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TO SELL INDIAN EQUITIES: FM

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## GYANESH KUMAR LIKELY TO BE NEW CEC OF INDIA

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The selection committee headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, which met on Monday evening, is learnt to have recommended the name of the next chief election commissioner to President Droupadi Murmu. Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar, a senior most official of the three member panel, is expected to take over from Rajiv Kumar as Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) of India. Kumar's term ends on February 18 on attaining the age of 65 years.



This comes after the Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi asking the government to adjourn the meeting to select the new chief election commissioner until the Supreme Court hears on February 19 a petition on the constitution of the selection panel. The Congress' statement came soon after a meeting of the three-member selection committee. Besides Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Leader of the Opposition Rahul Gandhi are part of the panel which met here. Incumbent CEC Rajiv Kumar demits office on Tuesday on attaining the age of 65 years. Sources said the notification announcing the name of the next CEC could be issued "in the next few hours". The CEC's term can last up to six years from the date of appointment, though they must retire upon

turning sixty-five, regardless of whether their term has concluded. This marks the first time a selection panel has been set up to appoint the head of the country's election watchdog. Earlier, there was no law passed by Parliament for the appointment of the CEC and ECs. The appointments were done by the President on the advice of the Prime Minister. Traditionally, the successor to the incumbent CEC has been the next senior-most Election Commissioner. Seniority was usually defined by who was appointed earlier to the Commission. However, a new law on the appointment of the CEC and ECs came into force last year under which a search committee shortlists five names from among secretary-level officers for consideration and finalisation by the prime minister-led panel. After Rajiv Kumar, Gyanesh Kumar is the

## Earthquake in Delhi causes panic and tremors

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Residents of Delhi-NCR and several parts of northern India were jolted early Monday morning as strong tremors shook high-rise buildings, prompting many to rush outdoors. Residents were terrified by the loud sound while the tremors were felt as they watched their buildings shake for a few seconds which lasted for 35 seconds. According to the National Centre for Seismology (NCS), the earthquake, measuring 4.0 on the Richter scale, struck at 5:36 AM IST with its epicentre located within Delhi's Dhaula Kuan.



A man stands near an uprooted tree at Dhaula Kuan's Jheel Park, the epicentre of the earthquake that struck the Delhi-NCR

Prime Minister Narendra Modi took to social media to raise concerns and urged residents to stay alert for any aftershocks. "Tremors were felt in Delhi and nearby areas. Urging everyone to stay calm and follow safety precautions, staying alert for possible aftershocks. Authorities are keeping a close watch on the situation," he said. The Dhaula Kuan area, which has a lake nearby, has been experiencing low-magnitude quakes once every two to three years. It recorded an earthquake of magnitude 3.3 in 2015. Soon after the tremor, the Ministry of Earth Sciences warned the people of Delhi and surrounding areas of a possible "aftershock" hours after the city was rocked by a low magnitude but strong earthquake. Union Earth Sciences minister Dr Jitendra Singh has asked the people of Delhi to stay calm and exercise safety precautions and preparedness for the aftershocks. "Following the earthquake tremors felt this morning in and around Delhi at about 5:36 AM, the authorities are keeping a close watch and professional experts as well officials in the Ministry of Earth Sciences are constantly monitoring. However, it is advised to stay calm and exercise safety precautions and preparedness for possible aftershocks, if any. Meanwhile, regular updates are being shared by the department through its different communication channels and social media handles," he wrote on X. Several political leaders mentioned

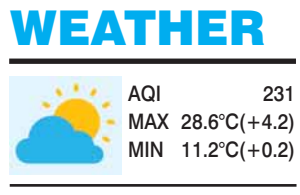
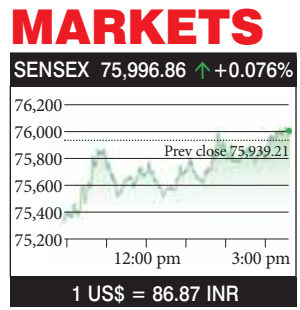
experiencing the earthquake tremors and prayed for everyone's safety. The Delhi Police also wrote on X, saying, "We hope you all are safe, Delhi! For any emergency help, dial 112." According to NCS official, a loud sound was heard when the earthquake hit Delhi-NCR. The rumbling sound heard during the earthquake could have been the result of the earthquake's shallow depth. It could have been due to movement in tectonic plates and several bursts of energy. Though a 4.0-magnitude quake is considered moderate, its impact felt stronger than usual because of its shallow depth and close proximity to densely populated areas. Earthquakes with epicentres within a city result in more intense shaking since seismic waves travel a shorter distance before reaching structures, amplifying the tremors. The Delhi Police and the Delhi Fire Service did not receive any calls about untoward incidents during the earthquake but the sudden tremors sparked concern among residents. Seismologists continue to monitor aftershocks and have advised citizens to stay informed about earthquake preparedness measures. However, National Centre for Seismology Director OP Mishra said, "The epicentre was at Jheel Park in

Dhaulta Kuan, it was a 6.0 magnitude earthquake. It was in the depth of 5 km, it is called shallow depth, hence people felt the effect. People getting panicked was natural. Seismologically, it is not new region, earthquakes have happened earlier in the region. Earlier, there was 4.6 magnitude earthquake in 6 km periphery, but it was deeper, with 10 km depth. There is a difference. It was not a plate tectonic earthquake, it was due to in situ material heterogeneity, it was due to local effect. We can expect aftershock of around 1 or 1.2 magnitude." He said the Dhaulta Kuan region has witnessed 420 shallow earthquakes and the national capital has remained safe from such incidents for the past several years. "The epicentre of Monday's earthquake was at Jheel Park in Dhaulta Kuan, it was a 4.0 magnitude earthquake. It was in the depth of 5 km, it is called shallow depth, hence people felt the effect," Mishra said. Srijan Pal Singh, the former advisor to the 11th President of India and founder of Kalam Centre and Homi lab, also explained the phenomenon on X. He said that the residents felt "bigger tremors than ever before" because the epicenter was in Delhi itself. "This is how quakes feel at the epicenter," he said.

## Student from Nepal dies by suicide at KIIT

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ BHUBANESWAR

A third-year B-Tech student of a private engineering institute hailing from Nepal died here allegedly by suicide in her hostel leading to tension in the campus, police said on Monday. Taking note of the incident, Nepal Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli said his government is working on this issue through diplomatic channels and is in touch with the authorities. The deceased was identified as Prakriti Lamsal. She was a B-Tech third-year student of Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology (KIIT), varsity Registrar said. The deceased's cousin lodged a complaint at Infocity police station in Bhubaneswar alleging that his sister hanged herself in her hostel room on Sunday.



## SC to hear Places of Worship case in April



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Expressing displeasure over filing of several pleas on the Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act, the Supreme Court on Monday said a three-judge bench will hear in April the pending post-notice petitions related to the 1991 law which mandates the religious character of a place to be maintained as it existed on August 15, 1947, except in Ayodhya's Babri Masjid - Ram Mandir case. The top court, however, granted liberty to the petitioners like Samajwadi Party leader and Kairana MP Iqra Choudhary, who have filed the pleas recently and notices have not been issued on them, to file applications for intervention in pending ones by citing new legal grounds.

Dismissing fresh petitions, on which notices were not issued yet, a bench comprising Chief Justice Sanjiv Khanna and Justice Sanjay Kumar said, "The writ petitioners can file an (intervention) application raising new grounds." "We are constrained to pass this order after taking note of the number of fresh petitions filed. The pending writ petitions, which have no notices, stand dismissed with liberty to file an application raising additional grounds, if any. The new IA will only be allowed if there is any new point or new legal issue that has not been raised in the pending petitions," the bench said. "People keep on filing fresh petitions alleging that they have raised new grounds... It will become impossible for us to deal with the petitions besides whatever has already been filed," said CJI. The Bench then listed the batch of petitions and cross ones pertaining to the 1991 law in the week commencing April 1 before a three-judge bench. Senior advocate Dushyant Dave agreed to the bench and said no fresh plea be allowed on the issue. Another senior advocate Vikas Singh, appearing for one of the old petitioners, raised the issue of non-filing of the response by the Centre to the petitions and said the last opportunity be given to the government for this purpose. Earlier in the day also, the CJI expressed displeasure over filing of many fresh cases.

## Pitroda's China comment sparks row

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI



Congress Indian Overseas leader Sam Pitroda courted yet another controversy with his comments negating Chinese threat to India which brought him in line of fire by ruling BJP while Congress distanced itself from their celebrated leader. The Congress leader, whose comments have been a frequent fodder for the BJP's attacks on the opposition party, is reported to have said that he does not understand the threat India faces from China, claiming that it is often blown out of proportion. Congress distanced itself from Pitroda's remarks, saying these are not the views of the party and that China remains India's foremost external security and economic challenge. Addressing a press conference, BJP national spokesperson and MP Sudhanshu Trivedi sought to draw a link between US-based Pitroda's remarks, US-based groups funding for "voter turnout" in India and the ruling party's charges against Congress MP Gaurav Gogoi for his alleged links to Pakistan. Trivedi claimed that Pitroda's comments should not be seen in isolation as he recalled

expressed by Mr Sam Pitroda on China are most definitely NOT the views of the Indian National Congress," AICC general secretary, Jai Ram Ramesh, said in a social media post. Another BJP spokesperson Tuhin Sinha said, "Those who ceded away 40,000 square km of our land to China, still see no threat from the Dragon.. No wonder Rahul Gandhi is in awe of China." Pitroda's comments, Trivedi said, are an insult to Indian military and the sacrifices made by its personnel, invoking the Galwan clash in which 20 Indian Army personnel laid down their lives while an unspecified number of Chinese soldiers died too. He said India wants good relations with every country, adding it will be, however, done by maintaining its prestige and security. The BJP spokesperson also took up the issue of funding from the US-based ground into India for "voter turnout" and the ruling party's allegation against Congress MP Gaurav Gogoi for links to Pakistan to hit out at the opposition party. Asserting that there is no ground left for the Congress to defend itself, he, however, demanded that the opposition party must come out with a clarification.



Security personnel manage passengers boarding a train at the New Delhi Railway Station

## Rail minister promises action on Delhi stampede

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■ NEW DELHI

In his first reaction, two days after the tragic stampede at New Delhi Railway Station, which claimed 18 lives, Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw while regretting the 'unfortunate' incident said that investigations are going on and responsibility shall be fixed. Simultaneously, Vaishnaw who held a second round of meeting with Home Minister Amit Shah on Monday, said action will be against the principle of natural justice till the time the inquiry report comes. "I have maintained a principle of 'We Fail'. So far as action is concerned, we have not taken any action against any official as we are waiting for the

inquiry committee to give its report. This is in line with the principle of natural justice," Vaishnaw stated. On a question on the time frame for the committee to give its report, the railway minister said no time period has been fixed as it will put undue pressure on the committee members. Sources said that the Railway Minister and top brass was not given the correct status of the un-fateful day till two hours after the it happened on platform 14-15 on Saturday around 9 pm. Well placed sources in Delhi Division of Northern Railway said that top officers of the division, including DRM, for more than an hour, maintained that the chaos was minor.

## Snow delays Khelo India Winter Games

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

In the absence of a thick blanket of snow at the famous Gulmarg Ski resort, the Jammu and Kashmir Sports Council Monday decided to postpone the 5th edition of the Khelo India Winter Games, initially set for February 22-25, 2025. The Jammu and Kashmir Sports Council also announced that a new assessment will be conducted once snow conditions improve, after which a revised schedule will be announced. According to official sources in the Jammu and Kashmir Sports Council, around 300 athletes were set to compete in four snow sports-ski mountaineering, alpine skiing,

snowboarding, and Nordic skiing - from February 22 to 25. "We have decided to postpone the event as key ski slopes lack sufficient snow," said Rauf Trambo, president of the Winter Games Association of Jammu and Kashmir. Normally, the slopes receive seven to eight feet (about 2 meters) of snowfall, but this year's conditions have been unusually dry. Several parts of Jammu and Kashmir have already witnessed a sudden rise in the day temperature by 2 to 4 degrees Celsius. However, the weathermen have raised hopes by predicting a fresh spell of rain/snow in parts of Kashmir between February 19-20. According to the forecast, "Weather is expected to



remain generally cloudy with light to moderate rain/snow at many places from the 19th evening till the 20th of February". "The Plains of Kashmir & Jammu may receive light to moderate Rain/Thunder with gusty winds at a few places. Higher reaches of Chenab Valley & South Kashmir may receive moderate snowfall (6-10 inches) while higher reaches of North & Central Kashmir may receive 4-8 inches of fresh snow". Jammu and Kashmir is

currently witnessing a prolonged winter dry spell with the Union Territory recording 79 percent rainfall deficit against the normal precipitation of 144 mm. In February so far, the UT has recorded just 29.8 mm rainfall as per official data. Baramulla has recorded a deficit between 70-79 percent this year. The dry spell has also taken a toll on Kashmir's water bodies, with dozens of springs drying up, including one in the 17th-century Mughal Garden in Achabal town, located south of Srinagar. Meanwhile, several parts of Kashmir valley are already grappling with massive forest fires in the absence of adequate fire fighting measures in place.

## UP school named after war hero renamed, locals protest

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ GHAZIPIUR

The name of Param Vir Chakra awardee Shaheed Veer Abdul Hamid was removed from the main entrance of a primary school in Dhamapur village, sparking protests from his family and locals. Following their objections, the martyr's name was restored-but only on an external wall, not the main gate, leading to further controversy. The school, previously known as 'Shaheed Abdul Hamid Vidyalaya,' was renamed 'PM Shri Composite School' after a

recent repainting, according to officials. Jameel Ahmed, Hamid's grandson, stated that the name was erased during the repainting work four days ago. When the family raised objections, headmaster Ajay Kushwaha directed them to approach Basic Education Officer (BSA) Hemant Rao. Rao later assured the family that Abdul Hamid's name had been inscribed on one of the school's external walls, but the entrance continued to bear only the new name. Dissatisfied with the response, the family lodged another complaint on Saturday, demanding

that the martyr's name be reinstated at the entrance. Despite assurances from officials that the matter would be addressed immediately, as of Monday, the name remained missing from the main gate, leaving the family "deeply hurt." Abdul Hamid is revered for his bravery during the 1965 Indo-Pak war, where he single-handedly destroyed three Pakistani Patton tanks, forcing the enemy to retreat. His valor earned him India's highest military decoration, the Param Vir Chakra, awarded posthumously to his wife, Rasoolan Bibi.



MCD starts operation of 15 auto trippers to prevent garbage dumping in rivers

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The Municipal Corporation of Dehradun (MCD) started the operation of 15 electric garbage vehicles- auto trippers, on Monday, which will mainly operate in slums near Rispana and Bindal rivers to collect garbage.



Dehradun mayor Saurabh Thapliyal and municipal commissioner Namami Bansal flagged off these auto trippers from the MCD premises on Monday.

He said, "This initiative is a significant step towards the city's sanitation goals and will contribute to the MCD's Swachhh Survekshan efforts."

The corporation will soon start taking action against guilty parties under relevant sections. We will also consider increasing the number of such auto trippers in the future to further strengthen the city's waste management system," Bansal added.

BJP reviews panel of 104 mandals for organisational elections in U'khand

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The Bharatiya Janata Party has initiated discussions on the panel of 104 mandals prepared by observers from six districts covering 20 Assembly constituencies as part of its organisational elections.

He informed that the senior leadership reviewed the panels of mandal president candidates prepared by observers and considered the several constituencies, including Gangotri, Yamunotri and Purola, Badrinath, Karnaprayag, Tharali, Kedarnath, Rudraprayag, Narendranagar, Tehri, Pratapnagar, De-

prayag, Dhanaulti, Srinagar, Chaubattakhal, Pauri, Lansdowne, Kotdwar and Yamkeshwar. A total of 104 mandals across these districts were discussed.

He said that according to the set schedule, the announcement of mandal presidents will be made by February 20, followed by the election of district presidents between February 20 and 28.

The BJP State media in-charge Manveer Singh Chauhan said that a meeting was held at the party headquarters in Dehradun on Monday in the presence of BJP State president and



Rajya Sabha MP Mahendra Bhatt, along with State general secretary (Organisation) Ajaya Kumar, State election officer of the BJP and Rajpur Road MLA Kha-

cial, regional and community dynamics of the respective mandals and districts. On the first day, discussions were completed for

POSSESSION NOTICE (For Immovable Property) (As per Appendix IV read with rule 8(1) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002)

Champion refuses then agrees to treatment in Doon

PNS ■ HARIDWAR

Former Khanpur MLA Pranav Singh 'Champion' was referred to Dehradun by doctors in the Haridwar district hospital on Monday. Suffering from gastrointestinal issues since Saturday night while in judicial custody for firing at the camp office of Khanpur MLA Umesh Kumar on January 26, Singh first refused to undergo treatment in Dehradun then agreed to do so on Tuesday.

Govt to appoint 439 assistant professors in medical colleges

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The Medical Education department has started the process of appointment to 439 vacant posts of assistant professors in the government medical colleges of the State. Health minister Dhan Singh Rawat said that the State government has taken a decision to fill the vacant faculty positions in the medical colleges and the Medical Education department has sent recruitment requisition to the Medical Services Recruitment Board.

NIEPVD opens seats for visually fit students in class XI

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

To improve support for students with visual impairments, the National Institute for the Empowerment of Persons with Visual Disabilities (NIEPVD) has allocated 10 seats for visually fit students in the maths and science stream for the first time in class XI. Informing about this, the principal of NIEPVD Amit Sharma announced that the registration process for admissions within the institute has begun.

Employees seek invitation for input on eighth pay commission

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The president of the State Employees Joint Federation Arun Kumar Pandey along with its general secretary Shakti Prasad Bhatt met chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhama here on Monday. They demanded that an official letter be issued to invite suggestions from major employee organisations in the State concerning the eighth Pay Commission.

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कुमाऊँ मण्डल विकास निगम लिमिटेड (उत्तराखण्ड सरकार का प्रतिष्ठान) ओक पार्क हाउस, मल्लीताल, नैनीताल-263001

निविदा सूचना. 1. E-Tenders are invited from reputed firms for Annual Testing of all Mechanical, Electrical & Civil parts of Ropeway, Nainital for 5 years for Ropeway KMVN, Nainital.

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THE PIONEER CLASSIFIEDS PUBLIC NOTICE

I have changed my son's name from AARUSH to AARUSH YADAV. In future, it should be known as AARUSH YADAV S/O Smt. Megha W/o Sh. Sandeep R/o 70/3 Indira Colony Chukhuwala District Dehradun.

I, KRISHNA SIKARWAR W/o Army No JC-387913N SUB PREM SINGH residing at Village: Mansya Kalan P.O: Sadabab, Teh-Sadabad Distt-Hathras, UP - 281306 change my name from KRISHNA SIKARWAR to KRISHNA KUMARI in the service records to my husband.

मेरे पति के सैन्य अभिलेखोंनुसार, मेरा गलत नाम सिमरजित कोर दर्ज है, सही नाम सिमरजित कोर आधार नं. 247816985647 W/o आर्मी नं. 344935Y नायब सूबेदार कुलदीप सिंह, ग्राम - मैनी बाघा, पोस्ट-मैनी बाघा, तहसील व जिला - मनसा, पंजाब- 151508 है।

मेरे पति के सैन्य अभिलेखोंनुसार, मेरा गलत नाम व जन्मतिथि बी वी रुबम्म-21.08.1989 के रूप में दर्ज है, सही नाम व जन्मतिथि बुडिगी वेकटसुबम्म- 01.01.1989 आधार नं. 770297109943 W/o आर्मी नं. 18000007Y हवलदार नारायण बी, गांव - मुसल रेड्डी पल्ले, पोस्ट-कवलाकुटला, तेह- पोरुमामिला, जिला-कडपा, आंध्र प्रदेश-516505 है।

मेरे सैन्य अभिलेखोंनुसार, मेरे पुत्र की गलत जन्मतिथि- 10.07.2010 के रूप में दर्ज है, सही नाम व जन्मतिथि बुडिगी विष्णु वर्धन - 10.07.2009 आधार नं. 605767643082 S/o आर्मी नं. 18000007Y हवलदार नारायण बी, गांव - मुसल रेड्डी पल्ले, पोस्ट-कवलाकुटला, तेह - पोरुमामिला, जिला-कडपा, आंध्र प्रदेश-516505 है।

LOST & FOUND

I am the owner of property bearing Khaska No. 276 Min (Property No.-507) situated at Mauja Bankhandi, Rishikesh, District Dehradun, Uttarakhand. The previous original document/sale deed of this property, which was executed in favour of Shri Thiraham Arora S/O Late Ram Chandra and Smt. Manta Devi W/o Thiraham, aged registered in the office of in the Sub-Registrar, Rishikesh, Dehradun vide Book No.-1, Volume 970, pages 283 to 308 at Serial No 3409 dated 05.07.2010 has been actually lost somewhere near the railway station on 11.02.2025.

खोया-पाया

मेरी भूमि के पूर्व मालिक रजिन्द्र रामन अली पुत्र श्री चन्द्र अली निवासी- लेन नं. सी-15 टैरि स्ट्रीट केम्पेस्टाइन देहरादून व श्री रजिन्द्र कुमार पुत्र श्री जगमल निवासी-मंगरील जसका रहिदार को मूल रजिस्ट्री की कि भूमि खता नं. 1320 खसरा नं. 888 स्थित मौजा ब्राह्मणवाला पराना कौन्ट्रिक्ल जिला देहरादून, बर्ही संख्या 01 सिन्द नं. 6849 पृष्ठ 295 से 318 पर क्रमांक संख्या 4287 पर दिनांक 14.11.2019 बैनामा सब रजिस्ट्रार कार्यालय देहरादून पंजीकरण नं. 675 पर दर्ज व अंकित है वास्तव में कहीं खो गया है। इसका उपयोग अवैधानिक है। मिले तो सूचित करें-

श्यामी टंडन व डब्लोकॉर्ट सिविल कोर्ट कम्पाउंड देहरादून। मो. नं. - 9897006975

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# Vidhan Sabha budget session starts today

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The budget session of the Vidhan Sabha will commence today in Dehradun with the address of the governor lieutenant general (ret'd) Gurmit Singh. The Vidhan Sabha secretariat and State administration have made all the necessary preparations for smooth conduct of the session.



On Monday, the speaker Ritu Khanduri Bhushan presided over the meeting of the business advisory committee held at her office in Vidhan Sabha. The meeting was attended by the Parliamentary Affairs minister Prem Chand Agarwal, leader of opposition (LoP) in Vidhan Sabha Yashpal Arya, BSP leader Mohammad Shahzad, Chakrata MLA Pritam Singh, Rajpur Road MLA Khajan Dass and Raipur

MLA Umesh Sharma 'Kau'. The agenda for the session was decided in the meeting. The meetings of the BJP and Congress legislature parties were also held on Monday. Both the ruling and the opposition parties worked on their respective strategies for the session in the meetings.

After the address of the

governor, the speaker will read the governor's address in the post lunch session on Tuesday. The discussion on the governor's address and vote of thanks on the address will be held on February 19. It is likely that the State government will table the budget of the State on February 20. The budget 2025-26 of the State is expected to amount to about Rs 1,10,000 crore. Apart from the budget, the govern-

ment will table the State economic survey and annual reports of different corporations and departments in the house.

However, all eyes will be on the Land Law Act which the chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhama had promised to the people of the State.

The Vidhan Sabha secretariat has received more than 550 questions from the legislators for the budget session. The Vidhan Sabha secretariat is working to make the budget session paperless. As per the norms the Vidhan Sabha building in Dehradun is now e- Vidhan Sabha or National e- Vidhan Application (NeVA). However, it is likely that the session this time will not be completely paperless.

# Several routes to remain diverted due to Assembly session

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Several routes will remain diverted from Tuesday due to the Vidhan Sabha session in Dehradun. The police released the traffic plan on Monday to maintain law and order in the city during the session. As per the plan, the police will stop processions at specific barrier points, including at Pragati Vihar, Shastrinagar, Defence Colony and Vidhan Sabha trisection. During the ses-

sion, all heavy vehicles will be diverted from Kargi Chowk and Doiwala towards Dudhli Road. If a procession moves from Him Palace hotel towards the Pragati Vihar barrier, traffic coming into Dehradun from Rispana bridge will be diverted via Haridwar Bypass.

He also appealed to the locals to use alternate routes to avoid inconvenience during the session.

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ion, all heavy vehicles will be diverted from Kargi Chowk and Doiwala towards Dudhli Road.

If there is increased traffic pressure in the Rispana bridge area, heavy vehicles will be temporarily stopped at Lal Tappad, Harrawala and Nayagaon. Vehicles travelling from Dehradun to Haridwar, Rishikesh, Tehri and Chamoli will be diverted from Nehru Colony and Fountain Chowk towards Chhe Number Pulia. Traffic moving from Dharampur Chowk to ISBT will be directed through Mata Mandir Road, passing through the old bypass post towards ISBT. Besides this, vehicles heading towards Mussoorie from Mohkampur will be rerouted via Jogiwala, Ring Road, Ladpur and Sahastradhara Crossing, leading to the IT Park and Mussoorie Road.

In case of high traffic volume, city buses coming from Doiwala towards Dehradun will take a u-turn at Kailash Hospital and return towards Doiwala. The Dehradun senior superintendent of police Ajai Singh said that additional diversions may be implemented as per

the requirement and previously diverted traffic may be restored to normal if needed.

## Cong demands longer budget session

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The Congress has demanded that the State government should increase the duration of the budget session of the Vidhan Sabha.

The leader of opposition Yashpal Arya said that the government does not want to face the house and so it has deliberately kept the duration of the session short. He also questioned the State government for not holding sessions on the Mondays. Arya said that for the last three years the session is not being held on Mondays. It usually starts on Tuesday and ends on Friday. Arya said that Monday is reserved for the departments headed by the chief minister and in such a situation questions related to many departments headed by chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhama are not taken by the Vidhan Sabha secretariat.

Arya added that by convening the budget session of Vidhan Sabha in Dehradun the State government has backtracked on its promise on hold-

ing the budget session in the summer capital Gairsain.

He said that the Congress members will raise the issues of installation of smart meters by UPCL, prevailing corruption in government, deteriorating law and order situation and stringent land laws during the session. Former Pradesh Congress Committee (PCC) president and Chakrata MLA Pritam Singh said that during the last session of Vidhan Sabha, the chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhama had said that the budget session will be held in Gairsain but the government has convened the session in Dehradun. Singh claimed that the CM had also said that the budget session will be of 10 days duration. He demanded that the government should ensure that the duration of the budget session is at least 10 days so that the members get a chance to raise the important issues of public interest. Singh said that the Congress members will corner the government on a number of issues during the session.

## Police assure smooth movement for students during Vidhan Sabha session

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The police have released the traffic control room number 7579278154 to address any traffic-related issues faced by students appearing in the board examinations during the Vidhan Sabha session starting on Tuesday in Dehradun. They assured that students studying in schools within the city limits will not be stopped under any circumstances. However, the police have also requested parents to ensure that their children leave for the examination centre on time and, if possible, use alternative routes to avoid delays. Several students and parents had expressed concerns about traffic movement during the class X and XII board exams coinciding with the Vidhan Sabha session, which is set to begin on Tuesday. The police install barriers and reroute traffic during every Vidhan Sabha session, affecting the usual flow of movement, causing congestion

on various routes. Vidhan Sabha speaker Ritu Khanduri Bhushan has also directed authorities to ensure that students and ambulances do not face difficulties in reaching their destination during the session. Regarding the issue, the Dehradun superintendent of police (City) Pramod Kumar told The Pioneer that if any student faces traffic-related difficulties, they can contact control room number 112 or the traffic control room number 7579278154 for assistance. He assured that police will take immediate action to resolve such problems. He also advised parents to send their children early to avoid any inconvenience. He added that police will ensure that students reach their examination centres on time, either by directing them through alternative routes or temporarily removing barricades when necessary.

# Uttarakhand water tower of the country: Dhama

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhama said that Uttarakhand is an important water tower of the country as it houses many glaciers and sources of rivers. He said that the State government is working in the field of springshed management and environmental conservation on priority. The CM was addressing a seminar on 'springshed management and climate adaptation: strate-

gies for sustainable development in Indian Himalayan region' organised under the joint aegis of NITI Aayog, GB Pant National Institute of Himalayan Environment and the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development here on Monday.

He said that climate change is exerting a negative effect on the natural water sources. He said that water sources are traditionally considered sacred and worshipped in Uttarakhand. The minister stressed on the importance of collective efforts for water conservation.

He said, "The Assembly is the best platform for raising the voice of the people and the issues related to the public. All the members should make the best of this opportunity. We look forward to the members

making the most of the session and indulging in a constructive debate on the bills tabled during this session. I also appeal to the opposition to play a constructive role in the conduct of the session," Bhatt said. Addressing the members of the opposition, the BJP State president appealed to them to set aside ideas influenced by political differences and participate in the discussion. Considering that the people of the State carefully observe the role of the treasury and opposition benches in the house, all are collectively responsible for enabling the constructive conduct of the house in public interest, he said.



gives for sustainable development in Indian Himalayan region' organised under the joint aegis of NITI Aayog, GB Pant National Institute of Himalayan Environment and the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development here on Monday.

He expressed hope that the workshop will prove to be an important initiative in the direction of scientific rejuvenation of the water sources of the country.

Maharaj said that climate change is exerting a negative effect on the natural water sources. He said that water sources are traditionally considered sacred and worshipped in Uttarakhand. The minister stressed on the importance of collective efforts for water conservation.

He claimed that many works are being undertaken in Uttarakhand for resolving the problem of climate change. The CM said that the State has constituted a

Suman K Beri of NITI Aayog emphasised on the importance of reverse migration of the people of villages in the Himalayan States. He said that the Vibrant Village

NITI Aayog member VK Saraswat, chief secretary Radha Raturi, NITI Aayog advisor Surendra Mehra and others attended the workshop.

## BJP State president requests opposition to play constructive role in session

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

BJP State president Mahendra Bhatt has expressed hope that this budget session of the Vidhan Sabha will witness the presentation of a development oriented budget in public interest. The opposition should also play a constructive role in the session, he said.

In his statement released to the media a day ahead of the start of the Assembly budget session, the BJP State president and Rajya Sabha member opined that the State government under chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhama is undertaking historic efforts for the all round development of the State. This is evident from the impressive economic statistics of the State, he said. The presentation of the budget at such a time is a cause for excitement and one hopes that this budget will enable the State to rise further on the developmental index, Bhatt added.

## Uttarakhand water tower of the country: Dhama

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### E-Auction Sale Notice

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**E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act 2002 read with provision to Rule 8(6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rule, 2002.** Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the borrower (s) and Guarantor (s) that the below described immovable property mortgaged/charged to the Secured Creditor, the constructive/physical/symbolic possession of which has been taken by the Authorised officer of the Bank/ Secured Creditor, will be sold on "As is where is", "As is what is", and "Whatever there is" on the date as mentioned in the table herein below, for recovery of dues due to the Bank/Secured creditor from the respective borrower(s), and Guarantor (s). The Reserve price and the earnest money deposit will be as mentioned in the table below against the respective properties.

| Lot No. | Name of The Branch   |                         | Description of the Immovable Properties Mortgaged/Owner's Name (Mortgagers of Property (ies))  | (A) Reserve Price   | DATE & TIME OF AUCTION                  | Details of The Encumbrances Known To The Secured Creditors |
|---------|--|-------------------------|--|---------------------|---|--|
|         | Name & Addresses of The Borrower/Guarantor/Mortgager   | Name of the Account     |  | (B) EMD             |   |  |
| 1.      | Branch: Niranjapur, Dehradun<br>Borrower & Mortgager: Prop. Ahansi Begum, M/s Doon Darbar Mutton & Chicken Shop, R/o Address 1: 186, Brahmanwala, Patel Nagar, Dehradun - 248001, Address 2: Kargi Chowk, Near Sandal Wood School, Dehradun - 248001, Guarantor: Shri Burhan Ahmed Qureshi S/o Shri Nazir Ahmed Qureshi, Address: 187 Brahmanwala, Patel Nagar, Dehradun - 248001. | (A) 02.08.2024          | Equitable Mortgage of Property having land area measuring 401.48 sq. mtrs out of covered area measuring on ground floor is 71.07 sq. mtrs. forming part of Land khasra no. 475 Gha min (old no. 186 min) of Mauza Kargi Grant, Pargana Pachwa Doon, Dehradun, Bounded and butted as under (As per sale deed): North: Nala, Side measuring 62.75 feet, South: Remaining property of Gulfam Qureshi, Side measuring 48 feet. East: Nala and 20 feet wide road, Side measuring 78 feet, West: Property of others, side measuring 78 feet. Sale deed registered on book no. 1 vol 2452 page 375 to 404 at sr. No. 24 on dated 01.01.2016 at SRO IV Dehradun. | (A) Rs. 86,70,000/- | 06.03.2025<br>From 11:00 AM to 04:00 PM | Not Known  |
|         |  | (B) Rs. 21,98,739.65    |  | (B) Rs. 8,67,000/-  |   |  |
|         |  | (C) 18.10.2024          |  | (C) 06.03.2025      |   |  |
|         |  | (D) Symbolic Possession |  | (D) Rs. 0.50 Lakh   |   |  |

**This notice is also treated as 15 days statutory notice to under Rule 8(6) Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002**

**The sale shall be subject to the Terms & Conditions prescribed in the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002 and to the following further conditions:** 1. The properties are being sold on "AS IS WHERE IS BASIS" and "AS IS WHAT IS BASIS" and "WHATEVER THERE IS BASIS".  
2. The particulars of Secured Assets specified in the Schedule herein above have been stated to the best of the information of the Authorised Officer, but the Authorised Officer shall not be answerable for any error, misstatement or omission in this proclamation.  
3. The Sale will be done by the undersigned through e-auction platform provided at the Website <https://ebkraj.in> on 06.03.2025 at 11.00 AM to 04.00 PM.  
4. For detailed term and conditions of the sale, please refer [www.bnpl.in](http://www.bnpl.in), <https://ebkraj.in>.  
**Note: For more information, Contact Authorised Officer Mobile Number: 8193024024.**

**Date: 17.02.2025 Place: Dehradun Authorised Officer**







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PAPER WITH PASSION

## Heart-wrenching

The New Delhi Railway Station stampede exposes administrative lapses and highlights the need for better crowd control

It is as heart-wrenching as it is unfortunate. The stampede at New Delhi Railway Station has shocked the Capital. At least 18 people, including five children, lost their lives, and over a dozen sustained injuries in a horrific stampede at the Station on Saturday night. The tragedy unfolded on the foot-overbridges connecting platforms 14 and 15, as a sudden surge of passengers waiting to board trains for Prayagraj resulted in a deadly crush. The incident raises critical questions about mismanagement, infrastructural inadequacies and lapses in crowd control that led to the catastrophe. The primary trigger of the incident appears to be a confluence of factors, including excessive passenger load, misleading announcements and poor crowd management. The surge of pilgrims traveling to Prayagraj for the ongoing Maha Kumbh Mela significantly increased the footfall at the station. Reports indicate that around 1,500 general tickets were being sold every hour. Sources suggest that a wrong announcement regarding a change of platforms may have led to confusion among passengers.



In the ensuing rush, some individuals slipped while descending the foot-overbridge stairs, triggering widespread panic. Besides, extended waiting periods for departing trains may have resulted in a bottleneck effect. While overcrowding was an expected challenge, poor planning and mismanagement turned it into a disaster. Given the predictable surge of passengers, railway authorities failed to deploy adequate personnel to regulate the movement of people. Despite previous incidents highlighting the risks of overcrowding, no significant upgrades had been made to ensure smoother pedestrian movement. Moreover, the response from railway officials and security personnel was reportedly delayed. A more robust system to alert and manage surging crowds could have prevented the incident from escalating into a full-fledged disaster. Could this have been prevented? Surely. Deployment of additional railway police and personnel during peak travel periods could have averted the disaster. Besides, real-time monitoring of passenger density using surveillance cameras and AI-based crowd control systems could have definitely helped in such situations. This stampede must jolt the authorities from their deep slumber as this is not for the first time such a tragedy has happened. Expansion and widening of foot-overbridges to accommodate high passenger traffic must be done on priority. Clear and accurate digital signage to minimise confusion is also very important. Besides, there must be a system to cap the number of the general tickets issued per hour, especially during mega events. While accountability is being fixed, the focus must remain on implementing long-term solutions to prevent such tragedies in the future. The railway authorities must ensure that infrastructure, security and operational protocols are robust enough to handle high footfall scenarios safely.

Moreover, the response from railway officials and security personnel was reportedly delayed. A more robust system to alert and manage surging crowds could have prevented the incident from escalating into a full-fledged disaster. Could this have been prevented? Surely. Deployment of additional railway police and personnel during peak travel periods could have averted the disaster. Besides, real-time monitoring of passenger density using surveillance cameras and AI-based crowd control systems could have definitely helped in such situations. This stampede must jolt the authorities from their deep slumber as this is not for the first time such a tragedy has happened. Expansion and widening of foot-overbridges to accommodate high passenger traffic must be done on priority. Clear and accurate digital signage to minimise confusion is also very important. Besides, there must be a system to cap the number of the general tickets issued per hour, especially during mega events. While accountability is being fixed, the focus must remain on implementing long-term solutions to prevent such tragedies in the future. The railway authorities must ensure that infrastructure, security and operational protocols are robust enough to handle high footfall scenarios safely.

### PICTALK



A flock of ibis flying over a paddy field, in Nagaon

## Delhi High Court reinstates fraud claims against Reliance

The Delhi High Court quashes an international arbitration award that had dismissed government claims of 'insidious fraud' and 'unjust enrichment' against Reliance Industries



PRASHANT TEWARI

The resounding victory of the Central Government's legal team, led by the Attorney General of India A.R. Venkatramani reinforced by the active participation of the eminent jurist and the former Attorney General of India KK Venugopal, under the astute administrative guidance of Union Petroleum & Natural Gas Minister Hardeep Singh Puri, in the Delhi High Court verdict against Mukesh Ambani's Reliance Industries Ltd. (RIL), has decisively dismantled allegations of favouritism levelled against the Modi government.

This landmark ruling categorically refutes opposition claims that the government promotes select business houses, reaffirming its commitment to transparency, fairness, and the rule of law in corporate governance and policy-making. In a landmark judgment dated February 14, 2025, the Delhi High Court delivered a decisive verdict in the case of Union of India vs Reliance Industries Ltd. (RIL), addressing long-standing allegations of crony capitalism and favouritism towards major industrialists by the current government.

This 79-page judgment not only exonerates the government from accusations of bias but also underscores the integrity of India's judicial system and the competence of its political and legal leadership. Background of the Case The dispute centres around the Production Sharing Contract (PSC) executed between the Union of India and Reliance Industries Ltd. in 2000, about the exploration and extraction of natural gas in the Krishna-Godavari basin.

The Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas alleged that RIL had engaged in "unjust enrichment" by extracting and selling gas that had purportedly migrated from fields operated by the state-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) to RIL's adjacent block. The government sought compensation, contending that RIL's actions resulted in significant financial losses to the state exchequer. Details of Judgement The Delhi High Court's single judge judgment in Union of India vs. Reliance Industries Ltd. examined the allegations of unjust enrichment, contractual breaches, and fraud against RIL, ultimately dismissing them due to a lack of concrete evidence.



The court upheld the findings of the international arbitration tribunal, reaffirming that RIL operated within the bounds of the Production Sharing Contract (PSC) and could not be held liable for natural gas migration beyond its control. However, the Division Bench of the Delhi High Court has quashed an arbitral award that had dismissed the Central government's claims against Reliance Industries Limited (RIL) and its foreign partners. The government had accused the conglomerate of "insidious fraud" and "unjust enrichment" amounting to over \$1.729 billion by allegedly extracting natural gas from deposits beyond its entitlement. The Bench, comprising Justices Rekha Palli and Saurabh Banerjee, overturned the ruling of a single judge, who had, in May 2022, set aside the Petroleum Ministry's allegations. The court determined that the international arbitration award dated July 24, 2018, which had favoured the RIL-led consortium, was "contrary to public policy" in India. This decision marks a significant legal setback for RIL, as it reinstates the gov-



THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS ALLEGED THAT RIL HAD ENGAGED IN 'UNJUST ENRICHMENT' BY EXTRACTING AND SELLING GAS THAT HAD PURPORTEDLY MIGRATED FROM FIELDS OPERATED BY THE STATE-OWNED OIL AND NATURAL GAS CORPORATION (ONGC) TO RIL'S ADJACENT BLOCK

ernment's claims concerning unauthorised gas extraction. The ruling also strengthens the government's position in regulatory disputes within the oil and gas sector. With the arbitral award nullified, the matter may now proceed further in Indian courts, potentially leading to fresh legal battles over financial liabilities and resource allocation in the country's hydrocarbon sector. Beyond the legal nuances, the judgment serves as a crucial precedent for future contracts, emphasising the importance of precision in drafting and adherence to arbitration mechanisms for dispute resolution. It underscores the independence of the judiciary in adjudicating disputes involving powerful corporate entities and government bodies, dispelling claims of crony capitalism. The case also highlights the competence of the central government's legal representation, particularly the diligence of Attorney General AR Venkatramani and Union Petroleum & Natural Gas Minister Hardeep Singh Puri in defending the government's stance. It further reflects the abysmally woeful performance of the RIL legal team in defending the case. Furthermore, the ruling reassures investors about India's commitment to the rule of law, ensuring that legal processes remain transparent and evidence-driven. By challenging the political narrative of undue favouritism towards industrialists, the judgment reinforces the integrity of India's governance, corporate regulations, and media responsibility in shaping public discourse.

**Conclusion** The Delhi High Court's latest judgment in Union of India vs Reliance Industries Ltd. is a testament to the robustness of India's legal system and its capacity to adjudicate high-stakes disputes impartially. It dispels allegations of governmental bias towards prominent industrialists, affirming that decisions are grounded in evidence and legal merit. The ruling also underscores the importance of adhering to contractual obligations and the role of arbitration in resolving intricate commercial conflicts. As India continues to navigate its path towards economic growth, this judgment reinforces the principles of fairness, transparency, and the rule of law as cornerstones of its democratic ethos. (The writer is a prominent columnist and Public Policy Expert; the views expressed are personal)

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

#### US CRITICISES EUROPEAN LEADERS

Madam — At the 61st Munich Security Conference, American Vice President JD Vance left no stone unturned in reprimanding and threatening the European leaders. He has launched a monstrous attack on Europe, in which he has accused its leaders of failing to give free speech, restricting illegal migration, and living in fear of religious ideology. He has put the biggest threat to Europe's security on the European countries themselves. Along with this, he also said that the European countries do not pay the full price for their security. America will no longer provide security to Europe with closed eyes. This simply means that Donald Trump has indicated that if the NATO organisation has to be run, then it will have to be run on Trump's terms, or else America will leave that organisation. America has also indicated that it wants to see Russia back in the G-7 countries' organisation. The White House has already announced that it will impose additional tariffs on goods imported from countries around the world. Now the rest of the world, especially the European Union, will have to decide without any delay how they will learn to live without America. Before America leaves NATO, the campaign to expel it will have to be intensified. Also, every possible help will have to be given to Ukraine to save it from the clutches of Russian terrorism. Because Trump is completely determined to hand over the reins of Ukraine to the Kremlin.

Jang Bahadur Singh | Jamshedpur

#### HOPES HIGH FOR TROPHY

Madam — This refers to your caption in Sunday Pioneer, "Rohit, Kohli lead Team India for Champions Trophy". Indeed, it was a brilliant century from skipper Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli against Bangladesh in the ICC Champions Trophy opener while I occupied the studio box as a special guest from which I was witnessing the

#### Stampede at New Delhi Railway Station



The stampede incident at New Delhi Railway Station claimed 15 innocent lives, but it also serves as a warning that the time for change has arrived. Chaos, lack of crowd control and failure of security measures led to this tragedy. It is now essential that we learn from this incident and take steps to prevent such occurrences in the future. This disaster has made it clear that the railway must adopt modern strategies for crowd

management and passenger safety. The railway administration should anticipate potential crowds during major events and pilgrimages and make appropriate arrangements in advance. By utilising new technologies, entry and exit points should be better organised to ensure smooth passenger movement. The government has expressed condolences over the incident, and Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnav has ordered a high-level inquiry. However, beyond this, we must take proactive steps with a positive mindset to prioritise passenger safety. By improving traffic management, deploying adequate police forces and making the information system more effective, we can prevent such incidents.

R K Jain | Barwani

match. The entire box was surrounded by the players' family, and I can see all the cheers in Anushka Sharma and Rohit's wife. The recent rule of restrictions has not permitted the player's family to join them for this tour. When my opinion about Rohit and Virat has been changing while watching them play, there came a strong pat behind my back, which brought me to reality. Oh, it all happened in my dreams that I woke up to my wife's call and went for a quick shower and to get ready to start at my office. Hitman and Kohli thus became the dream object in fans lives, and I am also one among those impacted much by their failures. One hopes that both will come good in the upcoming Champions Trophy.

A P Thiruvadi | Chennai

#### MSMES MUST REINVENT TO SHINE

Madam — The US's push for reciprocal tariffs, framed as a 'fair trade' corrective, has sent shockwaves through global markets-but for India's MSMEs

Shruti Sagar | Pune

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

## India advances carbon market reforms following COP 29

India, already a leader in renewable energy, reinforced its commitment to climate action by proposing a unified carbon market



ATUL AGRAWAL

The 29th Conference of the Parties (COP 29) under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) concluded in Baku, Azerbaijan, on November 24, 2024. While key expectations regarding climate finance remained unmet, significant progress was achieved in carbon market regulations. A landmark agreement on carbon trading rules was reached, aiming to accelerate climate action by enabling countries to meet their emission reduction goals efficiently and cost-effectively. Under its Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), the country initially aimed to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emission intensity by 33-35 per cent from 2005 levels by 2030, later revising this target to 45 per cent in 2022. India has launched multiple initiatives to combat climate change. On the supply side, renewable energy generation helps mitigate carbon footprints, while demand-side initiatives like Perform-Achieve-Trade (PAT), star labeling, energy conservation building codes, and improved lighting solu-



tions further reinforce India's climate commitments. Existing frameworks, including Renewable Energy Certificates (RECs) and Energy Saving Certificates (ESCs), serve as a foundation. These were introduced under the National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC) in 2008 and have been successfully traded on Indian power exchanges. RECs drive renewable energy adoption by allowing obligated entities to purchase either renewable energy or its certificates. One REC equates to 1 MWh of renewable energy generated from sources like solar, wind, hydro, and biogas. This system benefits both electricity generators and buyers, ensuring environmental compliance. Similarly, ESCs promote energy efficiency by enabling designated energy-intensive

industries to either enhance energy savings or buy corresponding certificates. One ESCert represents a reduction of 1 million tonnes of oil equivalent energy. Currently, 13 key industrial sectors, including aluminum, cement, power distribution, and railways, participate in this program, covering nearly 50 per cent of India's primary energy consumption. Since their inception, RECs and ESCerts have driven significant emissions reductions, saving over 73 million tonnes of CO2 through REC trading and preventing 106 million tonnes of CO2 emissions via ESCerts. Recognising the need for a unified carbon market, India proposed a comprehensive system merging RECs and ESCerts into a single, internationally aligned framework. The regulatory foundation was set with the amendment of the Energy Conservation Act in January 2023, followed by the notification of the Carbon Credit Trading Scheme, 2023. The scheme designates the Central Electricity Regulatory Commission as the market regulator and power exchanges as trading plat-

forms, while the Bureau of Energy Efficiency oversees compliance mechanisms. India's carbon market will consist of two segments: a compliance market and an offset market. The compliance market will impose emission caps on obligated entities, allowing overachievers to sell surplus carbon credits to underachievers. The offset market will enable voluntary participation by non-obligated entities aiming to reduce their carbon footprints. Carbon credit certificates will be traded through a regulated bidding process. The transition from existing REC and ESCert markets to a unified carbon trading system is expected to be seamless, given India's well-established power exchanges and transaction mechanisms. With this development, India moves closer to integrating its climate action efforts into global carbon markets, reinforcing its commitment to reducing emissions and achieving long-term sustainability goals. (The writer works with Indian Institute of Management, Sirmaur; views are personal)



## FIRST COLUMN

## RAISING GEN ALPHA AND GEN BETA

To ensure their well-being, parents must strike a balance between traditional values and modern approaches



SHAINY SHARMA

The 21st century has introduced new challenges and opportunities in parenting. As we raise Generation Alpha (born 2012-2024) and Generation Beta (born 2025-2039), it is crucial to adapt parenting strategies to their digital upbringing, rapid technological advancements and changing societal norms. Ensuring these children grow up healthy, happy, and disciplined requires a balance of traditional values and modern approaches. There is no denying that, unlike previous generations, Generation Alpha and Generation Beta are growing up with easy access to technology, which affects their lifestyle habits.

It is of utmost importance that parents/guardians take proactive steps to ensure their children's well-being such as providing balanced nutrition such as a diet rich in proteins, vitamins, and fibres while limiting processed foods and sugary snacks; reducing screen time and promoting physical activities such as cycling, swimming, and team sports to improve fitness and social skills; setting screen-free bedtime routines to ensure quality sleep, which is crucial for the cognitive and emotional development and encouraging children to spend time offline by engaging in hands-on activities like painting, gardening and DIY projects.

Not only these, but in an era of social media influence and fast-paced lifestyles, parents/guardians need to support their children by creating a strong emotional connection; encouraging resilience and a growth mindset; guiding them in reducing digital overload, and engaging them in mindful activities such as yoga, meditation, journaling, or simple relaxation exercises to help them cope with stress. Above all, what matters the most is the art of discipline. With instant gratification becoming a norm in the digital age,



parents/guardians must realise that these generations will grow up in an AI-driven world, requiring skills beyond academics. Parents/Guardians can help prepare them by encouraging critical thinking and creativity and providing problem-solving challenges, STEM activities, and artistic outlets along with proper guidance on developing social skills in a hybrid world. Raising healthy, happy, and disciplined Gen Alpha and Gen Beta children requires a thoughtful blend of love, guidance, and adaptability.

Parents/Guardians must embrace new-age parenting by integrating digital awareness with traditional values while fostering emotional resilience and self-discipline. By prioritising wellbeing, education and strong moral foundations, one can ensure these generations grow into responsible, fulfilled, and future-ready individuals.

Also, by providing proper nutrition, encouraging physical and mental well-being, fostering social skills, and setting positive examples, parents/guardians can create an environment where children thrive for it is aptly said that a happy and healthy child is not just the result of luck but of consistent efforts, care, and understanding from those who nurture them. By promoting healthy habits, setting strong moral foundations, and nurturing adaptability, parents can equip their children for a fast-evolving world. Ultimately, a happy and well-rounded child is shaped not by chance, but by consistent love, guidance, and understanding.

(The writer is an educator; views are personal)

## Unlocking nature's secrets: A journey through India's forests

Nature is an open book, rich with stories waiting to be uncovered. There are intricate connections between land, life, and time, write BKP Sinha & Arvind Jha

Nature, in its boundless complexity, holds countless wonders and mysteries. A walk through the forest offers a unique opportunity to engage deeply with the natural world, observing its intricate details and uncovering its hidden stories. Every tree, rock, and animal track contributes to the landscape's rich history, revealing the dynamic processes that have shaped it over time. The towering trees, with their rings cataloguing centuries of climatic shifts and environmental changes, stand as silent witnesses to the passage of time. A noticeable absence of middle-aged trees, for example, often points to a past forest fire. These fires, while natural and sometimes devastating, selectively eliminate younger trees while leaving behind older, more resilient ones. India, with its diverse ecosystems ranging from coastal regions to mountain valleys, offers a unique opportunity to observe the intricate relationships between flora, fauna, and their environment. Even the soil beneath our feet, a mosaic of organic matter, testifies to the endless cycle of life and decay that sustains the ecosystem. The contours of the land, the steepness of slopes, the presence of valleys and ridges – these are not mere accidents of geography. They are the fingerprints of geological forces, millennia in the making. The Himalayas, Western Ghats, and Vindhya ranges are iconic examples of such geological artistry, showcasing the dynamic processes that have shaped the nation's landscape and influenced its biodiversity. The forest is a timeless classroom, where nature's lessons unfold with every step. But to truly unlock these secrets, requires more than a casual glance; it demands a mindful approach and willingness to slow down and truly engage with our surroundings. As you walk through the forest, you'll notice the forest floor is covered with a thick layer of leaves, twigs, and decomposing organic matter.

This layer, known as the leaf litter, plays a crucial role in nutrient cycling and provides a habitat for many small creatures. The type and distribution of vegetation provide insights into the region's climate, soil conditions, and water availability. Lush rainforests, like those in the Western Ghats and Northeast India, thrive in areas with abundant rainfall. These verdant ecosystems boast a rich variety of plant species, from towering trees to intricate understory plants, each adapted to thrive in the humid, water-rich environment. This dense vegetation supports a wide range of wildlife, contributing to the region's biodiversity and ecological stability.

In contrast, the arid deserts of Rajasthan present a landscape where life has remarkably adapted to survive with minimal water. Vegetation here is sparse, but highly specialized, with species like cacti, acacias, and thorny bushes dominating the terrain. These species are equipped with unique adaptations, such as water-storing tissues and deep root systems, allowing them to conserve and access water efficiently and ensuring their survival in such harsh conditions.

The intimate relationship between plants and their environment becomes even more evident when observing specific species in particular areas. For instance, in floodplains, trees such as sycamore, Gular, and ash Gurjan thrive in fertile, wet conditions where water and nutrients

accumulate. On the other hand, the hardy Casuarina is well-suited to coastal environments, where the salty conditions pose a challenge for many other species, including Karanj (Pongamia). Similarly, along riverbanks, trees like Jamun and Arjun flourish in the constantly wet conditions, highlighting how plant life reflects the local ecosystem. Just as plant life reflects environmental conditions, rock formations provide a window into the geological history and processes that have shaped the land. Sedimentary rocks, often rich in marine fossils such as shells, corals, and fish, indicate that the region was once submerged underwater. These rocks may also display ripple marks or mud cracks, further supporting the presence of ancient water bodies. For example, the fossil-rich Shivalik Hills provide a glimpse into prehistoric times, showcasing the variety of life forms that once thrived in the area. The types of sediment and their layering can also offer insights into past climate conditions, such as periods of drought or heavy rainfall. For instance, fine-grained sediments suggest calm, shallow waters, while coarser sediments point to more turbulent conditions.

Igneous rocks, formed from cooled magma, reveal the area's volcanic history, while metamorphic rocks provide evidence of the intense transformations that occur deep within the Earth. Understanding the geology beneath the surface, which shapes the land, is equally important, and soil reveals much about this. For example, limestone regions, where rock weathering creates caves and stone pillars, typically have alkaline soils high in calcium. Conversely, granite-dominated areas, where rock breakdown leads to acidic soils, often develop wetlands due to poor drainage.

Soil colour offers further clues: Dark brown soil, rich in organic matter, supports diverse ecosystems; grey soil suggests wetter conditions; yellowish soil may indicate nutrient depletion. Dramatic shifts in soil colour often point to human influence. For example, in Karnataka and



Odisha, vibrant red and ochre hues reflect historical iron ore mining. In Rajasthan and Gujarat, white caps on the soil signal high salt levels from over-irrigation. Physical signs in the landscape—such as fissures or cracks in the soil—can indicate instability, caused by factors like erosion, seismic activity, or human intervention. In hilly regions like the Western Ghats or Himalayas, slipping or bending tree bark may signal shifting ground, a clear indicator of potential soil movement. Recognizing these signs is crucial for the safety of campers and hikers. Water bodies, including rivers, lakes, and wetlands, are vital components of India's ecosystems and are deeply intertwined with the land's geology. Major rivers such as Ganges, Brahmaputra, and Godavari are true lifelines for the nation.

The Ganges River, revered as sacred, flows over 2,500 kilometres across northern India, supporting numerous aquatic and terrestrial species. Its waters irrigate fields that feed millions, and it is a critical source of drinking water for countless communities. Similarly, the Brahmaputra River, originating from the Tibetan Himalayas, meanders through Northeast India, sustaining rich floodplain ecosystems and supplying water for agriculture and hydropower.

The Godavari, often called the "Dakshin Ganga," flows through central India, nourishing one of the largest river basins in the country and supporting diverse habitats. India's wetlands, such as the Sundarbans, the world's largest mangrove forest, span the Ganges-Brahmaputra-Meghna delta and are a haven for Bengal tigers, crocodiles, birds, and other wildlife, while its mangroves protect the coastline from storms and floods. As we explore these natural habitats, subtle signs like paw prints, droppings, and other traces offer glimpses into animals' presence and activities.

Each animal leaves a distinct signature reflecting its unique anatomy and behaviour. For example, cats,

with their stealthy grace, leave tracks showcasing the soft pads of their paws, devoid of sharp imprints of their retractable claws, hinting at their elusive nature. Rabbits, in contrast, leave bounding tracks with hind legs landing ahead of their forelegs, showcasing their hurried movements and vulnerability. Understanding these signs provides deeper insights into wildlife behaviour and habitat preferences. Like us, animals are drawn to places that offer the essentials of life: food, water, and shelter. A patch of trees followed by an open field and a water source, such as a lake or pond, indicates a popular spot for wildlife. However, animals in these areas are often cautious and aware of their surroundings.

They possess an innate ability to detect and avoid human presence long before we notice them, typically only breaking cover to make a quick escape. Birds, in particular, use vocalizations to mark territory and alert others to predators. For instance, the sudden flight of pigeons on a quiet woodland path can trigger a group warning system, notifying nearby animals—deer, rabbits, and foxes—of a potential threat. Similarly, a chorus of noisy bird calls may indicate a coordinated defence against a predator, such as a crow mobbing an owl. Birds also emit sharp alarm calls, like the high-pitched "seet," specifically designed to warn others of a bird of prey overhead. It is in paying close attention to these subtle cues that we begin to truly understand the richness of the natural world. The next time we find ourselves amidst the whispers of the woods, let us listen closely.

The forest invites us to unlock its wisdom, learn from its resilience, and contribute to its legacy. By embracing the profound lessons found within the diverse elements of the forest, we not only enrich our own lives but also ensure that this invaluable library remains open for generations to come.

(The writers are former principal chief conservator of Forests, UP and Maharashtra; views are their own)



THE GANGES RIVER, REVERED AS SACRED, FLOWS OVER 2,500 KILOMETRES ACROSS NORTHERN INDIA, SUPPORTING NUMEROUS AQUATIC AND TERRESTRIAL SPECIES. ITS WATERS IRRIGATE FIELDS THAT FEED MILLIONS,

## The rise of religious realty: How India's infrastructure push is transforming spiritual tourism

This emerging sector is transforming pilgrimage sites with upscale hospitality and commercial developments, meeting the needs of faith-driven travelers

The Indian economy has witnessed a significant push towards infrastructure, real estate and tourism, especially spiritual tourism especially in the 2025-26 Union Budget. The government's focus on urban redevelopment, affordable housing, and tourism-friendly policies has positioned India as a global hotspot for real estate and hospitality investments. Among the most prominent emerging trends is the rise of religious realty—an intersection of real estate, hospitality, and spiritual tourism, where projects are developed to cater to the growing number of pilgrims and faith-driven travellers. With disposable incomes on the rise due to tax relief measures—such as no income tax



MAYANK JAISWAL

exponential rise, with 50 top-tier tourist destinations being developed with state partnerships, reinforcing the nation's status as a must-visit destination for both spiritual and leisure travellers. **The Rise of Religious Realty: A New Era in Development** India's spiritual destinations have long been major attractions for domestic and international tourists. However, what was once a fragmented market with limited infrastructure is now being transformed into a sophisticated segment within the hospitality and real estate industries. The religious tourism boom has led to a surge in demand for premium hotels, commercial complexes, and mixed-use developments that cater to both pilgrims and high-end

travellers. The Solitaire Group has been at the forefront of this evolution. Recognising the immense potential in religious realty, it has strategically invested in prime pilgrimage destinations such as Ayodhya, Varanasi, Prayagraj, and Haridwar.

Its flagship development in Ayodhya—a luxury Taj hotel in partnership with the Indian Hotels Company Limited (IHCL)—exemplifies its commitment to redefining spiritual tourism. The 300-key Taj Ayodhya, spanning 7.2 acres, will feature high-end villas, luxury accommodations, wellness facilities, and state-of-the-art banquet spaces to cater to both pilgrims and travellers seeking opulent experiences. **Unlocking the Potential of Tier II and III Cities**

demand for quality real estate soars. The Solitaire Group has been a pioneer in this domain. Its developments in Prayagraj, including the city's first and largest township, are a testament to its vision of creating world-class urban spaces beyond metro hubs.

Through strategic land acquisitions and partnerships, the Group aims to bridge the infrastructure gap in smaller cities and deliver projects that enhance both living standards and economic prosperity. **Hospitality Meets Spiritual Tourism**

India's push for religious and spiritual tourism has been backed by key government initiatives, including hotels in pilgrimage hubs being added to the Infrastructure Harmonised Master List (HML), ensuring



easier access to low-cost financing, streamlined e-visa services and visa fee waivers for select international tourists to encourage global arrivals, and MUDRA loans for homestays to support budget travel and rural tourism. This structured approach to hospitality growth has enabled developers like the Solitaire Group to envision and execute projects that cater to a diverse range of travellers. The focus remains on integrating world-class amenities into heritage-rich locations while maintaining the cultural and spiritual essence of these sites. **Building a Legacy of Excellence** Since its inception in 2005, the Solitaire Group has established itself as a leading player in real estate and hospitali-

ty. From residential developments in emerging urban centres to luxury hotels in religious destinations, its portfolio reflects its commitment to innovation, sustainability, and excellence. With the Indian government's ambitious push for infrastructure, tourism, and real estate reforms, the opportunities in religious realty are boundless. Indian leading players would continue this transformative journey, crafting spaces that offer both spiritual fulfilment and contemporary luxury. The focus is on delivering exceptional living experiences and fostering economic growth in the communities that are being served.

(The author is the founder and CEO of Solitaire Group. Views expressed are personal)







# Profit booking leading FIIs to sell Indian equities: FM

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Seeking to assuage concerns over Foreign Institutional Investors (FII) selling Indian equities lately, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Monday attributed the action to profit booking. Speaking to reporters in the financial capital, Sitharaman said the Indian economy is one where the investors are bagging better returns which leads to profit booking. "FIIs also go out when they are able to or in a position to book profits. Indian market today, Indian economy today, has an environment in which investments are also yielding good returns and profit booking is also happening," she said. It can be noted that FIIs have sold over ₹1.56 Lakh Crore of stocks since October last year, including nearly ₹1 Lakh Crore



Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman addresses a press conference, in Mumbai PTI

in 2025 itself, which has led to a sharp correction on the indices and wiping out investor wealth. Finance Secretary Tuhin Kanta Pandey said FIIs are not moving from one emerging market to other, and added that

in times of global uncertainties like the one being witnessed right now, they tend to go back to the country of origin, which is mostly the US. He also hinted that these shifts may be temporary, and added

that Indian markets are resilient. Explaining that apart from demand-supply issues, growth prospects also influence investor behavior, Pandey said India remains the fastest growing large economy and

added that the recently announced Budget has a slew of growth-oriented measures. "We have faced global headwinds in the past, and will continue to face them. But I think India is in a strong position to handle it," he added. Ajay Seth, Secretary of the Department of Economic Affairs, dismissed any idea of a government interference in the market because of the heavy sell-offs, stating that such a move can be carried out only if there is any evidence of market failure, which is not the case at present. Seth said equities do not function on government policies alone, and added that foreign investors go to developed or bigger markets in periods of uncertainties. He said that while India has shown resilience when it comes to world events in parts, it is not fully de-coupled either.

# Experts intrigued by inclusion of electoral bonds in Income Tax Bill

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Experts are intrigued by the new Income Tax Bill, 2025 retaining provisions related to electoral bonds, which were rendered unconstitutional by the Supreme Court last year, saying it could be because of legislative oversight or the government's intention to bring it back in some other form. Electoral bonds have been mentioned in the new Income Tax Bill's Schedule VIII which deals with 'Income not to be included in the total income of political parties and electoral trusts'. In a judgement passed on February 15 last year, the Supreme Court had scrapped the Centre's electoral bonds scheme of anonymous political funding, calling it "unconstitutional" as it was "violative" of the right to freedom of speech and expression and right to information.

Under the existing Income Tax Act, 1961, donations received from companies and individuals through electoral bonds are exempt in the hands of political parties. The government has brought in a new Income Tax Bill to replace the 64-year old I-T Act. The 622-page Bill is a simplified version of the existing Act which has become complicated over the years because of over 4,000 amendments. About the electoral bond related provisions in the new I-T Bill, AMRG and associates senior partner Rajat Mohan said the mention of electoral bond provisions in the new Income Tax Bill could be because of a legislative oversight, or a deliberate move to keep the door open for a modified version of the scheme in the future. "While the Supreme Court had strong and justified grounds for striking down

the scheme, the concerns it highlighted can be addressed through structured dialogue and expert consultations. The government still retains the legislative authority to reintroduce a revised political donation framework, provided it aligns with constitutional principles and ensures transparency in electoral funding," he said. Mohan said mentioning of the electoral bond in the new Bill may be a strategic decision by policymakers to leave room for future electoral financing reforms. Shardul Amarchand Mangaldas and Co Partner Rohit Garg said the changes in the new income tax bill are merely structural in nature. There have been no major changes in the substantive provisions and the charging sections. Every provision which was not rendered obsolete has been carried forward into the new Act.

# IPO-bound NSDL profit jumps 30 per cent

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

National Securities Depository Limited (NSDL) on Monday reported a 30 per cent rise in its consolidated net profit to ₹85.8 Crore for three months ended December 2024. The depository registered ₹66.09 Crore profit in the year-ago period. The total income rose 16.2 per cent to ₹391.21 Crore in the October-December quarter of the current financial year (FY25) against ₹336.67 Crore in the same quarter preceding fiscal, NSDL said in a statement. For the nine months ended December 2024, NSDL posted a 32.6 per cent year-on-year growth in net profit to ₹259.82 Crore and a 13.3 per cent year-on-year increase in total income to ₹1,141.4 Crore. NSDL is India's first securities depository to reach ₹500 Lakh Crore (\$6 Trillion) in value of assets held in custody in September 2024. In October, NSDL received markets regulator Sebi's go-

ahead to launch an initial public offering (IPO). The proposed IPO is a complete offer for sale (OFS) of more than 5.72 Crore equity shares by shareholders, including National Stock Exchange of India (NSE), State Bank of India (SBI), and HDFC Bank, as per the draft red herring prospectus (DRHP). Since the public issue is completely an OFS, NSDL will not receive any proceeds from the IPO. NSDL is a SEBI-registered infrastructure institution offering a wide range of products and services to the financial and securities markets in India. Following the introduction of the Depositories Act in 1996, NSDL pioneered the dematerialisation of securities in India in November 1996. This will become the country's second publicly traded depository to list on the bourse, after Central Depository Services (CDSL), which got listed on NSE in 2017.

# Udaan secures \$75 million in funding round

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Online business-to-business platform Udaan has closed a Series G equity funding round of \$75 Million, led by M and G Plc, according to people in the know. Company Co-Founder and CEO Vaibhav Gupta announced the round's closure to employees on Monday, and mentioned that the company is in advanced discussions to close an additional equity round of \$25 Million from potential investors in the "coming quarter". The Series G funding round, led by M and G Plc and supported by existing investors like Lightspeed Venture Partners, comes after a \$340 Million fundraise in December 2023. A query to the company did not elicit any response till the filing of this story. Udaan intends to use the newly acquired capital to improve customer experience, expand its market reach, strengthen partnerships with vendors, and bolster long-term capabilities in supply chain



and credit, sources said. Last month, The National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) gave a green light for Udaan to merge its multiple business entities into one - Hiveloop Ecommerce Pvt Ltd. The unification of its business under a single umbrella strengthens Udaan's operating model as it prepares for a potential IPO in 2026. The company is on track to achieving profitability, with

a 65 per cent revenue growth and over 70 per cent increase in daily transacting buyers, the sources said. Founded in 2016, Udaan enables technology-based supply chain and logistics operations, focusing on B2B trade. It operates across diverse categories, including FMCG, staples, fruits and vegetables, and pharma. It claims to hold about 70 per cent market share in India.

# Airtel completes landing of SEA-ME-WE-6 submarine cable

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Bharti Airtel on Monday said it has completed the landing of the new Southeast Asia-Middle East-West Europe-6 or SMW6 (SEA-ME-WE 6) submarine cable system in Chennai. The company recently landed the SEA-ME-WE 6 cable in Mumbai on December 30, 2024. "The cable landing, both in Mumbai and Chennai, will be fully integrated with Airtel's data centre arm, Nxta by Airtel, at its large facilities in the respective cities with an aim to enable global hyperscalers and businesses in the country to seamlessly access international connectivity and data centre services," Bharti Airtel said in a release. These cable landings were completed by SubCom, a leading supplier of subsea fibre optic cable data systems responsible for the engineering, manufacture and installation of SEA-ME-WE-6. Cable landing stations connect submarine cable systems with

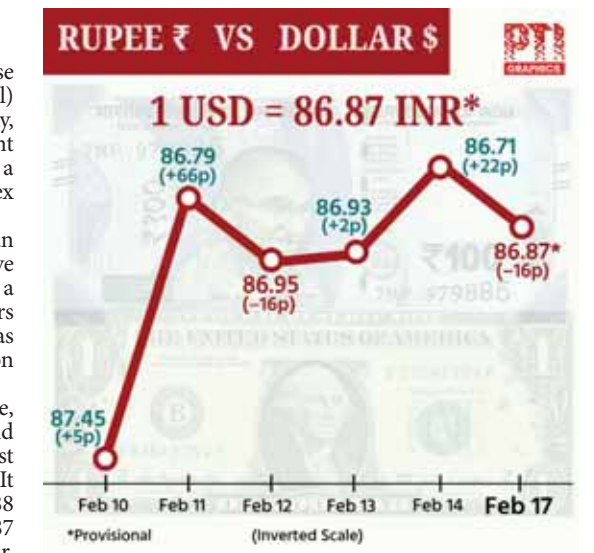
land-based networks. According to the release, the 21,700 route kilometres (Rkm) submarine cable system connects India to Singapore and France (Marseille) crossing Egypt through terrestrial cables. With this, Airtel has further enhanced its network presence with diversified capacity in the submarine cable system, globally. Sharat Sinha, Director and CEO of Airtel Business, said this new investment and milestone would further improve the company's secure, diverse and scalable global network. "We are delighted to further strengthen our global connectivity by landing one of the largest cable systems into our facilities. This complements our existing network strength of 400,000Rkms across 50 countries," Sinha said, adding that the move underlines Bharti Airtel's commitment to address Digital India's growing demand for global connectivity and data with additional routes, diversity

and capacity. As a key member of the consortium of the SEA-ME-WE-6 cable system, Airtel has invested in the core cable and has additionally co-built a private network of four Fiber Pairs between Singapore, Chennai and Mumbai. This cable system will bring a whopping 220 terabits per second (TBPs) of global capacity to India. Airtel's global network spans five continents. The company has investments in 34 cables globally with some of the recent ones, including two Africa, Southeast Asia-Japan Cable 2 (SJC2) and Equiano. Apart from these cables that connect India to key regions like Asia Pacific, Europe, the Middle East and US, Airtel's global subsea network investments also include large cable systems like i2i Cable Network (I2iCn), Europe India Gateway (EIG), IMEWE, SEA-ME-WE-4, AAG, Unity, EASSY, Gulf Bridge International (GBI) and Middle East North Africa Submarine Cable (MENA Cable) among others.

# Rupee falls 16 paise against USD Sensex, Nifty eke out gains in volatile session

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The rupee depreciated 16 paise to close at 86.87 (provisional) against the US dollar on Monday, weighed down by significant foreign fund outflows and a recovery in the US dollar index from intraday lows. Forex traders said the Indian rupee is trading with a negative bias as foreign banks went on a dollar-buying spree and importers scrambled to secure dollars, as they feared further depreciation amid global uncertainty. At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 86.70 and touched the high of 86.68 against the greenback during intraday. It also touched the low of 86.88 before ending the session at 86.87 (provisional) against the dollar, logging a loss of 16 paise from its previous close. On Friday, the rupee extended its recovery and settled 21 paise higher at 86.71 against the US dollar. "Indian rupee declined today on a weak tone in the domestic markets and a recovery in the US dollar index from intraday lows. However, weak tone in crude oil prices and a decline in US



weigh on the rupee. However, any further decline in the US treasury yields or any further intervention by the RBI may support the rupee at lower levels," Choudhary added. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 0.14 per cent higher at 106.85. Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, rose 0.12 per cent to USD 74.83 per barrel in futures trade. In the domestic equity market, the 30-share BSE Sensex advanced 57.65 points, or 0.08 per cent, to settle at 75,996.86, while the Nifty rose 30.25 points, or 0.13 per cent, to 22,959.50 points. Foreign institutional investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth ₹4,294.69 Crore in the capital markets on a net basis on Friday, according to exchange data. Meanwhile, India's forex reserves jumped by \$7.654 Billion to \$638.261 Billion in the week ended February 7, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) said on Friday. This is the third consecutive week of a jump in the kitty, which had increased by \$1.05 Billion to \$630.607 Billion for the week ended January 31.

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Stock markets snapped the eight-day losing run in a volatile session on Monday with benchmark Sensex closing higher by 57 points on the back of value buying in blue-chip stocks HDFC Bank and Reliance Industries. Helped by fag-end buying, the 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 57.65 points or 0.08 per cent to settle at 75,996.86. During the day, the barometer tanked 644.45 points or 0.84 per cent to 75,294.76. The NSE Nifty rebounded 30.25 points or 0.13 per cent to 22,959.50. Reports that the US and India will meet soon to decide on broad contours of a trade agreement for reducing tariffs supported buying in metal, pharma and financial shares, analysts said. From the 30-share blue-chip pack, Bajaj Finserv, Power Grid, IndusInd Bank, Adani Ports, UltraTech Cement, HDFC Bank, Zomato and Tata Motors were among the major gainers. Mahindra and Mahindra,



Bharti Airtel, Tata Consultancy Services, Infosys, ICICI Bank, and ITC were the biggest laggards. Foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) offloaded equities worth ₹4,294.69 Crore on Friday, according to exchange data. The total outflow by FPIs has reached ₹99,299 Crore - near ₹1 Lakh Crore - in 2025 so far, data with the depositories showed. FPIs pulled out ₹21,272 Crore in the first two weeks of this month, driven by global

tensions after the US imposed tariffs on imports. This came following a net outflow of ₹78,027 Crore in January. "Markets eked out modest gains in late recovery in a highly volatile trade, but most importantly it managed to halt the eight-session losing streak. Positive Asian and European indices aided sentiment, while gains in select banking, oil and gas, metal and power stocks helped local benchmarks recover from their early lows,"

Prashanth Tapse, Senior VP (Research), Mehta Equities Ltd, said. The BSE midcap gauge climbed 0.51 per cent, while smallcap index declined 0.56 per cent. Among BSE sectoral indices, healthcare jumped 1.14 per cent, energy (0.89 per cent), services (0.82 per cent), metal (0.76 per cent), power (0.75 per cent), oil and gas (0.74 per cent), Consumer Discretionary, industrials, IT, telecommunication, auto, teck and BSE Focused IT were among the laggards. In Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo and Shanghai settled in the positive territory while Hong Kong ended lower. European markets were trading higher. US markets ended mostly lower on Friday. Global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 0.21 per cent higher at USD 74.90 a barrel. The BSE benchmark dropped 199.76 points or 0.26 per cent to settle at 75,939.21 on Friday. The Nifty declined 102.15 points or 0.44 per cent to 22,929.25.

# Bajaj Consumer Care to acquire Vishal Personal Care

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

FMCG firm Bajaj Consumer Care Limited will acquire rival Vishal Personal Care, which owns hair and skin care brand Banjara's, at an enterprise value of ₹108.3 Crore to deepen its penetration in the South Indian market. The board of Bajaj Consumer Care Ltd (BCCL), which operates in the personal care space and owns the Bajaj Almond Drops brand, in its meeting held last Friday, approved the acquisition 100 per cent stake in Vishal Personal Care in two tranches - a 49 per cent in the first followed by remaining 51 per cent in the second tranche. "The estimated transaction

value stands at ₹120 Crore, with an enterprise value of approximately ₹108.3 Crore," BCCL said in a statement. This move aligns with BCCL's vision to expand its footprint across Indian markets, leveraging the growing demand for natural and Ayurvedic personal care products, it added. Banjara's, founded in 1991 in Hyderabad, has a diversified product portfolio, including facial kits, herbal powders, aloe vera gels, shampoos, and hair care powders. Its products have a retail presence of over 70,000 outlets across the five South Indian markets through cosmetics stores, supermarkets, pharmacies, and grocery chains. "With the acquisition of Vishal Personal Care, BCCL

will be leveraging Vishal's extensive distribution network to deepen their penetration in South India," BCCL said, adding that it "will also introduce brand Banjara's products in its stronghold Hindi-speaking markets (HSM), effectively doubling its reach in both the regions." BCCL Managing Director Jaideep Nandi said, "Acquisition of Vishal Personal Care Pvt Ltd is a strategic step in strengthening BCCL's footprint in the five southern markets. The addition of Banjara's to our portfolio enhances our ability to serve the evolving consumers across India, while also complementing our product range for further expansion."

# Centre considering raising deposit insurance limit above ₹5 Lakh

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The government is "actively considering" raising the deposit insurance limit beyond the current ₹5 Lakh, a top finance ministry official said on Monday. Days after the New India Co-operative Bank scam came to light, Department of Financial Services Secretary M Nagaraju announced that such a proposal is in the works. "The point about increasing insurance. That is under active consideration. As and when the government approves, we will notify it," he said at a press conference in the presence of

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman. He, however, declined to speak on the crisis at New India Co-operative Bank, saying the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is seized of the matter. A deposit insurance claim gets triggered when a lender goes down, and over the years, the Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation (DICGC) has paid out such claims. The body collects premiums from banks for the cover it offers, and a majority of the claims have had to be done in case of cooperative lenders. It can be noted that following the PMC Bank scam, the

DICGC insured limit was raised to ₹5 Lakh from ₹1 Lakh in 2020. Economic Affairs Secretary Ajay Seth said the cooperative banking sector is well regulated under the RBI's watch and termed the overall health of the sector as strong. A crisis at one entity should not lead anybody to cast doubts on the overall sector, he added, pointing out that it is the job of the regulator to take actions against errant entities. As per reports, 90 per cent of New India Co-operative Bank's 1.3 Lakh depositors will have their entire sums covered under the DICGC.

# IL&FS Group initiates ₹5,000 Crore interim payout to creditors

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The IL&FS Group on Monday said the company has initiated ₹5,000 Crore interim payout to eligible creditors as part of its ongoing resolution mandate. Post this payout, the company said that the aggregate debt discharged will stand at approximately ₹43,000 Crore, which is over 70 per cent of the estimated total debt resolution target pegged at ₹61,000 Crore. "IL&FS Group companies have initiated an interim distribution of ₹5,000 Crore

- ₹3,500 Crore of Infrastructure Investment Trust (InvIT) units and ₹1,500 Crore in cash to eligible creditors as part of the Group's ongoing resolution efforts," the statement said. The interim distribution is largely being initiated by three holding companies - Infrastructure Leasing and Financial Services (IL&FS), IL&FS Financial Services (IFIN), and IL&FS Transportation Networks (ITNL) - that collectively hold the majority of the Group's debt and nests large creditors and public funds.

# Liverpool continues its charge with a 2-1 win against Wolverhampton

PTI ■ LONDON

Liverpool continued its charge toward the Premier League title with a 2-1 win against Wolverhampton. For Manchester United, it just keeps getting worse after a 1-0 loss at Tottenham. The fortunes of England's two most successful teams could hardly be more contrasting. Victory for Liverpool saw the club restore its seven-point lead over Arsenal at the top of the table and move ever closer to equaling Man United's record haul of 20 league crowns.

United, meanwhile, lost for the 12th time in the league this season and is 15th in the standings after James Maddison's first-half strike for Spurs.

It is turning out to be another miserable campaign for the club that dominated English soccer under former manager Alex Ferguson. That is a distant memory now, with United's wait to end its title drought set to extend to 12 years this season.

United has not been champion since Ferguson's final campaign in 2013. Ruben Amorim is the sixth permanent coach since then to be charged with the responsibility of restoring its supremacy, but his

early tenure has been fraught with problems.

"I am not worried. I understand our fans, what the media think about it. I hate to lose, that feeling is the worst," Amorim said. "I am here to help my players. I understand my situation, my job, I am confident on my work and I just want to win games. The place in the table is my worry, I am not worried about me."

**CLASH OF CLUBS IN CRISIS**

This was Amorim's ninth defeat in 21 games in all competitions since taking over in November. He has only overseen four league wins in that time.

He already claimed in January that this could be the worst United team in the club's storied history and there is little sign of improvement.

Against a Spurs team that is also struggling in the wrong half of the table, Maddison's goal in the 13th minute at the Tottenham Hotspur Stadium was enough to settle this clash of clubs in crisis. Some Tottenham fans are so dismayed by the state of their club that they staged a pre-match protest against chairman Daniel Levy. But this was the third time their team had beaten United this season. There could yet be a fourth



encounter if both teams continue to advance in the Europa League. But the Premier League is Amorim's primary concern right now — even if a relegation fight remains unlikely. Despite being just three places above the drop zone, United is 12 points above the safety line.

That is little to shout about with United eight points off the top half.

**NERVOUS LIVERPOOL**

Liverpool had to withstand a fightback from Wolves, which included a brilliant long-range goal from Mathew Cunha.

First-half strikes from Luis Diaz

and Mohamed Salah secured the win for Arne Slot's team, but an unconvincing performance after the break saw the home team fail to register a single shot on target as Wolves dominated the chances.

"Obviously 2-0 at halftime, we know that can be one of the most dangerous results in football. We

had to come out and we had to start well — and we didn't quite do that," said Liverpool defender Andrew Robertson. "When they scored, everyone gets nervous. The players get nervous, the crowd get nervous — of course that's only natural. But it's a massive win for us and another game down."

Diaz bundled the ball over the line from close range in the 15th minute to give Liverpool the lead. And Salah doubled the advantage from the penalty spot in the 37th after Diaz was brought down.

It was the Egypt international's 28th goal of an outstanding season and extended his current scoring streak to six straight games.

But if the home crowd was expecting a routine victory against 17th-placed Wolves, it was anything but.

Liverpool conceded a goal in stoppage time to draw 2-2 with Everton on Wednesday and was pushed again.

Cunha's drag-back and curled finish from around 20 yards (meters) in the 67th came after a sustained period of pressure from the visitors.

Before that Marshall Munetsi was denied when through on goal — it took a crucial block in front of goal from Jarell Quansah to prevent

him from converting late on.

"In a season where you want to achieve something, you need to have wins like this as well," Slot said.

**INJURY CRISIS**

United named eight teenagers on the bench who had never played a senior game for the club following an injury crisis at Old Trafford.

Amad Diallo is likely to miss the rest of the season with an ankle injury and Lisandro Martinez has already been ruled out with cruciate ligament damage.

Amorim was also without Leny Yoro, Kobbie Mainoo, Manuel Ugarte and Toby Collyer through injury or illness at Spurs.

It meant the United coach waited until the first minute of time added on to make a substitution — replacing Casemiro for debutant Chido Obi.

**FANS PROTEST**

Tottenham fans protested outside the stadium before kickoff, calling for chairman Daniel Levy and owner ENIC to go.

Giant banners read "Profits before glory" and "We want our club back" as supporters let their feelings be known.

The protest was organised by a fans' group called "Change for Tottenham".

## Frankfurt beats Kiel 3-1

PTI ■ BERLIN

Eintracht Frankfurt snapped its run of three draws and consolidated third place in the Bundesliga with a 3-1 win over relegation-threatened Holstein Kiel.

Hugo Ekitiké saw a penalty saved and had a late goal ruled out for offside, but others stepped up to score the goals that showed Frankfurt can live without Egypt forward Omar Marmoush.

Marmoush, Frankfurt's top-scorer with 15 league goals this season, joined Manchester City for a reported 70 million euros (\$73 million) during the winter transfer period and scored a hat trick for his new team on Saturday.

"We sent an extremely young team onto the field, one that played with confidence, composure and maturity," Frankfurt coach Dino Toppmöller said.

"We've finally won again and now gone seven league games in a row without defeat," he said. "The table looks nice, but there are still many games to play. We have to stay confident."

Toppmöller's team moved five points clear of fourth-placed



Leipzig, which occupies the last place for Champions League qualification after 22 of 34 rounds.

**Goal gift**

Hugo Larsson broke the deadlock with his knee in the 18th minute, and Brazilian defender Tuta was left free at the back post to score Frankfurt's second in the 37th after Kiel failed to deal with a corner.

Ekitiké had the chance to make it 3-0 before the break but Thomas Dähne dived the right way to push away the French forward's penalty.

Frankfurt was later gifted the third goal anyway. Can Uzun gratefully took David Zec's botched backpass to score his

fourth goal of the season in the 59th.

Kiel's Finn Porath scored at the third attempt in the 73rd after Kevin Trapp saved his first two efforts but it wasn't enough to stop Kiel dropping to last place after this round of games. Bochum climbed off the bottom by defeating Borussia Dortmund 2-0 on Saturday.

Kiel could take some solace from Heidenheim's 2-0 loss at home to Mainz in Sunday's late game. Heidenheim stayed on 14 points, ahead of Bochum on goal difference, and just a point above Kiel.

Hoffenheim came from behind to win 3-1 at Werder Bremen in the early game.

## Tejas Dhingra retains Show Jumping title

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Tejas Dhingra Defends National Championship Title at NEC Show Jumping 2024-25. Tejas Dhingra of Beeya's Riding Facility successfully defended his National Championship title at the National Equestrian Championship (Show Jumping) 2024-25, held at Modi Equestrian Academy in Meerut on Sunday.

The reigning champion secured victory in the Championship Tour with 16 points, finishing ahead of joint runners-up Amar Sarin from Tarc Equestrian Centre and Ashray Butta of EGC Stables.

Meanwhile, Yashaan Zubin Khambatta of Tarc Equestrian Centre achieved a remarkable double triumph, dominating both the Novice and Medium Tours. In the Medium Tour, Sehaj Singh Virk and Abhishek Chopra shared second place, while in the Novice Tour, Narayan Singh secured the runner-up position, joining Yashaan on the podium after the latter impressively claimed the top



two spots.

On Saturday, the Preliminary Tour Individual Final saw Avik Bhatia of Modi Equestrian Stables clinch the gold medal with a flawless performance and a time of 31.02 seconds.

Major Ritika Dahiya of Team ASC delivered a strong showing to secure second place, while Dushyant Nagar finished third.

A standout moment of the competition was the performance of 13-year-old Sravya Vohra, the youngest participant. She impressed with her composure and skill, finishing fifth overall.

In recognition of her remarkable effort, the Modi Equestrian Academy and the Equestrian Federation of India awarded her a Special Appreciation Prize.

## Indian women aims to return to winning ways against Spain

PTI ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Indian women's hockey team will be eager to get back to winning ways when it faces a confident Spain in the doubleheader here.

After a promising start with a thrilling 3-2 victory over England in their opener, the India narrowly missed out on a bonus point in their second game, losing 2-1 in a dramatic shootout after the match ended 2-2 in regulation time.

Despite showing resilience, India currently sit in eighth place in the standings with four points from two games and will be looking to climb higher in the points table as they face a confident Spanish side on Tuesday and Wednesday.

India's performance against England offered glimpses of their potential, particularly in penalty corner conversions, where they scored twice from three attempts in their opening match. However, they failed to replicate that success in the second game, unable to convert any of their



three penalty corners.

"Spain is a tricky team, and we know it's going to be a challenging contest. However, we are ready for the challenge," India captain Salima Tete said.

"We've analysed our performances against England and identified the areas where we need to improve, especially in converting penalty corners. We are focused on tightening our defense and making the most of our scoring opportunities."

Spain, on the other hand, arrives on the back of two consecutive victories against Germany in the India leg. They secured back-to-back 2-1 wins over the Germans, boosting their confidence.

Despite their strong recent performances, Spain has had a mixed run overall, with just two wins and one shootout victory in six games.

Currently placed fourth in the points table with eight points, Spain will be looking to further consolidate their position. Patricia Alvarez has been their standout player, scoring twice to lead the team's goal tally.

Match starts 5:15 PM on Tuesday and 7:30 PM on Wednesday.

## Justin Leonard wins Chubb Classic for first PGA Tour Champions victory

PTI ■ NAPLES

Justin Leonard won the Chubb Classic for his first PGA Tour Champions victory, overcoming a slow start with a back-nine charge on Tiburon's Black Course.

Leonard birdied five of the last seven holes for a 4-under 68 and a four-stroke victory over Billy Andrade. The 52-year-old Texan won in his 45th start on the 50-and-over tour, his first victory since the last of his 12 PGA Tour titles in the 2008 St. Jude Championship.

"It's been a long time since I've won, and I tell myself all the time that I have won," Leonard said, fighting back tears on the 18th green. "But it's easy to kind of forget a little bit, and say, 'Well, you know, is it going to be?'"

"I just put a lot of work in. ... I mean, last year was so bad it was good. It was good for me. Made some changes with my golf swing. ... It's just so fun to finally be here because I always felt like I would be. But it's nice to finally get it done."

After a bogey on 10 dropped him to 1 over for the day, Leonard scrambled for a key par on the 11th, then birdied the next three.

He scrambled again for par on the par-3 16th, then got a 30-footer to catch the right edge for birdie on the par-4 17th and got up-and-down from a greenside bunker on the par-5 18th for one last birdie.

"I just kept telling myself that I was still in it," Leonard said. "I felt like my best golf was ahead of me. I played



OK the first 10 holes. Eleven, the end of it was good, but it just wasn't my best golf. I kept telling myself to just own the last seven holes. Once I got a little bit of momentum I felt like I could ride it."

Leonard finished at 15-under 201. He shot 65 on

Saturday to take a one-stroke lead and set himself up for the breakthrough victory in his return to competitive golf after a long run as a television analyst.

Leonard has starred at all levels, winning the 1992 U.S. Amateur and 1994 NCAA title for Texas to cap his

amateur career, then taking the 1997 British Open at Royal Troon and making the winning putt in the 1999 Ryder Cup at Brookline.

"I didn't think about anything in particular today, but just knowing I've been there," Leonard said. "Even though it might have been 10, 20, 30 years ago, I've been able to do it before."

Andrade also shot 68. Darren Clarke was third at 10 under, also shooting 68. Fred Couples had a 66 to tie for fourth at 9 under with Richard Green (68), Heath Slocum (70) and Paul Stankowski (71).

Ernie Els, a stroke behind Leonard entering the day, shot a 75 to finish 11th at 7 under. Bernhard Langer closed with a 70 to tie for 12th at 6 under.

## India look to continue winning momentum against German hockey

PTI ■ BHUBANESWAR

Their campaign back on track after a jittery start, India will look to continue the winning momentum when they take on Paris Olympics silver medallist Germany in their next men's FIH Pro League match on Tuesday.

India had a woeful start to their home leg matches of the Pro League, losing 1-3 to Spain in their opener.

But the hosts bounced back strongly to tame Spain 2-0 in the return match on Sunday.

With three points from two games, India are currently sitting in eighth place in the standings and will be desperate to climb up the table. After a relatively off day

on Saturday, the Indians looked a completely different side on Sunday, dominating for most part of the match and scoring two field goals through Mandeep Singh (32nd minute) and Dilpreet Singh (39th) to pocket all three points.

While the strikers shone bright in the second game, India's chief coach Craig Fulton would be a bit concerned about penalty corner conversions.

Despite winning seven penalty corners across their two games, India failed to convert a single chance.

In the absence of India captain Harmanpreet Singh, who was rested for the second match, Hockey India League

star performer Jugraj Singh cut a sorry figure from set pieces.

The forwardline comprising Dilpreet, Mandeep and Sukhjeet Singh have each netted a goal for India so far in the tournament and will be looking to add to their tally against Germany.

The Indian defence produced a much-better display in the second game, and were able to absorb pressure from the Spanish strikers.

Germany, who will be playing their first match of the India leg, are placed just above India in seventh place with four points from as many games and will be determined to turn their fortunes around.

# Cricket fever grips Pakistan ahead of Champions Trophy

PTI ■ KARACHI

Cricket fever has gripped Pakistan as the Champions Trophy unfolds with fans eagerly waiting for the action to begin here on Wednesday and businesses related to the game too picking up before the tournament opener between hosts Pakistan and New Zealand.

However, many in the country are disappointed that India are not playing their matches in Pakistan.

"It is disappointing because generally there is so much admiration for the Indian team and players, especially Virat Kohli, in our country," shopkeeper Moiz Ahmed said at the famous Zainab Market in the heart of Karachi's bustling Saddar area.

Moiz is surprised at the demand for the Indian shirts

among the cricket fans along with the Pakistan team.

"Virat Kohli definitely has a big fan following in Pakistan," he said as youngsters mingled in the shop choosing different team shirts.

Kashif, a college student, said he had always admired Kohli as a player and also because of his humility.

"He is so down to earth in his behaviour from what we see in the media," he said.

Shopkeepers in Zainab market, which is famous for selling original licenses and copies of the team shirts whenever a big cricket or football event happens, are clearly happy that the Champions Trophy is being held in Pakistan.

"I have sold nearly 4 to 5000 shirts in the last three days of the Pakistan and Indian teams," Javed Pakhali, a

shopkeeper, said.

Even in the enclosures during matches fans are not shy to wear or display pictures of Kohli and wear shirts with his name printed on them.

The Champions Trophy fever is also evident when one visits the match venue, National Stadium, as many fans are moving around the main gate to catch a glimpse of their favourite players as they come and go from the stadium.

On Monday, with the Pakistan team having a practice session at the stadium's high performance centre, fans clamoured to see them in action.

Ticket sales online and through booths have also picked up according to a Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) official who now just wants the Pakistan team to do well in the tournament.



"I am sure if the team keeps on winning the demand for tickets will keep on increasing," he said.

The fact that an ICC event is being held in Pakistan with some matches in Karachi is now evident from the colourful banners, posters put

up around the city announcing the staging of the event.

It is after 29 years that Pakistan is holding a proper multi team event although it hosted some matches of the Asia Cup in 2023 but the excitement didn't reach the levels being witnessed now.

Although the PCB and ICC held a low-key opening ceremony, without the teams at the Lahore Fort on Sunday night, in Karachi clearly the tempo is growing.

Former captain Javed Miandad praised the PCB for bringing the ICC event to Pakistan.

"I think the next few weeks are a celebration of the passion for cricket we have as a nation," Miandad said.

Miandad said that it is after a long time cricket fans will get to see top international players in action in their backyard. PCB chairman Mohsin Naqvi also said at the opening ceremony that the tournament was a platform for Pakistan to showcase its hospitality and love for cricket.

For 10 years, no top team visited Pakistan after the

militant attack on the Sri Lankan team bus in Lahore in March 2009.

Pace great Waqar Younis said having the Champions Trophy in the country was a big step forward for Pakistan cricket.

"I think it means a lot to everyone that we have shown how resilient we were as a cricket nation and how much our people love cricket even when for 10 years no top team played in Pakistan."

Waqar, also a former captain and who was head coach when Pakistan were their home matches in UAE, said there was a big difference between playing at home and your home series in UAE.

"I think this Champions Trophy will only increase the cricket passion and talent in the country," he added.

Naqvi also said they would be trying to get more ICC events

in Pakistan.

He said, hopefully, Pakistan would also host the women's World Cup qualifiers later this year.

The security for the tournament is unprecedented and with Naqvi himself heading the federal interior ministry, no chances are being taken for the visiting teams.

Senior police official SSP Muqadas Haider said that the PCB and security agencies had planned things in such a way that visiting players also got a chance to go out and see the city.

Pakistan play New Zealand in the tournament opener and everyone expects a full house despite the ticket prices being on the higher side.

The provincial government has also declared a public holiday on Wednesday for a religious festival.

# India hope for Shami's wrist magic to reclaim Champions Trophy

**PTI ■ BENGALURU**

Mohammed Shami's right hand has more sleight than a magician. A simple cock of his wrist can outfox the best batters in the world. But can he unlock the sorcery and help India reclaim the ICC Champions Trophy (CT) after 12 years? The fans will certainly expect Shami to hit his strides straightaway in the marquee event because India's primary strike weapon Jasprit Bumrah has been ruled out due to an injury. But there are multiple concerns as well about Shami's readiness for an event of this magnitude. India start their Champions Trophy campaign on February 20 against Bangladesh in Dubai. The 34-year-old is coming back from an injury. Even though he has played a few matches at various levels and formats since his re-entry into cricket late last year, delivering in a high-pressure tournament is an altogether different proposition. Another reason for the trepidation surrounding Shami is the absence of Bumrah, his trusted ally in the last six years or so at the other end. In the Champions Trophy, Shami

is all set to partner Arshdeep Singh. But for all his skills and promise, Arshdeep is not yet at Bumrah's level. **So, can Shami drag the train forward all by himself?** Former India pacer Laxmipathy Balaji found no reason to believe otherwise. "Actually, he had out-bowled Bumrah in the 2019 (50-over World Cup) and in the last World Cup (2023). Bumrah is the champion bowler across formats. But Shami has experience and, before Bumrah's arrival, it was Shami who carried India's attack all through," Balaji, now a reputed pace bowling coach, said. Bumrah's unavailability makes it imperative for Shami to strike upfront consistently. Balaji underlined that factor. "I think it's very important. If India has to do well, then Shami has to come good with the new ball. The kind of impact he can make in his first six overs with the new ball, it will play a crucial role for India. "Old ball is anyway... It is a defensive game now. If he can make early inroads regularly that will give a huge booster to India," he added.



But can he find his optimal and ideal running speed, because Shami's effectiveness totally depends on his rhythm. Balaji thought it was not a task beyond Shami. "Since that (ankle) injury has happened, there was a little bit of slowness, maybe. It's natural. But there is nothing you can do about it. It's part of any sportsperson's career. "He has the experience to get over it and he will do it as he bowls more. It's just about accepting the (physical) condition and continuing his best practices," he said.

However, Shami's duty will not be just restricted to taking wickets, as the senior bowler will also have to guide understudies like Arshdeep and Harshit Rana during the course of the Champions Trophy. Balaji felt the body of work that Shami has built over the last 12 years makes him an ideal candidate for it. "Shami is the leader of the pack right now. I mean, he has been the leader of the pack for a long time now. If you see what Shami has done in 12 years of cricket and, especially, in Test cricket, it has been humongous. "Now, if he starts striking with the new ball the confidence it gives to other bowlers will be huge," he said. It could be a blessing for Shami that India is playing their matches in Dubai, a venue where pacers found appreciable help in the past. "He keeps attacking the stumps, a quality that is very critical in a place like Dubai, where batsmen may get a little bit more assistance," said Balaji. How does Shami manage to be so effective with the new ball? "Shami has one of the best wrist positions in the game, helping him bring all of his variations. See,

conditions in Dubai will more or less be similar to India, so he just needs to follow his methods there," he added. **So, what are those methods?** "What Shami does is hit the seam and move the ball off the deck. It is dangerous as batsmen will not be able to guess easily which way the ball is going to move. "It also brings into the equation the LBWs and clean bowled dismissals. The away movement ensures that slip cordon too will be in the mix," said Balaji. "And he also bowls closer to the stumps, which allows him to explore those subtle angles. So, he will always be among the wickets," he added. But Shami will have another reason to go full tilt in the Champions Trophy. Despite achieving so much in his career, the Bengal man is yet to win a global trophy, the status brag for any cricketer. And already closer to the dog days of his career, Shami might not get another chance to do it either. It might give him that extra dose of motivation to run in hard in Dubai heat, snap his wrists, before batsmen walk out with a confused stare at the splayed stumps.



## Geraint Thomas to retire from cycling

**PTI ■ LONDON**

Geraint Thomas, the former Tour de France champion who also won gold medals in track cycling for Great Britain at the Olympic Games in 2008 and '12, announced Monday that this will be his final year as a professional. Thomas, a loyal teammate with a tremendous appetite for victory who transformed into a leader in his own right over his almost two-decade career, said he will focus on the Tour this summer with Ineos Grenadiers. Aged 38, Thomas told the BBC that he will ride in support of the team's ambitions and "maybe try to win a stage but just enjoy the race" that he won in 2018. "Since I was a kid I dreamt of riding the Tour and being part of the Olympics and winning was obviously a dream as well, but to achieve that was just nuts," he told BBC Breakfast. "I think now the decision is official, you do start to reflect because when you're in it, it's just one thing after the next, year after year, so you don't really appreciate it. I guess at the time you enjoy it but I don't think you sit back and reflect and think, so there will be a bit of that this year." For a long time, Thomas had a reputation as a party boy, always up for a few pints of beer while watching a rugby match. But his longevity at the highest level speaks about his

dedication and balanced lifestyle. "He is a true fighter," said Dave Brailsford, the man who masterminded Britain's successes at the Olympics and Tour de France. Growing up on the outskirts of Cardiff, Wales, Thomas started bike racing at 10, and his exceptional qualities did not remain unnoticed for long. "I first saw him when he was about 13 or 14 and he joined me at 17," recalled Rod Ellingworth, the performance director at Team Sky when Thomas won the Tour, who also trained him as a British team coach. "You could see straightaway he was just flying round the track, he was pretty good. As he joined the junior program, you just knew he was going to be pretty talented." Thomas's first successes came on the track. In 2006, he was the youngest member of the British pursuit team that competed at the world championships. In 2008, he won the Olympic gold medal alongside Bradley Wiggins. Four years later in London, with a second gold medal secured in the same event, Thomas left track cycling to focus on road racing. Thomas had already showed immense skills on the road from winning the Paris-Roubaix junior race in 2004. His initial ambitions on the road were to perform at one-day classics, then he rode the 2007 Tour.

## Malewar, Shorey lead Vidarbha to 308/5 against Mumbai

**PTI ■ NAGPUR**

Danish Malewar's gritty 79 and opener Dhruv Shorey's attractive 74 made up for a gritty batting show by hosts Vidarbha as they reached 308 for 5 against defending champions Mumbai on the first day of their Ranji Trophy semi-final here on Monday. Karun Nair, who is back in contention for a Test team berth, scored a chiselled 45 before he seemed distinctly unhappy with a caught behind decision of Shivam Dube's bowling although he had opted for DRS. While the two-time champions didn't have a big partnership, they had enough middling stands to see their cross 300-run mark after Mumbai had sent down 88 overs in the day. Mumbai bowlers were also more guilty of bowling as many as 13 no balls during the course of the opening day. Left-arm spinner Shams Mulani (2/44 in 18 overs) was easily the best bowler on



the day as he got appreciable bounce and some amount of purchase from the Jamtha track. Dube (2/35 in 9 overs) also had a couple wickets but one of them was more so because of a splendid one-handed diving catch by Suryakumar Yadav in the slip cordon. That Mumbai failed to make more inroads was because the two new ball bowlers Shardul Thakur (0/57 in 14 overs) and Mohit Avasthi (0/61 in 14 overs) were way off the mark with both new

Atharva Taide (4) as the batter tried to shoulder arms. Shorey, a former Delhi opener, who hit nine boundaries, added 54 for the second wicket with left-hander Parth Rekhade (23), who was out just before lunch trying to drive Dube but Surya standing at third slip showing brilliant reflexes to pouch it one-handed. Malewar, who has been Vidarbha's find of the season, blended caution with aggression after lunch, dominating in his 51-run stand with Shorey. Shorey, who looked good for a three-figure mark, was finally gone when Mulani got one to jump off length and it turned enough to carry the edge which Mumbai skipper Ajinkya Rahane gleefully accepted. Nair, who is in fantastic form this season, looked effortless while tackling both Mulani and off-spinner Tanush Kotian en route his 78-run fourth wicket stand with Malewar. They were ready to use their

feet with Malewar hitting the only six off the day off Mulani, who was otherwise in full control. Nair, who had hit six boundaries, looked in control before a delivery from Dube in the post-tea session moved a shade and was taken by keeper Akash Anand. While on-field umpire gave it out after some deliberation, Nair asked for review and the decision was upheld. Malewar's 159 ball knock ended when he tried to play forward defence to a Mulani delivery that kissed the outside edge into keeper Anand's gloves. However the bespectacled pair of left-handed Yash Rathod (47 batting) and skipper Akshay Wadkar (13 batting) added 47 for the unbroken sixth wicket to take the total past 300-run mark. **Brief Scores** Vidarbha 308/5; 88 overs (Danish Malewar 79, Dhruv Shorey 74, Karun Nair 45; Shams Mulani 2/44, Shuvam Dube 2/35) vs Mumbai.

## Pakistani's Haris Rauf resumes bowling in nets

**PTI ■ KARACHI**

Pakistan's injured fast bowler Haris Rauf said on Monday he has resumed bowling in the nets and was feeling comfortable, adding that it was up to the team management to decide on his selection for the Champions Trophy (CT) opener against New Zealand. "I have started doing exercises a few days back and also resumed bowling since yesterday," Haris told reporters at the National Stadium. "I am feeling comfortable and my body is okay now the team management will decide about my playing in the opening match," he said. Haris, who remains one of Pakistan's key fast bowlers with his express pace and ability to take wickets in the middle overs, sustained a muscular strain in his lower chest wall in the first match of the recently-held three-nation event.

## Kane Williamson joins Middlesex for 2025 season

**PTI ■ LONDON**

Former New Zealand captain Kane Williamson has signed a two-year contract with Middlesex Cricket to play in the T20 Blast and County Championship, while also captaining London Spirit in this year's edition of The Hundred. Regarded as one of the greatest modern-day batters, Williamson, who previously played for Gloucestershire (2011-2012) and Yorkshire (2013-2018), will be available for at least 10 of Middlesex's 14 T20 Blast group fixtures and a minimum of five County Championship matches in the second half of the season. "I've played a bit of county cricket in the past, but not for a number of years now, so when this opportunity arose with Middlesex it was a really exciting prospect," Williamson, the all-time leading Test run-scorer for New Zealand, said in a release. "To be able to play for Middlesex - a fine club with a rich heritage - is really exciting and something that I'm really looking forward to being a part of. To play at Lord's, the Home of Cricket - which is



one of my favourite grounds in the world for so many different reasons - is something I'm especially looking forward to also. "There's a good balance of youth and experience in the Middlesex squad, which is great, and I'm really excited to join up with the team, meet the players in the squad and helping out wherever I can." Williamson, who will make Lord's his home in 2025 from May through to the end of September, has become one of the

first-ever direct signings for The Hundred. London Spirit secured his services outside of the draft process, and he will lead the team under the guidance of newly appointed head coach Justin Langer. Fraser Stewart, General Manager of London Spirit, said: "We're thrilled to have Kane on board for this summer. For us to be able to make a direct signing of this calibre is truly exciting for London Spirit, and I am sure that he will be looking forward to captaining our talented side." A veteran captain in all formats for New Zealand, Williamson has accumulated over 18,000 international runs, including 47 centuries. He boasts an impressive average of 54.88 in Tests, 49.65 in ODIs, and 33.44 in T20s. Williamson is a familiar face in the world's top franchise leagues, having played for Gujarat Titans and Sunrisers Hyderabad in the IPL, Barbados Tridents in the Caribbean Premier League, and Durban's Super Giants in the South African T20 league.

## Australian team arrives in Pakistan for Champions Trophy

**PTI ■ LAHORE**

The Australian cricket team arrived in Pakistan on Monday to participate in the upcoming ICC Champions Trophy. The tournament begins with a match between hosts Pakistan and New Zealand in Karachi on Wednesday. Pakistan are also the defending champions having won the last edition of the tournament in 2017 in the UK where they beat India in the title clash. "The Australian cricket team has arrived in Lahore for the @ICC #ChampionsTrophy 2025! They will play their first match of the tournament on 22 February against England at the Gaddafi Stadium," the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) posted on X. The team landed in two separate groups. The first batch, which included captain Steve

Smith, coaches, and support staff, arrived from Colombo via Dubai. The second group, comprising 15 players and two additional members of the support staff, followed the same route and reached Lahore later the same day. Like India, who will be playing all their matches in Dubai as per the hybrid model agreement, the Australian team will also not feature in any warm-up matches, as they were very recently involved in a two-match ODI series against Sri Lanka, which they lost 2-0. After their opener against traditional rivals England, Australia will play their second match against South Africa on February 25 at Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium, followed by a final group-stage outing against Afghanistan on February 28, again at Gaddafi Stadium.

# No success without failure, embrace hard work: Mary Kom, Lekhara, Suhas

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**

There is no success without failure and perseverance always pays was the message from boxing great M C Mary Kom and Paralympic stars Avani Lekhara and Suhas Yathiraj when they offered stress-management tips to school students as part of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 'Pariksha pe Charcha' initiative. The three athletes also gave advice on overcoming failure, staying focused, and embracing challenges during the special session conducted annually since 2018 for students preparing for board examinations. "They say failure is the opposite of success. But I think failure is the biggest part of success. No success comes without failure," said two-time Paralympic champion in shooting Lekhara, who was paralysed

from waist down after suffering a car accident as a child. In a shift from the traditional town hall format, this time the Prime Minister opted for a more informal setting, taking the students to Delhi's picturesque Sunder Nursery for his annual interaction ahead of board exams. He also brought on board eminent personalities from different walks of life to answer questions from students in an episodic format starting with himself on February 10. Mary Kom, a six-time world champion and a London Olympics bronze-medallist, spoke about the challenges she faced while pursuing boxing, underlining the importance of resilience. The 42-year-old struggled to keep her composure while recalling the many challenges she overcame to become a boxing great, which included



opposition of her father early on and physical challenge of continuing a high-risk contact sport after embracing motherhood. "Boxing is not a women's game. I took up that challenge because I wanted to prove to myself and to all the women in the country that we can do it, and I went on to become a world

champion several times," she said. "In your life, if you want to take on a challenge, you have to be strong from within. Initially, I faced many challenges. I was often discouraged and had to overcome numerous obstacles," the diminutive Manipuri said fighting back tears. "Every field is difficult. There are no shortcuts; you have to work hard. If I can do it, why can't you?" she added. Two-time Paralympic silver-medallist in badminton Suhas, who has a congenital deformity in his left ankle that affects his mobility, also stressed on the need to be persistent. "Good things don't come easily. Your journey must go on. If you are willing to shine like the sun, you must be willing to burn like it," he stressed. The questions from students

were focussed on tackling anxiety, pressure and the many distractions that make up the modern life. The athletes gave them just the pep talk to deal with all these issues. Suhas spoke about how eliminating the fear of failure helped him secure a historic gold at the Asian Championships. "Your mind is your greatest friend as well as your enemy. In 2016, I represented India at the Asian Championships, and I got so scared that I lost the first game and was trailing in the second. "During the 30-second drinks break, I said to myself, 'You have come this far; the worst that could happen is that you might lose. So, lose the fear of losing and play your natural game.' "I not only won that match but went on to win six more, becoming the first ever unseeded player to win a

gold medal in China at the Asian Championships. The lesson is, if you lose your fear, you will play your natural game. Never think about who is in front, just give your best." A computer engineer-turned-IAS officer, Suhas urged students to keep three things in mind when they pursued their ambitions. "Consider whether you can achieve a position among the top three-five per cent in your chosen field, and whether you have the passion for it that comes from your heart." The 23-year-old Lekhara emphasised that recovery and revision are as important as studying. "I have been balancing shooting and studying since 9th grade. I think there should be a period of rest and recovery after studying, just as in sports. You should go for walks and revise."