjeev Kalra R/O #480/8 Ward No 10, Deepak Vihar, Shahabad(m), Kurukshetra, Haryana 136135, have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as Rekha Matta.

I, Inder Singh S/O Gurmukh Singh R/O H.No. 236/8, Kutiyia Wali Gali, Rajinder Nagar, Kurukshetra, inform that my name is mentioned as Inder Singh Saggu in my son Divender Singh's Passport No. M3885852. While my actual name is Inder Singh.

I, Divender Singh S/O Inder Singh R/O H.No. 236/8, Kutiyia Wali Gali, Rajinder Nagar, Kurukshetra, inform that my father's name is mentioned as Inder Singh Saggu in my Passport No. M3885852. While his actual name is Inder Singh.

I, Venus W/o Paras Gill R/O H.No.1484/8 Gali No. 2, Sial Kotia Chowk Islamabad, Amritsar-1 PO Amritsar G.P.O District Amritsar Punjab-143001 Have changed my name from Venus to Venus Gill

I, Meer Singh Sohni S/O Ram Singh R/O Vill. Dashmsh Nagar (Lola) Tehsil Baba Bakala Distt. Amritsar have changed my name to Major Singh

I, Manmeet Kaur W/O Harjinder Singh R/O VPO Bal Khurd Amritsar have changed my name from Manmeet Kaur to Given name Manmeet Surname Kaur

I, Sahil Kumar S/o Ranbir Singh R/O Ward No. 13, Gali no.6, Shiv Nagar, VTC Hisar, Haryana, have changed my date of birth from 20.07.2003 to 20.06.2003 for all purposes in future.

I, Sonika Garg W/O Baljinder Pal Singh R/O H.No. 1087, Sector - 13, Hisar - 125001 (Haryana) have changed my name from Sonika Goyal to Sonika Garg for all purposes in future.

I, Kamalesh mother of Army No 14852913N NK SHT Sumit Kumar R/O Dhindala, Meerut, Uttar Pradesh-250205 have changed my name from Kamalesh to Joshna & date of birth from 05.04.1966 to 01.01.1974 vide affidavit dated 26.02.2025 before Distt. Session Court, Hisar

I, Azad Singh father of Army No 14852913N NK SHT Sumit Kumar R/O Dhindala, Meerut, Uttar Pradesh-250205 have changed my name from Azad Singh to Ajjad Pal & date of birth from 04.03.1956 to 12.12.1954 vide affidavit dated 26.02.2025 before Distt. Session Court, Hisar.

I, Rano Devi mother of No 13767064K Rank HAV Name Jasbir Singh presently residing at Vill - Chatwal, PO - Jandwal, Tehsil and Distt Pathankot (Punjab), have changed my name from Rano Devi to Champa Rani vide Affidavit No IN-PB10074990343808X Dated 24-02-2025 before Executive Magistrate Pathankot (Punjab).

I, Navjot Kaur D/o No. 2486454P EX. NK Harbhajan Singh R/O Village - Samrai, PO- Fatehgarh Churian, Tehsil-Dera Baba Nanak, Distt - Gurdaspur (PB) have changed my name from Navjot Kaur to Navjot Kaur and date of birth from 08/10/2002 to 30/04/2000 E-Stamp No (Affidavit) IN-PB-10073571819203X date 24/02/2025 produced before Executive Magistrate, Dera Baba Nanak. Please note all concerned

I, Parveen Kumar S/O Baldev Kumar, Ward no. 8, Ambedkar Nagar, Gurdaspur (Punjab) Declared that Kumar is my Surname and Parveen is my given name.

I, Jasbir Kaur Wife of No. JC434227N Rank NB/SUB Name Jagdev Singh Resident of Vill Khudapur P/O Behrampur Tehsil Dinanagar Distt Gurdaspur have changed my name from Jasbir Kaur to Jasvir Kaur and date of birth from 24.08.1983 due to wrongly recorded in my husband army service record vide Affidavit attested by executive magistrate, Dinanagar dated 19.02.25.

I, Shaik Khasimbi W/o No. JC-389106X Rank Sub Ismail Shaik R/o 1-128, Kondaveedu, Kondaveedu, Guntur, Andhra Pradesh-522529 declare that in my husband's service record my name was wrongly mentioned as Khasimbee. My correct name is Shaik Khasimbi.

I, Kamala Bisht Mother of No. 15703041N Rank Hav Paras Singh Bisht R/O Kharau, Almora Kharau, Almora, Uttarakhand-263601 declare that in my son's service record my name and date of birth was wrongly mentioned as Kamla Bisht and DOB 01-07-1962. My correct name is Kamala Bisht and correct DOB is 11-07-1960.

I, Sarita Kumari Yadav W/O No. 15733757F Rank Sigman Krishan Kumar R/O Village & Post Office Hingwahera, Tehsil Tijara, District Alwar, Rajasthan-301411 declare that in my husband's service record my name was wrongly mentioned as Sarita Kumari. My correct name is Sarita Kumari Yadav.

I, hitherto known as Rekha W/O Sanjeev Kalra R/O #480/8 Ward No 10, Deepak Vihar, Shahabad(m), Kurukshetra, Haryana 136135, have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as Rekha Matta.

I, Inder Singh S/O Gurmukh Singh R/O H.No. 236/8, Kutiyia Wali Gali, Rajinder Nagar, Kurukshetra, inform that my name is mentioned as Inder Singh Saggu in my son Divender Singh's Passport No. M3885852. While my actual name is Inder Singh.

I, Divender Singh S/O Inder Singh R/O H.No. 236/8, Kutiyia Wali Gali, Rajinder Nagar, Kurukshetra, inform that my father's name is mentioned as Inder Singh Saggu in my Passport No. M3885852. While his actual name is Inder Singh.

I, Venus W/o Paras Gill R/O H.No.1484/8 Gali No. 2, Sial Kotia Chowk Islamabad, Amritsar-1 PO Amritsar G.P.O District Amritsar Punjab-143001 Have changed my name from Venus to Venus Gill

I, Mejer Singh Sohni S/O Ram Singh R/O Vill. Dashmsh Nagar (Lola) Tehsil Baba Bakala Distt. Amritsar have changed my name to Major Singh

I, Manmeet Kaur W/O Harjinder Singh R/O VPO Bal Khurd Amritsar have changed my name from Manmeet Kaur to Given name Manmeet Surname Kaur

I, Sahil Kumar S/o Ranbir Singh R/O Ward No. 13, Gali no.6, Shiv Nagar, VTC Hisar, Haryana, have changed my date of birth from 20.07.2003 to 20.06.2003 for all purposes in future.

I, Sonika Garg W/O Baljinder Pal Singh R/O H.No. 1087, Sector - 13, Hisar - 125001 (Haryana) have changed my name from Sonika Goyal to Sonika Garg for all purposes in future.

I, Kamalesh mother of Army No 14852913N NK SHT Sumit Kumar R/O Dhindala, Meerut, Uttar Pradesh-250205 have changed my name from Kamalesh to Joshna & date of birth from 05.04.1966 to 01.01.1974 vide affidavit dated 26.02.2025 before Distt. Session Court, Hisar

I, Azad Singh father of Army No 14852913N NK SHT Sumit Kumar R/O Dhindala, Meerut, Uttar Pradesh-250205 have changed my name from Azad Singh to Ajjad Pal & date of birth from 04.03.1956 to 12.12.1954 vide affidavit dated 26.02.2025 before Distt. Session Court, Hisar.

I, Rano Devi mother of No 13767064K Rank HAV Name Jasbir Singh presently residing at Vill - Chatwal, PO - Jandwal, Tehsil and Distt Pathankot (Punjab), have changed my name from Rano Devi to Champa Rani vide Affidavit No IN-PB10074990343808X Dated 24-02-2025 before Executive Magistrate Pathankot (Punjab).

I, Navjot Kaur D/o No. 2486454P EX. NK Harbhajan Singh R/O Village - Samrai, PO- Fatehgarh Churian, Tehsil-Dera Baba Nanak, Distt - Gurdaspur (PB) have changed my name from Navjot Kaur to Navjot Kaur and date of birth from 08/10/2002 to 30/04/2000 E-Stamp No (Affidavit) IN-PB-10073571819203X date 24/02/2025 produced before Executive Magistrate, Dera Baba Nanak. Please note all concerned

I, Parveen Kumar S/O Baldev Kumar, Ward no. 8, Ambedkar Nagar, Gurdaspur (Punjab) Declared that Kumar is my Surname and Parveen is my given name.

I, Jasbir Kaur Wife of No. JC434227N Rank NB/SUB Name Jagdev Singh Resident of Vill Khudapur P/O Behrampur Tehsil Dinanagar Distt Gurdaspur have changed my name from Jasbir Kaur to Jasvir Kaur and date of birth from 24.08.1983 due to wrongly recorded in my husband army service record vide Affidavit attested by executive magistrate, Dinanagar dated 19.02.25.

I, Ritu D/o Sh. Mahabir Singh R/O H. No. 105, Mahesh Nagar Kamir Road, Hisar (Haryana) declare that I have changed my name from Ritu to Rittu for all future purposes.

I, Vipin Jagga S/o Sh. Satish Kumar R/O House No. 784, Sector 16-17, Hisar (Haryana) declare that I have changed my name from Vipin Jagga to Vipin for all future purposes.

I, Phoolwati W/o Sh. Dharampal R/O H. No. 628, VPO Isharwal, Tehsil Tosham, Distt. Bhiwani (Haryana) declare that I have changed my name from Phoolwati to Phula Devi for all future purposes.

I, Sakshi Tayal W/O Sh. Parveen R/o House No. 615, Sector 14, Hisar (Haryana) declare that I have changed my name from Sakshi Tayal to Sakshi for all future purposes.

I, Kanta Rani Chugh W/O Jagan Nath Chugh R/O 303/18, Rana Chowk, Dogran Mohalla, Hisar (Haryana) declare that I have changed my name from Kanta Chugh to Kanta Rani Chugh for all future purposes.

मैं, महावीर प्रसाद सोनी (Mahabir Prasad Soni) पुत्र श्री राम कुमार सोनी निवासी मकान नं

Punjab Assembly Unanimously Rejects National Agriculture Marketing Policy, Terms It "Anti-Farmer"

MONIKA MALIK ■ CHANDIGARH

In a unanimous decision, the Punjab Vidhan Sabha, sans two BJP MLAs who were absent during discussion and voting, on Tuesday passed a resolution rejecting the draft of the National Policy Framework on Agricultural Marketing, terming it "anti-farmer" and a direct assault on the country's federal structure.

The resolution, moved by Punjab Agriculture Minister Gurmeet Singh Khuddian, was supported by legislators across party lines, who argued that the policy mirrored the contentious farm laws repealed in 2021 after a year-long farmers' agitation that claimed over 700 lives. The Assembly also criticized the policy for its silence on the legal guarantee of Minimum Support Price (MSP) and its potential to dismantle the state's robust Agricultural Produce Market Committee (APMC) system.

The second day of the two-day special session witnessed heated debates during discussion on the resolution, with MLAs from both the ruling Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) and the opposition — Congress and Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) — condemning the draft policy as an attempt by the Central Government to undermine state autonomy. Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann led the charge, accusing the Centre of harbouring a "hatred" for Punjab and its farmers. He asserted that the policy was a covert attempt to reintroduce the repealed farm laws, which had sparked massive protests across the country.

"The draft policy is a blatant attack on the federal structure of the Constitution. Agriculture and marketing are state subjects, and the Centre has no business interfering in these matters," said Mann, emphasizing that Punjab, as the food bowl of India, would not tolerate any policy that jeopardizes the interests of its farmers.

Similar to Farm Laws

The resolution highlighted the similarities between the draft policy and the three farm laws repealed in 2021. MLAs argued that the policy aimed to promote private markets at the expense of the state-regulated APMC system, which has been the backbone of Punjab's agrarian economy. They warned that the policy would lead to

the monopolization of agricultural trade by corporate entities, leaving farmers at the mercy of market forces.

"The draft policy is silent on MSP, which is the lifeline of Punjab's farmers. It is clear that the Centre's ultimate goal is to phase out MSP-based procurement, just as they tried to do with the farm laws," said Khuddian while presenting the resolution. He added that the policy would render APMC markets irrelevant, leading to the collapse of the existing mandi system.

The resolution highlighted the constitutional conflict arising from the Centre's intervention in a state subject. Agriculture and agricultural marketing are listed under the State List of the Constitution, giving states exclusive jurisdiction over these matters. Legislators argued that the draft policy violates the spirit of federalism by encroaching on the state's domain.

"The founding fathers of the Constitution wisely placed agriculture in the State List to ensure that policies are tailored to local conditions. The Centre's attempt to impose a one-size-fits-all policy is unconstitutional," Mann said.

The resolution concluded with a call to the Central Government to withdraw the draft policy and engage in meaningful consultations with the states and farmers. The Punjab Government vowed to continue its fight against any policy that undermines the interests of farmers and the state's agrarian economy. "The state government will not rest until the Centre abandons this anti-farmer policy. We will use all legal and constitutional means to protect Punjab's rights... We will not only forward this resolution but also follow it," Mann declared.

Farmers' Concerns Take Center Stage

The Assembly echoed the concerns of farmers, who fear that the policy would deprive them of fair prices for their produce. The resolution noted that farmers across the State are opposed to the policy, as they believed it would negatively impact state-regulated markets and reduce their bargaining power. "Farmers feel that this policy will deny them the right price for their crops and destroy the APMC system," read the resolution. Chief Minister Mann also pointed



out that the draft policy fails to address the issue of MSP, which was one of the key demands of the farmers during the 2020-21 protests. "The absence of any reference to MSP in the draft policy has reignited the same fears among farmers. This is unacceptable," he said.

A Broader Attack on Punjab?

Mann went a step further, accusing the Central Government of adopting a "step-motherly" attitude towards Punjab. He claimed that the Centre's hostility stems from the state's pivotal role in the farmers' agitation, which forced the government to repeal the farm laws. "The Centre hates Punjab because our farmers led the movement that forced them to backtrack on the farm laws. This policy is another attempt to target Punjab and its farmers," Mann said. He also criticized the Centre for withholding Punjab's Rural Development Fund (RDF) and accused it of deliberately trying to tarnish the state's image. "From denying us funds to sending illegal immigrants to Amritsar, the Centre is leaving no stone unturned to defame Punjab," Mann said.

Opposition Backs the Resolution

The resolution found support from opposition leaders, including the Congress MLA and the Leader of Opposition Partap Singh Bajwa, who launched a scathing attack on the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led Central Government. Bajwa recalled warning Prime Minister Narendra Modi about the adverse impact of the farm laws, which he said were "death warrants" for farmers. "The BJP is anti-Punjab and is conspiring to weaken the state politically and economically," Bajwa said. He also accused the Centre of withholding Rs 8,000

crore owed to Punjab and urged the state government to take legal action to secure the funds. "If the State Government is serious about fighting for Punjab's rights, it should hire top lawyers and stage a protest outside Modi's residence... we are ready to go with them," Bajwa said.

Strong Mandi System

All the MLAs emphasized the strength and significance of Punjab's robust mandi system, highlighting how market committees and Rural Development Funds play a crucial role in maintaining rural infrastructure and supporting farmers and farm labourers during times of need. "Punjab's mandi system is the largest in Asia and serves as the state's primary source of income. However, the Centre aims to divert all state revenues into its own coffers, allowing it to distribute funds arbitrarily, especially to BJP-ruled states," said AAP MLA Amritpal Singh Sukhanand.

Cabinet Minister Sond labeled the draft policy as a "direct attack on India's federal structure," questioning why the BJP-led Centre is targeting states when agriculture is unequivocally a state subject under the Constitution. "Do they want us to beg for what is rightfully ours? Take the example of RDF — we are being denied what is due to us," he said, accusing the Centre of acting as a "government for corporates".

Echoing similar sentiments, Cabinet Minister Aman Arora criticized the Centre for pursuing a "use and destroy" policy against Punjab's farmers. "This draft policy is nothing but an attempt to reintroduce the three controversial farm laws through the backdoor," he added, underscoring the widespread apprehension that the Centre is reviving its earlier

agenda under a different guise.

Call for Farm Innovation

Rejecting the draft proposal, several MLAs also emphasized the need for forward-thinking strategies, expert consultations, and comprehensive discussions to address the challenges faced by farmers. Congress MLA from Abohar Sandeep Jakhar questioned the Punjab Government's commitment to providing MSP on all crops. "What is stopping the AAP government from ensuring MSP for all crops when other states are doing it? What about the moong dal cultivation initiative you launched?" he asked the treasury benches. Jakhar urged the government to develop a "common minimum program" and a detailed roadmap to address farmers' issues holistically.

Former Minister and Congress MLA Pargat Singh echoed the call for expert input and broader discussions. "We must explore alternatives to safeguard agriculture, which is our lifeline, while also guiding farmers toward sustainable practices," he said. He stressed the importance of balancing defense of existing systems with innovative solutions for the future.

Independent MLA from Sultanpur Lodhi Rana Inder Pratap Singh presented a comprehensive list of suggestions to diversify Punjab's agriculture beyond the paddy-wheat cycle. He advocated for setting up agro-based industries, adopting advanced technologies like air freezing and cold chains, and connecting farmers directly to markets. "We have institutions like Markfed and Milkfed... Let's move beyond selling paneer and saag and build infrastructure to market value-added products," he said.

Rana Inder also proposed crop insurance schemes, market intelligence systems to predict consumers' future demands, and strengthening financial support systems.

Strongly opposing the draft policy's focus on boosting millet production, he argued that it is unsuitable for Punjab's agricultural landscape. "We cannot let Punjab bear the cost of such impractical measures," he said. Instead, he called for robust processing infrastructure, new potato varieties, and developing the Doaba region as a seed belt to ensure long-term agricultural sustainability.

BJP will secure landslide victory in MC Polls, says Hry CM

PNS ■ PANIPAT

Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini on Tuesday said that BJP will win the upcoming municipal election by a landslide, citing a "one-sided atmosphere" in the State in favour of the party.

Addressing the 'Nomination Rally' of BJP's mayoral candidate Komal Saini and 26 candidates for the Councillor's post, Saini appealed to the people to support BJP candidates in their wards and vote for the mayoral candidate. The huge turnout at the nomination rally was a showcase of people's trust and excitement towards the BJP's policies and Prime Minister Narendra Modi's guarantees. BJP is going to win continuously for the third time in the state on March 12, the Chief Minister added.

Moreover, after the rally, a procession was organised from the election office to the mini secretariat. BJP's mayoral candidate Komal Saini filed her nomination before the returning officer and SDM Braham Prakash in the presence of Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini, BJP's state chief Mohan



Lal Badoli, Education Minister Mahipal Dhanda and MLA Pramod Vij.

Taking a dig at the Congress and AAP, he said the Congress has become a "sweet master party" with no ground presence, while AAP has no work to do. He further claimed that senior Congress leaders are joining BJP in large numbers, trusting the party's policies. He urged voters to support BJP candidates for Mayor and councillor positions. "We will build roads using high-quality materials for durability, promote solar energy projects and install energy-efficient streetlights,"

Saini said. He further said that the sanitation workforce will be expanded and free public toilets for women will be constructed. Additionally, sanitary napkin vending machines and baby food rooms will be installed.

BJP has made 21 promises in its manifesto, including providing clean potable water, cleanliness, and development works in all civic bodies. CM Saini assured that the party would fulfill these promises on priority. It should be mentioned here that the municipal polls are scheduled to take place on March 2, with results expected on March 12.

Punjab Police raids 1274 Immigration firms: 24 FIRs registered, 7 held

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

To protect the youth aspiring to settle abroad from falling prey to illegal travel agents, Punjab Police conducted raids and carried out search operations at as many as 1274 immigration firms across the state.

The operation against illegal travel agents was carried out simultaneously in all the 28 Police districts from 11 am till late evening on Monday. The development came amidst the ongoing crackdown against illegal travel agents across the state in wake of the deportation of Indians from the USA.

Special DGP Law and Order Arpit Shukla, who was personally monitoring this daylong state-level operation, said that police teams have registered at least 24 first information reports (FIRs) against defaulter travel agents and arrested seven of them. He said that all the CPs/SSPs were asked to constitute special police teams under the supervision of gazetted officers to carry out searches at all the immigration and travel agent firms in their respective jurisdic-

dictions.

"All the CPs/SSPs were directed to ensure strict action against those travel agents, who were found violating the mandatory provisions and procedures of the Punjab Travel Professionals' Regulation Act, 2012 or defrauded innocent people with false promises of facilitating illegal entry into foreign countries," said the Special DGP.

As per the provisions of The Punjab Travel Professionals' Regulation Act 2012, all the travel agents are mandated to obtain a license from the Deputy Commissioner's office, which is valid for five years and renewable for subsequent five-year periods. Licensed agents are also required to display their license prominently, maintain records of clients and services, and inform authorities prior to advertising or hold-

ing seminars. Additionally, agents are prohibited from engaging in activities beyond their licensed services, including human smuggling or unauthorised emigration assistance. Non-compliance can result in suspension or cancellation of the license and legal action.

Shukla said that the DGP Punjab has constituted a four member Special Investigation Team (SIT) headed by ADGP NRI Affairs Praveen Sinha to investigate complaints from deportees if any and take necessary action as per law. He exhorted citizens to be cautious and verify travel agents' credentials before entrusting them with documents and money. "Only engage agencies with a valid license issued by the Deputy Commissioner under the Punjab Travel Professionals' Regulation Act, 2012," he advised.

Arora Leads from the Front in 2-Day Session of Punjab Assembly

MONIKA MALIK ■ CHANDIGARH

Punjab Cabinet Minister and Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) state president Aman Arora demonstrated leadership qualities in Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann's absence during the two-day special Vidhan Sabha session that concluded on Tuesday. Steering the ruling party's MLAs and countering the Opposition's attacks, Arora reinforced the AAP Government's commitment with swift and decisive action.

The defining moment came when, within hours of Congress MLA Barinder Singh Pahra raising concerns about corruption in his constituency in the House, Arora handed over the suspension orders of Gurdaspur Block Development and Panchayat Officer (BDPO) Baljit Singh. Accused of embezzling Rs nine lakh from village panchayat funds, the official's immediate suspension underscored Arora's proactive approach and his authority within the current regime. The swiftness of the action signaled that the AAP Government would neither shield the corrupt nor allow any delays in punitive measures.

Pahra, during Zero Hour, raised concerns about financial irregularities in Gurdaspur's Loldhinagar village panchayat, alleging that the BDPO had siphoned off Rs nine lakh meant for development work. He submitted that despite repeated demands for an investigation, no action had been taken until the issue was formally brought to the floor of the Vidhan Sabha.

Congress MLA alleged that the accused officer had failed to provide accounts for Rs four crore spent on development work and had even undertaken two international trips without informing the department.

Over the course of the two-day session, Arora, much like a battle-hardened commander on the front lines, steered the rul-

ing benches through a storm of opposition salvos. While CM Mann remained absent on the first day due to health reasons and appeared only at the fag end of the session on the second day, it was Arora who took charge of ensuring that the Government remained on the offensive rather than just playing defense.

Not limiting himself to answering queries related to his own departments, Arora stood firm, assisting his Cabinet colleagues when they came under attack. He was seen offering clarifications, assurances, and in some cases, immediate corrective measures — exemplified by the BDPO's suspension — to maintain the credibility of the government.

Arora's leadership extended beyond the Vidhan Sabha floor. Ahead of the session on Monday, he convened a meeting of AAP's legislature party, setting the tone and strategy for the upcoming discussions. He advised party MLAs against cornering their own government in the House.

Meanwhile, he fiercely countered the Leader of the Opposition Partap Singh Bajwa's "32 AAP MLAs in his touch" claims. Arora dismissed the statement outright, accusing the Opposition of indulging in baseless propaganda and emphasizing that the AAP legislators were committed to the party's governance agenda.

Third in Command, But the Man of the Hour

While officially third in the Cabinet hierarchy after CM Mann and Finance Minister Harpal Singh Cheema, Arora's role during the special session painted a picture of a leader in full control. On Tuesday, Arora led the party's response to Bajwa's allegations of corruption against the Minister. Bajwa was seeking an explanation from the Government over accusations



Over Corruption Allegations

The allegations of corruption ignited a fierce war of words between Leader of Opposition Partap Singh Bajwa and AAP Ministers on Tuesday. The House quickly turned into a battleground as Bajwa sought an explanation from the government over accusations leveled by the PSEB Engineers Association, claiming that ruling party officials had pressured them to raise "party funds".

Taking on Bajwa, Arora effectively flipped the corruption narrative back onto the Congress. What began as Bajwa's attempt to corner the ruling AAP Government quickly backfired when Arora launched a counter-offensive, exposing Congress-era scandals. Arora acknowledged the existence of a letter from the association but pointed out that it did not name AAP, dismissing Bajwa's allegations as baseless, while coming in all-out support of his cabinet and party colleague Harbhajan Singh ETO.

In a sharp retort, he reminded Bajwa of the 2020 Tarn Taran liquor tragedy, citing a retired Enforcement Directorate officer's report that implicated a Congress Minister and 10 MLAs. He also highlighted past Revenue Department corruption cases, demanding that Bajwa first answer for his own party's track record before casting aspersions on AAP.

As Bajwa pressed for a House Committee probe, Arora deflected the attack, emphasizing that a Vigilance Bureau inquiry into financial irregularities was already underway.

Bajwa, AAP Ministers Clash

Arora defended Power Minister Harbhajan Singh ETO, recalling his role in cracking down on corruption by ensuring the arrest of a tainted official. "As party president, it is my duty to defend my colleague," Arora asserted, shifting focus to broader issues such as illegal mining, drug addiction, and entrenched corruption under previous regimes.

Amid the verbal skirmish, Arora also invoked a past corruption scandal, citing a report, in which retired Enforcement Directorate officer Niranjan Singh had implicated a Congress Minister and 10 MLAs in the infamous 2020 Tarn Taran liquor tragedy. He further reminded Bajwa that a Vigilance inquiry was already underway into the latest allegations and expressed hope that the findings would put the matter to rest.

The fiery debate mirrored a deeper political rivalry, with Bajwa accusing AAP of misusing government machinery to solicit funds for elections, while AAP countered by highlighting Congress-era corruption. The clash intensified when Bajwa referenced a former vigilance chief's report, which allegedly identified 48 revenue officials as corrupt. Additionally, a retired revenue officer's claim that nearly Rs 1,000 crore in corruption occurred monthly in tehsil offices further fueled demands for a probe.

With political barbs flying across the floor, Speaker Kuldar Singh Sandhwan attempted to restore order, questioning the authenticity of Bajwa's claims. However, the back-and-forth continued, leaving the assembly in turmoil. As Bajwa continued to insist on forming a House committee to probe all instances, he is under current regime or previous Congress government, the Speaker asked the Congress leader to approach the Petitions Committee as already several House committees, covering various aspects, are in place.

Centre has hatred towards Punjab: CM Mann

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Launching a scathing attack on the Narendra Modi-led BJP Government, Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann on Tuesday accused it of systematically undermining Punjab's development and federal rights. Speaking on the floor of Punjab Vidhan Sabha during discussion of resolution on draft policy on agriculture marketing, Mann condemned the stalling of RDF funds, targeting of Punjab in deportation cases, and the growing corporatization of politics under the Union government.

Mann pointed to the recent deportation of Indian nationals from the US, where a flight carrying deportees landed in Amritsar despite most being from other states. "If former Bangladesh PM Sheikh Hasina's plane can land at Hindon Airport, why not this one?" he asked, alleging a deliberate attempt to tarnish Punjab's image.

The Chief Minister reminded the Centre that 80 percent of India's freedom fighters hailed from Punjab, and the state played a pivotal role in India's agricultural self-sufficiency and national security. "Punjab is not a beggar; we know how to fight for our rights," he said.

Mann also criticized the privatization of national assets, alleging that public sector resources were being handed over to corporate allies of the government at throwaway prices. In contrast, he highlighted Punjab's historic purchase of the Goindwal power plant from private ownership, marking a rare instance of a state reclaiming an essential resource rather than selling it.

The Chief Minister vowed to continue the fight against Punjab's marginalization and urged opposition leaders to stand with the state instead of playing into divisive narratives.

BRIEFS

HARYANA SPEAKER PULLS UP OFFICIALS DURING SURPRISE INSPECTION AT MLA HOSTEL

Chandigarh: Haryana Vidhan Sabha Speaker Harvinder Kalyan on Tuesday conducted a surprise inspection at the MLA Hostel, Sector 3 in Chandigarh and pulled up the officials over several shortcomings in facilities. During inspection, he took stock of the facilities, cleanliness of the Hostel Rooms, Canteen, Kitchen among others. He observed poor sanitation at the campus. Speaker expressed disappointment over poor arrangements at the Canteen of Haryana Hospitality Department. He also inspected the Public Works Department office situated behind the MLA Hostel. During inspection, he expressed dissatisfaction over food, accommodation and other arrangements being provided to the security personnel. He warned that any kind of negligence by the officials concerned will not be accepted at any cost.

ANNUAL FETE AT PGIMER

Chandigarh: The National Institute of Nursing education (NINE), PGIMER, Chandigarh on Tuesday organized the annual fete, a fundraising event for the welfare of underprivileged patients at its campus. Students and faculty of NINE came up with innovative fund-raising ideas for the underprivileged patients, featuring a variety of engaging activities that captured the hearts of attendees. From food stalls offering an array of regional delicacies like Daal baati churma, makkhi ki roti, sarson ka saag, to captivating art & craft displays and fun-filled games, there was something for everyone to enjoy.

MC CARRIES OUT ANTI-ENCROACHMENT DRIVE IN CHANDIGARH

Chandigarh: The enforcement team of Municipal Corporation of Chandigarh on Tuesday carried out an anti encroachment drive in Sector 15 and Sector 22. The team members removed temporary violations besides issuing challans to 57 violators, an official said.

BOGIE OF PASSENGER TRAIN DERAILS IN KARNAL, ALL PASSENGERS SAFE

Karnal: The bogie of a passenger train derailed at Nilokheri in Karnal on Tuesday. All the passengers were reported safe. GRP officials said that the passenger train was headed from Kurukshetra to Delhi when the incident took place. No report of injury to passengers has been received. "When the train travelled barely 100 metres after halting at the Nilokheri railway station, a wheel of the fourth bogie from the rear came off the tracks. The train was stopped immediately," the GRP official said. When asked what could be the reason behind the incident, the official said, "It could be a technical issue. The technical team of the Railways will be able to tell the exact cause after a probe."

MAYOR URGES UT CHIEF SECY TO SUPPORT MC IN SECURING ADDITIONAL FUNDING FROM CENTRE

Chandigarh: City Mayor Harpreet Kaur Babla on Tuesday urged the UT Chief Secretary Rajiv Verma to support the Municipal Corporation of Chandigarh (MCC) in securing additional funding from the Union Government as well as Chandigarh Administration and to expedite pending financial allocations from the administration. Presiding over a meeting with the Chief Secretary, the Mayor discussed and apprised the Chief Secretary of the financial health of the Municipal Corporation and the challenges being faced in delivering essential civic services to the residents. In the meeting, she said that despite providing numerous essential services to the people, the Corporation is not generating any direct revenue from these services. It was revealed that the service tax amounting to Rs 16.35 crore approximately on commercial buildings has not been deposited. The service tax amounting to Rs 65.78 lakh approximately on residential buildings remains unpaid. In the meeting, the Chief Secretary assured that the administration would provide all possible support to address the financial issues.



www.dailypioneer.com

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

PAPER WITH PASSION

Liberty is sacrosanct

The Supreme Court's directive affirming bail as the norm and emphasising liberty is a welcome step

The Supreme Court in a recent ruling and observation made a very pertinent precedence that could have far-reaching implications in the functioning of the democracy. The Supreme Court in the case of Kailash Kumar vs State of Himachal Pradesh wherein it set aside a High Court order cancelling the bail of an accused has rooted for individual's liberty. This ruling underscore the judiciary's commitment to protect personal liberty and ensuring that courts do not meddle with individual's right to freedom. Liberty is a cornerstone of the Indian Constitution, protected under Article 21, which states that no person shall be deprived of life or personal liberty except according to the procedure established by law. Bail, in this context, serves as a safeguard against arbitrary detention and ensures that an accused remains free unless proven guilty. The Supreme Court has consistently held that bail should be the norm and jail the exception, especially when the accused does not pose a threat to the legal process. The Supreme Court, while overturning the High Court's decision, made critical observations regarding the protection of personal liberty.

The Supreme Court's ruling aligns with a broader judicial philosophy that bail is a right and should not be treated as a privilege granted at the discretion of the courts. The idea is that pre-trial detention should not be punitive but rather a measure to ensure the accused's presence at trial. In numerous judgements, the Court has clarified that unless there is compelling evidence of misconduct, denying bail would violate an individual's fundamental rights. However, courts must balance the rights of the accused with the interests of justice and the safety of society. The Supreme Court's reaffirmation that bail is a fundamental right serves as a significant reminder to lower courts to uphold personal liberty. The judiciary must ensure that bail decisions are guided by legal principles rather than subjective interpretations of the accused's culpability. This observation is likely to have far-reaching implications and may pave the way for several undertrials, especially political activist who are languishing in the jails. For instance as of February 2025, several individuals accused in connection with the 2020 Delhi riots continue to await bail, leading to prolonged incarceration without trial. Notable among them are activists Umar Khalid and Sharjeel Imam, as well as a politician Tahir Hussain. Despite multiple bail applications, courts have consistently denied them relief. As of October 2024, Khalid had spent over four years in jail without trial, highlighting concerns about prolonged pre-trial detention. The prolonged detention of these individuals has sparked debates about the use of stringent laws like the UAPA and the rights of undertrials in India. These cases exemplify the challenges within the Indian judicial system regarding prolonged pre-trial detention and the balance between ensuring justice and upholding individual rights.

The Supreme Court's reaffirmation that bail is a fundamental right serves as a significant reminder to lower courts to uphold personal liberty. The judiciary must ensure that bail decisions are guided by legal principles rather than subjective interpretations of the accused's culpability. This observation is likely to have far-reaching implications and may pave the way for several undertrials, especially political activist who are languishing in the jails. For instance as of February 2025, several individuals accused in connection with the 2020 Delhi riots continue to await bail, leading to prolonged incarceration without trial. Notable among them are activists Umar Khalid and Sharjeel Imam, as well as a politician Tahir Hussain. Despite multiple bail applications, courts have consistently denied them relief. As of October 2024, Khalid had spent over four years in jail without trial, highlighting concerns about prolonged pre-trial detention. The prolonged detention of these individuals has sparked debates about the use of stringent laws like the UAPA and the rights of undertrials in India. These cases exemplify the challenges within the Indian judicial system regarding prolonged pre-trial detention and the balance between ensuring justice and upholding individual rights.

PICTALK



A sadhu performs a yogasana at a Ganga ghat, in Varanasi

The growing threat of radicalisation of Central Asia



NISHAKANT OJHA

The rise of extremist ideologies among Central Asian youth has become a critical security concern, exacerbated by economic hardship and geopolitical conflicts

In recent years, the increasing attraction of Central Asian youth to extremist and Takfiri groups has become a significant security concern for regional governments and international experts. The ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict has only intensified these concerns, with reports indicating that young migrant workers are being recruited for extremist activities, a pattern reminiscent of the recruitment seen during the conflicts in Syria and Iraq. The emergence of the Turan Battalion, a group of Turkic-speaking Central Asians fighting alongside Ukrainian forces against Russia, highlights the pressing need to address radicalisation among young people. At the same time, extremist propaganda spread by figures such as Idas Sadeghov has contributed to the rising tide of radicalism, further complicating the region's security landscape.

The radicalisation of Central Asian youth stems from a combination of social, economic and political factors that make them vulnerable to extremist narratives. Economic hardship is one of the most significant drivers, particularly in countries like Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, where persistent poverty, high unemployment, and limited socio-economic opportunities push young people toward alternative ideologies. Over three decades of independence, Kyrgyzstan has experienced multiple coups, widespread corruption, and growing dissatisfaction with the secular governance model.

Many young people, disillusioned with their governments, seek a sense of purpose and community in extremist ideologies that not only provide identity but often come with financial incentives. Migration also plays a critical role in this radicalisation process. Millions of Central Asians migrate to Russia for work, where they frequently face exploitation, legal difficulties and social alienation. The absence of integration programs and social support leaves them vulnerable to extremist recruiters who exploit their grievances and isolation. These recruiters present extremist ideology as a means of empowerment and justice, a dangerous proposition that finds traction



among individuals struggling to navigate foreign environments with little institutional support. Religious education, or the lack thereof, is another crucial factor in the rise of extremism. In countries like Tajikistan, where Islamic teachings are heavily restricted and even prohibited for individuals under 18, a significant knowledge vacuum has emerged.

This vacuum is quickly filled by extremist propaganda, often disseminated via social media. Many young Tajik migrant workers in Russia rely on online content to shape their religious understanding, unknowingly consuming distorted interpretations of Islam that align with extremist beliefs. This unchecked exposure to radical ideologies fuels the rapid spread of extremist sentiment within vulnerable communities. Kazakhstan presents a unique case where extremist ideologies have infiltrated even the highest levels of power.

Salafi groups, for instance, gained traction with backing from influential figures such as General Kairat Satybaldy, making the fight against radicalisation more challenging. The entrenchment of these ideologies within powerful circles emboldens extremist sympathisers and complicates government efforts to dismantle radical networks. The rise of social media has dramatically accelerated the spread of extremist propa-



THIS UNCHECKED EXPOSURE TO RADICAL IDEOLOGIES FUELS THE RAPID SPREAD OF EXTREMIST SENTIMENT WITHIN VULNERABLE COMMUNITIES. KAZAKHSTAN PRESENTS A UNIQUE CASE WHERE EXTREMIST IDEOLOGIES HAVE INFILTRATED EVEN THE HIGHEST LEVELS OF POWER

ganda. Extremist groups have mastered the use of digital platforms to reach and recruit young people, leveraging engaging content that is often more accessible and persuasive than state-backed religious teachings. Many of these online materials promise a sense of belonging, purpose, and spiritual rewards, making the path to radicalisation dangerously appealing. Experts emphasise that without a strong digital counter-narrative, governments and moderate religious leaders will continue to struggle in preventing the indoctrination of young minds.

The psychological manipulation employed by extremist groups goes beyond simple recruitment, leading some individuals to commit acts of violence, including suicide attacks. The belief that martyrdom ensures a direct path to heaven is a powerful motivator, and extremist groups exploit feelings of injustice, social exclusion, and spiritual ignorance to persuade young people to sacrifice themselves for a perceived greater cause. By manipulating these vulnerabilities, these groups create a mindset in which violence is not only justified but seen as a divine mission.

Governments in Central Asia have responded to this growing threat with various strategies, though with mixed success. Initial measures included mass arrests and harsh prison sentences, particularly in

Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. However, this approach has often backfired, as prisons have become breeding grounds for further radicalisation. Inmates exposed to extremist ideologies behind bars frequently emerge more radicalised than before, exacerbating the problem rather than solving it. Recognising the limitations of purely repressive measures, some governments have turned to religious reforms as a more effective means of combating extremism. Uzbekistan, for example, has eased restrictions on religious practices, allowing the call to prayer from loudspeakers and providing greater freedom for Islamic education. These initiatives have had a noticeable impact, significantly reducing extremist recruitment within the country by offering legitimate avenues for religious expression. Education is widely regarded as one of the most effective tools in preventing radicalisation. Experts stress the importance of integrating religious education into school curricula to provide young people with a correct understanding of Islamic principles. Only through a holistic and sustained effort can Central Asian nations protect their youth from extremist influences and work toward a more stable and peaceful future.

(The writer is expert in national security, radicalization, and counterterrorism; views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

RIGHT IS NOT ALWAYS RIGHT

Madam — The editorial, 'Right is Raising' (24-2-25), presents a balanced fact. The fact is that the Right will collapse due to its own weight and internal contradictions but will manage to overcome the setback for some time. The great economic depression of 1930s, which was saved by applying Keynes theory of equipping the mass with more purchase power. The worst recession in 2008, which marked the collapse of the capitalist order, had to be restored by huge spending of people's money to save the insolvent institutions. The countries are still in the recovery process. But the division Right creates in the society with its unquenching thirst for more and more profits and the avaricious attitude will reach its unbearable stage, compelling the victims to raise their voices for justice and their justified place in the society. This trend is already gaining momentum. The victims are on an active search for an alternate. In some countries, like Sri Lanka, the victims could identify the Left as the right alternate. The process of bringing in a new alternative is too difficult but is still going on. In India, the BJP is given power purely because of the nonavailability of such an alternate national party and not because of the party's communal or far-right policies, as reflected in the last election that denied the party an absolute power. It is inevitable that when the Right reaches its peak it forces the majority to accept Left to be the right choice.

A G Rajmohan | Anantapur

KOHLI HITS 51ST CENTURY

Madam — Kohli came out sensational and passed out in the acid test to prove that he is 'King Kohli' for his brilliant tonne against Pakistan in the Champions Trophy at Dubai. What the experience can deliver during the personal crisis for oneself was Kohli's class act when he hit his 51st ODI tonne with 7 fours to his credit in his century and paved the way for Team India's win. One can observe that this is the innings rated much higher in character because this calls for great perseverance to

BSNL turns profitable after 17 years



In its remarkable comeback, the state-run telecom BSNL has posted a Rs 262 crore profit in the quarter ending December 2024. This is the first profitable quarter since 2007. The company's renewed focus on profitability and its future growth strategy have ultimately led it to profit for the first time in the last 17 years. In a cutthroat competition with private players like Airtel and Jio, the revival of chronically ailing BSNL was not

an easy task. But the government kept its trust in its capabilities and announced a Rs 89,047-crore revival package in 2023. Finance and market gurus termed it a waste of taxpayer money and raised doubts on the wisdom of the government. But the company's efforts on network expansion, cost optimisation and customer-centric service enhancements have now borne fruit. BSNL has successfully reduced its finance costs and overall expenditure, leading to a decline in losses by over Rs 1,800 crore compared to the previous year. The government should be given credit for this achievement of BSNL, which not only allocated spectrum but also granted funds for strengthening network infrastructure.

Manoj Parashar | Ujjain

stay at the wicket with the will to kill to succeed in his important comeback game. When at the time skipper Rohit Sharma and Shubman Gill were dismissed, it is Virat's a kind of vengeful vigour and Shreyas Iyer's sensible batting put team India on top to cross Pakistan's target of 242 by six wickets victory. Pakistan's leg spinner Abrar Ahmed was spectacular when he gave the timely breakthrough but Kohli was completely defensive by not scoring a single boundary against the spinners. He showed his shrewd way to play them with a clear focus that he must prove a 'king is always a king' by his historic tonne to help the Indian flag fly high in the stadium.

A P Thiruvadi | Chennai

MELONI EXPOSES GLOBAL HYPOCRISY

Madam — The battle of ideologies has always been a part of the global political stage. But when those who preach neutrality themselves fall into the trap of bias, questions are bound to arise. Italy's Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni recently made a striking remark on this hypocrisy. She

accurately pointed out — "When I, Trump, and Modi engage in discussions, it is labeled a threat to democracy. But when leftist leaders unite, it is considered a symbol of progress!" This statement is not just an opinion; it exposes the harsh reality of global politics. Why this double standard? Does democracy only mean the acceptance of a single ideology? Do leaders with differing views not have the right to dialogue and cooperation? If democracy belongs to everyone, then why this discriminatory wall? In today's multipolar world, it is essential to give all perspectives an equal platform. Leaders like Modi, Trump, and Meloni represent the mandates of their respective nations. Ironically, those who claim their dialogue is a threat to democracy are the same people who applaud the alliances of their own ideological counterparts. It is time to recognise this hypocrisy. Democracy is not just for one group — it is for all.

R K Jain | Barwani

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

Caught in the middle: The great generational balancing act

Our generation's greatest contribution might be our ability to bridge opposing worldviews. We're creating a new paradigm of family dynamics, blending the two

Remember when we trembled at the sound of our father clearing his throat? When "because I said so" was an unassailable argument, and questioning authority was as foreign as the smartphones that would one day rule our lives? We, the Generation X, find ourselves in an extraordinary position today - delicately balanced between reverential traditions and revolutionary change, between "yes, papa" and "ok, dude." Our generation has witnessed perhaps the most dramatic transformation in human history. We are the last ones who know what it feels like to run home to catch a TV show, to memorise phone numbers, to write letters that took weeks to reach their destination. We're also the first to navigate the brave new world of social media, digital parenting and a workplace that transforms faster than we can update our LinkedIn profiles. The contrast is stark. We grew up in homes where children were to be seen, not heard. Today, we raise children who not only want to be heard but expect to be consulted on family decisions,



from dinner choices to vacation plans. We find ourselves caught in an amusing dance - instinctively reaching for the authoritarian patterns we inherited, then quickly pivoting to accommodate the more egalitarian expectations of modern parenting. This balancing act becomes even more complex as we care for our aging parents while raising our children. Our parents, products of an era where respect was non-negotiable and tradition was sacrosanct, often struggle to understand why their grandchildren question everything, from religious practices to gender roles. We become translators of sorts, explaining to our parents why their grandchildren need mental health days, while simultaneously trying to teach our children why touching their grandmother's

feet isn't just an empty ritual. The technological revolution has added another layer to this generational sandwich. While we pride ourselves on mastering email and Facebook, our children roll their eyes at our confused attempts to understand TikTok algorithms or cryptocurrency. Meanwhile, we spend weekends teaching our parents how to make video calls or use digital payment apps. We are the bridge generation, fluent in both analog and digital, traditional and modern, hierarchy and equality.

Our generation has had to rewrite the rulebook of life multiple times. The career advice we received - "join a good company and stay loyal" - seems quaint in an age where our children talk about side hustles and personal branding. The values we were taught - sacrifice, stability, saving for tomorrow - clash with the modern emphasis on self-care, work-life balance, and living in the moment. Perhaps the most challenging aspect is managing the emotional landscape. We were raised to believe that mental health issues were character

flaws, that anxiety was just weakness, and that depression could be cured by "going out for a walk." Now, we find ourselves unlearning these notions, supporting our children's therapy journeys, while also gently helping our parents understand that their grandchild's panic attacks are not just "attention-seeking behaviour."

The irony isn't lost on us. The same generation that was told "log kya kahenge" (what will people say) now has to defend their children's right to be themselves, regardless of what people say. We who learned to suppress our emotions now have to validate our children's feelings while managing our parents' disapproval of this "oversensitive" approach. Yet, there's a unique strength in being this sandwich generation. We understand both worlds intimately. We can appreciate our parents' wisdom while embracing our children's progressive ideas. We can see how tradition provides roots while change enables growth.

(The author is a Dubai-based columnist and children's writing coach. She has published six books. Views are personal)



ASHA IYER KUMAR

FIRST COLUMN

SHIVARATRI: THE NIGHT OF SHIVA AND SHAKTI

On this sacred night, one can ignite the power of Shiv and Shakti within



ASHWANI GURUJI

Shivratri is the night of Shiv and Shakti, the night of merger, the night of completeness - Understanding this is a sadhana... which can span lifetimes or be accomplished in a moment just, a beautiful journey bestowing myriad siddhis en route... Shiv is an experience. This experience begins at the feet of the Guru and unfolds as per the capacity of the sadhak. Ravan composed the Shiv Tandav Stotram to describe it. Adi Shankaracharya said 'na paapam, na punyam, na saukham, na daukham...' to describe what it's not. These were the Shiv sadhaks of finest quality, a rare phenomenon. What they described was their experience of Shiv; Shiv however is beyond description, for what is limitless cannot be bound in words and meanings. So no amount of reading and writing can grant you the experience, to get that experience you need to tread the path of sadhana, under a Guru.

The first experience of Shiv is the Shakti of Guru. As you walk the path shown by Guru, something that you want manifests in your life. It could be health, relationship, job etc. That becomes your experience of the Shiv tatva - that which has manifested the un-manifested. There are as many examples of such manifestations at Dhyana Ashram in present times as there are narratives from the past of sadhaks who were able to get the boon they desired.

That 'boon' or manifested desire, however, is only an aspect of Shiv. 90 per cent of the people were satisfied with the experience and their focus shifted from Shiv to that 'thing' that they wanted. So the experience of Shiv for them gets limited to that. A thousand names of Shiv, stem from here. Those who don't let their focus shift, move further into the dimension of Shiv. Next, the subtler siddhis of yog start manifesting - clairvoyance, clairaudience, premonition, extrasensory perceptions etc. Many take this to be the ultimate and end their experience here. They immerse themselves in the siddhis and powers so acquired and forget that this too is just an aspect.



The finer sadhaks progress ahead where they start interacting with the energies that run creation, aiding and assisting them in the process of Creation. Mentioned above are just some siddhis, the domain of Shiv however is endless. The key to accessing it is vairagya (detachment). The moment one gets attached to any aspect of Shiv or Siddhi that it bestows, the upward progression stops. Vairagya is possible only when one has the gyan of reality and gyan is possible only when one can sit in dhyana. Dhyana happens only when one has accumulated good karmas, which are acquired from seva or service. Seva is the first step. It is through seva that one increases the size of their container or the experience of Shiv that one can hold.

This Shivratri, embark on the journey to increasing the size of your container... to experience Shiv. Shiv is real, not a myth. Shiv is all-encompassing. All are accepted in the abode of Shiv - bhoot, pret, pisach, yaksh, kinnar, naag, dev, danav and humans. You don't have to be of a special caste to experience the various dimensions of Shiv. Shivratri is the night of Shiv and Shakti, the night of merger, the night of completeness. Guru, on the night of Shivratri, awakens the power of Shiv and Shakti in each and everyone who follows the path shown, without exceptions. In my journey of 25 years,

I have yet to come across a sadhak who under Guru Sanidhya has not experienced Shiv. The seva and sadhana performed on this night grant one the experiences and siddhis of many lifetimes, in just one night. It is a 100 per cent science, not a religion. Try and test it for yourself.

(The writer is a spiritual guru; views are personal)

Women pioneering change in Indian higher education



SUJATHA KSHIRSAGAR

Women academic leaders and entrepreneurs are not only shaping institutions but also fueling India's socio-economic growth with their grit and determination

Women are leading from the front today - in academics or education, media, healthcare, armed forces and many other fields. The country is witnessing a pivotal shift in how women leaders were perceived before. Indian higher education landscape is also being driven by a strong women-led force, laying the foundation of the nation's progress, unlocking opportunities for socio-economic growth, self-reliance and an improved quality of life. Needless to say, education is essential for women's empowerment in the journey to Viksit Bharat. Educated women drive change, uplift families, strengthen communities and fuel national progress, creating a lasting impact for future generations.

The current scenario and notable mentions

Indian higher education remains male-dominated when it comes to leadership, even as women are playing a significant role, data suggests. In 2021, women headed just 9.55 per cent of Indian higher educational institutions, whereas men headed 89.57 per cent. This makes more inclusive representation of females in academic leadership extremely important. If we compare India with the international landscape, it still has a huge gap to fill. Internationally, 25 per cent of leadership positions in the top 200 universities globally are occupied by women.

The good news is that the picture is drastically changing, especially over the last few years. Even in the past, the country has seen visionary women leaders like Savitribai Phule, a pioneering social reformer who, alongside her husband Jyotirao Phule, established India's first school for girls in 1848, championing women's education and social justice.

Other notable and pragmatic women leaders who are marking a significant shift in higher education include Ms Rashmi Mittal, Pro-Chancellor, of Lovely Professional University, and Dr Uma Bhardwaj, Vice-Chancellor, of Noida International University. Other honourable mentions include Dr Madhu Chitkara, Pro-Chancellor at Chitkara University and a Higher Education entrepreneur with a vast experience 42 years, who has built a successful university from scratch; Dr Ananya Mukherjee, Vice-Chancellor of Shiv Nadar University, Delhi-NCR, recognised as an Institution of Eminence.

Apart from that, women leaders in business and entrepreneurial space have also inspired aspiring Indian youth. Notable mentions include Kiran Mazumdar Shaw and Indra Nooyi. Women leaders are transforming Indian higher education through inclusive environments and innovation. More women in leadership positions increase diversity and bring new perspectives to academia. Through their efforts, they are paving the way for future generations to have a more progressive and equitable educational landscape in India.

The Challenges Faced by Women Leaders in Academia

The challenges for women leaders include social stereotypes at one end and the barriers of an institution at the other. Several women are even still facing serious prejudices against them regarding their potential as leaders, especially in traditional fields. Women lack opportunities to get mentors and network for their professional advancement.

The chief issues for women leaders world-



APART FROM THAT, WOMEN LEADERS IN BUSINESS AND ENTREPRENEURIAL SPACE HAVE ALSO INSPIRED ASPIRING INDIAN YOUTH. NOTABLE MENTIONS INCLUDE KIRAN MAZUMDAR SHAW AND INDRA NOOYI. WOMEN LEADERS ARE TRANSFORMING INDIAN HIGHER EDUCATION THROUGH INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENTS AND INNOVATION

wide relate to work-life balance and insufficient presence in senior leadership positions. India has taken a holistic approach to orient and train women faculty across the country through the University Grants Commission (UGC). These initiatives are designed to prepare women for leadership roles, equipping them with the right skills and knowledge. Other countries have programs that focus on leadership training and inclusivity to break barriers for women in academia. Some countries have witnessed an impressive increase in the number of women represented in academia, but the world still has a long way to go, including India.

Women as Educators and Leaders Empowerment in education is not merely a question of access; it involves equipping women with the role of teachers, leaders, and models. An increased number of women in schools and colleges has acted as a motivating force for girls to achieve excellence in academics. Diverse viewpoints among women in higher education leadership institutions create an inclusive and innovative atmosphere.

Female professors have formed the backbone for progressive educational policy and research quality. Many critical departments and significant research initiatives now have women running them, evidence of their burgeoning influence in university life.

Programmes and fellowships dedicated to providing opportunities for girls and women, especially in these STEM fields, have helped a culture of creativity and excellence flourish within these disciplines. At present, there are some of India's most high-profile universities and institutions, with women at the helm, spearheading the trend of making education more accessible and equitable. Women leaders are

playing an important role in academics.

For instance, women-led institutions, like competitive exam coaching institutions, have been responsible for guiding thousands of students in shaping their aspirations. Thus, it is clear that women leaders can bring transformational change in education and can be great change managers.

Women as Catalysts or Agents of Change

Women are educators and agents of change. They are innovators who are good leaders in filling knowledge gaps, fostering inclusivity, and empowering communities. Their contribution to a forceful, solution-focused, and responsive workforce is particularly indispensable for the simple reason that it is tantamount to ensuring not only economic prosperity but also social justice.

The most deep-seated effect of women in education has been in adult literacy and skill development. Women educators have led the process of increasing rural and marginalised communities' literacy rates, greatly improving their socio-economic conditions. Female entrepreneurs also are revolutionising education delivery by coming up with innovative solutions for diverse learners across India.

EdTech platforms of female founders have promoted flexible models, digital classroom applications, and AI-based analytics with their introduction; thereby, performance from students at high-quality education gets scaled up because access to more is also made easily feasible. Social development and the tech revolution are mutually supporting each other here.

The Future of Women's Leadership in Higher Education

Increasing the number of women

leaders in higher education is not only about gender equality; it is a strategic imperative for India's progress.

Women leaders in higher education institutions bring diverse perspectives and transformative decision-making into academic administration, which drives innovation and excellence. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 has recognised the importance of women's participation in academia and thus proposed reforms, to ensure gender inclusivity. Through the incorporation of leadership training under the framework of higher education and initiating mentorship opportunities, India can usher in an optimum pipeline of women academic leaders. Furthermore, the vision of Viksit Bharat and Atmanirbhar Bharat is in line with the very need to absorb India's demographic dividend. Education is at the heart of this vision, and empowering women as educators and leaders would be crucial in realising India's aspiration to become Vishwaguru—that is, a global leader in innovation and knowledge.

Conclusion

Women leaders are undeniably shaping the future of Indian higher education. Despite all existing challenges, their excellence is bringing innumerable positive transformations within the present academia, which will lead to a more inclusive, progressive, and innovative educational landscape. The overall transformation of Indian education and the socio-economic liberalization of India can be achieved by removing all barriers to leadership, implementing supportive policies, and championing women's participation in higher education.

(The writer is President at Career Launcher; views are personal)

Maha Kumbh 2025: A grand confluence of tradition, technology and transformation

IIT Kanpur research highlights how government initiatives are shaping the Mela—blending ancient traditions with modern infrastructure to enhance accessibility and efficiency

The Maha Kumbh Mela in Prayagraj draws millions of pilgrims worldwide to the sacred confluence of the Ganga, Yamuna and Saraswati rivers. As this grand spiritual event unfolds, an ongoing IIT Kanpur study provides real-time insights into stakeholder experiences. This research examines how government initiatives shape pilgrim experiences, blending ancient traditions with modern technology.

For devotees, the Mela remains a deeply spiritual journey, with bathing in the Triveni Sangam seen as a path to salvation. While age-old rituals and processions inspire awe, an extensive logistical network operates behind the scenes to manage massive crowds. A key focus of the study is



PRADIP SWARNAKAR

transportation. With pilgrims arriving from across India and abroad, the government's commitment to improving accessibility is evident. Nearly 40 per cent of attendees rely on public transportation, primarily trains and buses. Despite expanded shuttle services and improved parking facilities, feedback is mixed. While most find transportation satisfactory,

some report overcrowding and delays during peak hours. A hallmark of Maha Kumbh 2025 is its technological integration, earning it the title "Digital Maha Kumbh." Mobile apps, e-wallets, and real-time crowd monitoring enhance the experience for pilgrims and organisers. Many appreciate online registration, virtual darshan booking, and real-time updates on crowd density, transport, and amenities.

These tools streamline accessibility, particularly for international visitors and those from remote areas. However, bridging the digital divide remains a challenge. While tech-savvy pilgrims adapt easily, older attendees and those from rural regions often struggle with digital platforms.

Some report difficulties using smartphones or accessing the internet, highlighting the need for alternative engagement methods. Feedback underscores the importance of inclusive communication strategies blending digital and traditional approaches.

Security and crowd management are also key concerns. Managing millions of attendees in Kumbh Mela is a massive undertaking. The government has deployed extensive security personnel, CCTV surveillance, and designated safe zones, including lifeguard-staffed bathing areas. Nearly 93 per cent of respondents feel secure within the Mela's vast grounds, affirming these measures' effectiveness. However, congestion near ghats causes anxiety among some pilgrims,



emphasizing the need for refined crowd management as the event progresses. Health and sanitation remain top priorities. Overall, 81 per cent of respondents find sanitation facilities adequate, reflecting high satisfaction with cleanliness. Temporary medical camps and mobile health units ensure pilgrims' wellbeing, yet restroom overcrowding persists during peak

hours. Despite thousands of cleaning staff and waste management facilities, additional measures are needed to maintain hygiene during busy periods. These findings highlight commendable efforts while emphasising the need for continued improvements.

Inclusivity is also a focus, with the government enhancing accessibility for differently-abled individuals and senior citizens. Dedicated pathways, toilets, and designated spaces reflect a commitment to inclusive participation. The widely appreciated 'Lost and Found' services further ease concerns, helping separated families navigate the crowd more efficiently. Environmental impact remains a major concern. The government has introduced eco-friendly initiatives, includ-

ing waste segregation, solar-powered lighting and over 25,000 trash bins to reduce the ecological footprint.

Despite these efforts, concerns persist over plastic use and non-biodegradable waste. While 62 per cent of respondents recognise sustainability progress, stronger awareness campaigns and stricter enforcement of eco-friendly practices are needed.

The ongoing study suggests green initiatives must be reinforced through greater public education on waste management and sustainability. As the IIT Kanpur study continues to document stakeholder experiences, the Maha Kumbh Mela 2025 is a testament to the evolving nature of large-scale spiritual events. Government initiatives have improved effi-

ciency, security, and inclusivity. Stakeholder feedback highlights the need to refine transportation, expand digital inclusion, enhance crowd management, and address environmental concerns.

The success of the Mela hinges not only on preserving spiritual traditions but also on integrating modern infrastructure, technology, and inclusive governance. More than a massive gathering, the Maha Kumbh exemplifies how government initiatives can transform spiritual events into safer, more efficient, and enriching experiences. As it unfolds, it remains a dynamic confluence of tradition, technology and inclusive governance.

(The author is a professor of Sociology at IIT Kanpur. Views expressed are personal)

Desperation grows in northern Gaza

Palestinians struggle to rebuild homes

PTI ■ BEIT LAHIYA (GAZA STRIP)

When night falls over northern Gaza, much of the cityscape of collapsed buildings and piled wreckage turns pitch black. Living inside the ruins of their home, Rawia Tambora's young sons get afraid of the dark, so she turns on a flashlight and her phone's light to comfort them, for as long as the batteries last. Displaced for most of the 16-month-long war, Tambora is back in her house. But it is still a frustrating shell of a life, she says: There is no running water, electricity, heat or services, and no tools to clear the rubble around them. Nearly 6,00,000 Palestinians flooded back into northern Gaza under the now month-old ceasefire in Gaza, according to the United Nations. After initial relief and joy at being back at their homes — even if damaged or destroyed — they now face the reality of living in the wreckage for the foreseeable future. "Some people wish the war had never ended, feeling it would have been better to be killed," Tambora said. "I don't know what we'll do long-term. My

brain stopped planning for the future."

The six-week ceasefire is due to end Saturday, and it's uncertain what will happen next. There are efforts to extend the calm as the next phase is negotiated. If fighting erupts again, those who returned to the north could find themselves once again in the middle of it. A massive rebuilding job has no way to start: A report last week by the World Bank, UN and European Union estimated it will cost some USD 53 billion to rebuild Gaza after entire neighbourhoods were decimated by Israel's bombardment and offensives against Hamas militants. At the moment, there is almost no capacity or funding to start significant rebuilding.

A priority is making Gaza immediately livable. Earlier in February, Hamas threatened to hold up hostage releases unless more tents and temporary shelters were allowed into Gaza. It then reversed and accelerated hostage releases after Israel agreed to let in mobile homes and construction equipment.

Humanitarian agencies have stepped up services, setting up free kitchens and water delivery stations, and distributing tents and tarps to hundreds of thousands across Gaza, according to the UN.

President Donald Trump turned up the pressure by call-

ing for the entire population of Gaza to be removed permanently so the US can take over the territory and redevelop it for others. Rejecting the proposal, Palestinians say they want help to rebuild for themselves.

Gaza City's municipality started fixing some water lines and clearing rubble from streets, said a spokesperson, Asem Alnabih. But it lacks heavy equipment. Only a few of its 40 bulldozers and five dump trucks still work, he said. Gaza is filled with over 50 million tons of rubble that would take 100 trucks working at full capacity over 15 years to clear away, the UN estimates.

Families try to get by day by day: Tambora's house in the northern town of Beit Lahiya was destroyed by an airstrike early in the war, so she and her family lived in the nearby Indonesian Hospital, where she worked as a nurse. After the ceasefire, they moved back into the only room in her house that was semi-intact. The ceiling is partially collapsed, the walls are cracked; the surviving fridge and sink are useless with no water or electricity. They stack their sheets and blankets in a corner. Tambora said her 12-year-old son lugs heavy containers of water twice a day from distribution stations. They also have to find firewood for cooking. The influx of aid means there

is food in the markets and prices went down, but it remains expensive, she said. With the Indonesian Hospital too damaged to function, Tambora walks an hour each day to work at the Kamal Adwan Hospital. She charges her and her husband's phones using the hospital generator. Many of Tambora's relatives returned to find nothing left of their homes, so they live in tents on or next to the rubble that gets blown away by winter winds or flooded during rains, she said.

Asmaa Dwaima and her family returned to Gaza City but had to rent an apartment because their home in the Tel al-Hawa neighbourhood was destroyed. It was only weeks after returning that she went to visit their four-story house, now a pile of flattened and burned wreckage. "I couldn't come here because I was afraid. I had an image of my house in my mind — its beauty, and warmth. ... I was afraid to face this truth," the 25-year-old dentist said. "They don't just destroy stone, they are destroying us and our identity."

Her family had to rebuild the house once before, when it was levelled by airstrikes during a round of fighting between Israel and Hamas in 2014, she said. For the time being, they have no means to rebuild now. "We need to remove the rub-

ble because we want to pull out clothes and some of our belongings," she said. "We need heavy equipment ... There are no bricks or other construction tools and, if available, it's extremely expensive."

Desperation is growing: Tess Ingram, a spokesperson with UNICEF who visited northern Gaza since the ceasefire, said the families she met are "grieving the lives that they used to live as they begin to rebuild." Their desperation, she said, "is becoming more intense."

Huda Skaik, a 20-year-old student, is sharing a room with her three siblings and parents at her grandparents' house in Gaza City. It's an improvement from life in the tent camps of central Gaza where they were displaced for much of the war, she said.

There, they had to live among strangers, and their tent was washed away by rain. At least here they have walls and are with family, she said.

Before the war interrupted, Skaik had just started studying English literature at Gaza's Islamic University. She is now enrolled in online classes the university is organizing. But the internet is feeble, and her electricity relies on solar panels that don't always work.

"The worst part is that we're just now grasping that we lost it all," she said. "The destruction is massive, but I'm trying to remain positive."

At least 6 infants in Gaza die from hypothermia

PTI ■ JERUSALEM

Palestinian medics say at least six infants have died from hypothermia in the last two weeks in the Gaza Strip, as a UN official warned that the Trump administration's suspension of funding to the World Health Organisation withheld money for critical operations in the territory.

A fragile ceasefire that took hold last month paused 15 months of war between Israel and the Hamas militant group. But hundreds of thousands of people are still living in squalid tent camps or bombed-out buildings with little shelter from the cold, and temperatures have plunged in recent days.

Dr Rik Peeperkorn, the WHO representative for Occupied Palestinian Territories, said the funds suspension leaves six areas underfunded, including EMT operations, rehabilitation of health facilities, coordination with partner organisations and medical evacuations.

Dr Ahmed al-Farah, head of the paediatric department at the Nasser Hospital in Khan Younis, told The Associated Press that it received the body of a two-month-old girl on Tuesday. He said another two infants were treated for frostbite, with one of them discharged. Saeed Saleh, of the

Patient's Friends Hospital in Gaza City, said five infants aged one month or younger have died from the cold over the last two weeks.

Zaher al-Wahedi, head of the Gaza Health Ministry's records department, said it has recorded 15 deaths from hypothermia this winter. The territory on the Mediterranean coast experiences cold and wet winters, with temperatures dropping below 10 degrees Celsius (50 degrees Fahrenheit) at night.

Freed Israeli hostage says faith kept her going through Gaza captivity: Agam Berger, a former hostage released by Hamas, said it was her Jewish faith that sustained her during her 16-month ordeal in the Gaza Strip. Berger was a military spotter who was captured during Hamas' October 7, 2023 attack that ignited the war.

Berger told Israeli public radio Reshet Bet on Tuesday that she was held in tunnels and apartments with other female captives. She was given two meals a day, pita and rice, and had some access to media.

In January 2024, Berger said her captors brought her and other hostages two Jewish prayer books, as well as other objects left behind by Israeli soldiers, such as a newspaper and military maps. She said around the first Hanukkah she spent in

captivity in December 2023, in a tunnel with four other hostages, they asked their captors for candles to mark the holiday, and they brought them one.

Lebanon's prime minister says only armed forces can defend the nation: Lebanon's new prime minister has read his government policy statement stating that only the country's armed forces should defend the nation in case of war.

Nawaf Salam was picked to form a new government last month after a devastating war between Israel and Hezbollah that killed over 4,000 people and caused widespread destruction.

Hezbollah has kept its weapons over the past decades saying it is necessary to defend Lebanon against Israel. But many in Lebanon have been calling on the group to disarm, and such calls intensified during the latest war that stopped when a US-brokered ceasefire went into effect on November 27.

Salam said Tuesday that the government asserts that Lebanon has the right to defend itself in case of "aggression" and only the state has the right to have weapons. He also said that the government takes measures to liberate land occupied by Israel "through its forces only."

Russia, Indonesia hold talks to strengthen ties on defence, security

Jakarta (PTI): Russia and Indonesia took steps on Tuesday to strengthen their defence ties with a meeting between a top Russian security official and Indonesia's defence minister in the capital of Jakarta as Moscow's war on Ukraine entered its fourth year. Ahead of the visit by Sergei Shoigu, secretary of the Russian Federation Security Council, the Russian news agency RIA Novosti said he would discuss ways to deepen a defense partnership with Indonesia's Defense Minister Sjafrrie Sjamsoeddin.

The two officials would also discuss "cooperation in other areas of mutual interest", the agency said, citing a Russian government statement. Shoigu's visit, the first stop in a five-day Asia tour that also includes Malaysia, comes after Indonesia — the world's most populous Muslim-majority country and Southeast Asia's largest economy — was admitted as full member to the BRICS bloc of developing economies, an alliance where Russia is one of the founding members.

Indonesian officials said ahead of Shoigu's arrival that the sides would exchange views on international and regional issues as Russia hopes to deepen its defense engagement with Southeast Asia countries. Shoigu will also pay a courtesy call on Indonesian President

Prabowo Subianto before departing for Malaysia on Wednesday. Shoigu declined to comment to the media after his meeting with Sjamsoeddin.

Indonesia's Defence Ministry spokesperson Brig. Gen. Frega Wenas told reporters that Moscow and Jakarta "share an ambition to further broaden and deepen our defence relationship" and that Shoigu's visit reflected the highest level commitment to bilateral ties.

Indonesia's and the Russian navy held a joint drill last November in Indonesia's East Java Sea. Also, Jakarta has purchased Russian defense equipment, including Sukhoi fighter jets, BTR-80A military transport armoured and other combat vehicles, helicopters and assault rifles.

Subianto, who has made strengthening Indonesia's military a priority, also wants to buy submarines, frigates and more fighter jets, and step up defence cooperation with other countries. Last August, as the country's president-elect, he met Russian President Vladimir Putin at the Kremlin. Indonesia has sought to maintain a neutral position since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022.

Subianto's predecessor, Joko Widodo, was the first Asian leader who visited both Moscow and Kyiv in July 2022, hoping to push for a ceasefire.

Pope meets Vatican No. 2 to discuss sainthood candidates

PTI ■ ROME

Pope Francis, hospitalised in critical condition with double pneumonia, was well enough to meet with the Vatican secretary of state to approve new decrees for saints and call a formal meeting to set the dates for their canonisation, the Vatican said on Tuesday. The audience, which occurred Monday, signalled that the machinery of the Vatican was still grinding on and looking ahead even with Francis, 88, hospitalised and doctors warning his prognosis is guarded. The Vatican's Tuesday noon bulletin announced that Francis had approved decrees for five people for beatification and two for canonisation during an audience with Cardinal Pietro Parolin and Archbishop Edgar Pena Parra, the so-called Vatican "substitute" or chief of staff.

It was the first known time the pope had met with Parolin, who is essentially the Vatican prime minister, since his February 14 hospitalisation. The Vatican statement said that during the audience, Francis had "decided to convene a consistory about the future canonisations."

Such an audience and decision is par for the course when Francis is at the Vatican. He regularly approves decrees from the Vatican's saint-making office, albeit during audiences with the head of the office, not Parolin. But the forward-looking sense of the future consistory was signifi-

cant, given his illness. The only other outsider who is known to have visited the pope, other than his personal secretaries and medical personnel, is Italian Premier Giorgia Meloni, who visited February 19.

In a subsequent bulletin, the Vatican announced that Francis had additionally named a handful of new bishops for Brazil, named a new archbishop for Vancouver and modified the law for the Vatican City State to create a new hierarchy.

Pope slept well: On Tuesday morning, the Vatican's typically brief morning update said: "The pope slept well, all night." The previous evening, doctors had said he remained in critical condition with double pneumonia but reported a "slight improvement" in some laboratory results. In the most upbeat bulletin in days, the Vatican said Francis had resumed work from his hospital room, calling a parish in Gaza City that he has kept in touch with since the war there began.

The Argentine pope, who had part of one lung removed as a young man, has been hospitalised since February 14 at Rome's Gemelli hospital and doctors have said his condition is touch-and-go, given his age, fragility and pre-existing lung disease before the pneumonia set in. But in Monday's update, they said he hadn't had any more respiratory crises since Saturday, and the flow and concentration of supplemental oxygen has been slightly



Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Vatican Secretary of State during a rosary prayer service held for the health of Pope Francis in St Peter's Square at The Vatican, on Monday

reduced. The slight kidney insufficiency detected on Sunday was not causing alarm at the moment, doctors said, while saying his prognosis remained guarded.

Nightly prayer vigil begins at St Peter's: After night fell, thousands of faithful gathered in a rain-soaked St Peter's Square for the first of a nightly ritual recitation of the Rosary. The prayer evoked the 2005 vigils when St John Paul II was dying in the Apostolic Palace, but many of those on

hand said they were praying for Francis' recovery.

"We came to pray for the pope, that he may recover soon, for the great mission he's sharing with his message of peace," said Hatzumi Villanueva, from Peru, who praised Francis' empathy for migrants.

Standing on the same stage where Francis usually presides, the Vatican secretary of state, Cardinal Pietro Parolin, said that ever since Francis had been hospitalised, a chorus of prayers for his recovery had

swelled up from around the world. "Starting this evening, we want to unite ourselves publicly to this prayer here, in his house," Parolin said, praying that Francis "in this moment of illness and trial" would recover quickly.

The vigil was to continue Tuesday night, presided over by another senior Vatican official, Cardinal Antonio Tagle of the Philippines, who heads the office responsible for the Catholic Church in the developing world.

Allies and ordinary faithful hopeful: Francis' right-wing critics have been spreading dire rumours about his condition, but his allies have cheered him on and expressed hope that he will pull through. Many noted that from the very night of his election as pope, Francis had asked for the prayers of ordinary faithful, a request he repeats daily. "I'm a witness of everything he did for the church, with a great love of Jesus," Honduran Cardinal Oscar Rodriguez Maradiaga told La Repubblica. "Humanly speaking, I don't think it's time for him to go to Paradise." Maradiaga, a founding member of Francis' inner circle of cardinal advisers, said he himself had been near death with COVID-19, on high flows of oxygen like Francis. "I know the pope may be suffering and as a result I feel closer to him in prayer."

At Gemelli on a rainy Tuesday morning, ordinary Romans and visitors alike were also praying for the pope and reflecting on the teachings he has imparted over nearly 12 years. Hoang Phuc Nguyen, who lives in Canada but was visiting Rome to participate in a Holy Year pilgrimage, took the time to come to Gemelli to say a special prayer for the pope at the statue of St John Paul II outside the main entrance. "We heard that he is in the hospital right now and we are very worried about his health," Nguyen said. "He is our father and it is our responsibility to pray for him."

Trump backs Musk as he roils federal workforce

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

President Donald Trump backed Elon Musk's demand that federal employees explain their recent accomplishments by the end of Monday or risk getting fired, even as government agency officials were told that compliance with Musk's edict was voluntary. Confusion and anger over the situation spawned new litigation and added to turmoil within the federal workforce.

"What he's doing is saying, Are you actually working?" Trump said in the Oval Office during a meeting with French President Emmanuel Macron. "And then, if you don't answer, like, you're sort of semi-fired or you're fired, because a lot of people aren't answering because they don't even exist." The Republican president said Musk's Department of Government Efficiency has found "hundreds of billions of dollars in fraud" as he suggested that federal paychecks are going to nonexistent employees. He did not present evidence for his claims. Even as Trump and Musk pressed their case, the Office of Personnel Management

informed agency leaders that their workers were not required to respond by the deadline of 11:59 p.m. EST Monday, according to a person with knowledge of the conversation who requested anonymity to discuss internal matters. The conflicting directives led to varying advice for federal employees, depending on where they work. Some were told to answer the request for a list of five things that they did last week, others were informed it was optional, and others were directed not to answer at all.

Musk bristled at resistance, saying federal workers "hate even the tiniest amount of accountability." He continued to threaten firings hours after employees were told that they didn't need to comply with his demands.

"Subject to the discretion of the President, they will be given another chance," he posted on X, his social media platform. "Failure to respond a second time will result in termination." Attorneys representing unions, businesses, veterans and conservation organizations filed an updated lawsuit in federal court in California on Monday, arguing Musk had violated the law

by threatening mass firings. The lawsuit, spearheaded by the State Democracy Defenders Fund, called it "one of the most massive employment frauds in the history of this country."

Anna Kelly, a White House deputy press secretary, criticized the litigation by saying "in the time it took these employees on taxpayer-funded salaries to file a frivolous lawsuit, they could have briefly recapped their accomplishments to their managers, as is common in the private sector, 100 times over." Musk is leading Trump's efforts to overhaul and downsize the federal government. They've urged employees to resign, directed agencies to lay off probationary workers and halted work at some agencies altogether.

There has been pushback in protests around Washington and from within the government. The Office of Special Counsel, a watchdog for the federal workforce, said Monday that the firing of several probationary workers may be illegal. Trump is trying to fire the office's leader, Hampton Dellinger, in a case that has reached the US Supreme Court.

4 workers killed as elevated part of highway being built in South Korea collapses

Seoul (PTI): Elevated parts of a highway under construction collapsed in South Korea on Tuesday, killing four workers and injuring six others, officials said. Ten people were working on the site near the city of Cheonan, about 90 kilometers (55 miles) south of Seoul. They fell when it collapsed and were trapped in the rubble, the National Fire Agency said.

One was found dead in the rubble. Eight injured workers were sent to hospitals before two of them were declared dead there later. The 10th

worker who was missing for hours was eventually discovered dead, according to fire agency officials.

The fire agency said in a statement that five remained in serious condition.

The cause of the collapse wasn't immediately known. Acting President Choi Sang-mok urged authorities to mobilise all available personnel and equipment to salvage the workers. About 50 fire trucks, three helicopters and some 150 personnel were mobilised for the rescue effort.

Unknown illness kills over 50 people in part of Congo

PTI ■ KINSHASA (CONGO)

An unknown illness has killed over 50 people in northwestern Congo, according to doctors on the ground and the World Health Organisation on Monday. The interval between the onset of symptoms and death has been 48 hours in the majority of cases, and "that's what's really worrying," Serge Ngalebato, medical director of Bikoro Hospital, a regional monitoring centre, told The Associated Press.

The latest disease outbreak in the Democratic Republic of

Congo began on January 21, and 419 cases have been recorded including 53 deaths. According to the WHO's Africa office, the first outbreak in the town of Boloko began after three children ate a bat and died within 48 hours following hemorrhagic fever symptoms. There have long been concerns about diseases jumping from animals to humans in places where wild animals are popularly eaten. The number of such outbreaks in Africa has surged by more than 60 per cent in the last decade, the WHO said in 2022. After the

second outbreak of the current mystery disease began in the town of Bomate on February 9, samples from 13 cases have been sent to the National Institute for Biomedical Research in Congo's capital, Kinshasa, for testing, the WHO said. All samples have been negative for Ebola or other common hemorrhagic fever diseases like Marburg. Some tested positive for malaria. Last year, another mystery flu-like illness that killed dozens of people in another part of Congo was determined to be likely malaria.

China not keen to join Trump's 50% defence cut proposal

Beijing (PTI): China on Tuesday appeared not keen to join US President Donald Trump's proposal for a 50 per cent cut in defence budget by the US, Russia and China saying that its "limited" defence spending is to protect its sovereignty, security and development interests.

China's "limited defence spending is completely out of the need of safeguarding national sovereignty, security and development interests, and the need of maintaining world peace,"

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Lin Jian said reacting to Trump's proposals floated earlier this month. Media reports had quoted Trump as saying on February 13 that "one of the first meetings I want to have is with President Xi of China, President Putin of Russia. And I want to say: 'Let's cut our military budget in half.'"

"And we can do that. And I think we'll be able to do it," he said. Russian President Vladimir

Putin, in his reaction on Monday, termed it as a good idea. "I think it's a good idea. The US would cut by 50 per cent and we would cut by 50 per cent and then China would join, if it wanted," Putin was quoted as saying in a television interview.

Asked for his reaction to Trump and Putin's comments, Lin told a media briefing here that China is committed to peaceful development but its "limited" defence spending is to defend its sovereignty and

development interests. "China upholds a self-defence strategy, pursues coordinated development between its economy and national defence, and never engages in any arms race with any country", he said adding that Beijing has worked for world peace through concrete actions and injected stability and certainty to the world.

China, which is the second largest spender on defence after the US, last year increased its defence budget by 7.2 per cent to about USD 232 billion

(1.67 trillion Yuan) as it continues with the massive modernisation of its military of all its armed forces.

Speculation is rife that Beijing may increase its defence spending this year to amid Trump's assertion to further ramp up the US military. China is due to unveil its annual budget, including the defence spending at the annual session of its Parliament, the National People's Congress, (NPC) which is scheduled to begin from March 5.

Morocco says it dismantled Islamic State cell that was planning attacks

PTI ■ SALE (MOROCCO)
Moroccan authorities this month arrested a dozen people they said were planning attacks on behalf of the Islamic State in the Sahel, a region south of the Sahara Desert, officials said on Monday. The discovery of the terrorist cell and what authorities called an "imminent dangerous terrorist plot" reflect the expanding ambitions of extremist groups in the region. Authorities did not provide details of the suspects' motives or their plot, beyond saying they planned to set off bombs remotely. They released photographs and videos showing officers raiding terrorist cells throughout the country. The images showed weapons stockpiles found during police raids, Islamic State flags drawn on walls, and thousands of dollars of cash. "Morocco remains a major target in the agenda of all terrorist organisations operating in the Sahel," Habboub

Cherkaoui, the head of Morocco's Central Bureau of Judicial Investigations, said at a news conference. Militant groups have been expanding their presence in the Sahel, capitalising on instability in countries including Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger. Since French troops began withdrawing almost two years ago, the Islamic State in the Sahel has launched deadly campaigns and taken control of lucrative transit routes. Groups like Islamic State in the Sahel have found support in impoverished communities that feel neglected by their governments. Their growth has destabilised and in several cases contributed to the overthrow of elected leaders. It has alarmed neighbouring states — including in North Africa and coastal west Africa — and worried western powers concerned about militant groups using their regional bases to orchestrate violence elsewhere. Authorities said the Morocco-

based cell called itself "the Lions of the Caliphate in the Maghreb" and took direction from Islamic State in the Sahel commanders. More than a year of tracking done by Morocco's General Directorate for Territorial Surveillance showed Islamic State in the Sahel commanders worked to recruit, arm and direct sympathisers to carry out attacks in Morocco. The weapons found include materials to make explosives including nail bombs, dynamite and gas cylinders as well as knives, rifles and hand guns whose serial numbers had been scratched off. Investigators said the 12 men arrested ranged from 18 to 40 years old and were apprehended in nine different cities, including Casablanca, Fez and Tangier. The majority were unmarried and had not finished high school. They have not yet been charged under Morocco's anti-terrorism laws. Based on materials gathered in raids last week, authorities

were able to locate a cache of weapons in the desert near Morocco's border with Algeria, including firearms and ammunition wrapped in newspapers printed in Mali in late January. Authorities said the suspects arrested this month had maintained ties to Adnan Abu Walid al-Sahrawi, a militant leader born in the Morocco-controlled Western Sahara who was killed by French forces in 2021. In the years since, they took direction from the Libyan commander Abderrahmane Sahrouri, who oversees the group's operations outside the Sahel. Episodes of violence would be particularly damaging in Morocco, where the economy relies heavily on tourism. More than 17 million people visited the North African Kingdom last year and the tourism industry makes up more than 7 per cent of its GDP. Morocco is the only in North Africa not to have experienced a major terrorist attack

for more than a decade. But its security services regularly underscore that the threat remains and claim attacks are regularly foiled when terrorist cells are dismantled. They have in recent years claimed to have dismantled 40 such cells, including one as recently as January. Cherkaoui said the operation revealed that Islamic State in the Sahel aimed to expand and establish operations in Morocco or recruit Moroccans to fight abroad, including most recently in Somalia. He said the groups "do not hide their desire to target Morocco through propaganda platforms" and said Morocco's aggressive counterterrorism posture made it a target. Morocco has worked to present itself as a regional leader in combatting violent extremism, forging deeper ties with new governments throughout the Sahel, including Mali, with which it signed a joint military cooperation agreement last month.

Bangladesh interim govt's key adviser resigns

Likely to lead new pol party

PTI ■ DHAKA
Bangladesh interim government's Information Adviser and one of the key leaders of the students' movement, Nahid Islam, Tuesday resigned from the cabinet, ahead of the launch of a new political party by the July uprising activists. "Given the current situation in the country, the rise of a new political force is necessary. I have resigned from the advisory council to remain on the streets to consolidate the mass uprising," Islam said in a media briefing after submitting his resignation letter to Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus. One of the key coordinators of the July uprising that toppled the Awami League regime led by Sheikh Hasina, Nahid said his role on the street appeared more important than staying in government. He said he wanted to work for people's aspirations for a demo-

cratic change and thus resigned as an adviser, effectively a minister with two portfolios of Information & Broadcasting and Post and Telecommunications. Anti-Discrimination Student Movement led a mass uprising that toppled longtime prime minister Sheikh Hasina's government on August 5 last year. Three days later, Yunus took charge of the interim government. Islam was one of the three representatives of the Movement, who were inducted into the council of advisers. He resigned as the platform and its ally Jatiya Nagorik Committee or "national citizens committee", also led by students, earlier this month said they were set to form a new political party on Friday but did not announce its name. Islam is likely to join the new political party as its top leader. His resignation came amid criticisms from former prime minister Khaleda Zia's Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and several groups against forming a party with

their representatives staying in state power. Hasina's Awami League virtually remained silent on the development while most of her colleagues in the party and government were in jail and on the run on charges like crimes against humanity during the July-August Uprising last year. A UN fact-finding report earlier this month said the past regime wanted to ruthlessly crush the protesters, but the retaliatory violence continued even after its ouster while an estimated 1400 people were killed between July 15 and August 15. Two other comrades, Mahfuz Alam and Asif Mahmud, however, remained as advisers. Islam said, "The student advisers in the government will remain active in implementing the promises of justice and reform to which the government has committed." Yunus, earlier, said he encouraged the student movement-led party since they were ready to shed their blood for the country.



US President Donald Trump speaks during a meeting with France's President Emmanuel Macron in the Oval Office of the White House in Washington, on Monday

Syria's national dialogue conference begins

Battered country seeks to rebuild

PTI ■ DAMASCUS
Syria's new rulers kicked off a long-awaited national dialogue conference on Tuesday as a "rare historical opportunity" to rebuild the country after the fall of former President Bashar Assad and nearly 14 years of civil war. About 600 people from across Syria were invited to the gathering in Damascus, hosted by the new authorities led by the Islamist former insurgent group Hayat Tahrir al-Sham or HTS. The group led the offensive that ousted Assad in December. "Just as Syria has liberated itself by itself, it is appropriate for it to build itself by itself," interim President Ahmad al-Sharaa told the conference. "What we are experiencing today is an exceptional and rare historical opportunity in which we must use every moment to serve the interests of our people and our nation and honor the sacrifices of its children," he said. Syria's new rulers have promised an inclusive political transition. They will be closely watched by Syrians and the international community, including countries weighing whether to lift sanctions imposed during Assad's authoritarian rule. Syria faces major challenges, from rebuilding an economy and war-wrecked infrastructure to setting up a new constitution and justice mechanisms for those accused of war crimes. Although incidents of revenge and collective punishment have been far less widespread than expected, many in Syria's minority communities — including Kurds, Christians, Druze and members of Assad's

Alawite sect — are concerned for their future and not convinced by promises of inclusive governance. HTS was formerly affiliated with al-Qaeda, although it broke ties, and al-Sharaa has since preached coexistence. The organisers of the Damascus conference said all of Syria's communities were invited. Women and members of minority religious communities were among the attendees. The gathering is meant to come up with nonbinding recommendations on the country's interim rules before drafting a new constitution and forming a new government. Syria's new leaders also face the challenge of transforming former insurgent factions into a single national army they say should control all of the country's territory. Some armed groups — mainly the US-backed, Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces, which holds sway in northeastern Syria — have refused to disarm and dissolve their units. SDF figures weren't invited to the conference, although the organisers said the Kurdish community would be represented. A group of mostly Kurdish political parties said in a statement on Tuesday that the conference did "not reflect the reality of the Syrian components" and warned that it would be "meaningless, worthless and ineffective and will not contribute to finding real solutions to the crisis that the country is suffering from".

Along with the internal frictions, Syria's new authorities face external threats. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Sunday that Israel won't allow Syria's new army or HTS to "enter the area south of Damascus". He said that Israel aimed to protect Syria's Druze, a religious minority who live in southern Syria and in Israel's Golan Heights. After Assad's fall, Israeli forces moved into territory in southern Syria adjacent to the Israeli-annexed Golan Heights and have made clear they plan to stay indefinitely. Syria's new rulers haven't directly responded to Netanyahu's warning, but al-Sharaa told the Damascus conference that Syria must "firmly confront anyone who wants to tamper with our security and unity". Interim Foreign Minister Asaad al-Shibani said that Syria's new authorities "will not accept any violation of our sovereignty or the independence of our national decisions". He also touted the government's efforts to rebuild diplomatic ties with Arab and Western countries, and push for lifting sanctions. Also on Tuesday, hundreds of demonstrators gathered in the Druze heartland of Sweida and the southern city of Daraa to protest against Netanyahu's comments. Nour Alameddine, a university student, displayed a sign: "Syria is not for sale, Syria is united". "Sweida is part of Syria. We do not want it to be under Israeli occupation," she said. After Assad's fall, "we want to be part of a united Syria".

Pakistan SC to hear Imran Khan's pleas on Feb 28

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD
Pakistan's Supreme Court will take up on Friday petitions filed by jailed former prime minister Imran Khan seeking a judicial probe into the May 9 violence and alleged rigging of last year's general elections, according to media reports on Tuesday. A five-member constitutional bench of the apex court led by Justice Aminuddin Khan will conduct the hearing. The Express Tribune newspaper reported. Khan's petition for the May 9 investigation was filed in December last year. On May 9, 2023, violent protests erupted after Khan's arrest by paramilitary Rangers

POLL RIGGING, MAY 9 VIOLENCE
from the premises of the Islamabad High Court. His party workers vandalised a dozen military installations, including the Jinnah House (Lahore Corps Commander house) and the ISI building in Faisalabad. The PTI leadership alleges that May 9 was planned by its opponents. Khan had said he was implicated in the cases related to the violence as a result of a "well-orchestrated plan" to "harass" him for political reasons. In March 2024, Khan filed a

petition in the Supreme Court requesting the formation of a judicial commission to "inquire, audit and examine" the manner and process of the February 8 general elections held in the country, Geo News reported. Khan's PTI claims it had won the general elections held on February 8, 2024, but was robbed of its mandate through massive rigging, an allegation rejected by the government and the election officials. Khan has been jailed since August 2023 after he was arrested in several cases and convicted for some of them. He is currently lodged in the high-security Adiala jail in Rawalpindi.

China holds live-fire exercises in Gulf of Tonkin after Vietnam marks its territorial claims

Bangkok (PTI): Chinese authorities said they began live-fire exercises in the Gulf of Tonkin on Monday, only days after Vietnam announced a new line marking what it considers its territory in the body of water between the countries. China's Maritime Safety Administration said the exercises would be focused on the Beibu Gulf area, closer to the Chinese side of the Gulf of Tonkin, and would run through Thursday evening. It gave no further details, but the drills follow an announcement last week by Vietnam establishing a baseline used to calculate the width of its territorial waters in the Gulf of Tonkin. State-run Vietnam News reported that the baseline was in compliance with the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea and would provide "a robust legal basis for safeguarding and exercising Vietnam's sovereignty, sovereign rights and jurisdiction." Vietnam has not publicly responded to the Chinese drills. China and Vietnam have long had a maritime agreement governing the Gulf of Tonkin, but have been locked in competing claims in the nearby

South China Sea over the Spratly and Paracel Islands and maritime areas. China has been growing aggressive in pursuing those claims, and in October assaulted 10 Vietnamese fishermen near the Paracel Islands, three of whom suffered broken limbs. China claims almost the entire South China Sea as its own, though it has not publicly released exact coordinates of its claim other than a map with 10 dashed lines broadly demarcating what it calls its territory. In addition to Vietnam, China's claims overlap with those of the Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan, while Indonesia has also figured in violent confrontations with the Chinese coast guard and fishing fleets in the waters around the Natuna Islands. Tensions have been particularly high with the Philippines, with regular confrontations between the two countries. Most recently, a Chinese navy helicopter flew within 10 feet (3 meters) of a Philippine patrol plane last week over the South China Sea, near the hotly disputed Scarborough Shoal off the northwestern Philippines.

Starmmer commits to raise UK defence spending to 2.5% of GDP by 2027

PTI ■ LONDON
Prime Minister Keir Starmer committed to raise UK defence spending to 2.5% of gross domestic product by 2027, saying Tuesday that Europe is in a new and insecure era. The UK spends 2.3% of gross domestic product on defence, and the government had previously set a 2.5% target, without setting a date. Starmer told lawmakers that the increase amounts to an additional 13.4 billion pounds (\$17 billion) a year. He said the goal is for defence spending to rise to 3% of GDP by 2035. The announcement comes as European countries scramble to bolster their collective defense as US President Donald Trump transforms American foreign policy, seemingly sidelining Europe as he looks to quickly end the war in Ukraine. Trump has long questioned the value of NATO and complained that the US provides security to European countries that don't pull their weight. Starmer is due to meet with Trump at the White House on Thursday. The prime minister has offered to send British troops to Ukraine as part of a force to safeguard a ceasefire, but says an American "backstop" will be needed to ensure a lasting peace. Trump hasn't committed to providing security guarantees for Ukraine.

petition in the Supreme Court requesting the formation of a judicial commission to "inquire, audit and examine" the manner and process of the February 8 general elections held in the country, Geo News reported. Khan's PTI claims it had won the general elections held on February 8, 2024, but was robbed of its mandate through massive rigging, an allegation rejected by the government and the election officials. Khan has been jailed since August 2023 after he was arrested in several cases and convicted for some of them. He is currently lodged in the high-security Adiala jail in Rawalpindi.

petition in the Supreme Court requesting the formation of a judicial commission to "inquire, audit and examine" the manner and process of the February 8 general elections held in the country, Geo News reported. Khan's PTI claims it had won the general elections held on February 8, 2024, but was robbed of its mandate through massive rigging, an allegation rejected by the government and the election officials. Khan has been jailed since August 2023 after he was arrested in several cases and convicted for some of them. He is currently lodged in the high-security Adiala jail in Rawalpindi.

petition in the Supreme Court requesting the formation of a judicial commission to "inquire, audit and examine" the manner and process of the February 8 general elections held in the country, Geo News reported. Khan's PTI claims it had won the general elections held on February 8, 2024, but was robbed of its mandate through massive rigging, an allegation rejected by the government and the election officials. Khan has been jailed since August 2023 after he was arrested in several cases and convicted for some of them. He is currently lodged in the high-security Adiala jail in Rawalpindi.

New Okhla Industrial Development Authority
Administrative Building, Sector-6, NOIDA-201301 (U.P.)
Website : www.noidaauthorityonline.in

E-TENDER NOTICE
E-Tenders are invited from eligible contractors/firm for the following jobs against which bids can be uploaded and same shall be opened/downloaded as per schedule mentioned. The details and conditions of all tenders are available on Noida Authority's official website : www.noidaauthorityonline.in & <https://etender.up.nic.in>. Please ensure to see these websites for any changes/amendments & corrigendum etc.

Sl. No.	Jobs No.	Name of Work	Tender Amount (Rs. in Lacs)
1.	18/GM(NTC)/Sr. Manager (E&M)/III/2024-25	Comprehensive Annual Maintenance of HVAC for Ist, IInd & IIIrd Floor Command Control Center Building near mahamaya flyover, Sector-94, Noida.	36.83

The above tenders can be uploaded by dated 03.03.2025 up to 5.00 PM. Pre-qualification shall be opened/downloaded on dated 04.03.2025 at 11.00 AM.

Office : Sector 39, Noida **General Manager (NTC) Noida**

CLEAN, GREEN, SAFE & SECURE NOIDA

PUBLIC NOTICE
General public is hereby informed that, We, M/S Yatah Enterprises Private Limited having its registered office at 602, Prominence by Sanghat, I.P.L. S.P. Ring Road, Near Vaishnodevi Zundal, Gandhinagar, Gujarat - 382421 are filing application in L&DO for mutation of the Plot of land bearing no. 5, in Block No. 148, known as 26 Ferozshah Road, New Delhi - 110001 in the name of M/S Yatah Enterprises Private Limited, on the grounds of registered Sale Deed dated 9th January 2025. If there are any objections / claims from the general public on this application, the same shall be communicated to L&DO with supporting documents through registered post or by visiting L&DO at Nirman Bhawan, New Delhi or through an email at ldo@nic.in, within 30 days of publication of this notice.

Name: Gurdeep Chauhan (Advocate)
Address: Law Intellect, B-20, Basement Floor, East of Kailash, New Delhi - 110065
Contact No.: +91-8595468935

PUBLIC NOTICE
We wish to inform you all that Executive committee members were elected on dated 15 December 2024 of RWA, Sector-116, Noida. The list of Executive members are as below:-
a. Sh. Brahmopal Chaudhary- President
b. Dr.VN Mishra- V. President & Treasurer
c. Sh. TS Chaudhary- Vice president
d. Adv. Preeti Mishra- Vice President
e. Sh. Vikram Baisoya- Gen. Secretary
f. Sh. Sunil Chaudhary- Dy. Treasurer
g. Smt. Sherry Grover- Dy. Gen Secretary
h. Sh. Deepak Dhama- Member
i. Sh. Ashok Kumar- Member
j. Sh. Rajkumar Sharma- Member
k. Sh. Kapil Baisoya- Member
Incense anybody has any grievances, the same may plz report at RWA sector 116 office within 15 days.

PUBLIC NOTICE
It is to inform to the public at large that Mrs. Seema Devi who is purchasing the Property bearing No. B-212, Land area measuring 50 Sq. yards, Khasra No.176/4, Situated at Village Ghonda Gurjan Khadar, in the abadi of Mandir Wali Gali, North Ghonda, Ilaqa Shahdara, Delhi-53 from Mrs. Savitri who became owner vide Notarized GPA dated 27.09.2001, Notarized ATS dated 27.09.2001 & Notarized WILL dated 27.09.2001 executed by Mr. Netra Pal Giri and same to be financed & mortgaged by Aditya Birla Housing Finance Ltd. So, to comply the requirements of BANK/NBFC, we give this public notice that if any Person having any type of claim (right/title/interest/creating mortgage over the said property, may inform in writing, at the address mentioned below, about his objections, within 15 days from today, failing which it shall be presumed that the said property is free from all type of Encumbrances, lien etc. Lucem Legal LLP B-93B, Second Floor, Opp. SBI Bank Sector-2, Noida, UP-201301 Contact No: 9126-4268379

PUBLIC NOTICE
To be known to all that Sh. Devi Prasad Misra & Sh. Debasish Misra R/o of DDA SFS Flat No. 61-A in Block-H, Saket, New Delhi - 110017 have lost/misplaced the original 5th and Final Demand Letter/Allotment-cum-Demand Letter; NOC for Water & Electricity; Handing Possession and Site Possession for the said premises. An FIR in this regard has been lodged with Police Station, Crime Branch, Delhi Police with FIR No. 251453/2025 dated 24/02/2025. Any person(s) in possession of the said documents bearing F.No. R (197)78/HBR/SFS/PL may please contact at the above address within 15 days from the date of publication of this notice. Person(s) claiming interest may personally inform/write to Deputy Director, SFS Housing, Vikas Sadan, INA, New Delhi - 110023.

PUBLIC NOTICE
Notice is hereby given to the General Public that Mr. Lakhan Singh S/o Mr. Ganga Sahay is the owner of Residential Property No. D-364, (land area measuring 100 Sq. Yards., out of Khasra No. 562, Situated in the area of village Ghonda Gurjan Khadar, in the Abadi of Gali no. 20, (Ganji Extension, P.O. Bhajanpura, Ilaqa, Shahdara, Delhi-110053, by virtue of Regd. GPA dated 15.12.2023, as Doc. No. 2506, executed by Mrs. Parwati, same to be financed by SMF-G India Credit Company Limited (Formerly Fullerton India Credit Company Limited). General public hereby informed that if anybody has any change/interest/title in the said property or any kind of dispute kindly inform the undersigned in writing on the below mentioned address within 07 days of the present. **Rahul Raj Pathak, Advocate** SG Associates (Law Firm) FF-18, Lotus Pond Plaza, Vaishali Khind, Indraprastha Extension-II, New Delhi-110044. Email: sgassociatespl@gmail.com, Ph: 701172764, 9126444760

PUBLIC NOTICE
Notice is hereby given to the General Public that Mr. Lakhan Singh S/o Mr. Ganga Sahay is the owner of Residential Property No. D-364, (land area measuring 100 Sq. Yards., out of Khasra No. 562, Situated in the area of village Ghonda Gurjan Khadar, in the Abadi of Gali no. 20, (Ganji Extension, P.O. Bhajanpura, Ilaqa, Shahdara, Delhi-110053, by virtue of Regd. GPA dated 15.12.2023, as Doc. No. 2506, executed by Mrs. Parwati, same to be financed by SMF-G India Credit Company Limited (Formerly Fullerton India Credit Company Limited). General public hereby informed that if anybody has any change/interest/title in the said property or any kind of dispute kindly inform the undersigned in writing on the below mentioned address within 07 days of the present. **Rahul Raj Pathak, Advocate** SG Associates (Law Firm) FF-18, Lotus Pond Plaza, Vaishali Khind, Indraprastha Extension-II, New Delhi-110044. Email: sgassociatespl@gmail.com, Ph: 701172764, 9126444760

CHANGE OF NAME
I, Thankam, Mother of No.14850508X Hav Shatharaj C S R/o- Vill- Nadama, Post-Eroor (South), Teh- Kanayanoor, Dist- Ernakulam, Kerala- 682306, have changed my name from Thankam to C S Thankam, vide affidavit dated 25/02/2025 before Notary Public Delhi. **PD(1582)C**

LOST & FOUND
I, Aditya Dasta S/o Sh. Ramsukh Dasta have lost original Allotment Letter of Flat No.A-301, Gayatri CGHS Ltd, Plot No.09, Sector-9, Dwarka, New Delhi, finder please contact: 9654150164. **PD(1584)C**

CHANGE OF NAME
I, Anita Jain W/O Satish Kumar Jain R/o B/O 79 Pitampura Delhi 110034 have changed my name Anita Rani Jain to Anita Jain for all purposes. **PD(1583)C**

India imported 49 Billion Euro worth of Russian oil in 2024

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
India, the world's third largest oil consuming and importing nation, bought crude oil worth 49 Billion Euros from Russia in the third year of Moscow's invasion of Ukraine, a global think tank said. India, which has traditionally sourced its oil from the Middle East, began importing a large volume of oil from Russia soon after the invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. This is primarily because Russian oil was available at a significant discount to other international benchmarks due to western sanctions and some European countries shunning purchases. This led to India's imports of Russian oil seeing a dramatic rise, growing from less than one per cent of its total crude oil imports to a staggering 40 per cent in a short period. "Russia's stronghold over new markets has solidified

in the third year of the invasion. The three biggest buyers, China (EUR 78 Billion), India (EUR 49 Billion) and Turkey (EUR 34 Billion) were responsible for 74 per cent of Russia's total revenues from fossil fuels in the third year of the invasion," Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air said in its latest report (CREA). The value of India's import saw an eight per cent year-on-year increase, it said. Russia's total global fossil fuel earnings in the third year of the invasion reached 242 Billion Euro and have totalled 847 Billion Euro since the invasion of Ukraine. Some of the refineries in India turned Russian crude oil into fuels like petrol and diesel that were exported to Europe and other G7 countries. "In the third year of the invasion, G7+ countries imported EUR 18 Billion of oil products from six

refineries in India and Turkey that process Russian crude. An estimated EUR nine Billion of this was refined from Russian crude," the CREA report said. In the first three quarters of 2024, as refineries in India and Turkey increased their consumption of Russian crude, the volume of Russian crude used to create products for G7+ countries jumped by an estimated 10 per cent. Concurrently, this also contributed to a rise in the price of Russian oil, boosting the value of the crude used for these exports by an estimated 25 per cent, it said. The EU is the biggest importer of oil products from India's and Turkey's refineries. On average, 13 per cent of these refineries' total production is targeted towards exports for the bloc in the third year of the invasion. The top-five importers within the EU were the Netherlands (3.3 Billion

Euro), France (1.4 Billion Euro), Romania (1.2 Billion Euro), Spain (1.1 Billion Euro), and Italy (949 Million Euro). The single biggest buyer was Australia, whose imports from these refineries totalled 3.38 Billion Euro in the third year of the invasion. In the third year of the invasion, 23 per cent of the oil transhipped in EU waters was destined for China, 11 per cent for India, 10 per cent for South Korea, and two per cent for Turkey, with the remainder distributed among other markets. "CREA's data shows that from February to September 2024, 331 shipments arriving in India's Sikka port (in Gujarat) averaged USD 90.8 per barrel," it said. In this period, 65 per cent of the tankers were subject to the cap. "Applying the price cap to cost, insurance and freight (CIF) price would have cut Russia's crude export revenues by 34 per cent —

about 5.8 Billion in 2024," it said. When Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022, it triggered a series of sanctions from the US, the European Union, and other western nations, aimed at crippling Russia's economy. One of the main sanctions was on Russian oil exports, which significantly impacted Russia's ability to sell oil to European markets. As a result, Russia began offering crude oil at heavily discounted prices in an attempt to find new buyers for its oil. India, with its large energy needs and an economy sensitive to oil price fluctuations, found this offer too attractive to ignore. The price discount on Russian oil, sometimes as much as USD 18-20 per barrel lower than the market price of other oil, allowed India to procure oil at a much cheaper rate. The discounts have, however, shrunk in recent times to less than USD 3 a barrel.

Centre urge companies to set up skill centres in-house

PTI ■ KOLKATA
The Centre has urged the corporate sector to set up skill centres in-house so that the employability of graduating youth is improved and the overall hiring scenario is boosted, an official said on Tuesday. Ministry of Corporate Affairs Secretary Deepthi Gaur Mukherjee said that there is a need to upscale the numbers of skilled youth in society. Under the Prime Minister Internship Scheme (PMIS) launched in 2024, the target is to provide skills to 1.25 lakh youth in the pilot phase and one crore over the next five years. Speaking at an event organised by CII here, Mukherjee said, "The response from companies is very encouraging and there is a need to upscale the numbers. The companies should set

up skilling cells in-house so that the quantum of the employable workforce increases." The internship programme under PMIS has been made a part of corporate social responsibility (CSR) with the view to provide flexibility. "This internship programme is a part of CSR and not a normal HR function. This will provide flexibility to the programme. Under the scheme, the industry will benefit from getting employable workforce which will contribute to the society," she said. Mukherjee said that 50 per cent of the population in India is below the age of 28 years. "This is a huge demographic dividend. If the youth of the country are not skilled, the demographic dividend will turn into a demographic nightmare," the official said. She said the internship

programme will help the youth learn teamwork and improve communication skills. "The entire government scheme on internship is a three-way partnership between industry, government and the youth", Mukherjee said. Ambuja Neotia Group chairman Harshvardhan Neotia said the industry is facing an issue of employability of youth who are graduating. The internship programme provides a wonderful tool to boost employability and job creation, he said. Renowned corporate houses like ITC, Emami, Reliance and HDFC Bank are participating in the programme. Under PMIS, individuals, aged between 21 and 24 years, are given 12-month internship opportunities in the country's top 500 companies.

Enable MSMEs to grow through right policy, ADB to MP government

PTI ■ BHOPAL
Madhya Pradesh must look to frame policies for MSMEs to enable them to grow into large companies, which can compete globally, a senior official of the Asian Development Bank said on Tuesday. Speaking at the Madhya Pradesh Global Investors Summit (MP GIS) 2025, Asian Development Bank (ADB) Deputy Country Director Aarti Mehra complimented the state for its achievements in tackling poverty and stand out performance in agriculture, specially in organic farming. "It (Madhya Pradesh) has also done really well in tackling poverty. It is among the fast improving states of the country. Multidimensional poverty (in the state) has declined between 2015 and 2021 at a dramatic rate of 15.9

per cent and that's really commendable when you compare it to the national average of 9.9 per cent," she said. On the MSME sector, Mehra noted that MP has enacted a number of policies to deal with challenges faced by these micro enterprises, including access to finance. "While every policy that supports MSMEs is fantastic, the state must keep its eye on getting these infants to grow into giants," she said. Pointing to a trend witnessed in a number of states in India, she said MSMEs continue to be MSMEs even 10 years after inception. "Given where the state (MP) is now, and having the benefit of the experience of other states, I would urge that policies be made to actually incentivise these MSMEs to grow into giants by connecting them to supply

chains by providing good access to financing and by good regulation," Mehra said. She cited examples from other states such as Rajasthan, where in 2015 THE MSME policy was tweaked resulting in the size of MSMEs in the state growing larger. There are many benefits of growing MSMEs into big corporations, she said. "They can benefit from economies of scale and most importantly, larger companies pay employees more. They are more resilient to economic downturns, and they are just more able to compete in the global landscape," Mehra said. The senior ADB official also highlighted that the multilateral lending body has been associated with MP since 1999 and it has worked across all sectors ranging from transport to urban governance and education.

Rupee plummets 47 paise to end at 87.19 against US dollar

PTI ■ MUMBAI
The rupee fell sharply by 47 paise to settle at 87.19 against the US Dollar on Tuesday due to month-end Dollar demand by importers amid uncertainty over US trade tariffs. Elevated greenback against major crosses and sustained FII outflows also contributed to the decline in the domestic unit, forex traders said. At the interbank foreign exchange, the Rupee opened weak at 86.83 and kept losing ground through the day before settling at 87.19, lower by 47 paise over its previous close. The local unit had settled at 86.72 on Monday. Currency markets will remain closed on Wednesday for Mahashivratri. "The rupee fell sharply against the US dollar amid uncertainty over US trade tariffs and demand from importers towards the end of the month.

Covering of short positions due to the expiry of the futures contract, too, weighed on the rupee. "We expect the rupee to trade negative on the back of overall weakness in the domestic markets and persistent FII outflows. Any recovery in the US Dollar may also weigh on the Rupee. However, any intervention by the RBI and weakness in crude oil prices may support the Rupee at lower levels," Anuj Choudhary, Research Analyst at Mirae Asset Sharekhan, said. Meanwhile, at the domestic equity markets, Sensex climbed 147.71 points to settle at 74,602.12 to end a five-session losing run. However, Nifty continued the downward streak, falling 5.80 points to 22,547.55. The Dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, rose 0.04 per cent to 106.64.

SEBI warns public against buying properties of HBN Dairies

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
Markets regulator SEBI has cautioned public against buying and dealing with any property belonging to HBN Dairies and Allied Limited. The cautionary statement comes after SEBI discovered that some individuals or entities are interfering with the auction process by spreading false rumours, pretending to be SEBI officials, and trespassing on HBN properties. These actions are not only misleading potential buyers but also obstructing SEBI's e-auction process, the regulator noted. In response, SEBI in a notice issued last week, cautioned public against 'buying/dealing with any properties wherein HBN, its directors or any of its associates, subsidiaries, sister companies have any interest, rights directly or indirectly'.

The regulator also said no person is allowed to take illegal possession of or interfere with the assets of HBN, its directors, or its related entities, including subsidiaries, associates, and sister companies. Any such unauthorised actions will result in legal consequences under applicable laws. Further, SEBI emphasised that as per Supreme Court orders, it has full authority to sell the assets of HBN, its directors, and its related companies, including properties where HBN has any direct or indirect interest. A Supreme Court order in May 2024 granted SEBI the authority to sell the assets of HBN with the involvement of a liquidator. A subsequent order in October 2024 further permitted SEBI to sell and dispose of assets and properties of HBN's sister

companies, which are currently in liquidation. Following the orders, the regulator in January stated that it will auction 26 properties of HBN Dairies and Allied Ltd for a reserve price of ₹83 Crore on February 27. Before this, the regulator had in August last year auctioned eight properties of HBN. The moves are part of the markets watchdog's effort to recover money raised by HBN through illicit collective investment schemes. The SEBI initiated the process for the sale of the assets after HBN and its directors — Harmender Singh Sran, Amandeep Singh Sran, Manjeet Kaur Sran and Jasbeer Kaur — failed to refund investors' money. The assets of HBN and its directors were attached by SEBI under recovery proceedings initiated via a prohibitory order in September 2017.

Kerala launches direct selling monitoring mechanism

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI
The Kerala government has launched the Direct Selling Monitoring Mechanism (DSMM), a major initiative aimed at strengthening the direct selling industry with a transparent and consumer-friendly ecosystem. Applauding this move, the Indian Direct Selling Association (IDSA) hailed it as a game-changer for the sector's growth and regulation. Under the leadership of Chief Minister Shri Pinarayi Vijayan and Minister Shri G R Anil, the initiative introduces clear guidelines for over 1.5 Lakh direct sellers in the state. Speaking at the launch event in Thiruvananthapuram on February 19, 2025, IDSA CEO Council Member, Mr Samir K Modi, highlighted Kerala's transformative step in strengthening its, 522 Crore direct selling market. He praised the launch of an online portal to enhance transparency and compliance.

VFS Global launch India developed AI-powered chatbot for UK visa customers

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ DUBAI/NEW DELHI
VFS Global, a global leader in visa and consular services, has launched an innovative AI-powered chatbot to provide enhanced customer support for UK visa applicants across 141 countries. Developed by VFS Global's AI Centres in India, the UAE, and Germany, this cutting-edge solution leverages Generative AI technology to deliver human-like, conversational support to applicants seeking information about their UK visa applications. The AI-powered chatbot is designed to cater to diverse audiences by effectively responding to both voice and text inputs. This ensures that travellers from around the world can easily access the assistance they need in a manner that feels both natural and intuitive. Jen Vidler, Deputy Director, Cross Cutting Service Operations, Visa, Status and Information Services, Customer Services Group, UK Visas and Immigration, said, "The rollout of VFS Global's AI-powered chatbot demonstrates our continued commitment to ensuring our visa services are accessible, efficient and meet the needs of all customers. Providing instant access to accurate

information about the visa application process will ensure we continue to offer the best service to our customers." Zubin Karkaria, Founder & Chief Executive Officer, VFS Global, added, "Technology and innovation have always been the cornerstones of our operations at VFS Global, and we are pleased to launch this AI-powered information solution which will significantly enhance the visa application experience for our customers travelling to the UK from across the globe. We are developing a range of AI and digital technology driven products to drive the next transformation in visa and consular services for our Client Governments and customers. We remain deeply committed to the responsible development of AI in accordance with the policies and requirements of our client governments." Powered by advanced Generative AI, the chatbot provides responses that mimic human conversation, fostering a more engaging user experience. The chatbot is fine-tuned to deliver accurate, country-specific details tailored to the needs of UK visa applicants. The system identifies and masks any Personally Identifiable Information (PII), ensuring that no sensitive data is stored or shared.

Sensex bounces back after five-day slump, Nifty ends marginally lower



Stock Exchange building, Mumbai Pioneer photo

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ MUMBAI
Benchmark BSE Sensex recovered 147 points in a range-bound trade on Tuesday, ending its five-day slide on the back of buying in financial and FMCG shares. The 30-share BSE benchmark Sensex climbed 147.71 points or 0.20 per cent to settle at 74,602.12 with 17 of its constituents ending higher and 13 lower. During the day, it rallied 330.67 points or 0.44 per cent to 74,785.08.

The broader Nifty of NSE, however, fell for the sixth day slipping by 5.80 points or 0.03 per cent to finish at 22,547.55 due to fag-end selling in pharma, metal and IT shares. Weak Asian and US markets along with foreign fund outflows made investors risk-averse, analysts said. Among Sensex shares, Mahindra and Mahindra, Bharti Airtel, Bajaj Finance, Zomato, Nestle, Bajaj Finserv, Maruti and Titan were the biggest gainers. Sun Pharma, Power Grid,

Tata Consultancy Services, Tech Mahindra, Asian Paints and Tata Motors were among the laggards. In the last five trading sessions, the BSE barometer lost 1,542.45 points or two per cent. Foreign institutional investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth ₹6,286.70 Crore on Monday, while DIIs bought equities worth ₹5,185.65 Crore, according to exchange data. In Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo, Shanghai and Hong Kong settled lower. Equity markets in Europe were trading mostly higher. US markets ended mostly in the negative territory on Monday. "Benchmark indices ended mixed in a lacklustre trading session as weak Asian cues further cautioned investors. Investors continued to stay risk averse as global uncertainty coupled with strong FII selling kept the mood sluggish ahead of expiry this week," Prashanth Tapse, Senior VP (Research), Mehta Equities Ltd, said. Global oil benchmark Brent crude dipped 0.13 per cent to USD 74.68 a barrel. "The domestic market experienced a range-bound trading session in anticipation of key economic data releases this week, alongside the monthly expiry.

Aravam tech solutions unveils triptronic application



(Left to Right) co founders of Triptronic Sahil Mendiratta, Sorabh Kothari and Ankush Mendiratta founder Pioneer photo

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI
Aravam Tech Solutions Private Limited has launched Triptronic, a next-gen app designed to address the growing demand for efficient, sustainable, and tech-driven transportation solutions for businesses. The launch event, held on today at The Metropolitan Hotel in New Delhi, showcased how Triptronic blends real-time updates, advanced technology, and electric vehicles to offer a comprehensive solution tailored to corporate travel needs. To meet growing demand, Triptronic starting its operations across India. As more employees return to offices and businesses rely on organised transport, the need for better corporate mobility solutions is increasing. The company also aims to expand

internationally to the UAE and Southeast Asia, helping businesses access cost-effective and sustainable transport. India's ride-hailing market is worth USD 13.4 Billion, but with only seven per cent penetration-compared to 40 per cent in China and 28 per cent in the US there is huge growth potential. By entering new markets, Triptronic expects to triple its revenue and serve more corporate clients. Triptronic is built around three core apps the Employee App, which enables employees to book, track, and pay for rides, receive real-time updates, and provide feedback, the Driver App, which helps drivers manage routes, assignments, and eco-friendly travel options and the Supervisor App, which allows businesses to monitor employee travel in real-time, track vehicles, manage expenses, and optimise routes for better efficiency.

DJGF signature 2025 debuts as premier jewellery showcase

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI
Informa Markets in India has launched the first edition of Delhi Jewellery and Gem Fair (DJGF) Signature 2025 at Bharat Mandapam at Pragati Maidan. Timed ahead of the Akshaya Tritiya buying season, the exclusive three-day event brings together

over 120 premium exhibitors, 150 hosted buyers, and more than 8,000 trade visitors across one Lakh square feet of exhibition space. DJGF Signature 2025 serves as a platform for wholesalers and retailers to explore elite jewellery collections, strengthen brand positioning and engage with key stakeholders.

Blue Star plans for gradual expansion at manufacturing facilities for ACs

PTI ■ CHENNAI
Air conditioners and commercial refrigeration system maker Blue Star Ltd has planned to take up gradual expansion of its manufacturing facilities to 1.8 million units as it aims to garner a market share of 14.3 per cent in the room air conditioner segment by FY26, a top official said on Tuesday. The company currently has a production capacity of about 1.4 million room air

conditioners. "With India set to add approximately 450 million middle-class consumers by 2030, the market for room ACs is at its inflection point and is poised to grow exponentially over the next few years. Positive trends such as the expansion of the housing sector, increased adoption of renewable energy, and growth in the rural economy are also expected to shape the industry's future," Blue Star Ltd Managing Director B

Thiagarajan said. He was here to unveil 150 models of room air conditioners including 'flagship premium' range in view of the forthcoming summer season. "We continue to make significant investments in R and D, manufacturing as well as supply chain to enhance competencies and capabilities to effectively leverage the growing demand. We are confident that our extensive range of room ACs, covering all consumer segments and price points, will enable us to

grow at a faster pace than the market," he added. The company has a cutting-edge manufacturing unit in neighbouring Sri City in Andhra Pradesh which commenced commercial production in January 2023. Besides, the company operates two dedicated plants in Himachal Pradesh for manufacturing room air conditioners. These facilities are equipped with advanced automation technologies, including state-of-the-art assembly lines and

material handling systems, along with comprehensive initiatives focused on Internet of Things integration and digitalisation. "With these plants, Blue Star's production capacity is currently around 1.4 Million room ACs, with plans for gradual expansion to 1.8 Million units in near future," the company said. The comprehensive range of air conditioners launched were in the 3-star and 5-star categories and are available in various cooling capacities

from ₹28,990 onwards. Nearly 40 models of smart Wi-fi air conditioners have unique features including 'customised sleep' where a customer can preset the temperature, fan speed, cool mode and switch on or off every hour for 12 hours ensuring uninterrupted sleep. The air conditioners also come with Voice Command technology in which customers can operate using Amazon Alexa or Google Home using English or Hindi voice commands.

Australia vs South Africa match abandoned due to rain

PTI ■ RAWALPINDI

The Champions Trophy (CT) match between Australia and South Africa was abandoned here on Tuesday due to persistent rain, forcing the two Group B heavyweights to share a point each.

The weather did not allow even the toss to be completed. With the conditions not getting any better, the match officials called off the game a little more than three hours after the scheduled start time.

The cut-off time for the game was 7.32 pm but the officials made the call much earlier with no weather improvement in sight.

After the no result, South Africa and Australia shared one point each and it means that Wednesday's contest between England and Afghanistan has turned into a virtual knockout with the loser becoming the third team to be eliminated from



the ICC event. Tournament hosts Pakistan and Bangladesh were knocked out of the event on Monday after suffering two successive defeats. Both Australia and South Africa had won their opening game against England and Afghanistan respectively. Interestingly, it was Australia's fourth abandoned

game in their last eight outings in the Champions Trophy. They next play Afghanistan in Lahore on February 28 while the Proteas face England in Karachi the following day. The semifinalists have already been decided in Group A with India and New Zealand progressing after two wins in as many games. Rain is predicted in

Rawalpindi as well as Lahore and the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) will be hoping it doesn't play spoilsport in the coming days. Pakistan is hosting an ICC event for the first time in 29 years. With the host nation already out of the semifinal race, the PCB already faces a challenge in keeping the local fans interested in the tournament.

SC bars Karnataka police from taking steps against Lakshya Sen

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Tuesday barred Karnataka Police from taking any coercive steps against badminton player Lakshya Sen, his family members, and coach over allegations of forging birth certificates.

A bench of Justices Sudhanshu Dhulia and K Vinod Chandran issued notice to the Karnataka government and the complainant M G Nagaraj who alleged birth certificates of Sen and his brother Chirag Sen were forged.

The top court was hearing a plea challenging February 19 order of the Karnataka High Court which rejected the petitions filed by Sen, his family members, and his coach U Vimal Kumar. The high court ruled there was prima facie evidence warranting an investigation into the case.

The case stems from a private complaint filed by Nagaraj, who alleged Sen's parents



Dhirendra and Nirmala Sen, along with his brother, coach, and an employee of the Karnataka Badminton Association, were involved in falsifying the birth records. According to the complaint, the accused allegedly manipulated the birth certificates of the Sen brothers, reducing their age by approximately two-and-a-half years. The alleged forgery was intended to allow them to participate in age-

restricted badminton tournaments and avail government benefits. Nagaraj supported his claims with documents obtained under RTI Act and requested the court to summon original records from the Sports Authority of India (SAI) and the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports in New Delhi. Based on this evidence, the court directed the High Grounds police station to conduct an investigation.

Following the court's directive, the police registered an FIR under Sections 420 (cheating), 468 (forgery), and 471 (using forged documents as genuine) of IPC. However, the petitioners moved the Karnataka High Court in 2022, securing an interim order that stalled the investigation. The petitioners argued that the complaint and subsequent FIR were baseless, motivated, and intended to harass them. They alleged Nagaraj was acting out of personal vendetta, claiming his daughter had applied to join the Prakash Padukone Badminton Academy in 2020 but was not selected after the evaluation process. Kumar, a coach at the academy, was named in the complaint. The high court, while dismissing the petitions, observed that the petitioners' counsel did not present arguments despite being given sufficient opportunities and refused more time.

Ready to lead KKR if captaincy comes my way: Venkatesh Iyer

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

All-rounder Venkatesh Iyer says he is prepared to lead Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) if given the opportunity in the IPL 2025 despite having no captaincy experience at any levels in competitive cricket.

The reigning champions, who will take on Royal Challengers Bengaluru in the opening game this season at the Eden Gardens, are yet to announce their captain.

Shreyas Iyer had led them to the title win in IPL 2024, but he was acquired by Punjab Kings in the mega auction and later named him as their skipper.

"Definitely, I'm ready. Again, I've always said this: captaincy is just a tag, I believe in leadership. That is a bigger role to play, being a leader," Venkatesh told ESPNcricinfo.

"There's no ambiguity surrounding this. I'll definitely do it, if it comes my way. There is no reason not to do it," he added.

Iyer said the captain needs to



"set an example" by being a "good role model". "You don't necessarily need the tag of a captain to be a leader in your dressing room. You need to set examples. You need to be a good role model, both on and off the field, which I am doing right now in Madhya Pradesh. "I'm not the captain of the MP team, but my opinions are respected and I really love to be in an atmosphere where every individual — new or experienced, Rs 20 lakh, Rs 20 crore, whatever — you just

need to have the freedom to voice your opinion. "You just need to have the freedom to give opinions and give suggestions and them to be taken in the right spirit," he added. Venkatesh, who joined the KKR in 2021, was released ahead of last year's auction but was bought back for a hefty Rs 23.75 crore after an intense tussle with RCB. Overall, the left-hander has scored 1,326 runs in 51 IPL matches, all for the Knight Riders.

Praggnanadhaa favourite to win Prague Masters

PTI ■ PRAGUE

Fresh off his nail-biting victory at the Tata Steel Masters, Grandmaster R Praggnanandhaa will start as the hot favorite to win the Prague Masters, which gets underway here on Wednesday.

It was a gruelling first-place finish at the Tata Steel Masters, where Praggnanandhaa overcame world champion D Gukesh in a nerve-wracking tiebreak battle and the Indian will now look to carry that momentum forward in this tournament.

Grandmaster Aravindh Chithambaram makes his debut in elite chess, thanks to his consistent rise in both performance and rating throughout last year. Having elevated himself to 2730 points in live ratings, Aravindh is knocking on the door of the top 20 in the world rankings and is currently ranked fifth in the country, behind Gukesh, Arjun

Praggnanandhaa, and five-time world champion Viswanathan Anand. The field, as usual, is an interesting mix. Chinese Grandmaster Wei Yi starts as the top seed, with Praggnanandhaa in second place based on ratings released on February 1. Le Quang Liem of Vietnam is seeded third, ahead of Vincent Keymer of Germany, while Aravindh is seeded fourth in the 10-player, 9-round all-play-all event.

Dutch Grandmaster Anish Giri could draw attention here, thanks to his vast theoretical preparation, which might prove useful. The best Czech player, David Navara, along with Nguyen Thai Dai Van, Sam Shankland of the United States, and young talent Edil Gurezi, complete the lineup.

For Praggnanandhaa, it would be a great opportunity as the Indian has the ability to outplay any opponent, giving him a distinct advantage over the others in the fray.

IPL: Matthew Mott appointed Delhi Capitals assistant coach

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Former England white-ball coach Matthew Mott was on Tuesday appointed assistant coach of IPL franchise Delhi Capitals for the upcoming season.

The 51-year-old Mott will assist former India cricketer Hemang Badani, who was named head coach in October last year. The Australian joins director of cricket Venugopal Rao and bowling coach Munaf Patel in the Delhi Capitals' support staff.

Mott, following an extremely successful stint with the Australian women's cricket team — he guided them to two T20 World Cups, one ODI World Cup and four Ashes series wins — over seven years, became the England men's team white-ball coach in 2022.

The former first-class cricketer, with more than 3,500 runs under his belt in 66 games, stepped down as England coach in July last



year after guiding them to the T20 World Cup title in Australia in 2022. Mott had also served as assistant coach of Kolkata Knight Riders during the first two seasons of IPL. Delhi Capitals, who are still looking for their maiden IPL title, have made major changes to their coaching staff ahead of the new season. They brought in former India player Badani

as head coach in place of legendary Australian cricketer Ricky Ponting, while also replacing Australia's James Hopes with ex-India pacer and member of the 2011 World Cup-winning squad, Munaf, as their bowling coach. Delhi Capitals will open their IPL campaign against Lucknow Super Giants (LSG) in Visakhapatnam on March 24.

I have not seen a better player than Kohli: Ponting

PTI ■ DUBAI

Former Australian skipper Ricky Ponting said he has not seen a "better player" than Virat Kohli in ODIs, and backed the Indian batting star to go past legendary Sachin Tendulkar as the highest run-getter in the 50-over format.

Kohli made an exceptional unbeaten 100, his 51st in ODIs, to guide India to a six-wicket win over Pakistan in a Champions Trophy match here on Sunday.

"I don't think I've ever seen a better 50-over player than Virat Kohli. Now that he's gone past me (in run-maker's list) and only two (batters) ahead of him, I'm sure he would want to give himself the best chance to be remembered as the all-time leading run scorer in the game," Ponting told ICC Review.

During the course of that



hundred, Kohli went past the 14000-run mark in one-dayers, joining former Sri Lankan captain Kumar Sangakkara and Tendulkar in a rare club. Kohli (14085 runs) is still 4,341 runs behind Tendulkar (18426) and at 36, the champion batter has limited time in his hand to overhaul the latter's mark. But Ponting did not see it as an impossible task for Kohli. "Obviously physical-wise, he's

probably as fit as he's ever been and works exceptionally hard on that side of his game. It's crazy when you think about it, isn't it? Just how good Virat's been over such a long period of time, yet he's still 4,000 runs behind Sachin. "It just goes to show how good Sachin was, but also his longevity in the game. But with someone like Virat, you never write him off. If the hunger's still there, then I'm

never going to write him off (to overtake Tendulkar)," he added. Ponting said a match against Pakistan often brought the best in Kohli, and termed him as a big match player. "Yeah, 2022 (T20 WC) and now, he stood up against the team that he would probably steel himself the most to play against. When Pakistan had batted first on a tricky wicket, it needed someone at the top of the order to play a match-winning innings like that. "Once again, it was Kohli to get the job done. He's been a champion player for a long, long time. And particularly in the white-ball formats, where he's been an unbelievably good 50-over player," said the Aussie. Ponting said Kohli's hundred was the difference between India and Pakistan on that night. "You look at the two

scorecards, it's one, Virat making a 100, and lots of Pakistan starts without anyone going on and making a big score. "I've said forever, in any format of the game, a 50 never wins you or your team anything. You have to get big scores. And so the individual big scores weren't there, but the big partnerships weren't there either," Ponting noted. The Tasmanian said senior batters Babar Azam and Mohammed Rizwan were not able to serve Pakistan in a desired manner. "They haven't been able to give their best back to their team. Those two guys had to stand up," Ponting said. "They had to make big runs, and they haven't been able to do it in the first couple of games, and that might be the reason why Pakistan don't make it through to the semi-finals."

India have huge advantage playing at same ground, says Cummins

PTI ■ SYDNEY

Injured Australia captain Pat Cummins believes India have a "huge advantage" to be based in Dubai for the ongoing Champions Trophy (CT) while other sides criss-cross Pakistan for their group games in the tournament being held under a 'hybrid model'.

Rohit Sharma's men are playing all their matches in Dubai and even the final will be held there if the team goes the distance. This was done after India refused to travel to Pakistan, the original hosts of the event, citing security concerns. "I think it's good in that the tournament can go on, but obviously it does give them (India) a huge advantage



playing on the same ground. They already look very strong and they've got that obvious benefit of playing all their games there," Cummins told 'Yahoo Australia'. India have won both their games, against Bangladesh and Pakistan, comfortably so far and are through to the semifinal on March 4, to be held in Dubai. Their last group match is on

Sunday against New Zealand, a team that has so far played in Pakistan, also winning both its games against the home side and Bangladesh. Cummins is watching the tournament from the sidelines owing to an ankle injury and is targeting a return to competitive cricket with the IPL next month. The break also coincided with the birth of his daughter.

Boxing Federation of India internal wars revealed amid IOA crackdown

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Stripped of its administrative powers by Indian Olympic Association (IOA) for allegedly failing to conduct elections on time, accusations and counter-accusations are flying thick and fast within the Boxing Federation of India (BFI) on what is to be blamed for the mess that has been in the making for several months.

Abuse of power, financial misconduct, and the never-ending turf wars are now coming to light as officials jostle to escape blame for the shocking turn of events.

The Indian Olympic Association (IOA) formed a five-member ad-hoc committee on Monday to oversee the sport's affairs, citing the federation's failure to conduct elections on time.

The panel is headed by former Athletics Federation of India (AFI) treasurer Madhukant Pathak, and comprises long-serving boxing federation officials such as Rajesh Bhandari (vice-chairman), DP Bhatt, Virendra Singh Thakur and former Asian champion Shiva Thapa as the sole players' representative. The sport's fortunes have been on the decline for a while now but the internal tug of war had so far been under wraps. With the IOA's crackdown, it is now out in the open.

Allegations of financial misconduct On December 28, the BFI received a complaint, a copy of which is in PTI's possession, accusing key officials, including Secretary General Hemanta Kalita and Treasurer Digvijay Singh, of "unauthorised fund

withdrawals, fraudulent billing, and abuse of power". They were also accused of tender process violations and it was claimed that contracts for the Multinational Training Camp in Rohtak and the Guwahati Talent Hunt were awarded without following the proper procedure. It was also alleged that non-boxing individuals were appointed as Technical Officials (NTOs) and there was unauthorised withdrawal of foreign currency and misuse of federation funds for personal expenses, among others. During the Executive Council meeting on January 12 attended by both the secretary and treasurer, it was decided that an inquiry will be conducted. To avoid conflict of interest, former Delhi High Court



judge, Sudhir Kumar Jain was appointed by the BFI to lead the investigation on January 21. Since then Jain has conducted several sittings. However, Digvijay wrote to BFI head Ajay Singh this week, objecting to the "unilateral appointment of a one-man inquiry committee" instead of referring the matter to the federation's internal

Disciplinary and Dispute Committee. The complaints made in December specifically highlighted misappropriation of funds and protocol violations by the finance committee. It is to be noted that Digvijay also heads the BFI finance committee, which includes Meren Paul, a member of the Disciplinary

and Dispute Committee. In a letter dated February 3, the federation stated that a Special General Body Meeting (SGM) was scheduled for Tuesday, and assured the ministry that the election will be conducted by mid-March. However, the meeting was not held. "The National Games were going on and World Boxing is in the final stages to get recognition from the IOC and the president is closely involved in this, hence it was decided that the meeting will be held in March," a BFI official familiar with the development said. **Opposition to IOA's ad-hoc committee** Meanwhile, IOA Treasurer and Dispute and Affiliation Committee member Sahdev Yadav on Monday strongly opposed the appointment of

an ad-hoc committee to oversee the BFI. He criticised the decision as "arbitrary and without due authority," stating that no procedural steps were followed before making such a move. In a letter to IOA President PT Usha, Yadav wrote, "The issuance of this office order creates an impression that the decision has been taken by the IOA, whereas, in reality, it is your personal decision." He further stressed that National Sports Federations (NSFs) are autonomous bodies and that the IOA does not have the authority to interfere in their internal governance. However, there have been past precedents of IOA stepping in to manage a sport's affairs if the federation fails to conduct elections on time.

England, Afghanistan dream of semifinal berth

PTI ■ LAHORE

Abattered England will hope to keep their Champions Trophy (CT) hopes alive when they face a dangerous Afghanistan in a crucial group B match here on Wednesday.

A defeat here would severely dent both the teams' dreams of a semifinal berth in the tournament, as South Africa and Australia have already notched up two points.

The days of England's white ball supremacy are far behind now, as the former world champions' creaking unit even failed to defend a 350-plus total against Australia in their tournament opener.

While England may take some comfort in posting a massive total, the reality is that it came against an Australian side missing their premier pacers — Pat Cummins, Mitchell Starc, and Josh Hazlewood.

The English bowlers then failed to stop an Australian line-up that did not have lead batters such as injured Mitchell Marsh and now-retired Marcus Stoinis.

So, England will need to show massive improvement against Afghanistan on both those counts.

Afghanistan's three-pronged spin attack, consisting Rashid Khan, Noor Ahmad and Mohammad Nabi, has the potential to trouble even the best, and England batters' recent outings



against slow bowlers are not confidence inspiring either.

England also suffered a setback as all-rounder Brydon Carse has been ruled out of the tournament with a toe injury. He has been replaced by leg-spinner Rehan Ahmed in an effort to strengthen their spin department.

This move will also provide Adil Rashid with proper backing, as, until

now, Liam Livingstone had been performing that role with his mixed bag of off-spin, leg-spin, and seam-up deliveries.

But England's real problem lies in the patchy form of opener Phil Salt and Harry Brook in the middle-order.

Salt's only hundred in the format was in 2022 and since then the Welshman has not really converted his starts, often getting out after a

quick 30 or 40.

Brook also offers a similar tale. The Yorkshire man looked in prime form during the home ODIs against Australia last year, hammering a hundred and two fifties in a three-match series.

However, Brook has been riddled with self-doubts against spinners since the tour to India, and fell to Aussie leg-spinner Adam Zampa in

the last match.

Now, the 26-year-old will have to negate three high-quality tweakers against Afghanistan.

The Afghans, on the other hand, have their own problems to tackle. They are coming off a 107-run shellacking by South Africa in their tournament opener.

They had reached the semifinals of the T20 World Cup 2024 with almost the same set of players but the ODI format demands much more consistency in performance and execution of strategies.

Afghanistan have the required talent but they need to find a way to channelise that consistently to challenge England, even in their most vulnerable state.

Teams (from):
Afghanistan: Hashmatullah Shahidi (c), Ibrahim Zadran, Rahmanullah Gurbaz, Sediqullah Atal, Rahmat Shah, Ikram Alikhil, Gulbadin Naib, Azmatullah Omarzai, Mohammad Nabi, Rashid Khan, Nangyal Kharoti, Noor Ahmad, Fazalhaq Farooqi, Farid Malik, Naveed Zadran. Reserves: Darwish Rasooli, Bilal Sami.
England: Jos Buttler (c), Jofra Archer, Gus Atkinson, Tom Banton, Harry Brook, Rehan Ahmed, Ben Duckett, Jamie Overton, Jamie Smith, Liam Livingstone, Adil Rashid, Joe Root, Saqib Mahmood, Phil Salt, Mark Wood.



UP Warriorz face Mumbai Indians

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Rejuvenated by their thrilling super-over win over RCB, UP Warriorz will look to continue their momentum when they take on an upbeat Mumbai Indians in the Women's Premier League here on Wednesday.

The Warriorz pulled off a stunning victory against defending champions Royal Challengers Bengaluru on Monday, with Sophie Ecclestone delivering a match-winning performance with both bat and ball.

However, they will need more from their batters to avoid finding themselves in a tight spot once again.

While Chinelle Henry led them to victory against Delhi Capitals, Ecclestone took center stage in their latest triumph. Though openers Kiran Navgire and Shweta Sehrawat have shown promise, they have not been able to capitalise on their starts.

Opener Vrinda Dinesh and skipper Deepti Sharma will have to give stability in the middle-order.

Amla labelled Gill as 'next big thing' in international cricket



PTI ■ NAVI MUMBAI

South Africa batting great Hashim Amla on Tuesday labelled India opener Shubman Gill, who has had an "exceptional" start to ODIs, as the "next big thing" in international cricket along with Rishabh Pant and Ryan Rickelton. The 25-year-old Gill, named India's vice-captain for the Champions Trophy, retook the No. 1 spot in ODI rankings for batters on the opening day of the tournament after his ascent to the top for the first time in 2023. Gill began with a match-winning century against Bangladesh and struck a vital 46 against Pakistan to steer India to two wins in as many games in Dubai.

"For India, you have got Shubham Gill; Rishabh Pant has been around for a while. For South Africa, we have Ryan Rickelton who has done really well off late," Amla, who is playing for South Africa

Masters in the International Masters League, told PTI Videos in an exclusive interaction.

"Every country has about 2-3 cricketers who are going to come through and I think that's pretty normal, that you see that every five years some youngster poke in the head through international cricket, and possibly be the next best, big thing," he added.

Talking further about Gill, Amla said, "He is a brilliant player, the way he started in one-day cricket, he has been exceptional. He has been a huge part of India's success at top of the order." "To have him and Rohit (Sharma) at the top, it's a very potent and dangerous opening partnership, and then they have got Virat (Kohli) at No 3."

Amla said playing the tri-series in Pakistan ahead of Champions Trophy would hold South Africa in good stead, especially against spin. "South African batters are well-equipped.

Government of Haryana

Heartiest Greetings on the pious occasion of

Maha Shivratri

February 26, 2025

Scan the QR code to join the Whatsapp channel of Information and Public Relations Department, Haryana

Information, Public Relations & Languages Department, Haryana



90 Successful Eye Surgeries Conducted Free of Cost at Babe Ke Ayurvedic Medical Hospital by Dr. Mohit Kalra

At Babe Ke Ayurvedic Medical Hospital in Daudhar, 90 successful eye surgeries were performed free of cost. These surgeries were carried out by Dr. Mohit Kalra. In addition to the surgeries, patients were also provided with free eyeglasses and medications. After this event, the team at Babey Ayurvedic Medical Hospital was also thanked for their contribution to making this campaign successful. This initiative sent a positive message to society, proving that medical services should be accessible to all.

Punjab and Sindh Bank, Hoshiarpur organized PSB Aao Khelein competition

Punjab and Sindh Bank, Hoshiarpur Zone organized PSB Aao Khelein competition on 22.02.2025 at Police Line Ground. The competition was inaugurated by Zonal Manager Mr. Naresh Kumar and Chief Manager Mr. Naresh Chander Sahdev by releasing green and yellow coloured balloons. Zonal Manager Mr. Naresh Kumar encouraged all the members and gave the message of keeping oneself fit through sports. Various competitions were started after the bank anthem. Many competitions were organized under the PSB Aao Khelein program, which included 50 meters, 100 meters, 200 meters, three leg race, sack race, lemon spoon race, walking and cricket. Cricket competition was also organized in which the team of Nawanshahr defeated the team of Hoshiarpur and won the trophy. In the end, the winners of all the competitions were encouraged by giving medals and trophies. Chief Manager Mr. Mandeep Singh, Manager Mrs. Navneet Kaur, Officer Rahul Ranjan and other members contributed significantly in making the program successful.