



**INSIDE**  
**MONEY 10**  
GOVERNMENT LOOKING AT PROCEDURAL EASING TO FURTHER PROMOTE FDI: OFFICIAL

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## 31 Naxalites, 2 cops killed in encounter

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ RAIPUR



Security forces during an anti-Naxal operation in Chhattisgarh

In a major crackdown operation against the Left Wing Extremism, security forces gunned down 31 Naxalites, including 11 women during a fierce encounter in Chhattisgarh's Bijapur district on Sunday. Two security personnel were also killed and as many others injured in the face-off. More than 650 security personnel entered the Indravati National Park area from different sides and eliminated 31 Naxalites in their den, Chhattisgarh's Deputy Chief Minister Vijay Sharma said.

Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai said the end of Naxalism in the country and the state is certain. Under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah, the state will get rid of Naxalism by March 2026, he added. With this incident, 81 Naxalites have been gunned down by security forces in separate encounters in Chhattisgarh so far this year. Responding to the operation, Union Home Minister Amit Shah said that Naxals will be eradicated by March 31, 2026 and no citizen of the country has to lose his life due to it. "I also reiterate my resolve that before 31 March, 2026, we will completely eradicate Naxalism from the country so that no citizen of the country has to lose his life due to it," he wrote on "X" in Hindi. The home minister said in the direction of making India Naxal-free, the security forces have achieved a big success in Bijapur, Chhattisgarh. The latest gunfight took place

at a forest in Indravati National Park area in the morning when a joint team of personnel from different security forces was out on an anti-Naxalite operation, Inspector General of Police, Bastar Range, Sundarraj P said. Personnel belonging to the District Reserve Guard (DRG), Special Task Force (STF) and Bastar Fighters, all units of the state police, were involved in the operation, he said. "So far, bodies of 31 Naxalites clad in 'uniform' have been recovered from the encounter site. Besides, a huge cache of weapons, including AK-47, INSAS, SLR and .303 rifles and Barrel Grenade Launchers (BGL), and explosives have also been seized from the site," the official said. Two security personnel, one belonging to the state DRG and the other from the STF, were killed in the gunfight and two others suffered injuries, he said. The two injured jawans, reportedly to be out of danger, were being airlifted to a better medical facility for treatment, he said. Reinforcement has been rushed to the spot and search operation is still underway in the area, he added. Security forces have been continuously getting success in this direction and moving rapidly towards achieving the goal. The end of Naxalism, which is like "cancer", from the country and the state is certain, he said in a statement. "The sacrifice of our soldiers will not go in vain. I pray to

God for the departed souls to rest in peace and provide strength to the bereaved families, and for the speedy recovery of the injured jawans," Sai said. Hailing the security forces, Deputy CM Vijay Sharma said the national park area in Bijapur was considered as a safe haven for Naxalites, where more than 650 security personnel entered from different sides and eliminated 31 Naxalites in their den. All the deceased Naxalites were clad in uniform and automated weapons were recovered from them, he told reporters. "The IEDs (Improvised Explosive Devices) laid (by Naxalites) on the path of development of Bastar will be cleared and we are working with full commitment to ensure basic amenities like schools, hospitals, water, road, anganwadis (government-run women and child care centres) and mobile towers reach the entire region," he said. Out of the 81 Naxalites gunned down in the state so far this year, 65 were killed in the Bastar division comprising seven districts, including Bijapur. Last year, 219 Naxalites were neutralised by security forces in separate encounters in Chhattisgarh, according to police. On October 4 last year, 38 Naxalites were killed following an encounter in Abhujmaad area along the Narayanpur-Dantewada inter-district border in the Bastar region.



Delhi BJP President Virendra Sachdeva, BJP Delhi in-charge Baijayant Panda, BJP National General Secretary BL Santoshi, BJP MPs from Delhi and newly-elected MLAs before a meeting after the victory in Delhi Assembly elections, at the Delhi state office in New Delhi. Photo: Ranjan Dimri/The Pioneer

## BJP huddles for new Delhi CM

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

After the party's historic victory in the Delhi Assembly elections, senior BJP leaders began crucial meetings to find its leader to head the next government in the national capital as party president JP Nadda met Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday where key decisions regarding the future of Delhi's governance were discussed. BJP's strong performance across all regions and communities in the polls has left the party with a wide pool of potential chief ministerial candidates. With larger political messaging often guiding the party's choices in choosing its chief ministers in different states, insiders believe that Delhi would be no exception. The BJP won 48 seats in the 70-member Assembly defeating the AAP which secured 22 seats. This was the BJP's first win in Assembly polls in 27 years and the AAP's first defeat after three successive victories since 2013. The BJP is also planning a grand swearing-in ceremony after Prime Minister Narendra Modi returns from his visit to the US after February 13. PM Modi will be on a two-day visit to meet US President Donald Trump on February 12 and 13. The swearing-in ceremony will be a grand event that will mark the BJP's return to power in Delhi after 27 years and BJP is planning to invite all the major leaders and chief ministers of the NDA alliance, celebrities and renowned personalities. Delhi BJP chief Virendra Sachdeva wrote to Lieutenant-Governor V K Saxena, seeking time from him for a meeting with the 48 newly-elected party MLAs. "I along with the BJP MPs from Delhi and our newly elected 48 MLAs wish to meet you at an early date. Please, allow an appointment at an early date according to your convenience," the letter said. Earlier today, AAP leader and Chief Minister Atishi

tendered her resignation to the Delhi L-G, who has asked her to continue till the ruling party stakes claim to form the government. Sachdeva also held the BJP, which went to the election without announcing a Chief Ministerial face, has started high-level meetings to decide the head of government, with five leaders emerging as key contenders. With larger political messaging often guiding the party's choices in choosing its chief ministers in different states, political watchers believe that Delhi would be no exception. While visible faces such as Parvesh Verma, a leader from the Jat community who defeated AAP supremo Arvind Kejriwal, and seasoned organisational leaders like Satish Upadhyay, Vijender Gupta, Ashish Sood and Pawan Sharma are being talked about, the BJP has a history of elevating leaders with a relatively low public profile.

## Manipur ready for change of guard



CM N Biren Singh hands over the letter of resignation from the post of Chief Minister to Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla at the Raj Bhawan in Imphal accompanied by party MLAs

has a rich and diverse civilizational history over thousands of years," the letter added. On Saturday, Singh convened a meeting with BJP-led ruling alliance MLAs at the CM Secretariat. The meeting was held in the wake of the opposition Congress seeking to move a no-confidence motion against the government led by Singh. More than 250 people have been killed and thousands rendered homeless since ethnic violence broke out in the state in May 2023. Meanwhile, state BJP president A Sharda confirmed that chief minister N Biren Singh tendered his resignation to governor in the interest of the people of the state. "We are yet to receive further instructions from the party," he told reporters. Sharda asserted that Singh worked tirelessly for the development and integrity of the state. "He has been trying to bring peace in the state since the ethnic violence broke out on May 3, 2023. The BJP will continue to work hard for the integrity of the state," she added. Congress termed N Biren Singh's resignation as "belated" and said people of the state were now awaiting a visit by "our frequent-flier Prime Minister" Narendra Modi.

border infiltration and to formulate policy for the deportation of the illegal immigrants and the fight against drugs and narco terrorism." "It has been an honour to serve the people of Manipur thus far. I am extremely grateful to the central government for time actions, interventions, developmental work and implementation of various projects for safeguarding the interests of every single Manipuri," Biren said in his letter. "My sincere request to the central government through your good office is to continue with the same. I take the opportunity to enumerate the most important ones of them... To maintain the territorial integrity of Manipur which

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## BUDDH SUTRA



Tibetan Buddhist monks participate in Kangyur (the Tibetan name for the Buddhist sutras) procession at Mahabodhi temple in Bodhi Gaya

## Atishi quits, Delhi Assembly dissolved

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI



AAP leader Atishi submits her resignation as Delhi Chief Minister to Lt Governor V K Saxena in New Delhi

A day after Capital's verdict, Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader and Chief Minister Atishi tendered her resignation to the Lieutenant-Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena who has asked her to continue till the winning side BJP stakes claim to form the government. Atishi, who retained her Kalkaji seat, handed over her resignation to Saxena at Raj Niwas. Later, the Lt Governor also dissolved the Seventh Legislative Assembly of the national Capital. The notification, dated February 7, stated, "In exercise of the power conferred upon me by subsection (2)(b) of section 6 of the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi Act, 1991, I, Vinai Kumar Saxena, Lieutenant Governor of Delhi, hereby dissolve the Seventh Legislative Assembly of the National Capital Territory of Delhi with effect from 8th February, 2025." Besides, the Election Commission of India (ECI) officially concluded the process of Delhi Legislative Assembly Election 2025, with the submission of the "Due Constitution Notification" containing the

list of newly elected candidates to the Lieutenant Governor. The same was submitted to LG by Ajoy Kumar, Principal Secretary of the ECI and R Alice Vaz, Chief Electoral Officer of Delhi. Also present on the occasion were B C Patra, Secretary, ECI, and Rajesh Kumar, Special Chief Electoral Officer of Delhi. Atishi served as Delhi's Chief Minister for nearly five months. She took oath as chief minister in September last year after AAP convenor and her predecessor Arvind Kejriwal resigned from the post amid corruption allegations against him. Five women candidates, including outgoing chief minister Atishi won in the Delhi Assembly poll 2025, down from eight in the 2020 elections. Atishi is the only woman candidate of AAP who won this time. The BJP is expected to stake claim to power next week after Prime Minister Narendra Modi returns from a foreign visit, party leaders said. In a related development, newly-elected MLAs of AAP met party supremo Arvind Kejriwal at his Ferozshah Road residence a day after the party faced drubbing in the Delhi assembly election, winning only 22 out of the total 70 seats it contested.

## Dry spell to cast on Shimla apple variety

PTI ■ SHIMLA

A prolonged dry spell has got Shimla farmers worrying about the apple crop, which is now threatened by a hampered production. Desired cooling hours (1,200 to 1,600 below 7 degrees Celsius) for traditional varieties and 600 hours for early varieties have not come by this season. Farmers were also restricted from new plantations due to unfavourable weather conditions, Fruit Vegetable Flower Growers Association President Harish Chauhan told PTI on Sunday. About 90 per cent of apple orchardists in the state are still on traditional varieties, while the remaining have adopted high density plantations. "Snow during winter months also kills insects and diseases but we are

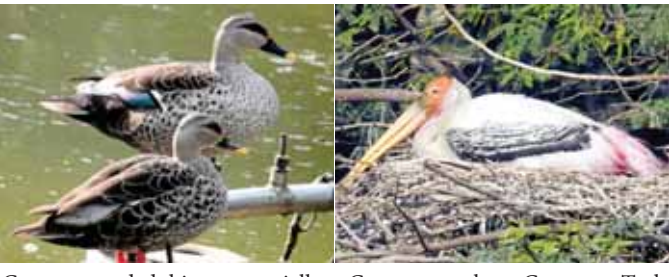
witnessing a one-month shift in weather for the past three years which has affected apple production," Chauhan said. The state saw a rain deficit of 97 per cent in October last year, 99 per cent in November, and 84 per cent this January, the ninth lowest since 1901, Meteorological expert Sandeep Sharma said. In all, the rain deficit was 41 per cent in the post-monsoon season (October to December), with December the only exception with 21 per cent of excess rain. Rain deficit from February 1 to 9 was 38 per cent, with the state receiving 16.2 mm of precipitation against a normal of 26.3 mm, the Met said. Sufficient chilling hours and moisture during winters is essential for a good apple crop, while hailstorms at flowering stage prove harmful.

The temperature has to remain below 7 degrees for appropriate chilling, which varies with latitude as the apple growing area falls mainly in the temperate zone, according to scientists. An increase in temperature tends to harm the apple production, while early spouting in stone fruit in low hills could affect the yield and the crop, said Sujaat Chauhan, an apple orchardist from Sandhu village. Farmers had dug pots in several areas for new plantation but a dry spell that led to less moisture in the land halted the process, says Sushil Dhalla, another apple grower. The cost of plantation is high as one plant costs between Rs 150-200, he said. "We were unable to sow the peas crop due to dry spell and are hoping to see rain and snow in February," another farmer, Rajhuber said.

## Climate change affects arrival of winged guests

T K ROY ■ NEW DELHI

Global climate change has impacted the arrival of migratory birds to National Zoological Park (NZP) wetlands here this month besides several such habitats all over the country. However, NZP still managed to welcome few species of migratory water birds including Common Teal, Common Sandpiper and Great Cormorant. Sharing this information, eminent ecologist T K Roy said on Wednesday National Zoological Park (NZP) has cluster of four smaller wetlands which support the habitat for water birds both resident and migratory and especially breeding bird Painted Stork's large breeding colony since past many decades. Asian Waterbird Census (AWC), part of International Waterbird



Census recorded this year partially lesser water bird species diversity, he said. Giving details, Roy said 19 species of total population 609 includes 16 resident species and three migratory species in comparison to AWC 2024 i.e. 17 species of total population 1,249 includes 15 resident species and 02 migratory species. In 2025, among three migratory species includes only one Common Sandpiper, one Great

Roy said Wetlands International's annual Asian Waterbird Census (AWC) part of the global International Waterbird Census is carried out in the month of January in 27 countries together in Asia and Australasia including India. This exercise includes active volunteers under coordination of the AWC State Coordinators as per the confirmed annual dates by National Coordinator. AWC supports the conservation and management of wetland and waterbirds globally. The AWC here was conducted on January at the smaller wetlands of NZP with active support of NZP Director. Participants included serious birders, professor as volunteer from Amity International University, Ramanujan College, NZP Curator.

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PAPER WITH PASSION

## Delhi dislodges AAP

In a landmark political shift, the BJP has stormed to power in the 2025 Delhi Assembly elections, marking its return after 27 years

**A**m Aadmi Party (AAP) that ruled for ten years has been ousted by the BJP. It is one of the major setbacks that AAP has suffered since its inception. Despite its misadventures it always remained voters favourite in Delhi. Now with the BJP making a comeback it has suffered not only a big jolt to the party morale but also to the brand Kejriwal. In a historic political shift, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has secured a decisive victory in the 2025 Delhi Assembly elections, ending the AAP's decade-long governance in the national capital. This marks the BJP's return to power in Delhi after 27 years. The BJP won 48 out of the 70 Assembly seats, surpassing the majority mark of 36 seats. In contrast, AAP managed to secure only 22 seats, a significant decline from its previous tally of 62 seats in the 2020 elections. The Congress party failed to open account, continuing its decline in the region. Notably, AAP's prominent leaders faced unexpected defeats. Aam Aadmi Party chief

Arvind Kejriwal lost the New Delhi seat to BJP's Parvesh Verma by a margin of 4,089 votes. Similarly, former Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia was defeated in the Jangpura constituency. Senior AAP leaders, including Saurabh Bharadwaj in Greater Kailash and Somnath Bharti in Malviya Nagar, also lost their seats. After ten years in power, AAP encountered strong anti-incumbency sentiments, with voters expressing a desire for change.

Legal troubles and corruption allegations against key leaders, including Kejriwal and Sisodia, further diminished public trust in the party. Meanwhile, the BJP successfully leveraged AAP's shortcomings, presenting a development-driven governance model that resonated with the electorate. This electoral outcome serves as a critical juncture for AAP. The party must undertake a comprehensive introspection. Perhaps it is time it realised that it would be a good idea to remain with the INDIA bloc and playing solo is not always a good idea. One of the major reason for its defeat might have been the division of votes. Congress though did not gain but pulled it down. Addressing the corruption allegations transparently and implementing internal reforms will be essential to rebuild credibility. Reassessing policy positions and strengthening grassroots connections can help the party reconnect with its core voter base. In his concession speech, Arvind Kejriwal acknowledged the defeat and extended his congratulations to the BJP, expressing hope that the new government will fulfill its promises to the people of Delhi. The results of the 2025 Delhi Assembly elections send a strong and clear message to all political parties—governance, credibility and adaptability matter more than rhetoric. The political parties cannot rely solely on past achievements; they must continuously evolve and deliver on public expectations. Ultimately, there are no shortcuts to winning voters' trust— even freebies have their limits.



### PICTALK



Tourists take a ride on a hot air balloon, in Manali

# The new geopolitical communication era

With emerging technologies, evolving geopolitical alliances and the dominance of visual storytelling, the way messages are crafted and delivered is being redefined



CHAITANYA K PRASAD

**O**ne of the critical areas where visible changes will be witnessed post-January 2025 is the communication landscape geopolitically. This era is positioned to redefine the very speedways of global communication, with a pivotal question arising: Are we on the verge of a 360-degree transformation in communication delivery, content orientation, outreach mechanisms, and the tools we deploy? Geopolitically, the communication ecosystem will embrace a new language—a language of immediacy, focused messaging, results-driven delivery, and the prioritisation of measurable outcomes to identify realistic patterns and global impacts.

As the world steps into this new chapter of geopolitical shifts, communication strategies are becoming more sophisticated, dynamic and multidimensional. The need of the hour is to analyse the new alliances afoot in the shifting political landscape and the major geopolitical developments. The evolving political climate is challenging traditional paradigms, compelling communication specialists, diplomats, and policymakers to rethink how messages are crafted, delivered, and received on a global stage.

The era demands a communication framework that not only transcends borders but also bridges divides with precision, creativity, and authenticity. In 2025, the phrase "a picture is worth a thousand words" takes on greater resonance. Visual communication has become the most impactful way to deliver messages. A single, well-composed image has the power to convey emotions, ideas, and narratives that words may struggle to encapsulate. Building on this, the explosion of short-form videos, and 30-second reels, for instance, has transformed the landscape further.

Their brevity and emotional depth make them tools of unparalleled influence in shaping public opinion, mobilising support, and even defusing tensions. This evolution places immense responsibility on communicators in the geopolitical arena. Diplomacy, once conducted primarily behind



closed doors, is increasingly playing out in the public domain through curated visuals, symbolic gestures and strategic messaging amplified by digital platforms. For foreign policy, the challenge is to balance transparency and strategy, using these tools to build trust while maintaining sensitivity.

As social media continues its rapid rise, many ask whether traditional media can still hold its ground in the face of this digital juggernaut. Social media has undeniably globalised and democratised communication, giving individuals, governments, and organisations a direct channel to their audiences.

It thrives on immediacy, engagement, and the power to go viral, making it an essential tool in geopolitical communication. However, traditional media is far from obsolete. In an era of information overload, its role as a trusted gatekeeper remains critical. While social media is the messenger of the moment, traditional media provides depth, analysis, and context—elements that are crucial for informed decision-making. For communication to be effective in this new geopolitical era, the two mediums must complement each other, creating a holistic narrative that is both immediate and enduring. The rise of artificial intelligence has added another layer of



**SOCIAL MEDIA HAS UNDENIABLY GLOBALISED AND DEMOCRATISED COMMUNICATION, GIVING INDIVIDUALS, GOVERNMENTS AND ORGANISATIONS A DIRECT CHANNEL TO THEIR AUDIENCES**

complexity to global communication. AI-driven analytics enable unprecedented insights into audience behaviour, preferences, and sentiments, allowing for hyper-personalised messaging. These tools are invaluable for diplomats and foreign policy experts, who can now craft messages with immense precision and predict their impact with greater accuracy. However, with these advancements come ethical dilemmas. The line between strategic communication and manipulation can easily blur, necessitating robust frameworks to ensure accountability and fairness. As the communication landscape becomes more intricate, the demand for skilled specialists is growing. These professionals are not just channels for information, they are strategists, analysts, and creators who understand the nuances of messaging in a diverse and rapidly changing world. Traditional media must evolve to remain relevant, embracing digital innovations and audience-centric approaches. Meanwhile, social media must grapple with issues of misinformation, polarisation, and echo chambers, striving to become a platform that unites rather than divides. In this era, communication is no longer just about delivering a message; it is about shaping perceptions, building relationships, and driving action. As

the world becomes increasingly interconnected, the ability to communicate effectively will be one of the most powerful tools in navigating the complexities of a neo-geopolitical era. In an era marked by shifting alliances and evolving global priorities, multilateral institutions face both challenges and opportunities. The reworking of commitments by key nations to international frameworks has drawn notice to the fragility of global consensus, raising questions about the role and relevance of these institutions in addressing shared challenges like public health, climate change, and economic inequality. This shifting landscape calls for a more nuanced approach to diplomacy within multilateral spaces, with a renewed focus on collective responsibility. For these institutions to thrive in a complex geopolitical climate, they must leverage communication technologies to foster transparency, engage diverse stakeholders, and amplify their ability to drive action. Whether through the lens of a camera, the reach of a tweet, or the depth of an investigative report, the stories we tell and how we tell them will shape the world in ways we are only beginning to understand.

*(The writer is a former civil servant. Views are personal. Inputs by Vaishnavie Srinivasan and Zoya Ahmad)*

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### WTO NEEDS REFORM

**Madam** — It is with reference to the editorial page article "WTO is at a crossroads; Reform or perish" — February 8. WTO is the world's largest international economic organisation, established in 1995 with 166 members representing over 98 per cent of the global trade and global GDP. Before the WTO, there was the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs (GATT), a global trade organisation with 23 countries. Every member country is obligated to follow the laws and policies framed by WTO rules. India is a significant member of the WTO. Trade disputes are addressed by the WTO's dispute settlement process. It is the WTO that makes efforts to promote transparency in decision-making by encouraging participation and, in particular, the use of the consensus rule.

As an international platform, the WTO regulates and negotiates additional trade liberalisation. In recent days, the WTO has been facing many challenges related to changes in the global economy and geopolitical context. Its members have not been able to agree on new rules on agricultural goals, highlighting the conflicting interests between developed and developing countries. Difficult trade relations between the two largest world economies and WTO members—the US and China—also put a strain on the WTO. Unilateral trade measures such as raising tariffs on iron and steel threaten the multilateral trading system. This highlights the WTO might need to be reformed to meet current concerns such as national security, environmental standards, and the impact of technology on trade. If urgent reforms are not undertaken, the global trading system may soon witness the demise of the institution once deemed indispensable.

**P Victor Selvaraj** | Tirunelveli

### ZERO SEATS FOR CONGRESS IN DELHI

**Madam** — It will be painful for the Congress for the massive loss in the Delhi elections when people voted against them consistently for the last 3 terms 0-0-0. The most pathetic observation is that they

## BJP returns to power in Delhi



**T**he BJP's long wait of 26 years to return to power in Delhi has ultimately come to an end after it registered an emphatic victory in Delhi Assembly polls. In fact, Delhi was the only erstwhile BJP-ruled state where victory remained elusive for the BJP even under the strong Modi wave since 2014. Hence, this victory has come as a big relief for the saffron party, which faced unceremo-

couldn't manage even a single seat in the last 3 assembly elections. Capital is Congress's home ground under the leadership of Sonia Gandhi.

The greed for power and dynastic politics made Priyanka Gandhi run all the way from Delhi to Wayanad to come back victorious in the by-election. There's a saying in the villages that 'If one has to assess the quality and power of a person in the village, ask the locals. The same yardstick proved right when there were no takers for Congress locally in Delhi and scoring 0-0-0 in their report card reflects that the quality of the Congress party is under a scanner. For the Congress to survive, the realistic approach must be to keep Rahul and Priyanka from the main limelight and keep them in a low profile so that the party can rebuild the faith for a better future of the party.

**A P Thiruvadi** | Chennai

### RBI CUTS INTEREST RATES

**Madam** — It is a first-rate cut in nearly five years by RBI and it signifies a shift in monetary strategy. With this cut, RBI has clear-

ly sent a signal that it wants to boost lending, stimulate consumer demand and nurture investment. In the recent months, core inflation has shown easing out, providing much-needed headroom for the RBI to implement this rate cut. And a slowdown in the economic growth forced the RBI to take the plunge now. By lowering the borrowing cost, RBI wants to encourage businesses to expand, boost consumption, and help economic growth. Now banks will be happy to extend credit more freely, but they need to be wary of what they have witnessed with their microfinance and unsecured loan portfolios in recent months. In the real estate sector, SMEs will take a sigh of relief, and individual borrowers will see a reduction in their EMIs and, in turn, more money in their pockets, coupled with recent income tax cuts, which will create a positive environment for the consumption boom to take place.

**Bal Govind** | Noida

Send your feedback to: [letterstopioneer@gmail.com](mailto:letterstopioneer@gmail.com)

## Flying faster-than-sound travel closer to reality

Boom Supersonic successfully tested its prototype supersonic aircraft, proving that supersonic commercial travel is not just a dream but an imminent reality



RAJNEESH BHANDARI

**A** significant milestone in commercial aviation history has been achieved. Boom Supersonic, a Colorado-based startup, completed a successful test flight of its prototype supersonic aircraft XB-1, demonstrating that commercial air travel at faster-than-sound speeds is not only feasible but may soon be available for frequent flyers, cutting average intercontinental flight times in half.



saw them as engineering challenges to be overcome with a fresh mindset. Unlike traditional companies that would try to upgrade a subsonic plane to go faster, Boom's team designed every component, from the aerodynamic shape and propulsion system to the fuel system, specifically for supersonic travel. The company exemplifies how ignoring legacy assumptions and knowledge can unlock groundbreaking solutions. Boom's engineers embraced the concept of "unlearning," jettisoning assumptions that certain design elements were necessary or that certain hurdles were insurmountable. Unlearning allowed Boom to innovate with advanced composite materials, wing design and a new noise-reduction strategy.

They rewrote the rules of the game, overcame longstanding technical barriers and ignited fresh interest in supersonic flight. Established players like Boeing and Airbus often shy away from radical changes for fear of failing or canalising profitable products. Boom took calculated risks, embraced uncertainty, and refined each step through rapid data-driven iteration. Historically, supersonic jets are fuel guzzlers. Boom's approach combines aerodynamic optimisation with advanced high-performance materials and a propulsion system designed ground-up to minimise fuel consumption. The propulsion system (Symphony) will run on zero aromatic 100 per cent sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) for sustainable commercial supersonic flights. As a start-up, Boom operates with lean teams. This contrasts sharply with the massive bureaucratic hierarchy within aerospace giants. Swift prototyping, quick feedback loops, and a willingness to pivot ensure that new technology is tested and integrated faster than what Boeing or Airbus might manage.

The prototype aircraft smoothly transitioned through Mach 1 (the speed of sound) and touched Mach 1.1. This technology demonstration will help refine the design ahead of the company's next goal: launching a full-scale 60 to 75-seater supersonic jet called Overture. The founders' vision is that passengers can fly supersonically at tickets comparable to business class fares. Imagine cutting a 7-hour transatlantic flight to 3.5 hours. Suddenly, a business meeting in Delhi and a dinner date in London are feasible on the same day. Overture is being designed to fly 7800 km. It can fly nonstop on routes like Delhi to Frankfurt or New York to London. Faster travel time can be a game-changer for business travellers and high-priority cargo. While Airbus, Boeing, and other established players have the resources and legacy to make big moves, it often takes a nimble newcomer with a fresh perspective and first-principles thinking to challenge what's possible. (The writer is an author, innovator and founder of NeuroEquilibrium; views are personal)



FIRST COLUMN

LIFE IS A MOUNTAIN: CLIMB YOUR PEAK, YOUR WAY

Just like climbing a mountain, life's true joy comes from the ascent, not just the summit



O P SINGH

I have come to believe life is a lot like climbing a mountain. It's not a race or a competition, and it's not about finding a shortcut. The absolute joy of life isn't standing at the summit—it's in the climb.

Each of us has a mountain to climb. It doesn't need to be Everest or Kilimanjaro. It doesn't have to impress anyone else. What matters is that your mountain challenges you, excites you and pushes you to grow.

Moving forward, even a little each day, builds the path to big dreams. Mountains don't reward the fastest or most competent climber—they reward perseverance.



The best routes are discovered through improvisation and authenticity, not by meeting others' expectations. Slips and falls are inevitable, and they hurt.

True success is transformation, not competition. The best climbers don't focus solely on themselves. They lend a hand, share tools, and cheer others on.

The summit is fleeting, but the slips, breakthroughs, lessons, and growth endure. These moments shape you into someone worthy of the top.

(The author is DGP & Head of Haryana State Narcotics Control Bureau, with three books to his credit; views are personal)

Trump's vision for Gaza: Paradise or purgatory?



NILANTHA ILANGAMUWA

President Donald Trump's proposal for Gaza is more than just another audacious policy move—it is a collision of commerce, geopolitics and power



Everyone saw it unfold. This is the harsh reality of life in the Devil's paradise, where desires are transformed into laws, ambitions become twisted ethics, and behaviour is coerced into the very fabric of the system.

Nevertheless, the proposal has sparked strong opposition. Saudi Arabia, a key ally of Trump, swiftly condemned it, insisting that no nation would recognise Israel without the creation of an independent Palestinian state.

Trump's proposition, laden with both visionary ambition and horrific repercussions, challenges the entrenched paradigm. This proposal, as reported, was not born of sudden whim, but the culmination of years of deliberation within Trump's inner circle.

Kushner's claim, in a recent interview with the Financial Times, that his "ability to see trends before others" uniquely positions him to capitalise on opportunities others find unpalatable, resonates with the underlying logic of Trump's plan.



THE ARAB WORLD, ONCE INTOXICATED BY THE IDEA OF PAN-ARAB UNITY, HAS REPEATEDLY SUCCUMBED TO ITS INTERNAL FISSURES, NEVER ABLE TO OVERCOME THE CORROSIVE FORCES OF REALPOLITIK AND SELF-INTEREST

cy but also as a means to expand a business empire throughout Asia. This fusion of commerce and conquest is as disquieting as it is unprecedented, conjuring images of modern-day feudalism, where land and people are subjugated to serve the profit motives of a privileged few.

Regional players—Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Iran, Qatar, Jordan, and others—have long danced to contradictory rhythms, using Palestine as a symbol to justify their betrayals, while failing to act with sincerity or consequence.

The Arab world, once intoxicated by the idea of pan-Arab unity, has repeatedly succumbed to its internal fissures, never able to overcome the corrosive forces of realpolitik and self-interest.

While the Sykes-Picot Agreement remains the most infamous symbol of colonial partition, it is far from the only clandestine accord that has shaped the fate of Palestine.

Lesser-known pacts, such as the Husayn-McMahon Correspondence, which promised Arab independence in exchange for rebellion against the Ottoman Empire, were later betrayed in favour of European imperial ambitions.

Similarly, the post-World War II period saw Arab states engage in secret dealings with both Western and Soviet powers, each prioritising their strategic interests over Palestinian rights.

Today, these past betrayals reverberate in the region's collective psyche, leaving Palestinian aspirations still choked by the suffocating embrace of powers both external and internal.

makes Trump's audacious proposal so paradoxically compelling. Here lies an opportunity for the perennial exiles—the Palestinians—not as pawns in a geopolitical chess game, but as potential agents for the reawakening of Arab unity.

For decades, Palestinian suffering has been wielded as a symbol of resistance, a poignant reminder of an exodus that began with the Nakba in 1948.

It is within this environment of ambivalence and simmering tension that Trump's proposal must be viewed as a paradigm-shifting moment. The convergence of statecraft and property development, epitomised by Trump and Kushner's ambitions, signals a departure from conventional geopolitical paradigms.

Whether this radical reimagining of Gaza could catalyse Arab unity remains uncertain, inherently tied to the unresolved contradictions within the region's historical legacy.

However, the likelihood remains that this bold gambit, with all its extravagant rhetoric and ambitious visions, will only serve to deepen existing rifts, leaving Palestinians once again at the mercy of external schemes.

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

Uttarakhand leads the way: The first state to implement Uniform Civil Code

Uniform laws that empower women will be the common thread binding the nation in oneness and uphold the constitutional spirit

Uttarakhand has led the way in formalising laws for women of different faith as equal, upholding the spirit of the constitution.



GEETA BHATT

The courageous step taken by this young state will pave the way as a paradigm for others to follow similar footsteps.

tabled for discussion in the Constituent Assembly when Babasaheb, as Chairman of Drafting Committee, had expressed need for uniformity in fundamental laws, both civil and criminal.

Majority of the members of this sub-committee were in agreement with the proposal except Minoos Masani, Hansa Mehta and Rajkumari Amrit Kaur who wrote to Patel stating, "One of the factors that have kept India back from advancing to nationhood has been the existence of personal laws based on religion".

stituent assembly got support from Dr BR Ambedkar, KM Munshi and Alladi K Ayyar. The opposition from the Muslim members ensued the UCC under Directive Principles Article 44, where the Constituent Assembly was not obliged to enforce the provision and at the same time, the provision could be implemented by the legislatures in the future.

A compromise made between those in support and those in disagreement of the UCC. The changing social milieu has seen a trend in rigorous churning to shed away repressive, orthodox practices so as to evolve a social structure which believes in equal rights.



Hindus from 1955-56. The women's rights under Muslim Personal law were challenged by Shah Bano in 1985 demanding maintenance from her husband.

(Protection of Rights on Divorce) Act, 1986. The lingering wait for gender rights saw a ray of hope after 30 years when on the plea filed by Shayara Bano and others, who were victims of matrimonial dispute, the Supreme Court declared "talaq-e-biddat" or instantaneous triple talaq as unconstitutional in 2017.

This time the government of the day stood by the rights of Muslim women and vindicated the crusade undertaken by Shah Bano by legally prohibiting triple talaq and protecting the rights of married Muslim women by bringing The Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Act in 2019.

by bringing this act, there are miles to go as social customs of polygamy and Halala still looms large. The judiciary has reminded the legislators to fulfil their obligation towards the Constitution and promote equal rights for women.

The bill in its four parts covers marriage and divorce, succession, live-in relationships. The section 4 of the bill outlines that "neither party has a spouse living at the time of the

marriage" with marriage age of 21 and 18 for man and women respectively, making polygamy and child marriage illegal. The bill also requires compulsory registration of marriages within 60 days where the couple has equal right to dissolve the marriage through a decree of divorce only through court proceedings.

(The writer is Director, Non Collegiate Women's Education Board, University of Delhi; views are personal)











# Must-Do Yogasanas

**BY YASH GUPTA**  
Breathe in! Breathe out! As long as you live there are certain things that you cannot control but there are other things that you can control. Having control over your senses is considered one of the wealth and the path is through yoga. The list of activities is forever going,

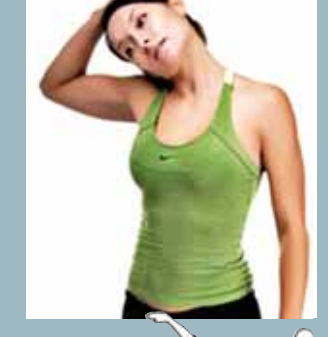
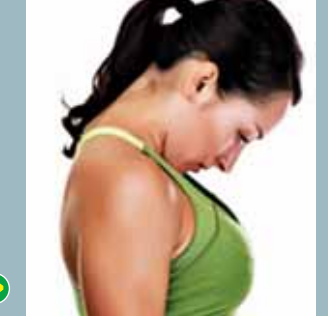
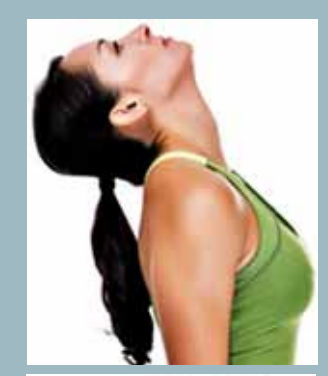
there is no end to what to do for better mental and physical health. Some exercises do not go well with the body because of the body structure, past injuries, or ongoing health issues. But here are 5 yogasanas that are recommended and are equally beneficial for everyone. You can do it during office hours and 2 of them are recommended as for starting your day.



**Tadasana:** The most common asana for a healthy spine is the tadasana, just be barefoot and balance your body weight on both legs equally, join the feet together and lock your fingers together, and stretch up lengthening your spine, come on your feet, lift your heels and hold the position. Keep breathing and after a while slowly come down, relax your feet and hand by the side. Repeat 2-3 times.  
*People with shoulder injuries can just lift the shoulder without raising hands and elderly people can also do it while sitting on a chair.*



**Malasanas:** As soon as you wake up, it is highly advisable to begin the day with lukewarm water and sit in malasana for a while. All you have to do is sip a glass of water like tea sip by sip fold your knees completely and come down in a deep squat position, stay there for a while, and also you can just touch Mother Earth and offer gratitude. Works magic for relief in bowel movements and what could have been a better start than offering your gratitude to Mother Earth.  
*People having knee issues, can try pulling knees towards the chest while sitting on the cushion surface.*



**Neck stretch and movements:** It is believed that all of the stress accumulated is usually in the neck and shoulder region. Work on your neck and it will help you release all your stress even in the middle of office hours or any other work. Simply relax your neck and sit in an upright position with a spine, take a deep breath in and out and close your eyes (recommended for better results) stretch your neck to the sides, and try touching your shoulder without lifting them. After a few rounds relax and start rotating your neck clockwise and anti-clockwise and open your eyes slowly.  
*People suffering from survival do it very gently and not more than two rounds.*



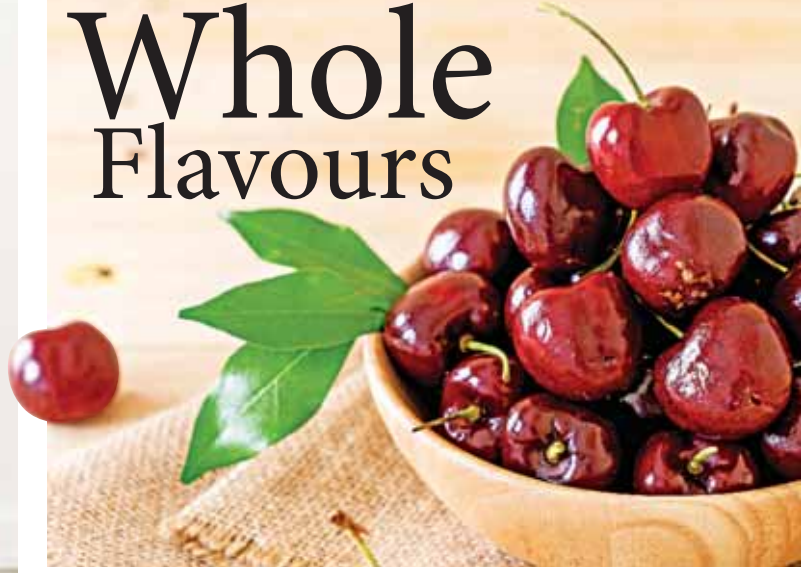
**Nadi Shodhan:** The king of all the pranayam, the instant stress buster and balancing the entire body. Place your right thumb on your right nostril and inhale from the left press the ring finger close left nostril and release the right exhaling breath, inhale through the right, and exhale through the left.

**Yogic breathing:** The most effective way to increase prana or vital life force is the pranayamas, simple yet effective and soothing too. It is also known as conscious breathing. Sit in an upright position, relax yourself, and relax your body, place one hand on your chest and the other on your navel. Start breathing in slowly, expanding your chest and stomach slowly, don't rush it and when you reach full capacity, even more slowly release the breath slowly contracting your abdomen and chest. Repeat 3-5 times.  
*Do not hold your breath and do not rush, the slower the breathing process the better.*



The author is an Art of Living faculty, meditation and mind coach, and professional yoga trainer.

## Whole Foods Whole Flavours



**TEAM VIVA**

Eating well isn't just about counting calories or following strict diet rules; it's about embracing a balanced lifestyle that fuels your body with nutrient-rich, delicious foods. When we choose fresh, wholesome ingredients, we not only boost our health but also enhance the flavours and textures of our meals. Whether you're looking to add more plant-based goodness to your

plate, experiment with creative ingredient combinations, or simply prepare meals that are both nutritious and satisfying. From salads packed with fiber and antioxidants to hearty grains and protein-rich legumes, each dish is crafted to bring out the best in natural ingredients while keeping things easy, flavourful, and fulfilling. These carefully curated recipes prove that healthy food can be just as your favourite comfort meals.

### Barley Salad With Chickpeas And Cherries



**Ingredients**

- Salad:**
- 1 cup hulled barley (uncooked)
  - 14.5 oz can chickpeas, drained & rinsed
  - 1/2 cup diced celery
  - 1/4 cup chopped green onion
  - 1 cup pitted & halved cherries
  - 1/4 cup toasted slivered almonds
  - 2 oz crumbled goat cheese
- Dressing:**
- 2 tbsp fresh lemon juice
  - 1 tbsp white balsamic vinegar
  - 1 tbsp grape seed oil
  - 1/2 tsp Dijon mustard
  - 1 tsp honey
  - 1/2 tsp kosher salt
  - 1/8 tsp black pepper

**Directions**

- Cook barley in salted boiling water (3 cups) for 45-60 mins until chewy. Drain, rinse, and cool.
- Mix barley with chickpeas, celery, green onion, and almonds.
- Whisk dressing ingredients and toss with the salad.
- Gently fold in cherries and goat cheese.
- Serve immediately or chill for up to 1 hour.

**Note:** Add cherries and almonds just before serving to maintain texture and prevent discoloration.

### Chilean Cherry, Wild Rice, and Quinoa Salad



**Ingredients**

- 3/4 cup wild rice
  - 1/2 cup quinoa
  - 2 cups fresh Chilean cherries, pitted & halved
  - 2 celery stalks, diced
  - 3/4 cup smoked Gouda cheese, diced
  - 1/2 cup toasted, chopped pecans
- Vinaigrette:**
- 1/4 cup extra virgin olive oil
  - 1/4 cup fruity vinegar (raspberry or strawberry)
  - 1 tsp Dijon mustard
  - 3/4 tsp salt
  - 1/4 tsp freshly ground pepper

**Directions**

- Cook wild rice in boiling water for 30 mins, add quinoa, and cook 15 mins more. Drain, rinse, and cool.
- Toast pecans in the oven at 350 F for 8 mins or in a skillet until fragrant. Cool and chop.
- Whisk vinaigrette ingredients in a large bowl.
- Toss rice, quinoa, cherries, celery, Gouda, and pecans with the vinaigrette.
- Serve at room temperature or chilled

## POWER OF SELF-CARE



Self-care is often neglected yet the most important part that defines your overall health. Authentic self-care fits with your needs, values, and lifestyle. Self-care need not be copied such as using gratitude journaling, bubble baths, etc., rather it should be something that aligns with your body and mind and nourishes your soul.

- **Importance of self-care:** To be honest, as a psychiatrist, I have felt that self-care is a biological necessity as it has a direct relation to improving mental and physical health.
- **Stress reduction:** - When a person stays in persistent stress, the body's cortisol levels rise, leading to poor sleep quality and anxiety too. But to alleviate stress, it's best to practice self-care activities such as deep breathing, mindfulness practices, exercise, etc. These activities are responsible for activating the parasympathetic nervous system.
- **Boosting up emotional health:** The activities that are guided towards self-care are responsible for releasing the 'feel good'

neurotransmitters namely dopamine and serotonin. They, in turn, improve the mood and relieve the symptoms of anxiety and depression. So working on you is an excellent approach to improve the quality of life and gain emotional regulation.

- **Improvising physical health:** Self-care activities are inclusive of a good quality night sleep, consuming a well-balanced diet, and engaging in regular physical exercise. They lay the foundation for a healthy mind and body.
- **Better decision making:** When your mental health stays sound, it creates an opportunity to develop a recharged brain that is efficient in problem-solving and is more focused on chores.

Authentic self-care isn't about perfection or following trends, it's about tuning into yourself and making intentional choices that enhance your well-being.



True self-care aligns with your unique needs and lifestyle, fostering balance, resilience, and emotional well-being



### CREATING A SELF-CARE ROUTINE

**Identification of needs:** Think about the self-care activity that you need the most and aligns with your lifestyle, values, and thoughts. You may need it in physical form such as exercise or sleep, emotional form such as therapy or journaling, social form such as connecting with friends, and spiritual form like prayer, nature therapy, etc.

**Wise choice** - After identification of your

needs, choose activities that are in alignment with your personality. For instance you may prefer solitude or social gatherings as per your nature.

**Building a routine:** After choosing the activity that you are interested in, plan a simple yet flexible schedule that is easy to follow. Begin by practicing 1-2 habits and try to fix them in your current routine.

**Tracking progress:** Keep a record of your self-care activities and also reflect on your feelings post accomplishing them.

Real Madrid vs Atletico Madrid ends in 1-1 draw

PTI ■ MADRID

Kylian Mbappé scored in his first capital derby against Atletico Madrid as Real Madrid fought back for a 1-1 draw and kept its slim lead of the Spanish league on Saturday.

Barcelona, in third place, is five points behind Madrid before visiting Sevilla on Sunday. Mbappé had missed the first Atletico derby of the season, a 1-1 draw in September, because of injury.



gotten a better result," Simeone said. "We had some situations that we lacked the clarity we needed to resolve better."

when he dribbled past Javi Galan and Lino on the right side and slipped a ball to Bellingham in the heart of the box. Bellingham's scuffed shot hit a defender and fell to Mbappé to rifle home for his first goal against Atletico.

Mbappé had missed the first Atletico derby of the season, a 1-1 draw in September, because of injury. Madrid poured forward searching for a second goal with Atletico rattled. Vinicius dribbled

down the left side and scooped the ball for Bellingham, who smashed a header off the woodwork. Someone changed both his full backs with Reinildo and Nahuel Molina in the 63rd, but Oblak still had to come to Atletico's rescue on three occasions.

14 consecutive rounds, dating back to a defeat at Girona on October 6. Antony scores but Celta wins. Antony scored his first goal since joining Real Betis on loan from Manchester United, but Celta Vigo rallied from two goals down to earn a thrilling 3-2 comeback victory.



Australia secures first test series win in Sri Lanka in 14 years

PTI ■ GALLE

Australia wrapped up a comprehensive 2-0 series victory over Sri Lanka, sealing the second test with a commanding nine-wicket win in Galle on Sunday.

with meticulous planning — including a training camp in Dubai — and executed their strategies with precision. Their batters laid the foundation with big hundreds, allowing the bowlers to dictate terms with attacking fields.

innings soon after, leaving Australia with a modest target of 75 runs. Sri Lanka briefly found hope when Prabath Jayasuriya removed Travis Head (20) early, caught behind. However, Usman Khawaja (27 not out) and Marnus Labuschagne (26 not out) calmly guided the visitors home with an unbroken 37-run stand.

Rabada produced an inspired bowling performance to lead MI Cape Town to their maiden SA20 title with a comfortable 76 runs win over two-time champions Sunrisers Eastern Cape in the final at the Wanderers here.

High on confidence after five wins on the trot before the final, MI Cape Town won the toss and chose to bat. In-form Ryan Rickelton (33 off 15; 1x4, 4x6s) and Rassie van der Dussen (23 off 25; 2x6s) showed their intent from the onset, giving an aggressive start to MI Cape Town's innings.

rest of the top-order batters struggled against spin. Pakistan was bowled out for 252 in 47.5 overs. Perfect day Phillips capped a perfect day by trapping Zaman leg before wicket with his off-spin and also took a brilliant diving catch to dismiss Babar Azam early in Pakistan's run chase.

India are placed in a tough Group D alongside runners-up South Korea and Macau. They will begin their campaign against Macau on February 12, which will be followed by a tough outing against South Korea on February 13.

After India, New Zealand is one of strongest teams in CT: Ashwin

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Spin great R Ashwin has scalped India and New Zealand the strongest sides heading into the Champions Trophy but warned teams against taking Australia lightly despite the loss of key players to injuries as they "bring their A-game" into marquee tournaments.

playing T20s in Dubai. The toss becomes really crucial in Dubai. I think winning the toss becomes crucial." Ashwin said New Zealand, despite the absence of the long-serving pace duo of Trent Boult and Tim Southee, who have quit playing the 50-over format, will pose a challenge to India.

concerned, Ashwin observed that they transform into a formidable outfit when the stakes are high in ICC events. "Steven Smith as captain is a marriage made in heaven. Smith is going to captain the team in the Champions Trophy. Will Smith, Head,

Maxwell and Labuschagne pull through the team to the semis. I always believe that Australia is a champion team that always brings its A-game in marquee tournaments.

ODI cricket, removing himself from the squad. Ashwin also expressed his excitement at the return of tri-series tournaments after a gap of many years.

would be back to shooting blanks in the tournament. The great off-spinner, who announced his retirement from international cricket during the Border-Gavaskar Trophy in Australia, added, "90s kids would definitely understand this fascination for tri-series."

"The tri-series might be a perfect curtain raiser for what's in store for these teams at the Champions Trophy."

MI Cape Town wins maiden SA20 title

PTI ■ JOHANNESBURG

Pace spearhead Kagiso Rabada produced an inspired bowling performance to lead MI Cape Town to their maiden SA20 title with a comfortable 76 runs win over two-time champions Sunrisers Eastern Cape in the final at the Wanderers here.



wins over Joburg Super Kings and Paarl Royals in the last two matches, could not maintain the momentum and except Tom Abell and Tony de Zorzi, no other batter could live up to the expectations.

High on confidence after five wins on the trot before the final, MI Cape Town won the toss and chose to bat. In-form Ryan Rickelton (33 off 15; 1x4, 4x6s) and Rassie van der Dussen (23 off 25; 2x6s) showed their intent from the onset, giving an aggressive start to MI Cape Town's innings.

MI scored 52 runs for the loss of two wickets in the Powerplay. The wickets stemmed the flow of runs as left-arm wrist spinner Dawson gave only four runs in the seventh over. Van der Dussen looked uncomfortable from the beginning and was the next to depart stumped by Tristan Stubbs off Dawson in the ninth over.

New Zealand beat Pakistan ahead of Champions Trophy

PTI ■ LAHORE

Glenn Phillips warmed up with his first one-day international century as New Zealand beat Pakistan by 78 runs in the opening game of the tri-nation cricket series on Saturday.



rest of the top-order batters struggled against spin. Pakistan was bowled out for 252 in 47.5 overs. Perfect day Phillips capped a perfect day by trapping Zaman leg before wicket with his off-spin and also took a brilliant diving catch to dismiss Babar Azam early in Pakistan's run chase.

time since 2015 and scored a painstaking 10 runs off 23 balls. New Zealand captain Mitchell Santner (3-41) clipped the top-order with his left-arm spin while Bracewell took 2-41. New Zealand, which is already sweating on the fitness of fast bowler Lockie Ferguson, had another injury scare when the ball hit Rachin Ravindra in the face as he misjudged a catch of

Khushdil Shah in the outfield and had to leave the field. Fast bowler Matt Henry chipped in with 3-55. No. 10 batter Abrar Ahmed hit an unbeaten 25 that included three successive boundaries off Henry.