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INSIDE

WORLD 8
LEADERS OF INDONESIA,
TURKIYE HOLD TALKS ON
DEFENCE, ECONOMIC TIES

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SUPREME COURT SLAMS PARASITES

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

On political parties promising freebies ahead of polls, the Supreme Court (SC) on Wednesday said instead of bringing people into the mainstream for national development, Aare we not creating a class of parasites? A bench of Justices BR Gavai and Augustine George Masih said it would be better to make people a part of the society's mainstream and contribute towards national development.

"Rather than promoting them to be a part of the mainstream of the society by contributing to the development of the nation, are we not creating a class of parasites?" it asked. Justice Gavai went on to add, "Unfortunately, because of these freebies, which just on the anvil of elections, are declared, like 'Ladki Bahin' and other schemes, people

are not willing to work." The top court was hearing a matter concerning the right to shelter of homeless persons in urban areas and said people got free rations and money without working. "We quite appreciate your concern for them but would it not be better to make them a part of the mainstream of society and permit them to contribute to the development of the nation?" the bench asked. Advocate Prashant Bhushan, appearing for one of the petitioners, said there was hardly anybody in the country who did not want to work, if they had work. The judge said, "You must be having only one sided knowledge. I come from an agricultural family. Because of the freebies in Maharashtra, which they just announced prior to elections, agriculturists are not getting labourers." The court, however, said it did not want to debate.

Judges said everybody, including attorney general R Venkataramani, was on the same page that providing shelter to the homeless merited due attention. "But at the same time, should it not be balanced?" the bench asked. Venkataramani said the Centre was in the process of finalising the urban poverty alleviation mission, which would address various issues, including the provision of shelter for the urban homeless. The bench asked him to verify from the Centre the time frame within which the scheme would be applicable and also place on record the aspects covered by it. "In the meantime, the attorney general is also requested to take instructions as to whether till the implementation of the said scheme, the Union of India would continue with the National Urban Livelihoods Mission," it said.

The bench further asked the Centre to collate information from all states for the consideration of the issue on a pan-India basis. One of the petitioners during the hearing said it was unfortunate that the cause of the homeless was not being addressed as it was last on the priority. The bench was irked when he claimed the authorities showed compassion only for the rich, not the poor. "Don't make a speech of Ramlila Maidan in this court," said Justice Gavai, "And don't make unnecessary allegations. Don't make a political speech here. We won't permit our courtrooms to be converted into a (place of) political battle." The judge went on to add, "How do you say the compassion is shown only for the rich? Even for the government, how can you say this?" Painting a picture that the

government did not do anything or show concern for the poor was not in a good taste, the court added. Bhushan said as per a note placed before the bench, as on December 4, 2024, a total of 2,557 shelters was sanctioned by the States or Union Territories and 1,995 shelter homes were functional with a capacity of 1.16 lakh beds. He said a survey showed there were about 3 lakh urban homeless in Delhi alone. Bhushan said as per the Delhi Urban Shelter Improvement Board, the total capacity of the shelters was 17,000 persons of which only 5,900 such facilities had beds. The DUSIB counsel said the board had 197 shelter homes running in Delhi as on date with a total capacity of 17,000 persons. In the last four years, he said, the average maximum occupancy was 5,500 in all shelter homes.

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Prime Minister Narendra Modi and French President Emmanuel Macron at the Mazargues Cemetery to pay their respects to the fallen heroes, in Marseille PTI

Modi, Macron walk together

PTI ■ PARIS

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and French President Emmanuel Macron on Wednesday called for enhancing trade and investment ties between the two countries and committed to further deepening their engagement in the Indo-Pacific and various global forums and initiatives. After their wide-ranging talks, the two leaders also underlined their commitment to concrete actions to ensure that the global AI sector can drive beneficial social, economic, and environmental outcomes in the public interest. A joint statement issued after the meeting here said the talks covered a full spectrum of bilateral relations, as well as key global and regional issues. The two leaders stressed an urgent need for reform in the United Nations Security Council and agreed to coordinate closely on various

global issues, including the UNSC matters. French President Macron reiterated France's firm support for India's permanent membership of the UNSC. The two leaders reaffirmed their strong commitment to India-France Strategic Partnership while noting that it has steadily evolved into a multifaceted relationship over the past 25 years. Prime Minister Modi flew together from Paris to Marseille in the French Presidential Aircraft last evening and held discussions here on the full spectrum of bilateral relations and key global and regional issues. This was followed by delegation-level talks after arrival in Marseille. The two leaders reviewed cooperation in the strategic areas of defence, civil nuclear energy and space. They also discussed ways to strengthen collaboration in the fields of technology and innovation.

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UPSC updates registration system online

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) has introduced certain changes in its online application system for the civil services preliminary exam after aspirants complained of technical glitches while applying through it, according to an official notice. The Commission had recently extended the last date to apply for the civil services preliminary exam 2025 till February 18.

The UPSC said in the notice that some entries have been made "editable" in the one-time registration for filling up of the online application. "In view of the queries/difficulties raised by the candidates in filling up the online application form for the civil services examination, 2025, the Commission has decided the following changes in the one-time registration (OTR) for filling up of the online application," it said. The candidates are "not allowed to make any change(s) in the columns relating to 'Name (as per Class X)', 'Date of Birth', 'Father's Name', 'Mother's Name', 'Mobile Number' and 'Email ID' in the OTR profile, the Commission said in the notice.

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MARKETS

SENSEX 76,171.08 ↓ -0.16%

1 US\$ = 86.87 INR

WEATHER

AQI 212
MAX 26.5°C(+3.1)
MIN 11.6°C(+1.4)



MAGHI PURNIMA: 2 CRORE DIPS

More than two crore devotees took a dip in the Sangam till 6 pm on Wednesday on the occasion of Maghi Purnima. With the 'snan' on Maghi Purnima, another auspicious day for holy bath, the month-long 'Kalpavas' will be ending and around 10 Lakh 'Kalpavasis' will start leaving the Maha Kumbh. The administration has requested them to follow traffic rules and use only authorised parking spaces. Overall since the start of the Maha Kumbh, over 47 crore people have taken a dip in the Sangam. The Maha Kumbh will conclude on February 26 with the final 'Amrit Snan' on the occasion of Mahashivratri. Meanwhile, Adityanath greeted everyone on the holy bathing festival while the UP government has also launched a safety drive for the pilgrims.

Detailed story on page 5

Kerala ragging turns serious

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KOTTAYAM (KERALA)

Five third-year students have been arrested for allegedly ragging first-year students at the Government Nursing College here, police said on Wednesday. A case was registered after three first-year students lodged a complaint, alleging that the ragging had been ongoing for nearly three months at the nursing institute, which functions under the Government Medical College. According to the complaint, the ragging began in November last year. The students reported that the incidents involved extreme brutality. They alleged that they were forced to stand naked and subjected to severe physical abuse using dumbbells, including tying them to their private parts. Further allegations include injuries inflicted using compasses and similar objects, followed by the application of lotion on the wounds. Additionally, they were forced to have cream applied to their faces, heads, and mouths. The accused students have been suspended, college authorities said. The action was taken following an inquiry conducted under the anti-ragging law, they added. The arrested students have been identified as Samuel Johnson

(20), Rahul Raj (22), Jeev (18), Rijil Jith (20), and Vivek (21). The complaint also states that senior students regularly extorted money from juniors on Sundays to buy alcohol and frequently assaulted them. On November 16, the accused allegedly forced a first-year student to transfer Rs 300 via Google Pay and hand over Rs 500 in cash under threats. Police revealed that the money was used for alcohol consumption. On December 13, a first-year student endured extreme physical torture. That night, the accused allegedly entered his room, tied his hands and legs, and restrained him. They then poured lotion all over his body and inflicted injuries using a divider. They also forced another first-year student in the room to record the incident on a mobile phone. Unable to endure the harassment any longer, three students finally lodged a complaint with the Kottayam Gandhinagar police. College authorities stated that the affected students had not informed hostel officials, teachers, or parents about the abuse. Upon receiving the complaint, the college promptly took action. Once the investigation confirmed the allegations, the case was handed over to the police, they added.

Sajjan Kumar convicted for Sikh riots murders

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi's Rouse Avenue court on Wednesday convicted former Congress MP Sajjan Kumar in a case related to the killings of two men in Saraswati Vihar on November 1, 1984, during the anti-Sikh riots. The arguments on the quantum of sentence in the case will take place on February 18. The Congress leader, who is currently serving a life sentence in another anti-Sikh riots case in Delhi Cantonment, was produced from Tihar jail before special judge Kaveri Baweja, who pronounced the conviction order. "I am of the opinion that Prosecution has been able to prove its case against the Accused beyond reasonable doubt. Thus, Accused Sajjan Kumar S/o Ch.Raghunath Singh is hereby convicted for offences punishable under Sections 147/148/149 IPC and for offences punishable under Sections 302/308/323/395/397/427/ 436/440 read with Section 149 IPC," Special Judge Kaveri Baweja said in her 139 pages order on Wednesday. The order said, "I am of the considered opinion that the Prosecution has been able to bring home the guilt of the Accused. It has been established that the Accused was instigating the mob, which was armed with deadly weapons i.e. lathis and sarias etc. and that the mob being an 'unlawful assembly' within the meaning of Section 141 IPC used force and violence in prosecution of the common object of looting, committed the offence of rioting armed with deadly weapons. Further, the fact that the members of the 'unlawful



Former Congress MP Sajjan Kumar at the Rouse Avenue Court, in New Delhi PTI

assembly' were armed with iron rods, lathis, bricks etc. also proves that alleged offences were committed after having made preparations for committing such offences." The case attracts a maximum punishment of death penalty and life-term imprisonment as the minimum sentence. Kumar was produced before the court from Tihar jail to pronounce the verdict. He was convicted for the murder of Jaswant Singh and his son Tarundeep Singh on November 1, 1984. Special judge Kaveri Baweja aside from saying that a mob took part in rioting and killed the victims, held, "It has further been established that Kumar, being a member of such unlawful assembly, is guilty of having committed the murder of Jaswant Singh and Tarundeep Singh, the husband and son of the complainant, during the

incident." The conviction judgment said, "The complainant who witnessed the brutal killing of her husband and son can certainly not be expected to forget the face of the person who was instigating the mob to carry out the said killings and looting and her deposition in court fortifies her stand that it is accused who was not only present during the alleged incident but also instigating and leading the mob which resulted in commission of the aforesaid offences." The judge rejected Kumar's argument that the statement of the complainant couldn't be trusted as she named him belatedly and held at the time of the incident, she was not aware of the identity of the accused as she was admittedly new to the area and had never seen him earlier.

Continued on page 2

CBI arrests DTC officials

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has arrested six officials of the Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC) on charges of corruption and bribery. This is the first major crackdown by the apex investigating agency in the national capital after the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) lost the recently concluded Assembly elections. Sources said, the arrests follow multiple complaints alleging widespread corruption in the department. The CBI launched a thorough surveillance operation to verify these claims before taking action. Upon investigation, authorities found prima facie evidence indicating corruption at various levels, leading to the arrests. The arrests are a part of a larger corruption case, which is being investigated by the CBI. The DTC has been in the eye of storm over allegations of corruption against its officials. The BJP had alleged a scam in the purchase of 1,000 low floor buses by DTC during the AAP Government in Delhi. The Chief Secretary of Delhi had then recommended the CBI to investigate the matter. The recommendation was approved by Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena.

NEWS BRIEFS

Ram Janmabhoomi chief priest passes away

LUCKNOW: Acharya Satyendra Das, the chief priest of the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi temple, breathed his last at SGPGI, Lucknow. He had been battling health complications after suffering a stroke earlier this month. Despite receiving intensive care, doctors were unable to save him. His passing has cast a pall of sorrow over Ayodhya, where he had served as the chief priest since 1993. Over the decades, he became a symbol of devotion, witnessing the long and tumultuous journey from the Babri Masjid demolition to the consecration of Ram Lalla in the grand new temple.

Continued on page 2

Tragedy unfolds in Jammu, humanity loses

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

Captain Karamjit Singh Bakshi and Naik Mukesh Singh Manhas of 9 Punjab, martyred in an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) blast near the Line of Control (LOC) in the Akhnoor sector of Jammu on Tuesday, were both engaged and waiting to tie the knot in April 2025. A pall of gloom descended on the families of the soldiers as the mortal remains of these two bravehearts were dispatched to their hometowns in Hazaribagh, Jharkhand and Samba for the last rites on Wednesday. At both places, the telltale signs of ongoing renovation work were visible as their families were eagerly waiting to solemnize their marriage ceremonies. A solemn wreath-laying ceremony was organised at the Air Force Station in Jammu where Lt-Gen

Navin Sachdeva, General Officer Commanding of the Nagrota-based White Knight Corps paid homage along with several other senior police and civil officers. Captain Bakshi, who hailed from Hazaribagh in Jharkhand, had recently visited his home to oversee wedding preparations scheduled for April 5. A coursemate who had recently attended an advanced training course in the Army War College, Mhow while paying tributes to Captain Bakshi said he was very passionate about his duty. "He was a bold officer and always led from the front. We were all looking forward to attending his marriage ceremony and now we have to join a prayer meeting in his sweet memory." A close relative of Captain Bakshi said his family runs a Restaurant in Hazaribagh. Lovingly known as Puneet, Captain Bakshi had recently resumed his duties in the



Army personnel pay tribute to soldiers who were killed in a suspected IED blast near LoC, in Jammu's Akhnoor PTI

first week of February 2025. Captain Bakshi's father, Ajinder Singh Bakshi, and mother, Neelu Bakshi, were left crestfallen by the

loss of their elder son. The entire Hazaribagh community is mourning the martyrdom of their brave son of the soil.

Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren on Wednesday condoled the death of Captain Karamjit Singh Bakshi and the slain army jawan. State BJP chief Babulal Marandi also expressed grief over the death of the army personnel. "Received the sad news of the martyrdom of Captain Karamjit Singh Bakshi from Jharkhand and another army jawan during a search operation in Akhnoor, Jammu. May Marang Buru grant peace to the souls of the martyred soldiers and give strength to the bereaved families to bear this difficult time of grief," Soren posted on X. Meanwhile, a religious function was going on at the residence of Naik Mukesh Singh Manhas in Samba when the army authorities reached out to them to inform them about the IED blast and injuries suffered by their son in the Akhnoor sector.

Naik Mukesh Singh Manhas returned to his Army unit in the Akhnoor sector on January 28 after a two-week holiday for his ring ceremony. He too was constructing his home ahead of tying the nuptial knot. Naik Mukesh Singh comes from a family of patriots. His father Chagatar Singh served in the Jammu and Kashmir police while his younger brother is currently serving in the Indian army. Paying glowing tributes to Naik Mukesh Singh, former Sarpanch Mukhtiyar Singh remembered him as an enthusiastic cricketer, motivator, and always ready to extend a helping hand to the needy. Naik Mukesh was set to get married around April 20-21, the grieving father said, as his relatives and neighbors made a beeline in front of the house to convey their condolences.

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Shiv Sena MLA switches to Shinde Sena camp

■ MUMBAI

In a major jolt to the Uddhav Thackeray-led Shiv Sena (UBT), former MLA and influential leader from coastal Konkan region Rajan Salvi on Wednesday resigned from the party and is all set to join the Eknath Shinde-headed Shiv Sena.

In what came to be described as the start of the "Operation Tiger" unleashed by the Shinde Sena to woo the leaders from the Uddhav Sena, Salvi resigned as the deputy leader of the Shiv Sena (UBT). More leaders are expected to desert the Uddhav Sena and switch over to the Shinde Sena in coming weeks.

A three-time MLA, Salvi will join the ruling Shinde Shiv Sena at a function to be held on Thursday. After the recent Maharashtra Assembly polls - in which the Opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) constituent Shiv Sena (UBT) managed to win a meagre 20 seats out of the total 288 seats, there was



speculation that Salvi might join the BJP. However, a loyal Shiv Sainik has now chosen to join the Shinde Sena. Informed sources in the Sena (UBT) attributed Salvi's decision to quit the party and join the Shinde-led Shiv Sena to the fact that the state Anti-Corruption Bureau had launched a probe into his alleged disproportionate assets, and he did not see any future for himself in the crisis-hit Uddhav Sena. Salvi had met Uddhav last month and explained to the latter the circumstances that led to his defeat in the State Assembly polls. He had told

the Sena (UBT) chief that some of the party men had worked against him in the polls, leading to his defeat. Fifty-nine-year-old Salvi, who had been elected to the State Assembly from Rajapur constituency in Ratnagiri district in 2009, 2014 and 2019, is a force to reckon with in the coastal Konkan region. He had chosen to remain with Uddhav Sena when rebel leader Eknath Shinde engineered a vertical split in the Shiv Sena and teamed up with the BJP to form a government in June 2022. After the Sena split, Salvi unsuccessfully contested the elections for the post Maharashtra Legislative Assembly Speaker against BJP's Rahul Narwekar. In the 2024 State Assembly polls, Salvi lost to Shiv Sena's Kiran Samant, the brother of state Industries Minister Uday Samant, a close aide of Shinde by a margin of 19680 votes. Winning candidate Kiran Samant polled 80,256 votes as against 60,579 votes secured by Salvi.

Ram Janmabhoomi chief priest passes away

■ MUMBAI

For nearly three decades, Acharya Satyendra Das performed daily rituals for the deity, first under a makeshift tent and later in the temporary temple. His dedication remained unwavering through political storms, court battles, and the eventual construction of the temple. When the Ram Lalla idol was finally consecrated in its grand sanctum, it was the culmination of a journey he had been part of since the beginning. Champat Rai, General Secretary of the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Terth Kshetra, along with other temple officials, expressed deep sorrow. "His

contribution to the temple's spiritual foundation is immeasurable. He dedicated his life to Ram Lalla, and his absence will be deeply felt," said Rai. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, who had visited him in the hospital days before his passing, called his demise an "irreplaceable loss to the spiritual world." Religious leaders, devotees, and members of the temple trust have paid their respects, acknowledging his role in preserving the temple's traditions and rituals. Acharya Satyendra Das' journey from praying before a deity housed under a tent to witnessing the completion of one of India's most significant religious landmarks will

forever remain a part of the Ram Janmabhoomi's history. His legacy, however, will live on in the temple he served so faithfully. Acharya Satyendra Das' life was deeply intertwined with the temple's historic transformation, from a makeshift structure to a magnificent shrine. For over three decades, he stood as the guardian of Ram Lalla's rituals, offering prayers through Ayodhya's most defining years. His journey was not just one of devotion but also of witnessing history unfold before his eyes. With his passing, an era comes to an end, but his unwavering faith and service to Shri Ram will continue to inspire generations to come.

Delhi HC refuses petition on freebies

■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday refused to entertain a petition challenging promises made by political parties to distribute cash to voters ahead of the upcoming Delhi Assembly elections, noting the Supreme Court was already hearing a similar issue. The plea was filed by retired Delhi High Court Justice SN Dhingra. A bench of Chief Justice D K Upadhyaya and Justice Tushar Rao Gedela asked the petitioner, a retired judge, to move the apex court which is hearing the matter on two aspects -- distribution of freebies to voters and if it amounted to corrupt practices. "There are two aspects, freebies and whether it amounts to corrupt practice.

This matter is already pending in the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court has taken up both the issues... You better seek implementation there and assist the court there," it said. It said there couldn't be parallel litigations on one issue. The bench went on, "Essentially the subject matter of this PIL petition is already engaging the attention of the Supreme Court and accordingly, we are not inclined to entertain this petition at this stage." The court however said the petitioner had raised an important and larger issue. The petitioner's counsel sought to withdraw the plea and was allowed by the bench. Former Delhi High Court judge SN Dhingra, who is the petitioner, objected to the announcement on "freebies"

by political parties and said the entire election process was in violation of the law laid down by the Supreme Court. Though the plea was filed days before Delhi elections, it came up for hearing on Wednesday. His counsel said the petition also raised another issue of collection of data of voters by political parties for the purpose of distribution of freebies. The counsel for the Election Commission of India (ECI) submitted that the Supreme Court was already considering the issue of freebies in the Ashwini Kumar Upadhyay case. Dhingra, in his plea filed as the president of organisation Samay Yaan (Sashakt Samaj), said schemes like AAP's Mukhyamantri Mahila Samman Yojana, BJP's Mahila Samridhi Yojana and Congress'

Pyari Didi Yojna, gave direct cash benefit to women post polls and violated the election laws, amounting to "bribe in the form of election promises". "The ECI has consistently emphasised that political parties and candidates must refrain from making promises that are akin to bribery or undue influence on the voters under the pretext of welfare schemes. These guidelines aim to ensure a level playing field among contestants, uphold the integrity of elections, and safeguard the principles of free and fair elections," said the plea. Seeking a declaration that such cash-oriented schemes were unconstitutional and against the spirit of free and fair elections, the plea sought it to be classified as "election manipulation".

Khan alleges being framed

■ NEW DELHI

AP MLA Amanatullah Khan on Wednesday denied being on the run and alleged that the Delhi Police was framing him in a false case. In a letter sent to Delhi Police Commissioner Sanjay Arora via email, the Okhla MLA claimed that he was in his constituency and not on the run.

Tragedy unfolds in Kashmir, humanity loses

■ Srinagar

Referring to the service career of his son, Naik Mukesh Singh's father told media persons in Bri Kamila village of Samba district, "He served the Army for more than nine years and a half, performing his duties in (Siachen) glacier (in Ladakh), Kashmir and Punjab, before moving to Jammu's Akhnoor recently. He returned to his unit on January 28 after a two-week leave from duty for his ring ceremony." Narrotam Singh, another resident of the village, said Manhas was full of energy and was always motivating youngsters to get involved in sporting activities.

Mumbai records first GBS death

■ MUMBAI

The toll in the incidence of Guillain-Barre Syndrome (GBS) -- an autoimmune disorder where the body's immune system attacks the nervous system -- rose to eight in Maharashtra on Wednesday, as Mumbai recorded its first GBS death. Of the total deaths, Pune has accounted for the maximum GBS deaths. Of the eight persons who have died so far, four have been confirmed as

GBS deaths, while the remaining four are "suspected" GBS deaths. The latest death took place at Nair Hospital in Mumbai, where the patient was undergoing treatment. The patient had a history of travelling to Pune. A bulletin put out by the Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme of the Public Health Department, Maharashtra pegged the total number of suspected GBS cases at 203.

Of the total patients, 176 patients have been diagnosed as "confirmed GBS cases." Of the total suspected/confirmed GBS patients, 41 are from the Pune city, while 94 patients are from the newly added villages in the areas coming under the jurisdiction of the Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC). 29 patients are from Pimpri-Chinchwad, 31 from the rural areas of Pune district and eight are from other districts of the state.

Of the total patients, 109 have been discharged. "As many as 52 patients continue to be on ventilator in various hospitals," the medical bulletin said. GBS is a condition in which the body's immune system attacks the nerves. It can cause weakness, numbness or paralysis. Weakness and tingling in the hands and feet are usually the first symptoms. These sensations can quickly spread and may lead to paralysis.

SUPREME COURT SLAMS PARASITES

■ NEW DELHI

One of the petitioners placed on record a chart showing state-wise position on the number of homeless persons, available shelters and the capacity of such homes. He said the figures were based on Centre's data which was authentic. The bench asked Venkataramani to find out

from the ministry concerned if the figure mentioned in the chart depicted the correct position. The hearing was posted after six weeks. While hearing the matter in December last year, the apex court asked the states and union territories to furnish details about the facilities available for accommodating homeless persons.

UPSC updates registration system online

■ NEW DELHI

If a candidate has lost access to his/her registered mobile number but he/she has the access to his/her registered email ID, he/she can apply for change in the mobile number and in this case, an OTP will be sent to the registered email ID, it said. In case a candidate has lost access to his/her registered email ID but has the access to his/her registered mobile number, he/she can apply for change in the email ID and in this case, an OTP will be sent to the registered mobile number, the notice said. However, if a candidate reports that he/she has lost access to his/her registered mobile as well as registered email ID, the candidate will have to send a request to the Commission for making necessary changes at the (otrups@gov.in) along-with matriculation certificate, Aadhaar card or PAN card or Passport or driving license, recent passport size photograph and an undertaking in a prescribed format, it said. The UPSC also said the eligible PwBD (person with benchmark disability) candidates, who wish to seek assistance of 'own scribe', will have to mandatorily provide the details of the 'own scribe' for the civil services preliminary exam. "The PwBD candidates, who wish to seek assistance of 'own scribe' for the CS (Main) exam, may voluntarily indicate the scribe details for CS (Main) while applying for CS (prelim) exam." "Such candidates may

update/provide details of the 'own scribe' during the window, which will be made available to the candidates after the declaration of the result of CS (Prelim) Exam," it said. The changes come in the backdrop of the controversy involving former IAS probationer Puja Khedkar, who was accused of cheating, wrongly availing Other Backward Class (OBC) and disability quota benefits to ensure her selection in the government service. She has denied all allegations though. The UPSC said the candidates having integrated master's degree (graduation and post graduation) may fill the same course in their graduation as well as higher qualification column. "The candidates are advised to go through the entries made by them in relevant columns before finally submitting the same. It may be noted that after submission of the application, the changes/corrections, if any, in the entries in the application form, can be carried out only during the one week correction window..." the notice said. A correction window will be open for applicants "till expiry of seven days" from the next day after the closure of application window i.e. From February 19 to 25. The civil services preliminary examination is scheduled to be held on May 25. The number of vacancies to be filled through the examination is expected to be approximately 979, which include 38 vacancies reserved for persons with benchmark disability category.

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Sajjan Kumar convicted for Sikh riots murders

■ DELHI

Kumar was convicted under IPC Sections 147 (rioting), 302 (murder), 308 (attempt to commit culpable homicide), 323 (voluntarily causing hurt) 395 (dacoity), 397 (robbery, or dacoity, with attempt to cause death or grievous hurt), 427 (mischief causing damage to the amount of fifty rupees), 436 (mischief by fire or explosive substance with intent to destroy house, etc), and 440 (mischief committed after preparation made for causing death or hurt) aside from other provisions. "It is only when she was going through magazine after 1.5-2 months of the incident, that upon seeing the photograph of the accused, she was able to recollect that it was Kumar who was leading and instigating the mob on November 1, 1984. The version of the complainant and her narration of the incident is natural and believable," said the court. Kumar is currently lodged in

Tihar Jail serving a life sentence handed down by the Delhi High Court in 2018 in a case related to the killing of five Sikhs at Raj Nagar Part I in Palam Colony on November 1-2, 1984, and the burning down of a gurdwara in Raj Nagar Part II. The trial court had reserved the order after hearing the final arguments in the case last December. The conviction order is another significant milestone in the decades-long pursuit of justice for the victims of the anti-Sikh riots. Though the Punjabi Bagh police station had initially registered the case, a special investigation team later took over the investigation. The SIT alleged that Kumar, who was then the Congress MP for Outer Delhi, led a mob that burnt alive the two Sikh men Jaswant Singh and his son Tarundeep Singh and destroyed and looted their houses acting on his directions. The SIT was represented in the court by Additional Public Prosecutor

Manish Rawat. Kumar's counsel Anil Kumar Sharma, Anuj Sharma and Apoorav Sharma argued that the complainants, the wife and the mother of the victims, had claimed to be an eyewitness in the case after a long delay of seven years and that their testimonies were therefore unreliable. The complainants were represented by senior advocate H S Phoolka and advocates Kamna Vohra and Gurbaksh Singh. Widespread riots broke out in Delhi and other parts of the country after then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi was assassinated by two Sikh bodyguards in retaliation for her order for the Army to storm the Golden Temple at Amritsar in June 1984 to flush out militants. According to a report of the Nanavati Commission, constituted to probe the violence and its aftermath, there were 587 FIRs filed in Delhi in relation to the riots that saw killings of 2,733 people. Of the total, about 240

FIRs were closed by police as "untraced" and 250 cases resulted in acquittal. Only 28 cases of 587 FIRs resulted in convictions, in which about 400 people were convicted. About 50, including Kumar, were convicted for murder. Currently there are about 20 cases pending in various courts in the national capital. The FIR in the Saraswati Vihar matter was registered in 1991 on the basis of an affidavit dated September 9, 1985, given by the complainant before the Justice Ranganath Mishra Commission, which was appointed in 1985 by then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi "to inquire into the organised violence that took place in Delhi and also the disturbances in the Bokaro Tehsil and Chas Tehsil (both in present-day Jharkhand) and at Kanpur, and to recommend measures that may be adopted for prevention of recurrence of such incidents."

On December 4, 2021, the Rouse Avenue Court of Special Judge M K Nagpal framed charges against the accused for the offences of murder, rioting with a deadly weapon, unlawful assembly and attempt to commit murder, among others. Kumar is currently serving a life sentence handed down by the Delhi high court in 2018 in a case related to the killing of five Sikhs at Raj Nagar Part I in Palam Colony on November 1-2, 1984, and the burning down of a gurdwara in Raj Nagar Part II. In September 2023, a Delhi court acquitted Kumar in a case related to the murder of seven people from the Sikh community in Sultanpuri during the 1984 riots. One case is pending against Kumar in the Rouse Avenue court, two appeals against his acquittals are pending in the high court, and an appeal against his conviction in one case is pending in the Supreme Court.

Modi, Macron walk together

■ NEW DELHI

This area of partnership assumes greater salience in the backdrop of the just concluded AI Action Summit and the upcoming India-France Year of Innovation in 2026, the statement said. The leaders also called for enhancing trade and investment ties. President Macron also hosted a dinner in honour of the Prime Minister in the coastal town of Cassis, near Marseille. Prime Minister invited President Macron to visit India. The list of 10 outcomes included the India-France Declaration on AI, launch of the logo for the India-France Year of Innovation 2026, and Letter of Intent between India's Department of Science and Technology (DST) and France's Institut National de Recherche en Informatique et en Automatique (INRIA) France to establish the Indo-French Centre for the Digital Sciences. An agreement was also signed

for hosting 10 Indian startups at the French start-up incubator Station F, while a Declaration of Intent was signed on the establishment of a partnership on Advanced Modular Reactors and Small Modular Reactors. Other outcomes included the renewal of MoU between the Department of Atomic Energy (DAE) and Commissariat a l'Energie Atomique et aux Energies Alternatives de France (CAE), for cooperation with the Global Centre for Nuclear Energy Partnership (GCNEP) and the implementation of an agreement between DAE of India and CEA of France concerning cooperation between GCNEP India and Institute for Nuclear Science and Technology (INSTN), France. A joint declaration of intent on Triangular Development Cooperation was signed, while the two leaders also jointly inaugurated the Indian consulate in Marseille, and a declaration of intent was signed between The Ministry

for the Ecological Transition, Biodiversity, Forests, Marine Affairs and Fisheries and The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change in the Field of Environment. Modi reached France on Monday and also co-chaired the Artificial Intelligence Action Summit along with Macron. This is Modi's sixth visit to France and follows Macron's visit to India in January 2024 as the Chief Guest for the 75th Republic Day of India. The two leaders also visited the International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor facility here. The two leaders reiterated their call for reformed and effective multilateralism to sustain an equitable and peaceful international order, address pressing global challenges and prepare the world for emerging developments, including in the technological and economic domains. The two leaders stressed, in particular, the urgent need for the reform of the United

Nations Security Council and agreed to coordinate closely in multilateral fora, including on UNSC matters. The two leaders agreed to strengthen conversations on the regulation of the use of the veto in case of mass atrocities. They held extensive discussions on long-term global challenges and current international developments and agreed to intensify their global and regional engagement, including through multilateral initiatives and institutions. They welcomed the continuation of the cooperation of air and maritime assets in line with the ambitious Defence Industrial Roadmap agreed in 2024. Both leaders commended progress in collaboration in the construction of Scorpene submarines in India, including indigenisation, and in particular the work carried out with a view to the integration of DRDO-developed Air Independent

Propulsion (AIP) into P75-Scorpene submarines and the analyses conducted regarding the possible integration of the Integrated Combat System (ICS) into the future P75-AS submarines. Both leaders also welcomed the commissioning of the sixth and final submarine of the P75 Scorpene-class project, INS Vaghsheer, on 15 January 2025. Both sides welcomed the ongoing discussions on missiles, helicopter engines and jet engines. They also welcomed the excellent cooperation between the relevant entities in the Safran group and their Indian counterparts. Modi invited the French Army to take a closer look at the Pinaka rocket launcher, emphasising that an acquisition of this system by France would be another milestone in Indo-French defence ties. In addition, President Macron welcomed the decision to include India as an observer to the Eurodrone MALE

programme managed by OCCAR, which is another step forward in the growing strength of our partnership in defence equipment programmes. Both leaders had a detailed conversation on international issues, including the Middle-East and the war in Ukraine, the statement said. They agreed to pursue their efforts to coordinate and remain closely engaged regularly. The two leaders agreed to work together more closely on implementing the India-Middle East-Europe Corridor (IMEC) and acknowledged the strategic location of Marseille in the Mediterranean Sea. They underlined the key importance of strengthening EU-India relations, in view of the upcoming India-EU summit at the earliest possible in New Delhi. They appreciated the growing cooperation in trilateral format with Australia and with the United Arab Emirates.

They commended the joint military exercises that took place between France, India and the United Arab Emirates, as well as the participation of India, France and Australia in each other's multilateral military exercises. The two leaders underlined their common commitment to a free, open, inclusive, secure and peaceful Indo-Pacific region. They reiterated their desire to continue to deepen bilateral cooperation in the space sector. The two leaders reaffirmed their unequivocal condemnation of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, including cross-border terrorism. They called for the disruption of terrorism financing networks and safe havens. They further agreed that no country should provide safe haven to those who finance, plan, support, or commit terrorist acts. The leaders also called for concerted action against all terrorists.

They welcomed the ongoing discussions to create a comprehensive framework for enhanced bilateral cooperation in the civil aviation sector, which is at advanced stages, the statement said. Noting the record level of bilateral trade in 2024, they acknowledged that there is vast untapped potential for trade and investment between the two countries. Both leaders highlighted the need to maintain strong confidence for companies investing in France and in India. Prime Minister Modi congratulated President Macron on the successful organisation of the Paris Olympics and Paralympics 2024 and thanked President Macron for his willingness to share France's experience and expertise regarding the organisation and securing of major international sporting events in the context of India's bid to host the Olympics and Paralympics Games in 2036.

Sikh leaders, victims' families welcome Sajjan Kumar's conviction

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Families of victims and Sikh leaders on Wednesday welcomed former Congress MP Sajjan Kumar's conviction in a 1984 anti-Sikh riots murder case, demanding the harshest punishment to him. Delhi Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) president Virendra Sachdeva and newly elected MLA RP Singh welcomed the conviction and credited the Special Investigation Team (SIT) for unearthing evidence that led to the verdict. Kumar, 79, has been found guilty in a case involving the killings of Jaswant Singh and his son Tarundeep Singh in Sarawati Vihar on November 1, 1984. He now faces a maximum of death penalty

and a minimum of life term in prison after being convicted on Wednesday by a Delhi court in a murder case stemming from the 1984 anti-Sikh riots. Special judge Kaveri Baweja passed the conviction order and posted the arguments on the sentence on February 18. "Accused has been convicted. List for order on sentence on the next date of hearing," she said. Following the verdict, Sachdeva said the conviction of Congress leader Sajjan Kumar and others by Delhi's Rouse Avenue Court for the 1984 anti-Sikh massacre has brought a sense of satisfaction and joy to Sikhs and justice-loving citizens across the country. Sachdeva

emphasised that this verdict is the result of the SIT constituted by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government to deliver justice to the victims of the 1984 massacre. "In Sarawati Vihar, a father and son were burned alive. This happened because orders had come from Congress leaders. We thank Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah for forming the SIT, which brought the truth to light. We hope the court gives him nothing less than the death penalty," BJP newly elected MLA RP Singh said while reacting to the development. Following the verdict, survivors and Sikh leaders expressed relief and



demanding the harshest punishment for Kumar, saying what happened in 1984 was not a riot but it was a Sikh genocide. "Sikhs were systematically targeted and

killed. We want the death penalty for him on the 18th (February) so that all criminals know that burning an innocent family should only be punished with death," Surjeet Singh, a victim from Trilokpuri, said. He said, "Members of my family were burned alive and I have been fighting for justice for 40 years. I was just 11 years old when this incident happened, and for two to three days, I remained hungry and thirsty. "Today, justice has begun, but the real justice will come when he gets the death penalty on February 18. The 1984 massacre was not a riot... It was a genocide. Sikhs were selectively targeted and killed," Surjeet Singh said.

SAJJAN KUMAR CONVICTION: TIMELINE OF EVENTS

Following is the timeline of events leading to the conviction of former Congress MP Sajjan Kumar in a case related to the murders of two persons in Delhi's Sarawati Vihar during 1984 anti-Sikh riots.

- 1991:** FIR lodged in the case.
- July 8, 1994:** Delhi court finds no sufficient evidence to initiate prosecution. Kumar was not chargesheeted in the case.
- February 12, 2015:** Government forms SIT.
- November 21, 2016:** SIT informs court that case requires further probe.
- April 6, 2021:** Kumar is arrested.
- May 5, 2021:** Cops file chargesheet.
- July 26:** Court takes cognisance of chargesheet.
- October 1:** Court starts hearing arguments on charge.
- December 16:** Court frames charges of murder, rioting, other offences.
- January 31, 2024:** Court starts hearing final arguments.
- November 8:** Court reserves verdict.
- February 12, 2025:** Court convicts Kumar, posts matter for arguments on quantum of sentence on February 18.

Delhi BJP poll committees review Assembly results

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Days after the Capital's victory, the Delhi Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) various poll committees on Wednesday met to assess the assembly election results, with representatives from over 43 specialised committees, each assigned specific responsibilities for the Assembly elections. The party's Delhi unit and poll in-charge Baijayant Panda, co-in-charges Alka Gurjar and Atul Garg, and city BJP president Virendra Sachdeva were present for the meeting. Election management committee convener and Union minister Harsh Malhotra, and several other senior leaders also attended the meeting. According to sources, the primary agenda is to analyse the election results and evaluate the factors contributing to the party's defeat in 22 constituencies. Breaking the jinx, the BJP secured victory in 48 seats with an average winning margin of 14,725 votes. Meanwhile, despite the Aam Aadmi Party's (AAP) reduced tally of 22 seats, its average victory margin stood at 17,054 votes. Among the 22 seats which BJP lost to AAP, it only gave tough fight on four seats where margin of defeat



The BJP's Delhi unit and poll in-charge Baijayant Panda, co-in-charges Alka Gurjar and Atul Garg, and city BJP president Virendra Sachdeva met to assess the assembly election results

was less than 5000 votes. Fourteen BJP candidates lost the election by more than 10000 votes and the highest defeat margin was nearly 42800 votes. However, average victory margin of AAP stood at 17,054 votes despite the fact that the party won just 22 seats out of 70 seats of Delhi assembly. Seats where BJP gave fight to AAP candidates but defeated by a margin less than 5000 votes are Delhi Cantonment by 2029 votes, Kalkaji by 3521 votes Patel Nagar by 4049 votes and Ambedkar Nagar by a margin of 4230 votes. BJP lost four seats by a margin between 5000

and 10000. BJP lost Sadar Bazar by a margin of 6307 votes, Kondli by 6293 votes, Karol Bagh by 7430 votes and Gokulpur by 8207 votes. The BJP candidates have shown worst performance on remaining 14 seats where its candidates lost the seat by more than 10000 votes. BJP candidate lost Tilak Nagar seat by 11656 votes, Tuglakabad by 14711 votes, Chandni Chowk by 16572 votes, Sultanpur Majra by 17126 votes, Babarpur by 18994 votes, Burari by 20601 votes, Kirari by 21871 votes, Okhla 23639 votes, Badarpur 25888 votes and Ballimaran by 29823 votes. Despite

the overall win in Delhi assembly elections, BJP candidates from Deoli assembly constituency lost by 36680 votes, Seelampur lost by 42724 votes and Matia Mahal by a margin of 42724 votes. Sources said that BJP had fought with equal strength on these seats but was hopeful to give a good fight on eight seats only. The party candidates were even in leading position in several rounds on these seats but they lost against the AAP candidates. They claimed that the equation of voters was in favour of remaining 14 seats as majority of them are either Muslim dominated seats or reserved (SC) seats where AAP had performed well in previous assembly polls. Two seats where they got success to snatch from AAP are Mustafabad and Jangpura where BJP candidates defeated AAP candidates by breaking equations. The BJP had set up more than 40 election-related committees to handle campaigning and other related works ahead of the Delhi polls. In his concluding address, Election In-Charge Baijayant Jay Panda expressed gratitude and said that BJP workers in Delhi gave their all during the election campaign. He

credited the victory to the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, along with the strong guidance of the party's national and state units, and the hard work of booth-level workers. He congratulated all workers for their efforts. Dalits comprise more than 15 percent of the electorate in 36 seats of Delhi, or just over half the total. The BJP won 21 of these, eight of them where Dalits numbered over 20 percent of the population. Only three of its victories came in seats where Dalits number over 25 percent. In 2020, the AAP won 62 seats and the BJP eight, and in the 2015 election, the AAP won a massive mandate of 67 seats and the BJP, just 3. In this election, which saw a direct fight between the BJP and the AAP, the Congress continued to be on the fringes, failing to win a single seat just like in the 2015 and 2020 elections. The BJP got 45.56 per cent of the votes, a sizeable jump from 38.5 per cent in 2020. The AAP's vote share dropped from 53.6 per cent in 2020 to 43.57 per cent this time. The Congress only marginally improved its vote percentage from 4.26 per cent in 2020 to 6.34 per cent.



Gupta announces sixth DFC

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Newly elected BJP MLA from Rohini Assembly and former Leader of Opposition Vijender Gupta on Wednesday said after the formation of the BJP government in Delhi, the Sixth Delhi Finance Commission (DFC) will be constituted soon. He emphasised that the formation of this commission is crucial for the financial management of development projects undertaken by the municipal corporations. Since the BJP government is committed to the development of Delhi, the announcement of its formation will be made without any delay. Gupta revealed that on August 30 last year, BJP MLAs had met with the President to lodge a complaint regarding the constitutional violations being committed by the Delhi government. Additionally, BJP legislators had also filed a petition in the High Court over this issue. He criticised the Aam Aadmi Party government for failing to recognise the seriousness of the Finance Commission. The delay in its formation since April 2021 is a grave violation of Articles 243-I and 243-Y of the Indian Constitution. This has severely impacted financial planning and resource allocation for Delhi, particularly affecting the

Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD). Essential public services, including road maintenance, sanitation, park upkeep, and sewer management have all suffered due to this neglect. Reassuring the people of Delhi, Gupta said the BJP government will systematically address the damage caused by AAP's decade-long mismanagement. That is why all public welfare and development projects have been placed on the priority list. Roads, electricity, water, and sanitation will be given top priority, and in the very first cabinet meeting of the new BJP government, crucial decisions regarding these projects will be taken. Additionally, the BJP government is committed to presenting the 14 Comptroller and Auditor General reports, which have been pending for the past five years, in the first session of the Assembly. Reiterating his stance, he assured that public welfare issues will not be neglected. The BJP government will make every effort to implement all the promises made in its election manifesto at the earliest. Since these promises were presented to the people as "Modi's Guarantee," the BJP's double-engine government in Delhi will remain dedicated to fulfilling them and upholding its commitment to the public.

Winners' average vote share drops to 51 per cent

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The average vote share of the winners in the recent Delhi assembly elections was 51 per cent, a dip from the 2020 figure of 55 per cent, according to the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) and Delhi Election Watch. The ADR and Delhi Election Watch have released a comprehensive analysis of the 2025 Delhi polls, showing key insights into voter turnout, vote share, and the margin of victory for winning candidates. The results, declared on February 8, show a slight decline in voter turnout compared to the 2020 elections, with 61 per cent of voters casting their ballots, down from 63 per cent in the previous assembly polls. The analysis highlights a trend of narrower victory margins and a decline in the average vote share of winners. In 2025, winners secured an average of 51 per cent of the

total votes polled in their constituencies, down from 55 per cent in 2020. Moreover, 27 (39 per cent) of the winners secured less than 50 per cent of the votes in their constituencies. Out of the 70 winners, 31 (44 per cent) have declared criminal cases against them, with 21 of these candidates winning with a vote share of 50 per cent or more. Notably, 18 winners with criminal cases defeated runners-up with clean backgrounds. Among them, Aaley Mohammed Iqbal (AAP) from Matia Mahal constituency won with a staggering 50.58 per cent margin of victory, the highest in this category. On the other hand, 61 (87 per cent) of the winners are crorepaties (millionaires), with 41 of them securing more than 50 per cent of the votes. In contrast, only 2 out of 9 non-crorepati winners achieved a vote share of 50 per cent or above.

Bureaucrats prepare 100-day action plan for 'Viksit Delhi'

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

With a BJP-led government taking charge in Delhi likely next week, bureaucrats are busy preparing a 100-day action plan to implement "Viksit Delhi" and pending central schemes like Ayushman Bharat and combat sewer overflows and waterlogging. According to government sources, Chief Secretary Dharmendra in a recent meeting with heads of departments directed them to submit their action plan by Thursday.

According to the chief secretary's directives, the action plan should focus on targets to be completed within a period of 15 days, monthwise and 100 days. All department heads have also been directed to start preparing draft cabinet notes for the schemes or projects that the new BJP government may launch after taking oath of office. The General Administration Department (GAD) of Delhi government will compile the action plan for 100 days and keep it ready for presentation before the new government,

the officials said. The health department has been asked to prepare a cabinet note to implement Ayushman Bharat health insurance scheme that was not implemented in Delhi by the previous Aam Aadmi Party government, they said. During the campaigning for the assembly polls, all the top BJP leaders promised to implement the scheme immediately after coming to power. The scheme provides free treatment to the beneficiaries up to ₹5 Lakh each, with an additional ₹5 Lakh cover

from the state government. The department heads were also instructed to start working on various other central government schemes that were not implemented in Delhi by the previous government, the officials said. Civic bodies like Municipal Corporation of Delhi, New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC), Delhi Jal Board, DUSIB and Irrigation and Flood department will also take steps for proper desilting and cleaning of the drains to prevent waterlogging during the rainy season.

BJP MLAs prepare to meet Nadda

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Amid speculations over the name of next Chief Minister of Delhi, all 48 BJP MLAs are likely to meet party's national President JP Nadda in the next two days. BJP's legislature party meeting to decide the Chief Minister's face is likely to take place on

Sunday. It is expected that BJP's new government will be formed by February 22. "All winning MLAs will meet the National President in the next two days. Our national leadership will discuss the Chief Minister's face once Prime Minister Narendra Modi comes back from the foreign visit," said a senior

leader after Wednesday's meeting. According to the sources, the first meeting of the BJP's Legislature Party will be attended by the 48 newly-elected MLAs and presided over by two senior members from the BJP national leadership appointed to oversee the selection of the

Chief Minister and the Cabinet members. Sources said that after victory in Delhi assembly elections, several rounds of discussions over government formation, and the possible composition of Delhi's seven-member Council of Ministers, have taken place between the top brass of the BJP.

RSS moves back to old office after major rebuilding project

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) has moved back to its office in the city to its old address following the near completion of the rebuilding project spread across five lakh sq ft of built-up area over 3.75 acre premises, housing three 13-storey towers and around 300 rooms and offices in total. Sources said the rebuilding exercise of the RSS office, Keshav Kunj, has cost nearly ₹150 Crore collected through contributions from over 75,000 people sympathetic to the Hindutva organisation's ideology and took over eight years, a period marked by the disruption and delay forced by the COVID-19 outbreak. RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat and general secretary Dattatreya Hosabale will be attending a "karyakarta sammelan" of the organisation's Delhi unit on February 19 to mark the beginning of its work from the Jhandewalan office, they added. The sources said that the RSS, which is headquartered in Nagpur, will organise its annual 'Akhil Bharatiya Pratinidhi Sabha', considered its apex decision-making body, in Bengaluru from March 21 to March 23. Attended by nearly 1,500 persons,



including senior functionaries of the RSS and affiliated organisations, the meet sees discussions over key germane issues besides organisational matters and resolutions are passed to outline the Sangh's positions on a host of matters. Senior BJP leaders, including the party's president, also attend the exercise. Speaking of the rebuilt premises in the national capital, the sources said that

RSS had been carrying out its activities out of a rented premises since 2016 following the beginning of the rebuilding and renovation exercise at the place out of which it had been working since 1962. The new premise, a vast change from the earlier two-storey building, fuses modern technology with ancient architectural practices to make it airy and exposed to ample sunlight, they

said, adding that Gujarat-based architect Anup Dave has designed it. The three towers (ground floor plus 12 floors) are named Sadhna, Prerna and Archana, while one of its biggest auditoriums is named after Ashok Singhal, a leading Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) functionary closely linked to the Ram temple movement. This modern auditorium can seat 463 persons, while another hall can accommodate an audience of 650 members. The RSS office has accommodation facility for its functionaries and members besides a library, health clinic and its sewage treatment plant, the sources said. It also has solar power facilities to provide for a part of its total electricity needs. The RSS-linked weeklies Panchjanya and Organiser besides publishing firm Suruchi Prakashan, which has been bringing out books and other literature hewed to the Hindutva organisation's ideology, will also have offices in the RSS premises, they added. The health facilities will be open to the poor people living nearby and outsiders can also make use of the library facilities, the sources said. The new premises are home to modern and spacious conference rooms and auditoriums.

BJP aims for triple-engine government in Delhi

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

After securing a huge win in the Assembly elections, the BJP is eyeing a "triple-engine government" in Delhi by securing the post of mayor. The mayoral elections are expected to be held in April, and the BJP is working to consolidate its numbers and wrest control of the MCD from the AAP, which party insiders said, is not going to be an uphill task. AAP had won the last mayoral election, held in November, by three votes. However, the MCD's tenure since then has been tumultuous, with both the BJP and AAP engaging in aggressive poaching of each other's councillors. The BJP can easily get its councillor elected as mayor, party leaders said on Wednesday. "The BJP, which won 48 seats in the recent assembly polls, will have 10 out of the 14

nominated members in the MCD (Municipal Corporation of Delhi) while AAP will have four. Besides, several AAP councillors are ready to switch to the BJP for development of their wards under the new government," a senior Delhi BJP leader said. According to officials, three of AAP's 121 councillors in the MCD won the assembly polls while eight of the BJP's 120 councillors were elected to the House. As per the Delhi Municipal Corporation Act, the MCD is required to elect a new mayor and deputy mayor for which elections are supposed to be held in April every year. Apart from the councillor, 14 MLAs (nominated from parties in proportion to their representation in the Delhi Assembly), seven Lok Sabha MPs (all BJP) and three Rajya Sabha MPs (at the moment, all of them are from AAP) are

going to be a part of the mayoral electorate. In the 2022 MCD polls, AAP had won 134 wards, the BJP 104, the Congress nine and Independents three. According to the BJP leaders, the mayoral election would provide the party an opportunity to have a "triple-engine government" to serve the people of Delhi. The vote tally of the BJP -- including Delhi's seven Lok Sabha MPs, chances of AAP councillors switching sides, and eight MLAs as nominated members -- make it clear that the party will win the mayor's post, another senior leader said. "Several AAP councillors have already approached us but we have not given them any assurances so far. In the November mayoral election, several AAP councillors had voted for the BJP candidate," he said.

No child will be discrimination: SC on Rohingya access to schools

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

No child will be discriminated against in education, the Supreme Court said on Wednesday while fixing for next week a plea seeking a direction to the Centre and the Delhi governments to grant Rohingya refugees in the city access to public schools and hospitals.

The court just wants to know where these Rohingya families are living, in whose house and what are their particulars, a bench of Justices Surya Kant and N Kotiwar Singh said while making the the no discrimination in education point. Senior advocate Colin Gonsalves, appearing for the NGO Rohingya Human Rights Initiative, said he has filed an affidavit giving the details and pointed out that the Rohingya refugees have UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) cards.

It will be easier for the NGO to give the particulars if these Rohingya families have these cards, Justice Surya Kant said. Gonsalves then sought some time to furnish more details to



Photo: File photo

the court. The top court posted the matter for further hearing after 10 days. On January 31, the top court asked the NGO to apprise the court where the Rohingya refugees have settled in the city and the facilities accessible to them. It also asked Gonsalves to file an affidavit indicating their places of settlement in Delhi. Gonsalves said the NGO



sought access to public schools and hospitals to Rohingya refugees as they were denied the access due to lack of Aadhaar cards. "They are refugees having UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) cards and therefore they can't have Aadhaar cards. But for want of Aadhaar they are not being granted access to public schools and hospitals," he submitted.

Gonsalves said Rohingya refugees resided in Shaheen Bagh, Kalindi Kunj and Khajuri Khas areas of Delhi. "In Shaheen Bagh and Kalindi Kunj they are residing in slums and in Khajuri Khas they are residing in rented accommodation," he had submitted. The top court had said it asked the questions to understand if they lived in camps, the nature of relief would be different than the one mentioned in the PIL. The PIL has sought a direction to authorities to grant admission to all Rohingya children free of cost irrespective of Aadhaar cards and allow them to participate in all examinations, including Classes 10 and 12 and graduation, without government insistence on the ID proof.

India, France to develop modern nuclear reactors

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

India and France on Wednesday expressed an intent to jointly develop modern nuclear reactors, emphasising that nuclear power was crucial for energy security and transition to a low-carbon economy.

The two countries signed a letter of intent on Small Modular Reactors (SMRs) and Advanced Modular Reactors (AMRs), according to a joint statement issued after Prime Minister Narendra Modi met French President Emmanuel Macron in Paris.

"Prime Minister Modi and President Macron stressed that nuclear energy is an essential part of the energy mix for strengthening energy security and transitioning towards a low-carbon economy," according to the statement. SMRs are compact nuclear fission reactors that can be manufactured in factories and then installed elsewhere. They typically have a smaller capacity than conventional nuclear reactors.

The two leaders also acknowledged the strong civil nuclear ties between India and France and efforts in cooperation on the peaceful uses of nuclear energy,



Prime Minister Narendra Modi and French President Emmanuel Macron during the inauguration of the Indian Consulate, in Marseille, France PTI

notably in relation to the Jaitapur Nuclear Power Project.

They also renewed a memorandum of understanding between India's Department of Atomic Energy and France's Commissariat à l'Energie Atomique et aux Energies Alternatives of France, concerning cooperation with the Global Center for Nuclear Energy Partnership (GCNEP). Both the nations agreed to enhance collaboration in training and education for nuclear professionals. Later on Wednesday, Modi is scheduled to meet US President Donald Trump, with nuclear power expected to be among the topics of discussion. India aims to generate 100 gigawatts of nuclear energy by 2047 as part of its transition to

clean energy. Earlier this month, the government announced plans to launch a Nuclear Energy Mission with a budget of Rs 20,000 crore to support research and development of SMRs. As part of the initiative, India plans to operationalise at least five indigenously developed SMRs by 2033. To enable private sector participation, the government is considering amendments to the Atomic Energy Act and the Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act.

At present, nuclear power plants contribute 1.8 per cent of India's total installed power capacity of 462 gigawatts and around 3 per cent of total electricity generation. This helps save around 41 million tonnes of carbon dioxide annually.

India to host first Global Coalition for Social Justice

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Union Minister of Labour and Employment Mansukh Mandaviya will inaugurate first-ever Regional Dialogue on Global Coalition for Social Justice here on February 24-25, an official statement said here on Wednesday.

Giving details, it said Ministry of Labour and Employment in collaboration with Confederation of Indian Industry (CII)-Employers' Federation of India (EFI) will host the Dialogue at Bharat Mandapam. This landmark event is a significant contribution to the Global Coalition for Social Justice.

Launched by ILO in 2023 the Coalition is a platform for governments, employers' and workers' organizations, international and regional organizations, financial institutions and development banks, enterprises, international non-governmental organizations and academia committed to advancing social justice and engaging in collaborative efforts to achieve shared objectives.

The Coalition leverages collaboration among partners to amplify the unique strengths of each participant, comprehensively and coherently addressing social justice challenges. As a member of the Asia Pacific Coordinating Group,

India is spearheading the first 'Regional Dialogue' under the Global Coalition for Social Justice and championing the key intervention "Responsible Businesses for Inclusive and Sustainable Societies" under the Coalition's thematic area of "Expanding access to and capabilities for Productive and freely chosen Employment and Sustainable Enterprises." The Regional Dialogue will bring together nearly 80 Coalition partners from the Asia Pacific region and beyond to explore innovative approaches, exchange best practices, and strengthen collaboration to advancing social justice in the region.

The event will also mark the 74th Foundation Day of the Employees' State Insurance Corporation (ESIC), celebrating its unwavering commitment to ensuring dignified healthcare and economic security for India's workforce. The ESIC Foundation Day is an occasion to recognize the vital contribution of the organization in fostering social justice through the extension of comprehensive social security benefits for workers and their families in the formal sector. Discussions will focus on critical dimensions of social justice, including responsible business conduct and social protection, aligning with the Coalition's thematic priorities.

Ayush Ministry, social justice department sign MoU for senior citizens

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Ministry of Ayush and Department of Social Justice and Empowerment signed a MoU on Wednesday to improve the well-being of senior citizens and address the growing concern of substance abuse. This strategic partnership seeks to implement Ayush-based interventions to promote geriatric healthcare and combat substance abuse, Union Ayush Minister Prataprao Jadhav said. He said the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) is a pioneering step to develop cooperative initiatives for health promotion among senior citizens and those affected by substance abuse.



Photo: File photo

"Geriatric healthcare and substance abuse are critical areas that require special focus, especially as we face an ageing population and growing concerns around addiction," Jadhav said.

This collaboration between the Ministry of Ayush and the Department of Social Justice and Empowerment (DoSJE) represents a significant step towards addressing these chal-

lenges. "By leveraging the holistic approach of Ayush systems alongside social welfare initiatives, we aim to empower our senior citizens and those affected by substance abuse," the Minister stated. While addressing the gathering, Union Minister of State for Social Justice and Empowerment B L Verma, said, "Under the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, our government has taken several steps to ensure the welfare of our senior citizens. The signing of the MoU with the Ministry of Ayush will benefit our senior citizens in a big way. "The development of elderly-specific training modules, treat-

ment protocols, yoga training programs, sharing of preventive and curative practices, etc, under the MoU will go a long way in enabling our senior citizens to lead a healthy life. By joining hands with the Ministry of Ayush, I am sure that together we can provide comprehensive services to the community," Verma said. By leveraging the strengths of Ayush systems, both ministries committed to working together on various initiatives, including awareness programmes, capacity-building for service providers and the establishment of geriatric health and de-addiction units under Ayush autonomous bodies. Key objectives of the MoU include developing coopera-

tion, convergence and synergy between the Ministry of Ayush and DoSJE to foster innovative initiatives for promoting the health of senior citizens, reducing the demand for drugs, addressing substance abuse and aiding mental rehabilitation. This will be achieved through the generation of awareness and capacity-building of service providers using Ayush systems. It also includes encouraging research in the areas of geriatric health, substance abuse and mental health, with a focus on exploring the therapeutic benefits of traditional healthcare practices and supporting additional activities for health promotion tailored to both the geriatric population and individuals affected by substance abuse.

PM Modi embarks on two-day US visit

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will pay a two-day working visit to the US starting Wednesday and hold a bilateral meeting with President Donald Trump, with New Delhi saying it will give further direction and momentum to this "important partnership". Modi, who is currently visiting France at the invitation of President Emmanuel Macron, would be among the first few world leaders to visit the United States following the January 20 inauguration after Trump's vic-

tory in the US elections last November. The visit will provide a "valuable opportunity" to engage the new administration in all areas of mutual interest, senior officials said. The prime minister's visit to the US at the invitation of President Trump shows the "importance of India-US partnership and is also reflective of the bipartisan support that this partnership enjoys in the US", Foreign Secretary said Vikram Misri said here in a briefing on February seven. Modi will also interact with business leaders and members of the Indian community in the US.

Modi will hold a bilateral meeting with President Trump in both restricted and delegation-level formats, he said. A range of bilateral issues are expected to be on the table besides, besides discussions on regional and international situation. "There is an obvious convergence of interests between the two countries in a number of areas - trade, investment, technology, defence cooperation, counterterrorism, Indo-Pacific security, and of course, people-to-people relations," the Foreign Secretary said in the briefing. The visit is also expected to boost people-to-people ties between

India and the US. "The 5.4 million-strong Indian community in the US and the more than 3,50,000 students from India who are pursuing studies in universities strengthen this bond immeasurably," Misri said. "The prime minister's visit to the United States will give further direction and momentum to this important partnership. We expect a joint statement to be adopted at the end of the visit and will share that in due course," the foreign secretary said. This will be Modi's first visit since the inauguration of the second presidential term of Trump on January 20.

Judicial officers' pension: Unified pension scheme notified, Centre tells SC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre on Wednesday informed the Supreme Court that it recently notified the Unified Pension Scheme which might address the concerns of judicial officers.

A bench of Justices B R Gavai and Augustine George Masih heard the submission made by the Centre's counsel.

Attorney general R Venkataramani and solicitor general Tushar Mehta appeared for the Centre and apprised the bench about the Unified Pension Scheme (UPS). The matter relates to the applicability of the New Pension Scheme to the officers of the district judiciary. "It is the submission of the attorney general as well as the solicitor general that the Unified Pension Scheme may address concerns of all the employees, including the judicial officers," observed the bench. The court therefore found it appropriate to defer the matter for some time to experi-

ence how the Unified Pension Scheme worked and then take a call on the issues at hand. The matter would be heard after 12 weeks.

The case raises concerns over the disbursement of pension to officers of the district judiciary and retired high court judges.

The top court is dealing with salaries, arrears and allowances of the officers of district judiciary. The finance ministry notified the UPS on January 25 and it promises an assured pension of 50 per cent of the average basic pay drawn over the last 12 months prior to superannuation.

UPS would be applicable to Central government employees who were covered under the National Pension System and chose the option under the system, according to a gazette notification issued by the finance ministry. UPS or assured payout would not be available in case of removal or dismissal from service or resignation of the employee, as per the notification published on January 25.

Supreme Court denies Indrani Mukerjea plea to travel abroad

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday dismissed the plea of Indrani Mukerjea, accused of killing her daughter Sheena Bora, against a ruling denying her permission to travel abroad. A bench of Justices M M Sundresh and Rajesh Binal directed the trial court to conduct the proceedings in the case within a year and upheld the Bombay High Court order refusing her plea. "There is no guarantee that



Photo: File photo

you will come back. Trial is at an advanced stage. Taking into con-

sideration the fact that the trial is ongoing, we are not inclined to

consider the request at this stage. We direct the trial court to expedite the hearing and conclude within a year," it said. Indrani is also an Accused turned Approver in the INX Media bribery case. Former Finance Minister P Chidambaram and son Karti are accused in this case filed by CBI and ED. Indrani confessed before the court that she gave bribes to Karti linked firms to get saved from Income Tax and FDI violations. Opposing the permission, the CBI counsel said it was a sensitive matter and

the trial had reached halfway with the examination of 96 witnesses. The counsel for Mukerjea, a former media executive, submitted she was given bail by the top court and 92 witnesses still remained to be examined in the case. She said the trial court was vacant for the last four months and the proceedings could take a long time to conclude. The travel restriction matter came up in the Supreme Court after a special court on July 19 allowed Mukerjea's plea to visit Spain and the United Kingdom

for 10 days over the next three months. The Bombay High Court however set aside the order on September 27 after the CBI filed an appeal. Mukerjea moved the apex court against the high court order. In her plea, filed through advocate Sana Raees Khan, Mukerjea said she was a British citizen as she sought permission to visit Spain and her home country for "making necessary changes and amendments and taking care of pending work which cannot be transacted without her personal presence".

Deepika Padukone shares stress management tips with students on PM's PPC 2025

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Identify the cause of your stress and express it to someone you can trust, Bollywood actor Deepika Padukone has told school students during an interaction on PM's Pariksha Pe Charcha aired on Wednesday. The actor shared insights on mental health, stress management and how to stay calm during exams at a special session of 'Pariksha Pe Charcha', an annual event in which the Prime Minister Narendra Modi interacts with students appearing for board examinations. In a shift from the traditional

town hall format, Modi preferred a more informal setting this time and took the students to Delhi iconic Sunder Nursery for his annual interaction with them ahead of board exams. "I think competition and comparison is a part of life. Competition is not a bad thing, but recognising our strengths and weaknesses, focusing more on our strengths, and working on our weaknesses is probably the only way to do it," Padukone said during the session. During the session, the actor shared her struggle with depression and also advised the students to learn to derive happiness from their own strengths.

"To manage stress, talk to your parents the night before exams. Identify the cause of your stress and express it to someone you can trust," she said during the interaction broadcast on Wednesday. Eminent personalities like Boxer MC Mary Kom and spiritual leader Sadhguru have also shared their experiences and knowledge with students on key aspects of life and learning in different episodes of Pariksha Pe Charcha this year. Padukone, who revealed her depression diagnosis in 2015, said there was a time when discussion around mental health was not encouraged in India.



Photo: File photo

"Mental health used to be a stigma in our country. As soon

as I started talking about this illness, I started feeling so free,

light. From there, my journey towards mental health awareness began. Depression, anxiety, stress could happen to anyone, anytime. "Like Shri Narendra Modi ji has mentioned in his book 'Exam Warriors' - 'express, never suppress'. When you're preparing for exams, you start feeling better. And you're able to live a happier, healthier life," she told students during the episode of the PPC session which was telecast on Wednesday. Calling depression an "invisible" illness, the "Pathaan" star said there was a time she was working continuously and one day in 2014 she just passed out. It was

her mother, who was then visiting her in Mumbai from Bengaluru, who realised that something wasn't ok. "They asked me if something happened, someone said anything to me, something happened at work. And, I said, 'No. I don't know what it is. I'm just feeling completely helpless and hopeless. I just don't want to live anymore. I was lucky in that moment that my mother realised and she decided to call a psychologist," she recalled. When a student asked for tips to care for one's mental health, Padukone shared three pointers. "Sleep is very important. It is a

freely available superpower. You must go out for adequate sunlight and fresh air. Always reach out for help." The 39-year-old also said patience is an important virtue and one can only do what's in their control. "So take a short break. Relax the mind. And then address it again. Sometimes, you just (need to) have a fresh take on whatever you are studying. Feeling stressed is quite natural. How we handle it is important. It's important to be patient - related to your exams, results or preparations... Sleep well, hydrate, exercise, and meditate," she added.

Millions take holy dip in Prayagraj on Maghi Purnima

BISWAJEET BANERJEE
MAHAKUMBH NAGAR

The ghats of Prayagraj came alive with devotion as millions of pilgrims took a sacred dip at the confluence of the Ganga, Yamuna, and the mythical Saraswati on the auspicious occasion of Maghi Purnima. A sea of saffron-clad sadhus, devotees in colorful traditional attire, and spiritual seekers from across the country thronged the banks, creating a surreal atmosphere of faith and celebration.

Government claims that by the end of Wednesday over 2 crore people have taken a dip at Sangam.

From the break of dawn, chants of "Har Har Gange" echoed across the riverbanks, blending with the sound of temple bells and conch shells. As the golden hues of the rising sun kissed the holy waters, devotees stepped into

the river, some folding their hands in prayer, others bowing completely in reverence. Some wept tears of joy, while others stood silently, letting the sacred moment wash over them.

"The feeling is indescribable," said Anuradha Mishra, a 62-year-old pilgrim from Varanasi. "The moment you step into the Sangam, it's as if all your worries dissolve. This is not just a ritual, it is liberation."

Adding to the divine ambiance, authorities orchestrated a grand floral shower on the devotees. Thousands of marigold and rose petals rained down from atop buildings and helicopters, turning the ghats into a vibrant, fragrant spectacle.

The sight left many in awe. "It felt like the heavens themselves were blessing us," said 28-year-old Ramesh Tiwari, who had traveled from



Devotees gather to take a holy dip at the Sangam on the occasion of 'Maghi Purnima' bath festival during ongoing Maha Kumbh Mela, in Prayagraj

Madhya Pradesh with his family. "I have been coming here for years, but this time,

the energy is truly something else." Despite the enormous footfall, the movement of devotees remained smooth, thanks to well-planned arrangements by the authorities. "The Maghi Purnima snan has been conducted peacefully and efficiently," said a senior government official Anuj Kumar Jha. "Over 40 million devotees have already taken the holy dip. Our entire team is working tirelessly to ensure that facilities, crowd management, and sanitation are up to the mark."

According to officials, nearly one-third of India's population has participated in the ongoing Magh Mela's holy baths, a staggering testament to the event's significance. "This is an unprecedented turnout," said Uttar Pradesh DGP Prashant Kumar. "On peak weekends, crowds swell, sometimes causing traffic

slowdowns, but our teams work round the clock to keep everything under control. The sheer scale of faith on display here is beyond words."

Key routes such as Andawa to Jhansi and the Shastris Bridge witnessed a steady flow of pilgrims. Even around the iconic Bade Hanuman Temple, where devotees often queue for hours, the crowd was well-regulated.

The grand event was also marked by spiritual declarations. Former Uttar Pradesh Shia Waqf Board Chairman Wasim Rizvi, now known as Jitendra Narayan Singh Tyagi after his conversion to Hinduism, took a dip in the Sangam and expressed his joy.

"Sangam Snan is not just about bathing, it is about inner transformation. It fills my soul with bliss," he said, standing on the ghats surrounded by his supporters. He went on to

announce his plans for a new organization aimed at supporting those who choose to embrace Sanatan Dharma. "We will provide financial aid to converts, help them establish businesses, and ensure they are welcomed into society with dignity."

His statements sparked mixed reactions among devotees, with some expressing support, while others preferred to focus on the spiritual essence of the gathering.

The Magh Mela, often considered a precursor to the grand Maha Kumbh, has once again reaffirmed Prayagraj's role as the epicenter of Hindu spirituality.

As Maghi Purnima draws to a close, the energy at the Sangam remains electric, with pilgrims continuing their prayers and taking one last dip before heading home-hearts full, spirits uplifted, and faith renewed.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh hails Aero India 2025 as historic success

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
BENGALURU

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Wednesday said India is going through a revolutionary phase of transformation, and the country's fighter jets, missile systems, naval vessels are not only protecting our borders but are also becoming the centre of attraction for the entire world. He said this at the indigenisation event and the valedictory ceremony of Aero India 2025 here.

"Aero India has reached heights that are not only unparalleled but historic," the Defence Minister said. "I was personally present for the past three days in this event and if I have to express my



Photo: File photo

experience in three words, it is energy, energy and energy," he said. "Whatever we could see in

from India but from across the world. The enthusiasm seen among our entrepreneurs, our startups and innovators is commendable."

Noting that the country is going through a revolutionary phase of transformation, the Defence Minister said, "We all know that India has historically been dependent on imports for its defence needs. If I look back about a decade ago, 65 to 70 per cent of defence equipment was being imported into our country."

"If we look at the situation today, you may call it resolution or a miracle, but almost the same percentage of defence equipment is being manufactured in the country

today," he said. Rajnath Singh said, "Today we are standing at such a juncture where fighter jets, missile systems, naval vessels, or many such equipment and platforms, are not only protecting our borders but are also becoming the centre of attraction for the entire world."

"Today, we are exporting everything from small artillery to large platforms like Brahmos and Akash missile system to many countries. This is not only increasing our defence exports, but our new partnerships with different countries are also developing and strengthening at the global level," he said.

establishing a robust security framework by leveraging advanced technology for comprehensive surveillance. Every aspect of safety, convenience, crime control, and crowd management from Tuesday night onwards was meticulously monitored. The ICCC oversees the fairgrounds and the entire city through 2,750 high-tech cameras, an anti-drone system, and specialized security teams, ensuring round-the-clock vigilance. Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Rajesh Dwivedi emphasized that 24/7 aerial

Operation Chaturbhuj to monitor devotees

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
MAHAKUMBH NAGAR

A special security operation, Operation Chaturbhuj, was launched to ensure the safety of devotees from across the country and abroad for the holy bath on Magh Purnima in Mahakumbh Nagar. This initiative was carried out under the directives of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, reinforcing stringent security measures. Additionally, a dedicated team from the Integrated Command and Control Center (ICCC) was crucial in

surveillance is being conducted via drones, while special security arrangements at the ICCC have significantly enhanced crowd management. He added, "Furthermore, the anti-drone system remains on high alert in Mahakumbh Nagar, actively preventing unauthorized aerial activity. On the auspicious occasion of Magh Purnima, stringent measures were in place to detect and neutralize suspicious drones, ensuring an incident-free and secure environment for all devotees."

operation in three words, it is energy, energy and energy," he said. "Whatever we could see in

Panchayat steps up against drug menace in Himachal Pradesh



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
BILASPUR

Two days after Auhar gram Panchayat here decided to stop facilities for the families whose members are caught with adulterated heroin, another Panchayat, Gatwar has also decided to debar the members from receiving benefits.

Deputy Pradhan of Gatwar Panchayat, Ajay Sharma, said that the decision was taken to save the youths and the society at large from addiction to drugs such as 'chitta' (adulterated heroin).

He said that the various schemes are being run at the Panchayat level for the people and actions against drug addicts or the people involved in the business are necessary. The Panchayat has decided if any person is found to be involved in drug consumption or business, a proposal would be brought to deprive the family of any benefits, he added. The facilities given by Panchayats include facilities provided under the Below Poverty Line

(BPL), the Integrated Rural Development Scheme (IRDP), the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) and others. Sharma said that the approval of money for building a house, water storage tank and other facilities would not be provided to such families.

The Panchayat has also decided to start an awareness campaign to save the youth from the increasing menace of drug addiction and its ill effects, Gram Panchayat pradhan Naval Bajaj said.

Parents are making every effort to provide better education and living standards to their children. However, the youth falling into the trap of drug addiction is a matter of concern for the society. A campaign against drug addiction will be run in every ward and village under the Panchayat. The Panchayat has appealed for cooperation from self-help groups, youth groups, women groups and social service organisations to make this campaign successful.

Former cricketer Anil Kumble, wife take holy dip in Sangam

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
MAHAKUMBH NAGAR

Former Indian cricketer and coach Anil Kumble took the holy dip in Triveni Sangam on the auspicious occasion of Magh Purnima in Prayagraj. Accompanied by his wife, Chaitna Ramtirtha, Kumble immersed himself in the revered waters, embracing the spiritual significance of the occasion.

Later, he shared photos of the event on social media platform X, captioning them with a single word: "Blessed." Through this simple message, Kumble expressed that the holy immersion had granted him spiritual merit and the



Former Indian cricket captain Anil Kumble prays after taking holy dip at the Sangam on Maghi Purnima, during the ongoing Maha Kumbh Mela 2025

blessings of Prayagraj. Anil Kumble, known for his

masterful spin bowling, arrived in Prayagraj on

Tuesday. However, he chose the auspicious occasion of Magh Purnima for his sacred dip at Triveni Sangam. On this day, no VIP protocols are observed at the Mahakumbh, yet Kumble opted to join the devotees as a regular pilgrim. He boarded a boat to reach the confluence and took the holy dip, accompanied by his wife, Chetana.

The couple offered prayers to Lord Sun and performed traditional rituals before immersing themselves in the sacred waters. Kumble also captured the moment, sharing a selfie from the boat and a stunning image of the full moon on Magh Purnima with his fans.

BJP delegation calls on Manipur Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla amid political crisis

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
IMPHAL

Amid a political crisis in strife-torn Manipur, senior BJP leader Sambit Patra on Wednesday morning called on Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla at the Raj Bhavan here, sources said.

They held discussions for some time but the outcome of the meeting is not yet known.

Patra, the BJP's Northeast in-charge, later headed for a hotel, where he is likely to meet party MLAs during the day.

A BJP delegation led by Patra had on Tuesday met Bhalla at the Raj Bhavan amid a leadership crisis following the resignation of N Biren Singh as the chief minister of the ethnic violence-hit state on February 9.

Meanwhile, experts have warned that with no one staking claim to form the government so far, the BJP-ruled Manipur may head towards a constitutional crisis.

If the situation remains so, the state is likely to be under President's rule, they said.

Senior Supreme Court Advocate Arunabh Chowdhury told PTI, "In Manipur, the assembly is a live one... it is not under suspended animation or President's Rule. It is mandatory to hold assembly sessions as per the Supreme Court order.

Obviously, it will lead to a big constitutional crisis." There is no provision in Article 174 saying that this can be extended or be condoned beyond six months, he said.

Article 174 says that the Governor shall from time to time summon the House or each House of the Legislature of a state to meet at such time and place as he thinks fit, but six months shall not intervene between its last sitting in one session and the date appointed for its first sitting in the next session.

After six months, it will lead to a constitutional deadlock and the President's Rule under Article 356 is the only option, Chowdhury said.

Article 356 of the Constitution gives the President the power to impose this rule on a state on the advice of the Union Council of Ministers.

Chief Minister N Biren Singh had on February 9 resigned from his post and Governor A K Bhalla accepted the same. He requested the CM to continue in office until alternative arrangements are made.

The Governor has already declared the seventh session of the 12th Manipur Legislative Assembly, which was set to commence on February 10, as null and void. The last session of the assembly in the restive state concluded on August 12, 2024.

Aligning technologies with future warfare is not the only answer: General Anil Chauhan

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
BENGALURU

Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) General Anil Chauhan on Wednesday said aligning technologies with future warfare is not the sole solution to achieving victory in war. He emphasised the need to develop new concepts and doctrines to complement technological advancements.

Making these assertions in a seminar on aligning technologies with future conflicts at Aero India here, the CDS said "Aligning technologies with future warfare is only part of the solution to achieving victory. You must evolve

new concepts, create new doctrines, establish new organizations for such combat, and build a new culture and processes if you want to win." He added, "Technology will only provide a part of the answer."

Noting that warfare initially evolved on land before expanding into the maritime and air domains, the CDS said, "With each new domain, there has been an influence on the preceding one. Even within these domains, significant changes continue to occur." In the land domain warfare has evolved to include terrain-based and urban combat, he said. "In the

maritime domain, apart from surface warfare, battles are now extending underwater-almost to the seabed. In the airspace we are witnessing an expansion into near space." "We need to align technologies to fight in these increasingly complex domains, and that is where technology will assist us," he added.

Speaking on how combat is evolving due to technological advancements, General Chauhan said, "For generations warfare has been between human beings but today we are on the verge of redefining this. In the future combat may be between humans and

machines and later it could be entirely between autonomous machines." He also highlighted that warfare is becoming multi-domain, meaning that battles will be fought simultaneously across multiple domains.

As warfare grows more complex the need to develop technologies for cross-domain operations and cross-domain command emerge, the CDS stressed. "Warfare is also becoming more intelligent due to battlefield digitisation, the networking of terrestrial, aerial, and satellite systems, and the shift toward data-centric warfare," he added.

CM Mamata Banerjee slams BJP for Kumbh mess

SAUGAR SENGUPTA
KOLKATA

Consequent to Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitaraman's corruption diatribe on Bengal Government, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday mounted a blistering attack on the Centre and the BJP on a host of issues - including alleged fudging of voters' lists to win elections, mismanaging the Kumbh Mela as also suppressing facts post stampede deaths in Prayagraj and central deprivation of Bengal.

"Those who talk of corruption first look into their own acts... they are embodiment of corruption... let Nirmala Devi control their own

corruptions... she has stopped grants to us... even your own Gujarat Government is crying for grants... you attack us every time but how will you explain the ghost voters that swell the voters' lists causing you to win elections... from where this 40 lakh votes came," she asked in an apparent reference to the Maharashtra Assembly elections.

"You send ED and CBI to frighten the opposition into silence but allow your own corruption to go unchecked," Banerjee said roundly blaming the BJP for winning elections by fudging the voters' list and manipulating the Election Commission.

Banerjee was speaking to the

media after the State Finance Minister Chandrima Bhattacharya on Wednesday placed the last full-time Budget before the next year's Assembly elections. Saying that she was ready to take on the BJP she said, "though the BJP has introduced lakhs of fake voters from Bihar in the voters' lists (some other States)... we will not allow them to do that in Bengal our administration is quite alert about that... we will thwart your plans."

Earlier state Finance Minister Bhattacharya presented a ₹3.89-Lakh Crore budget for 2025-26 with a significant focus on social welfare, and announced a four per cent hike in Dearness Allowance (DA) for State government

employees. The State Government employees who had been fighting a long-drawn case in the Calcutta High Court and then in the Supreme Court would now get a 18 per cent DA as compared to their central counterparts that get 53 per cent.

For the first time speaking vehemently on the Kumbh Mela deaths she said, in other places they ask for setting up commissions but how many commissions they set up after the deaths in Kumbh Mela where there is no account of how many people died... they stopped media from entering the area for full 24 hours... they blocked internet and did everything to hide the number of

deaths... I was told how dead bodies were thrown in the river... we saw similar things happening during the corona... thousands of sandals lay strewn in places as testimony to the number of deaths during the stampede." About 30 pilgrims had died in the stampede on January 29 at Prayagraj.

"There was no plan to manage the crowd... everything was concentrated on VIP movement... whereas here in Ganga Sagar I do not visit the Mela during the main occasion so as not to create problem in crowd management... this was not so in Prayagraj," Banerjee said.

Abhijit Mukherjee quits TMC, joins Congress

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA

Trinamool Congress leader and former MP Abhijit Mukherjee on Wednesday returned to the Congress after a gap of four years. Mukherjee is the son of former President Pranab Mukherjee.

Mukherjee who joined the Congress in the presence of AICC in-charge Ghulam Ahmad Mir and PCC president Subhankar Sarkar said it was like "ghar wapsi" or homecoming for him.

When asked whether rejoining Congress was a politically correct move, given Congress' condition in the State, he said, "It does not matter what the Congress's situation is. I went there due



Photo: File photo

to a personal reason, I do not want to disclose. We carry forward orders, we do what responsibility we are given." Sarkar said that Mukherjee's rejoining the Congress would strengthen

the State party. His joining the Congress days after Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said that she will not ally with the tricolor party which had nothing left in it in the State.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Yunus Govt in the crosshair

Bangladesh army shifts away from the Yunus Government as it calls for stronger ties with India amid chaos and downward slide

Bangladesh is currently facing a period of political uncertainty and unrest as the government led by Muhammad Yunus finds itself increasingly at odds with the country's powerful military establishment. The recent statements made by General Waker-uz-Zaman, the Chief of Army Staff, at the Dhaka International Marathon 2025, indicate a significant shift in the military's stance towards the civilian government. His emphasis on peace, stability and international cooperation—particularly with India—suggests growing dissatisfaction within the army ranks regarding the Yunus administration's policies and governance approach. The military in Bangladesh has historically played a crucial role in maintaining internal stability, often stepping in when political crises spiral out of control. With political tensions escalating under the Yunus government, the army appears to be distancing itself from the administration, signalling a potential realignment in the country's power dynamics. Several factors seem to be driving the military's dissatisfaction with the Yunus government. This indicates the military's concerns over the deteriorating economic conditions and increasing social divisions under Yunus's leadership. Persistent political unrest could be damaging to foreign investments and economic growth, both of which are essential for national development.

The military appears to be worried about governance inefficiencies and security concerns, especially as political violence and mass protests become more frequent. The Yunus government's inability to control these disruptions may be viewed as a failure to ensure stability, a key concern for the army. Bangladesh's military leadership values strong bilateral relations with key regional powers. General Waker's remarks about India underscore the army's desire for a pragmatic foreign policy approach that prioritises stability and mutual benefits rather than ideological stances or populist rhetoric. General Waker-uz-Zaman's statement emphasising India as an important neighbour and a key partner in regional security and economic cooperation suggests a strategic recalibration in Bangladesh's foreign policy. His remarks that Bangladesh "depends on India in many matters" and that both countries should respect each other's strategic interests signal a clear endorsement of closer ties with New Delhi. India and Bangladesh share deep economic linkages, including trade, energy cooperation and infrastructure projects. A stable relationship with India ensures continued economic growth and regional connectivity. Cooperation in counterterrorism efforts and border management is crucial for maintaining peace and stability. Bangladesh's military leadership might be viewing stronger ties with India as a means to maintain a balanced foreign policy, ensuring that Dhaka does not become overly reliant on any single regional power. The balance of power between the civilian leadership and the military will be crucial in determining the country's direction in the coming months.



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PICTALK



Devotees perform rituals during the Thaipusam festival at Vadapalani Murugan temple, in Chennai

Breaking barriers: Building a future for women in science

Trailblazing women scientists continue to defy the odds, proving that inclusion is not just a matter of fairness but a necessity for scientific and societal progress

In the 21st century, where scientific breakthroughs continue to shape our world, the persistent under-representation of women in science remains a glaring issue. Women have been at the forefront of some of the greatest scientific achievements across the globe in diverse fields from basic science to space science. Despite these inspiring role models, systemic barriers continue to stifle women's participation in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). It's time we confront these challenges and build a future where women can truly thrive in science. What kind of scientific world are we building if we exclude half of our population?



Without the full participation of women, we lose access to a vast pool of talent, creativity, and innovative solutions that could address some of our biggest challenges. Many girls are discouraged from pursuing science from a young age due to stereotypes that frame these fields as "unsuitable" or "too difficult." The so-called "leaky pipeline" begins to take its toll as early as high school, with fewer girls opting for science-related studies and careers. Even for those who break through these initial hurdles, the challenges persist in higher education and professional life. Women in research face a lack of mentorship, unequal access to funding and systemic biases in hiring and promotions. The numbers speak for themselves: UNESCO reports that only 35 per cent of STEM students globally are women, and their representation in leadership roles remains even lower. In India, the All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) confirms that while the number of women pursuing science has grown, their presence in top research positions and leadership roles is still dismal. Despite these odds, many Indian women scientists have

defied the status quo and achieved remarkable success. Dr Indira Hinduja revolutionised reproductive medicine by developing India's first test-tube baby in 1986 and pioneering the gamete intrafallopian transfer (GIFT) technique. Dr Soumya Swaminathan's leadership as Chief Scientist at the World Health Organization (WHO) played a crucial role in global health policy. Kalpana Kalahasti, a senior scientist at ISRO, was instrumental in India's triumphant Chandrayaan-3 mission and earned a spot in Nature's list of notable figures in 2023. These trailblazers not only pushed the boundaries of scientific knowledge but also broke societal barriers, paving the way for future generations of women in science. Does this make any difference to the society? Society benefits from more inclusive and comprehensive solutions when women are at the forefront of scientific innovation. Areas like maternal health, gender-specific medicine and community health interventions often flourish because of women scientists who understand these challenges first-

hand. Inclusion isn't just about fairness—it's about enriching science itself. So, how do we move forward? Building a future for women in science requires collective effort on multiple fronts. We must dismantle the structural barriers hindering women's advancement, provide mentorship programmes and promote policies that ensure equal hiring, funding, and career progression opportunities. Educational institutions should actively encourage girls to pursue STEM fields, while workplaces must offer flexible work environments that allow women to balance personal and professional responsibilities. It is time to tear down these barriers and build a future where every young girl who dreams of becoming a scientist can do so without limitations. When women are given equal opportunities to contribute to science, we all stand to gain—from groundbreaking discoveries to a more inclusive and prosperous world.



BIJU DHARMAPALAN

(The writer is the Dean Academic Affairs, Garden City University, Bangalore, views are personal)

Mann ki baat: Leading the global revival of radio



SANTOSH MATHEW

As we celebrate World Radio Day, Mann Ki Baat reminds us that the essence of communication remains the same—connecting, inspiring and bringing people together

Radio is not just a medium; it is a lifeline that transcends borders, connects people and amplifies voices. On World Radio Day, as the world celebrates the power of this enduring platform, India stands at the forefront of a remarkable communication revolution. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's monthly broadcast, Mann Ki Baat, which recently aired its 118th episode, exemplifies how radio is experiencing a renaissance in the digital age, proving to be one of the most effective tools of governance, inspiration, and soft power diplomacy. When UNESCO designated February 13 as World Radio Day in 2011, the objective was clear: to recognise the influence of radio in fostering dialogue, spreading awareness, and bridging communities worldwide.



In India, Mann Ki Baat is a testimony to the enduring power of radio. Launched in 2014, this monthly programme has transformed into one of the largest and most effective communication experiments in the world, reaching millions of listeners not just in India but globally. With an unparalleled ability to engage audiences through storytelling, Modi's initiative underscores the relevance of radio in an era dominated by digital noise. At a time when many predicted the decline of traditional radio, Mann Ki Baat has revived and redefined its significance. The programme's strength lies in its simplicity and relatability. Every episode delivers not just policy discussions but also inspirational stories of common citizens, grassroots innovations, cultural heritage and national achievements. The 118th episode was no different, weaving narratives that resonated with the spirit of nation-building, environmental consciousness, and collective responsibility. Beyond its national appeal, Mann Ki Baat has become an instrument of India's soft power diplomacy. The global Indian diaspora tunes in eagerly, fostering a sense of connection with the homeland. The broadcast's reach extends beyond national boundaries, often being translated into multiple languages, including regional South Asian tongues, strengthening India's diplomatic and cultural ties with neighbouring nations. As India emerges as a global leader, leveraging radio as a tool for soft power projection enhances its image as a nation that values dialogue, shared heritage and cooperation. South Asia, a region bound by deep historical, cultural, and linguistic ties, finds an unexpected bridge in Mann Ki Baat. The programme's themes—self-reliance, community-driven initiatives, environmental sustainability and youth empowerment—are not just relevant to India but also resonate with India's neighbours. In an era where integration efforts in South Asia often face political roadblocks, the revival of radio as a medium of cultural and ideological exchange holds immense potential. India's radio diplomacy, through Mann Ki Baat, can become a catalyst for fostering deeper South Asian engagement, promoting shared developmental narratives, and creating common aspirations among regional populations. The 118th episode once again demonstrated how radio can be used as a participatory medium. Modi's interactions with citizens, his references to

AS INDIA EMERGES AS A GLOBAL LEADER, LEVERAGING RADIO AS A TOOL FOR SOFT POWER PROJECTION ENHANCES ITS IMAGE AS A NATION THAT VALUES DIALOGUE, SHARED HERITAGE AND COOPERATION

letters and messages from listeners, and his emphasis on people-centric governance make Mann Ki Baat an inclusive space for dialogue. Unlike social media platforms that are often fragmented and dominated by echo chambers, radio, through this programme, emerges as a unifying force that connects the masses uninterrupted and intimately. From the fishermen in Tamil Nadu to the farmers in Punjab, from students in Meghalaya to entrepreneurs in Gujarat, Mann Ki Baat speaks to every Indian, transcending linguistic, geographic, and socio-economic barriers. It harnesses the power of storytelling to amplify the voices of unsung heroes, small businesses, and cultural custodians. Radio has always been a tool of influence, but Mann Ki Baat takes it a step further by combining traditional broadcasting with modern digital integration. The program is simultaneously aired on multiple platforms, including community radio stations, AIR (All India Radio), podcasts, and social media channels. This hybrid model ensures that the message reaches every demographic, from the rural farmer with a transistor radio to the urban professional tuning in via a smartphone app. On World Radio Day, as glob-

al discussions revolve around the revival and impact of radio, Mann Ki Baat stands as a shining example of how the medium can be harnessed for nation-building and diplomacy. Countries across the world can draw lessons from India's use of radio as a tool for constructive engagement, leadership communication, and global outreach. In an era where polarization is rampant, radio's ability to create a sense of collective consciousness is more valuable than ever. India, with its vast diversity, has found in Mann Ki Baat a unifying voice that reflects the aspirations of its people. The power of voice, the magic of words, and the intimacy of audio storytelling are elements that make this programme not just a political initiative but a cultural phenomenon. As the world looks for ways to reinvigorate traditional communication platforms, India's example showcases that radio is not just surviving but thriving in the digital age. Mann Ki Baat is leading this revival, proving that in the cacophony of digital noise, the human voice still holds the power to unite and inspire. (The writer is an Associate Professor Centre For South Asian Studies, Pondicherry Central University. Views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

AI FOR PUBLIC GOOD

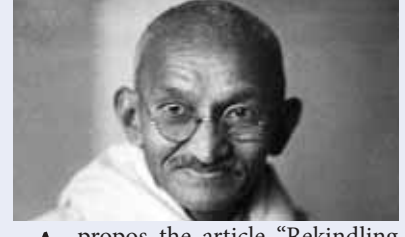
Madam — Artificial intelligence has become a truly global technology. The adoption of AI in healthcare, education, finance, labour and transportation is impacting society on a global scale while fundamental breakthroughs are being facilitated by research collaborations around the world. Its rapid deployment also creates major challenges in terms of the reliability of information, the protection of basic rights and accessibility. It is the international community's responsibility to maintain balance in our societies and to craft AI that respects universal values. The Paris AI Summit has been focused on several key themes related to opportunities, benefits and governance of AI. Also, these themes include AI for public good, for global AI governance, for innovation and culture and for environmentally sustainable AI solutions. The aim of the summit is to strike a balance between technological advancement and the preservation of universal values. The Paris AI Summit is of significant importance for the future of AI due to its focus on global governance, accessibility and ethical development of AI. The AI Action Committee at Paris, co-chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, shed light on India and France's joint work in the five dedicated working groups to tackle key issues for tomorrow: Public interest AI, future of work, innovation and culture Trust in AI and global AI governance. The role of India in the Paris AI Summit is laudable.

A G Rajmohan | Anantapur

US TARIFFS ON ALUMINIUM, STEEL

Madam— US President Donald Trump has virtually dropped another bomb on the global economy with the announcement of levying a 25 percent duty on steel and aluminium imports and reciprocal duty on all other imports from all countries. India is one of the largest exporters of steel to the US. While the world was aware of Trump's unconventional policies, his blanket threat to impose reciprocal tariffs—without any exceptions—almost upends the World Trade

Gandhi's insight on education



propos the article "Rekindling Gandhian values in education." Mahatma Gandhi wrote a few articles in a simple manner on the value of education that should serve as a big motivation for the students of our country. If the students read those writings and apply them in the modern perspective, they will surely give a new dimension to our education system. Gandhi played a significant role in value

education by emphasising the importance of moral and ethical principles. He encouraged educators to teach values like truth, non-violence and respect for others. He felt that instilling these values in students would help them become responsible and compassionate individuals. Gandhi described himself as a curious and eager learner during his student days. He valued education and believed that it was essential for personal growth. We have to apply Mahatma Gandhi's ideas on value education as a demand of time. Gandhi's unique and refined views about value education are not only important but are worth applying not only in India but also in the rest of the world. Ranganathan Sivakumar | Chennai

Organisation's (WTO) mandate to promote free trade by eliminating tariffs, quotas and other restrictions.

The free trade regime in the last 20 years kept inflation in manufactured products under control globally. However, Trump's populist agenda to find jobs for his support base consisting of semi-literate people in the US could damage the US-led alliance based on the Bretton Woods system. While the immediate threat from Trump's tariff on steel and aluminium could be negligible, the Indian economy could face the heat from fleeing foreign investors which could affect stock valuations and rupee weakness which could result in imported inflation.

N Sathasiva Reddy | Bengaluru

AFFORESTATION NEEDED TO SAVE FORESTS

Madam — It is indeed a matter of concern that a government agency like NHAI is overenthusiastic in felling a huge number of trees but not interested in attending to the compensatory afforestation. The government brought amendments in the Forest Act last year, which is sure to reduce

the forest cover in the country. Already the country's forest cover has come down from the recommended level of 1/3 to 1/5 of the land area. Now we can expect further deterioration in the status, as using forest land is permitted for shikar and industrial activities. The centuries-old valuable thick forests in the Northeast are threatened with their very existence in the coming years. Mines are given to private players to hasten the process of exploiting the fossil fuels. This is an act that goes against the concern of everyone over the fast-changing climate. Every mine project begins with the destruction of forests in the vast sheet of hill areas, which will take many decades to reconstruct by afforestation efforts. It is high time the moments to save forests take the form of a people's movement to sensitise all the concerned and save the globe to make it fit enough to live. The apex court's concern conveyed to NHAI is welcome. Dattaprasad Shirodkar | Mumbai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



FIRST COLUMN

ONE FAITH
ONE WORLDIt's easy to point fingers when things go wrong,
but true growth begins with self-reflection

RAJYOGI BRAHMA KUMAR NIKUNJ JI

All of us have heard the famous phrase "United We Stand, Divided We Fall" during our school days through the simple story of an old farmer who, on his deathbed, taught the importance of unity to his disunited sons through a bundle of sticks. That story still holds an important place in our society and has even gained popularity because discord, disunity, strife and warfare have assumed unprecedented proportions in the modern world. Today, one of the most arduous challenges that face humanity is to establish harmony among people of different religions.

There is no doubt that political and religious leaders have time and again endeavoured to bring people onto a common platform and find ways and means to forge better understanding and acceptance of each faith. But despite their hard efforts, not much has changed. Hence, the greatest question of all at present is whether can the diverse religions and faiths ever be united. If so, then how? If we walk down history lane, we would find that one of the important reasons why the need for religious harmony originated is that the most



violent wars and conflicts in human history were based on religious intolerance and hatred. It might be a shocking statement, but it's the harsh reality that religions, which are supposed to make people more peaceful and loving, have today become the biggest cause of discord and bloodshed in the world. It's so appalling to see organized groups across the globe sworn to spread terror in the name of religion and carry out ethnic cleansing in the name of removing evil from the world.

If we closely examine the growth of each faith through the centuries, it reveals an interesting pattern. Even though there are some common values and tenets in all faiths, there are far too many misconceptions and conflicting beliefs that have continually fanned mistrust and hostility among the masses. It's quite imperative to know that, at the time of their inception, every religion had the power of purity, truth, and unity.

Gradually, cracks, factionalism, shallowness, delusion, deception and ritualistic adherence devoid of spiritual significance began to appear. Hence, instead of empowering spiritual values, religions perpetuated dogmas, disciplines, and barriers that segregate people on many lines. Many fall prey to the very evils they preach against, such as the lust for power, pleasure and money. There can be better understanding, tolerance, and acceptance of each faith, but there cannot be unity unless there is a single or common belief. So, what's the best way to reach a common solution acceptable to all faiths? According to divine knowledge imparted by the Supreme Almighty, everything in the eternal cycle of the human world drama goes through a change, which means that everything degrades from a perfect state to an imperfect, fragmented state. Be it human souls, nature, religions, or civilisations, almost everything passes through the sato (pure), rajo (mixed) and tamo (impure) stages as the time cycle spins from the Golden Age to the Iron Age.

As of today, we are witnessing the tamo-pradhan (most degraded) stage of all aspects of human existence, and religions are no exception to this process of change. Hence, we can envisage a unified faith only in terms of the spirituality inherent in all faiths. It is said that God is Truth, and true religion embodies that truth. Hence, when humans embrace that truth in their hearts, there will be a unified world. So, let us all stand united with one unified faith to welcome the new world where truth, peace and harmony will prevail.

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

The MBA dilemma: Why degrees
alone no longer guarantee success

DINESH SOOD

Once considered a guaranteed gateway to lucrative careers, the MBA is under scrutiny as unemployment rates rise—even among graduates from elite institutions



The job market for MBA graduates has reached a critical juncture, sparking conversations that resonate with a growing number of aspirants and professionals grappling with the changing realities of employment. Once seen as a surefire ticket to high-paying corporate roles, the MBA degree is scrutinised for relevance in an evolving economic landscape. This issue is not confined to India alone; even graduates from elite institutions like Harvard, Stanford, and Wharton feel the squeeze. The Wall Street Journal recently reported that in 2024, 23 per cent of Harvard Business School's MBA graduates were jobless. Other top-tier business schools like Stanford and Wharton have seen similar dips, with unemployment rates hovering around 20 per cent.

The problem is not just limited to the United States. According to the International Labour Organisation's Global Employment Trends for Youth 2024, 13 per cent of the global youth labour force was unemployed in 2023—a staggering figure representing nearly 65 million people. This unsettling trend makes traditional, generalist MBA degrees less appealing than targeted skill certifications. A recent Forbes report highlighted how some MBA graduates have succeeded by lowering their expectations and opting for less conventional roles. In an era where industries are shifting dynamically, the rigid, cookie-cutter MBA model is struggling to keep pace. The need for a 360-degree reimagining of this degree has never been more pressing.

Degrees Alone Won't Cut It Anymore One fundamental truth is becoming evident: degrees alone no longer guarantee job or entrepreneurship security. The future belongs to professionals who continuously upskill and adapt to meet the ever-changing demands of the workforce. What used to be a clear, structured career trajectory for MBA graduates—typically leading to consulting, finance, or management roles—is now blurred. The stark reality is that a prestigious qualification, while valuable, no longer provides



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immunity against unemployment or underemployment. Even more telling is the global shift in job seekers' mindsets. While travelling to Canada, I recently observed an MBA graduate running a salon branded "MBA Barber Shop." This reflects an important reality—many skilled gig jobs are vital for holistic growth, but traditional academic pathways have often dismissed such careers as unworthy. Yet, most developed nations respect one's skills rather than qualifications or family background. We must ask: Why doesn't Indian society do the same? **Skill Respect Over Degree Prestige**

The changing job landscape demands a fundamental shift in how we perceive employment, education, and career success. Skill acquisition is about individuals learning new competencies and families being sensitised to alternative career paths. It is about communities understanding the implications of an evolving job market. It is about cities and regions acknowledging and respecting those who possess the skills necessary to sustain a livelihood, irrespective of whether they hold an MBA or a B.Tech degree.

The MBA has been a gateway to professional and financial success for decades. However, the economy's evolution demands a departure from this narrow thinking. In India and many other countries, social conditioning has led to an unspoken hierarchy of professions. White-collar corporate roles are celebrated, while vocational or blue-collar jobs are often overlooked. This mindset is outdated and damaging in a world where adaptability and skills matter more than mere academic credentials. **A 360-Degree Skills Revolution** What we need now is a complete rethinking of education and skill development. The traditional MBA

must evolve from a broad-spectrum business degree into a dynamic, skills-focused program that integrates emerging industry trends. A 360-degree approach should include everything from finance to marketing and HR. MBA programmes must incorporate niche skills such as data analytics, digital transformation, sustainability management and entrepreneurship in beauty-wellness, the most emerging sector. Instead of theoretical coursework, there should be a stronger focus on apprenticeships, live projects and problem-solving in real-world business scenarios.

Understanding AI, automation, and emerging technologies should be a core part of the curriculum to prepare graduates for future-ready roles. Rather than treating entrepreneurship as an alternative, business schools should actively promote and equip students with the skills to start and sustain their ventures. Business schools must recognise the gig economy's rise and train students to navigate freelance and contract-based work models. **Beyond Livelihood—Dignity in Work**

Redefining career success means placing equal value on all forms of work. Whether a person is an MBA graduate managing a corporate division, an AI consultant, a skilled tradesperson, or a self-employed barber, their ability to contribute meaningfully to society matters. The prestige of a job should be measured not by its title but by its impact and sustainability. Parents, educators, and policymakers have a role in fostering this change. We must instil in young minds that success is not confined to traditional white-collar professions. Regardless of their chosen field, a skilled individual should be celebrated just as much as a corporate executive. If an MBA graduate decides to become an artisan,

a chef, a salon owner or a renewable energy technician, they should be seen as pioneers, not failures.

The Need for Institutional Change

Educational institutions must move beyond outdated frameworks and align themselves with industry demands. Business schools should foster adaptive thinking, preparing students for unconventional but lucrative career paths. The focus should be on problem-solving, digital proficiency, and entrepreneurial agility rather than rigid academic theories.

Governments and industries should also contribute by incentivising skill-based education. Scholarships, subsidies, and awareness campaigns can help shift societal perspectives on what constitutes a respectable and rewarding career.

Conclusion: A Future Built on Skills Once a golden ticket to corporate success, the MBA faces an existential crisis. If it is to remain relevant, it must undergo radical transformation. A degree is no longer a guarantee; what truly matters is an individual's ability to adapt, innovate, and deliver value in an ever-changing world.

As a society, we need to support and encourage young professionals in their quest to discover their true potential—even in jobs that were once considered "odd." In reality, no job is odd; what matters is its necessity and impact. By embracing a 360-degree perspective on skills and careers, we can build a more inclusive, resilient, and future-ready workforce. The time for change is now.

(The writer is a Co-Founder and MD of Orane International, a Training Partner with the National Skill Development Corporation, and a Network Member, of India International Skill Centres. View express are personal)

Ethics-driven AI in predictive healthcare: Building a foundation of trust and accountability

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is revolutionising predictive healthcare, offering early disease detection, personalised treatment plans and improved patient outcomes

In today's rapidly advancing healthcare landscape, Artificial Intelligence (AI) plays a transformative role, particularly in predictive healthcare. AI's ability to analyse vast datasets enables early disease detection, personalised treatment plans and improved patient outcomes. The global AI in healthcare market, valued at approximately \$15.4 billion in 2022, is projected to surge to \$187.95 billion by 2030, growing at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 37 per cent.

Yet, with this potential comes a responsibility to ensure that AI is used responsibly, ethically, and equitably. Establishing a framework that prioritises privacy, fairness, transparency and accountability is essential to protect patient rights and



GERALD JAIDEEP

maintain public trust. The Power of AI in Predictive Healthcare AI's role in predictive healthcare is primarily driven by machine learning and data analytics, empowering it to forecast diseases, assess risk factors, and recommend preventive measures. By examining patterns in com-

prehensive datasets, such as medical histories, genetic profiles, lifestyle information and real-time health data, AI can predict the likelihood of conditions ranging from diabetes and cardiovascular diseases to complex ailments like cancer and Alzheimer's.

This shift from reactive to preventive care can ease the burden on healthcare systems and improve patient quality of life. For example, AI-based diagnostics for diabetic retinopathy have shown an accuracy rate of over 87 per cent, enabling early detection and timely intervention. Similarly, IBM Watson's Oncology AI has achieved 90 per cent accuracy in cancer treatment recommendations that align with those of human oncologists. However, to har-

ness AI's potential responsibly, it's crucial to address the ethical challenges it introduces. **Safeguarding Data Privacy and Security**

The ethical use of AI in healthcare hinges on the responsible management of patient data. Predictive healthcare AI relies heavily on sensitive information, including medical, genetic, and behavioural data. Yet, the need for privacy is ever more pressing—72 per cent of Americans express significant concerns about data privacy in AI applications, particularly in healthcare.

In 2022, nearly 50 million healthcare records were exposed to data breaches in the United States, underscoring the need for strong data security protocols. To protect this information, AI systems must



prioritise rigorous security measures such as encryption, anonymisation and regular audits.

Patients should also provide informed consent, clearly explaining how their data will be used and stored. By centring data protection in AI development, healthcare can ensure patient confidentiality and foster the trust necessary for AI's

continued adoption. **Addressing Bias for Fair and Equitable Predictions**

AI's reliance on historical data introduces the risk of bias, which can lead to predictions that disproportionately impact certain demographic groups. Research has shown that AI models trained on biased data result in 35 per cent more misdiagnoses for Black and Hispanic patients compared to white patients. In healthcare, such biases could exacerbate disparities for marginalised populations.

Ensuring fairness requires AI systems trained on diverse, representative datasets, as well as continuous monitoring and adjustments to detect and correct biases. A study published in Nature Medicine found that AI systems trained on

inclusive datasets significantly reduce diagnostic discrepancies, underscoring the importance of inclusivity in training data. Collaboration with healthcare professionals and ethicists is also vital to developing AI solutions that are equitable and serve all patients effectively.

Promoting Transparency and Explainability in AI Models

The complexity of AI algorithms often results in "black box" decision-making, where the reasoning behind predictions is not fully understood by users or developers. In predictive healthcare, this lack of transparency can hinder trust and adoption among patients and healthcare providers alike. In a survey by the American Medical Association, 67 per cent of healthcare providers

expressed reservations about using "black-box" AI systems, highlighting the need for explainable AI. Currently, only 23 per cent of AI-based diagnostic tools meet explainability standards to ensure transparency. By developing interpretable models, researchers can make AI's decision-making processes accessible to healthcare providers, enabling them to communicate AI-driven recommendations clearly and fostering patient involvement in care decisions.

As AI continues to advance, a strong ethical framework will be essential to uphold public trust and ensure that AI-driven healthcare remains a force for good.

(The writer is CEO, Medvarity; views are personal)

Trump admn battles lawsuit to block USAID dismantling

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

The Trump administration will present an unforbearing argument for dismantling the US Agency for International Development to a federal judge Wednesday: USAID is rife with "insubordination" and must be shut down for the administration to decide what pieces of it to salvage. The argument, made in an affidavit by political appointee and deputy USAID administrator Pete Marocco, comes as the administration confronts a lawsuit by two groups representing federal employees. USAID staffers deny insubordination and call the accusation a pretext to break up the more than 60-year-old agency, one of the world's biggest donors of humanitarian and development assistance. Accounts of USAID staffers filed Tuesday in support of the lawsuit revealed new details of the destruction of the agency. That includes a sworn statement from a USAID staffer describing a specific leader in billionaire Elon Musk's Department of Government Efficiency teams allegedly directing USAID staffers on Monday in the immediate termination of about 200 USAID programs without proper authorisation or process. US District Judge Carl Nichols, an appointee of President Donald Trump, dealt the administration a setback Friday in its dismantling of the agency, temporarily halting plans to pull all but a fraction of USAID staffers off the job worldwide. Nichols is due to

Trump readies matching tariffs on trade partners

Washington (PTI): President Donald Trump is taking additional action to upset the world trade system, with plans to sign an order as soon as Wednesday that would require that US tariffs on imports match the tax rates charged by other countries. "It's time to be reciprocal," Trump told reporters earlier this week. "You'll be hearing that word a lot. Reciprocal. If they charge us, we charge them." The president had suggested that the order would come on Tuesday or Wednesday. But when Tuesday passed without the tariffs being officially announced, Trump was asked if he would sign the order on Wednesday and Trump answered: "We'll see what happens." As Trump has unleashed a series of tariffs after being in power for less than a month, he has fully taken ownership of the path of the US economy. It's a bet that his economic ideas can eventually deliver meaningful results for vot-

ers, even if by Trump's own admission the import taxes could involve some financial pain in the form of inflation and economic disruptions. For all of Trump's talk, the impact will likely depend on the details of the tariffs and how other nations respond. A reciprocal tariffs order could amount to a substantial tax hike to be shouldered largely by US consumers and businesses as the Census Bureau reported that the country had total imports of USD 4.1 trillion last year. The tariffs could set off retaliatory measures by trading partners that could roil growth around the globe and reset where the United States stands with allies and rivals alike. By signing the order, Trump would fulfil his long-standing pledge to raise taxes on most imported goods, a clear break with his recent White House predecessors who saw tariffs as either targeted tools to use strategically or barriers worth lowering.

hear arguments Wednesday on a request from the employment groups to keep blocking the move to put thousands of staffers on leave as well as broaden his order. They contend the government has already violated the judge's order, which also reinstated USAID staffers already placed on leave but declined to suspend the administration's freeze on foreign assistance. Trump and Musk's cost-cutting DOGE have hit USAID particularly hard as they look to shrink the size of the federal government, accusing its work of being wasteful and out of line with Trump's agenda. In the court case, a government

motion shows the administration pressing arguments by Vice President JD Vance and others questioning if courts have the authority to check Trump's power. "The President's powers in the realm of foreign affairs are generally vast and unreviewable," government lawyers argued. USAID staffers and supporters call the aid agency's humanitarian and development work abroad essential to national security. They argue each step of the administration's breakup of USAID has been unnecessarily cruel to its thousands of workers and devastating for people around the world who are being cut off from clean water, life-saving medical care, education, training and more since Trump signed an executive order on Jan. 20 freezing foreign assistance. "This is a full-scale gutting of virtually all the personnel of an entire agency," Karla Gilbride, attorney for the employee associations, told the judge last week. The American Foreign

Service Association and the American Federation of Government Employees argue that Trump lacks the authority to shut down the agency without approval from Congress. Democratic lawmakers have made the same argument. In an affidavit ahead of Wednesday's hearing, Marocco, a returning USAID political appointee from Trump's first term, presents without evidence a description of agency workers stalling and resisting the administration's orders to abruptly cut off funds for programs worldwide and subject each one to a rigorous review. In the face of "deceit," "noncompliance" and "insubordination," USAID's new leaders "ultimately determined that the placement of a substantial number of USAID personnel on paid administrative leave was the only way to ... faithfully implement the pause and conduct a full and unimpeded audit of USAID's operations and programs," Marocco stated. Staffers deny resisting the funding freeze.

Leaders of Indonesia, Turkiye hold talks on defence, economic ties

PTI ■ BOGOR

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan met his Indonesian counterpart Prabowo Subianto on Wednesday for talks aimed at strengthening economic and defence ties between the two Muslim-majority nations. The two countries are holding their first High-Level Strategic Cooperation Council summit after agreeing to create the forum at a meeting in Bali in 2022. Erdogan's state visit to Indonesia, the world's most populous Muslim-majority country and Southeast Asia's largest economy, was his second stop in a four-day visit that also includes Malaysia and Pakistan. "This meeting is the highest regular bilateral forum

between the two countries where all matters of common interest will be discussed, including strategic issues and priorities," said Indonesian foreign ministry spokesperson Rolliansyah Soemirat ahead of the visit. A Turkish statement said the discussions will be focused on current regional and global issues, particularly the war in Gaza. On Monday, the Turkish leader met Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim, and reiterated his opposition to a US proposal to relocate Palestinians from Gaza and said Israel should pay for the territory's reconstruction. "We do not consider the proposal to exile the Palestinians from the lands they have lived in for thousands of years as

something to be taken seriously," Erdogan said. Erdogan and his wife, First Lady Emine Erdogan, arrived in Jakarta late Tuesday and was welcomed by Subianto at Halim Perdanakusuma International Airport in a light rain. Erdogan rode with Subianto in a motorcade to his hotel. Indonesia and Turkiye have built an increasingly close relationship in recent years, and the two leaders previously met in Ankara last July when Subianto was still president-elect and defence minister. Subianto pledged to "elevate defence cooperation and other strategic fields for mutual benefit". The two countries signed a defense cooperation agreement in 2010, under which

Indonesia's state-run arms producer Pindad and Turkiye's FNSS jointly developed a new model of medium tank. In 2023, the two countries inked a plan of action for joint military exercises and defence industry cooperation. In addition to Indonesia, Turkiye has HILSCC cooperation forums with 21 other countries, including Pakistan. Turkiye and Indonesia plan to sign agreements on trade, investment, education and technology during Erdogan's visit. Erdogan will head on to Pakistan on Wednesday, where he and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif will address the Pakistan-Turkiye Business and Investment Forum and attend another HILSCC meeting.



President Donald Trump, greets Marc Fogel at the White House, Tuesday.

Investigators file criminal complaints against Duterte

Manila (PTI): Philippine government investigators filed criminal complaints, including sedition, against Vice President Sara Duterte on Wednesday over her public threat to have the president assassinated if she herself was killed in an escalating political storm. National Bureau of Investigation Director Jaime Santiago said at a news conference that the complaints of inciting to sedition and grave threats against Duterte were filed at the Department of Justice, which would decide whether to dismiss the complaints outright or elevate them to court. The vice president, a lawyer and daughter of former President Rodrigo Duterte, reacted briefly by saying that she had expected the move by the NBI. She has accused her political rivals of taking steps to prevent her from seeking the presidency when President Ferdinand Marcos Jr's term ends in 2028. The vice president's father himself, whose presidential term ended in 2022, is facing legal troubles. The International Criminal Court has been investigating the widespread killings under a brutal anti-drug crackdown he oversaw while in office as a possible crime against humanity. Sara Duterte ran as Marcos' vice presidential running mate in 2022. Their whirlwind political alliance, however, quickly frayed and deteriorated into a bitter feud in an Asian democracy that has long been hamstrung by clashing political clans. Last week, the vice president was impeached by the House of Representatives on a range of accusations that included her threat to have Marcos, his wife and House Speaker Martin Romualdez killed if she herself were fatally attacked in an unspecified plot that she brought up in an online news conference in November. The impeachment complaint, which was signed by majority of the more than 300 members of the House, which is dominated by Marcos' allies, also included allegations of largescale corruption and misuse of her office's confidential funds.

THE PIONEERS CLASSIFIED

LOST & FOUND
Dear sir my name is zubaida w/o Dilshad my property paper chain are lost in Delhi, Property address-village sarawa pargana sarawa teshil & dist- meerut details -book no-1 documents no-137, zild no-2129, page no-15 to 30 Date- 08/01/2001. PD(1478)C

CHANGE OF NAME
I Rank No.3407092N, NK. Narender S/o Ishwar Singh R/o Bhawar (2) Sonipat Haryana 131302 inform that name of my mother Nirmla has been mentioned in my office documents wrongly as Nirmal Devi, Correct name of my mother is Nirmla which may be amended accordingly. PD(1466)A

I, Pravesh Kumar/ Pravesh Thukral S/o Shri Bhim Sain, C- 42-A School Lane, Acharya Niketan, Mayur Vihar Phase-I, Delhi-110091, that my name wrongly written in my daughter Pari Thukral, CBSE, 10th class marksheet as Parvash Thukral, correct name is Pravesh Thukral. PD(1467)C

I, Pooja W/o Manoj Sharma R/o House No.-74, Gali No.-2, Vaishali, Dabri, Delhi-110045 have changed my name to POOJA SHARMA. PD(1477)C

I, Basappa Father of No.8038827X L/NK Manjunath Nuchchundi, R/o- Vill & PO- Shivapur, Teh-Gokak, Dist- Belgaum, Karnataka- 591312, have changed my Name from Basappa Nuchchundi, vide Affidavit dated 12/02/2025 before Notary Public Delhi. PD(1468)C

I, Doddavva Mother of No.8038827X L/NK Manjunath Nuchchundi, R/o-Vill & PO- Shivapur, Teh-Gokak, Dist- Belgaum, Karnataka- 591312, have changed my name from Doddavva Basappa Nuchchundi, vide Affidavit dated 12/02/2025 before Notary Public Delhi. PD(1469)C

I, Kumari Ankita Shekhawat, D/o- JC-472785Y Sub Jaswant Singh, R/o- Vill & PO- Pardoli Badi, Teh & Dist- Sikar, Rajasthan- 332041, have changed my name from Kumari Ankita Shekhawat to Ankita Shekhawat, vide affidavit dated 12/02/2025 before Notary Public Delhi. PD(1470)C

I, Kumari Priyanka, D/o- JC-472136N Sub Hony Capt Mahender Singh, R/o- Vill- Unchi Bhandor, Post- Beri, Teh & Dist- Mahendergarh, Haryana- 123029, have changed my name from Kumari Priyanka to Priyanka Rani, vide affidavit dated 12/02/2025 before Notary Public Delhi. PD(1471)C

I, Sapana Tanwar D/o- JC-472758P Sub Suresh, R/o- Vill & PO- Khudana, Dist- Mahendergarh, Haryana- 123029, have changed my name from Sapana Tanwar to Sapna Tanwar, vide affidavit dated 12/02/2025 before Notary Public Delhi. PD(1472)C

I, Rama Shankar Singh, Father of- JC-472158M Sub Rakesh Kumar Singh, R/o- Vill- Banakara, Post- Pashuhari, Teh- Belthara Road, Ballia, U.P.- 221715, have changed my name from Rama Shankar Singh to Ramashankar Singh, vide affidavit dated 12/02/2025 before Notary Public Delhi. PD(1473)C

I, Kunti Devi, Mother of- JC-472735N Sub Sanjeev Kumar, R/o- H. No.- 31, Vill & PO- Churiyala, Thana- Bhojpur, Dist- Ghaziabad, U.P.- 201201, have changed my name from Kunti Devi to Kanti, vide affidavit dated 12/02/2025 before Notary Public Delhi. PD(1474)C

I, Mohani Devi, Mother of- JC-472136N Sub Hony Capt Mahender Singh, R/o- Vill- Unchi Bhandor, Post- Beri, Teh & Dist- Mahendergarh, Haryana- 123029, have changed my name from Mohani Devi to Mohini Devi, vide affidavit dated 12/02/2025 before Notary Public Delhi. PD(1475)C

I, Pramila Devi, Mother of- JC-472158M Sub Rakesh Kumar Singh, R/o- Vill- Banakara, Post- Pashuhari, Teh- Belthara Road, Ballia, U.P.- 221715, have changed my name from Pramila Devi to Parmila Devi, vide affidavit dated 12/02/2025 before Notary Public Delhi. PD(1476)C

UN: Abuses against Hindus, Ahmadiyya muslims during protests

PTI ■ UNITED NATIONS

Human rights abuses were inflicted on some members of Bangladeshi Hindu, Ahmadiyya Muslim, and indigenous communities during anti-discrimination protests and its aftermath last year, a UN report said. "Bangladesh's former government, security and intelligence services, alongside violent elements associated with the Awami League party, systematically engaged in a range of serious human rights violations during last year's student-led protests," the report by the UN Human Rights Office said. The report said that in the aftermath of the fall of the Sheikh Hasina government last year, "widespread attacks were reported against Hindu homes, businesses, and places of worship, especially in rural and historically tense areas such as Thakurgaon, Lalmonirhat, and Dinajpur, as well as other places such as Sylhet, Khulna, and Rangpur". The report said this destruction was especially prevalent in areas perceived to be sympathetic to the Awami League as Hindus

have often been stereotypically associated with this political faction. The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) Fact-Finding Report: 'Human Rights Violations and Abuses related to the Protests of July and August 2024 in Bangladesh' also documents "troubling instances" of retaliatory killings and other serious revenge violence targeting Awami League officials and supporters, police and media as the former government started to lose control of the country. Hindus, Ahmadiyya Muslims, and indigenous people from the Chittagong Hill Tracts were also subjected to human rights abuses. While some 100 arrests about attacks on distinct religious and indigenous groups have reportedly been made, the perpetrators of many other acts of revenge violence and attacks on such groups still enjoy impunity," the report said. It added the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights interviewed Hindu business owners and homeowners in some of these areas who reported that their businesses, houses, land and

religious sites had been targeted while shops owned by Hindus were also looted. "The violence often involved property destruction, arson, and physical threats, compounded by insufficient police responses, suggesting systemic impunity, and potential political motives," it said. One interviewee said that Hindu funeral sites and temples were vandalized in Thakurgaon, and other witnesses described that after attacks on their property, approximately 3,000 - 4,000 Hindus from those villages fearing communal violence sought refuge near the border with India. Affected families reported a pervasive sense of insecurity and heavy financial losses, with many losing essential items, livestock, and whole businesses, the report said. The report further said that witnesses and victims' accounts provided to one source indicated that attacks were primarily carried out by individuals involved in "victory processions" celebrating the Hasina government's collapse. "While the identity of the perpetrators in these attacks was not always

clear, witnesses to some of the incidents testified the attackers were local supporters of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), Jamaat-e-Islami, and other organised groups." However, there were also interventions from these political parties condemning the violence. After August 6, there were localised efforts by BNP, Jamaat-e-Islami, student groups, and Christian organisations to protect houses and places of worship of the Hindu community, the report said. BNP, Jamaat-e-Islami, Students against Discrimination leaders, and Interim Government Chief Advisor Mohammed Yunus all made public statements condemning the violence, it noted. Several allegations were reported of violent mobs coercing Hindu headmasters and teachers to resign. The report added that "some local members and supporters of the BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami opposition parties bear responsibility for human rights abuses committed during revenge attacks, including against members of the Hindu community". The report noted there had been a longer record of attacks

on places of worship, especially temples and shrines, in Bangladesh. In terms of the period under consideration in this report, between August 5 and 15, media and other local sources reported attacks on places of worship associated with Hindu, Ahmadiyya, Buddhist, and Christian communities across several regions. According to information submitted to OHCHR, three temples were attacked and set ablaze, along with the looting of approximately 20 houses, in Burashardubi, Hatibandha, and Lalmonirhat, reflecting significant levels of community unrest. There was also an arson attack in Meherpur on a temple of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON), it said. Specific incidents reported to OHCHR also underlined the complexities surrounding these attacks. "For example, the Kali temple in Nandipara was attacked on August 7, but, upon investigation, it became clear the damage stemmed not from religious intolerance, but rather a local dispute over land ownership," it said.

Relatives of Israeli hostages terrified as Gaza ceasefire teeters

PTI ■ TEL AVIV

After 16 months of excruciating uncertainty, Idit Ohel finally received word this week that her 24-year-old son, a hostage in Gaza, is still alive. She said she fainted upon hearing the brutal details of his captivity from freed hostages who had been held with him by Hamas since October 7, 2023. Bound by chains in an underground tunnel, Alon Ohel has subsisted on a piece of bread or less each day. "He hasn't seen sunlight in 493 days," she told reporters on Monday. As the fragile ceasefire between Israel and Hamas seems increasingly at risk of falling apart — Hamas says it will not free three hostages on Saturday as planned, and Israel says it's ready to resume the war if it doesn't — families of the hostages are struggling to maintain hope. They are pleading with

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu not to give up on the ceasefire framework, and to speed up the timeline of releases if possible. Their worries about the ceasefire collapsing have been exacerbated by President Donald Trump's demand that all of the hostages be freed by Saturday — and his insistence that Gaza be emptied of all Palestinians and redeveloped as a tourist enclave controlled by the United States. The emaciated state of three hostages released last Saturday has infuriated Israelis and terrified families of the remaining hostages, especially as more details come out about the conditions of their captivity. The situation is especially difficult for relatives of hostages who are not on the list of 33 hostages expected to be released in the ceasefire's first, six-week phase, which began on January 19. The agreement requires Israel

to free 2,000 Palestinian prisoners and detainees, whose families are also worried about how their enemy treats them. Two hostages released on Saturday, Or Levy and Eli Sharabi, were held together with Alon Ohel, and a fourth hostage, Eliya Cohen. The four were held underground since their kidnapping. Idit Ohel said Cohen is expected to be released in the ceasefire's first stage; Ohel would be freed in the second stage, if Israel and Hamas reach that point. Levy, Ohel, and Cohen were kidnapped from a bomb shelter near a music festival in southern Israel, along with Hersh Goldberg-Polin, an American-Israeli who was killed in captivity in August. "It breaks my heart to know he was chained and to know what happened to him in the tunnels from people in the tunnels," Cohens fiancée, Ziv Abud, 27, told reporters on Tuesday.

The returned hostages said that Cohen had lost more than 20 kilograms (44 pounds) and had a bullet in his leg that did not receive medical attention. While they were with him, Cohen was unaware that Abud had survived the Hamas attack on the bomb shelter where they were hiding. During the October 7 attack, militants tossed grenades and sprayed bullets inside the concrete bomb shelter near the music festival, where almost 30 people had crammed inside. At least 16 people inside the shelter were killed. Abud said she was protected by the crush of bodies above her. Going in and out of consciousness, she spent hours laying beneath the bodies of her nephew and his girlfriend. For families of hostages who are not scheduled for release in the first phase of the ceasefire, its uncertainty is even more difficult to bear.

Germany extends border controls by six months

Berlin (PTI):

Germany's outgoing government on Wednesday extended by six months the border checks it imposed on all its frontiers last fall as it attempts to cut the number of migrants arriving in the country, an issue that has become a top issue in the campaign for the February 23 election. Chancellor Olaf Scholz said his government notified the European Union's executive commission of the extension to September 15. "With the border controls, we are pushing irregular migration down successfully. The figures prove this," he said. Germany turned back 47,000 people back at its borders, seeing one-third fewer asylum requests year-on-year and arresting 1,900 smugglers. The country was already controlling its borders with Poland, the Czech Republic, Austria and Switzerland before it

extended the checks last September to its remaining borders, with France, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Belgium and Denmark. The EU has a visa-free travel area known as Schengen that allows citizens of most member states to travel easily across borders for work and pleasure. Switzerland also belongs to Schengen although it is not an EU member. According to the EU, member states are allowed to temporarily reintroduce border controls in cases of a serious threat, like internal security. But it also says border controls should be applied as a last resort in exceptional situations, and must be limited in time. German opposition leader Friedrich Merz, the front-runner in the election, wants to go further than the current government.

US Defence secy makes first visit to NATO with allies

PTI ■ BRUSSELS

US Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth on Wednesday made the first trip to NATO by a member of the new Trump administration, as the allies wait to learn how much military and financial support Washington intends to provide to Ukraine's government.

Hegseth held talks with UK Defence Secretary John Healey, before a meeting of the Ukraine Defence Contact Group at NATO headquarters in Brussels. Hegseth's predecessor, former Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin, set up the forum for drumming up arms and ammunition for Ukraine in 2022.

Over nearly three years, around 50 countries have collectively provided Ukraine more than USD 126 billion in weapons and military assistance. But the meeting this week was convened by another country for the first time: the United Kingdom. All previous gatherings of the forum were chaired by the United States.

No decision has been made on who might chair the next meeting, if one is called.

Hegseth wasn't expected to make any announcement on new weapons for Ukraine. His trip comes less than two weeks before the third anniversary of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022. Most US allies fear that Russian President Vladimir Putin won't stop at Ukraine's borders if he wins, and that Europe's biggest land war in decades poses an existential threat to their security.

US President Donald Trump has promised to quickly end the war. He's complained that it's costing American taxpayers too much money. He has suggested that Ukraine should pay for US support with access to its rare earth minerals, energy and other resources. Some US allies worry that a hasty deal might be clinched on terms that aren't favorable to Ukraine. On top of that, Trump appears to believe that European countries should take responsibility for Ukraine's security going forward.

Washington's 31 NATO allies also want to hear what Trump's new administration has in store for the world's biggest security organization. Trump traumatized his European partners during his first term in office by threatening not to defend any member that doesn't meet NATO guidelines for military spending.

NATO is founded on the principle that an attack on any ally must be considered an attack on them all and met with a collective response. Membership is considered to be the ultimate security guarantee, and it's one that Ukraine is trying to secure.

Kyiv's security needs and defense spending will be discussed on Thursday. European allies have hiked their military budgets since Putin ordered his troops into Ukraine, and 23 are estimated to have reached or exceeded last year's target of spending 2 per cent of gross domestic product.

However, a third of members still haven't reached that threshold, and Trump is almost certain to target them again. Recently, Trump called for NATO members to increase defense spending to 5 per cent of GDP, a level that no member has reached so far — not even Poland, which is the closest, spending more than 4 per cent and expected to approach 5% this year. Speaking to reporters in Germany on Tuesday, Hegseth wouldn't commit to having the US increase its defense spending to 5 per cent of GDP.

Hegseth said that he believes that the US should spend more than it did under the Biden administration and "should not go lower than 3 per cent."

He said any final decision would be up to Trump, but added that "we live in fiscally constrained times" and need to be responsible with taxpayer money.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Since Mr. Anoop Singh Sr. Azad Singh seeking a home loan from INDIAN OVERSEAS BANK for the property i.e. House No. 60, area measuring 299.2 sq. yds., Block-F, situated at Village Gadipur, Tehsil Badshapur, District Gurugram, Haryana; hereinafter referred to as "said property".

That, the said property was transferred several times. That, Mr. Jagdish Chander (80%) and Yogesh Kumar (20%) was owner through Sale Deed dated 09.02.2022. Thereafter, they have transferred between themselves 1/3rd Share Each i.e. Jagdish Chander (33.33%), Mr. Yogesh Kumar (33.33%) and Mr. Parvesh (33.33%) through transfer deed 1579 dated 03.05.2024. Finally, Mr. Parvesh (33.33%) has transferred his right to Mr. Jagdish Chander (16.66%) and Mr. Yogesh Kumar (16.66%). Therefore, Mr. Jagdish Chander (50%) and Mr. Yogesh Kumar (50%) became owner transfer deed dated 15.02.2025. Now, that Mr. Jagdish Chander and Mr. Yogesh Kumar were absolute owners of the said property. Therefore, Mr. Anoop Singh is purchasing said property. If anybody is having any objection, claim, interest, dispute for the above intended sale transaction, he/she may contact the undersigned with the documents/proof substantiating his/her objections/claims/details of disputes within seven (7) days from the date of this publication. Village Gadipur, Tehsil Badshapur, District Gurugram, Haryana. If no such claim is received within a period of 7 days from the date of publication of this notice, then it will be presumed that no one has any paramount right, title, or interest in the said property and even if someone has any claim/objection, he/she has given up the same.

M/S PASS & ASSOCIATES LLP
B-132, L.G.F. Malviya Nagar
New Delhi-110017, Mob: 9991116606

FOR SALE FOR IMMEDIATE SALE

300 SQ YDS, 12 MTR ROADE
2/12 DLF PHASE-1 GURGAON,
PRASHANT WADHWA SHANTI
PROPERTIES
☎-9891555575

PUBLIC NOTICE

LOSS OF ID CARD

This is to bring to the notice of the general public that one ID card of Ravenna issued by ICICI Bank Ltd. Having ID Card No. 2511336 has been found missing and/or lost on 11-02-2025. Anyone who find the said ID Card, is requested to return the said ID Card to The Manager Dept Services & Management Group, ICICI Bank Limited, Plot No. 7, Community Centre, S.D. Tower, Sector-8, Rohini, N. Delhi-85.

Therefore, all the customers of ICICI Bank Limited are hereby notified not to make any payment to any unauthorized person holding the said ID Card No. 2511336. Please take further notice that anybody making payment to any person holding the said ID card shall do so at his/her own costs, risk and peril and ICICI Bank shall not be bound and/or responsible for any payment.

For ICICI Bank Limited
---Sd---
Date: 11.02.2025
Place : Delhi

PUBLIC NOTICE

To be known to all: SURESH CHANDER SAHU S/O LATE SH. OM PARKASH SAHU & SMT. SUMAN RANI SAHU W/O SH. SURESH CHANDER SAHU both R/O HOUSE NO.332, TOPKIANA BAZAR, STREET NO.4, AMBALA CANTT., HARYANA-133001 allottee/owner of LIC FLAT NO.50, SECOND FLOOR, BLOCK-D-1, POCKET-4, SECTOR-34, ROHINI, DELHI, have applied for certified copies conveyance deed in DDA. The original documents i.e. POSSESSION LETTER, NOC FOR WATER AND ELECTRICITY CONNECTION of the above said flat have been lost. An LR NO.2579346/2025 dated 12/02/2025 to this effect has been lodged in P.S. Crime Branch, Delhi. Any person(s) claiming any right, interest, having any objection or found in possession of original documents, may write/contact with above named person at above Address/Phone No.8560292588 within 15days from the date of publication of this notice. The person claiming any right, interest, objection with respect to this property, can personally inform or write to Deputy Director (Housing) or Director (Housing), Delhi Development Authority, Vikas Sadan, New Delhi-110023.

PARADIP PORT AUTHORITY

E-TENDER CALL NOTICE

No. EM/MCHP/Tender-01/25/53
Date: 10/02/2025

Name of the Work "Design, Fabrication, Supply, Erection and Commissioning of one no. of Stacker 4000 TPH Capacity". Estimated cost: Rs.55,10,00,000/- Last date & time of submission of bid: 12.03.2025 up-to 17:15 Hrs. Refer our website for details <https://eprocure.gov.in/eprocure/app>.

Sd/-
Executive Engineer (M)
MCHP, PPA

PUBLIC NOTICE

NOTICE is hereby given that Dharamvir Singh Bhati and Abhishek Bhati claims to be owner and in possession of Prop No. 208, Block-B, Sec-46, Noida, U.P., hereinafter called the said property by virtue of Transfer Deed Cum Gift Deed dated 03.02.2025 executed by Rajesh Bhati through GPA holder (His Brother) Dharamvir Singh Bhati reg vide Doc. No. 1682 R/w Transfer Deed dated 14.09.2007 reg. vide Doc. No. 2893, and Said Dharamvir Singh Bhati and Abhishek Bhati has agreed to create a mortgage in favour of our clients Standard Chartered Bank ITO Branch, any person's having claim against the said Property, or any part thereof, by way of sale, exchange, mortgage (equitable/registered or otherwise), gift, trust, inheritance, lien or otherwise whatsoever, are hereby intimated to notify the same in writing to us with supporting documentary evidence at the address mentioned below within 10 days from the date hereof, failing which the claim or claims, if any, of such person or persons will be considered to have been waived and/or abandoned and our client shall proceed with the disbursement of loan and subsequent creation of mortgage in respect thereof.

Vishal Diwan (Advocate)
For Diwan and Company LLP
House No.2 (LGF), NRI Complex, N.D-19
Mobile No. 9818399999

| Particulars | Standalone | | |
|---|---------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| | Quarter Ended | Nine Months Ended | Quarter Ended |
| | 31.12.2024 (Unaudited) | 31.12.2024 (Unaudited) | 31.12.2023 (Unaudited) |
| 1 Total Income from operations | 93.72 | 337.27 | 191.54 |
| 2 Net Profit/(Loss) for the period before tax | 3.57 | 31.28 | 41.01 |
| 3 Net Profit/(Loss) for the period after tax (after Extraordinary items) | 3.97 | 31.08 | 41.01 |
| 4 Total Comprehensive Income/(Loss) for the year (after tax and other Comprehensive Income/(Loss)(after tax)) | 2.33 | 30.21 | 41.05 |
| 5 Equity paidup share capital | 30.00 | 30.00 | 30.00 |
| 6 Earnings per share (Not annualised) : | | | |
| Diluted (₹) | 1.32 | 10.36 | 13.67 |
| Basic (₹) | 1.32 | 10.36 | 13.67 |

1. The above results were reviewed and recommended by the Audit Committee & approved by the Board of Directors at their respective meetings held on 11th February, 2025. The Financial results for the Third quarter ended 31st December, 2024 have been limited reviewed by the Statutory Auditors of the Company.

2. The above is an extract of the detailed format of Unaudited Standalone Quarter ended filed with the Stock Exchange under Regulation 33 of the SEBI (Listing and Other Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015. The full format of the Unaudited Standalone Results are available on the Stock Exchange website, www.bseindia.com & www.nseindia.com and on the company website <https://imcapitals.com/fedders-electric-engineering/>.

For and on behalf of the Board of Directors of Fedders Electric and Engineering Limited
Sd/-
VISHAL SINGHAL (Managing Director)
DIN: 03518795

Place : Sikandrabad (U.P.)
Date : 12th Feb, 2025

PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice is hereby given to general public at large that my client Axis Bank Limited, having one of its Branch at Ground Floor, Tower-1, Axis House, Sector-12B, Noida, Uttar Pradesh, has issued a loan facility to Sh. Pradeep Sharma against security of DDA's Janta Flat bearing No.60, in Block-B, in Pocket-11, on Third Floor, in the layout plan of Housing Estate Jasola, situated at Jasola, New Delhi, hereinafter referred to as "Said Property". Smt. Usha Ram W/o Sh. Darshan Singh acquired the Said Property from Smt. Sarita Crauhan W/o Sh. Neeraj Crauhan vide Sale Deed bearing Doc. No. 4429 on 26.03.2022, who died intestate on 17.08.2022 leaving behind her only son, Gunvinder Singh Sodhi as per SMC No. 9060000163951 dated 26.09.2022 issued by office of the District Magistrate Kalkaji, who intends to sell the Said Property to Proposed Borrower. Any person(s) has/have any objection(s) or claim(s) with respect to title, or interest in the said property/portion in any manner whatsoever, must immediately contact the undersigned in writing along with supporting documents in respect of their claim(s) objection(s). If no such claim is received within a period of 7 days from the date of publication of this notice, then it will be presumed that no one has any paramount right, title, or interest in the Said Property and even if someone has any claim/objection, he/she has given up the same.

Himanshu Ahuja (Advocate)
Contact No: 9810310373, 011-41830049
E-mail Address: alolegals@gmail.com

PUBLIC NOTICE

Public Notice regarding cancellation of property

This Public Notice is from M/S JKG Construction Pvt Ltd for Mr Tarun Kumar bearing unit no. C1-1405 at JKG Palm Court, Plot No. GH-01D, Sector 16C, Greater Noida West, Uttar Pradesh- 201009.

We have offered possession of your allotted unit in February 2021, basis which we have shared final demand notice of unit C1-1405 on 09.04.2022, 02.06.2022, 16.08.2022, 07.10.2022, 17.08.2024, 24.08.2024 & 26.08.2024 you failed to make the payment as per final demand notice. Hence we have cancelled your allotted unit via cancellation intimation letter dated 02.12.2024. Neither got any response from your end nor we have received any payment so far which tantamount to your tacit acceptance that you are no more interested in taking possession of the said flat.

Hence your allotted flat C1-1405 is being cancelled on 16.01.2025, as such the allotment has become null & void and you have no claim on the dwelling unit and your deposited amount shall be refunded as per BBA Claus.

For M/S JKG Construction Pvt Ltd

PUBLIC NOTICE

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For M/S JKG Construction Pvt Ltd

PRAKASH WOOLLEN & SYNTHETIC MILLS LIMITED

Regd. office. 18th KM Stone, Delhi Moradabad Road, NH24, Village-Amhera, Distt: J.P.NAGAR-244102, U.P.
CIN: L17291UP1979PLC004804
PH: 91-9760091983, Email: info@prakashwoollen.com, Website: www.prakashwoollen.com

Extract of Standalone Unaudited Results for the Quarter Ended 31/12/2024

(Rs in lakhs)

| Particulars | Quarter ended | | | Nine months ended | | Year Ended |
|---|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|--|---|------------|
| | 3 months ended (31.12.2024) | Preceding 3 months ended (30.09.2024) | Corresponding 3 months ended in the previous year (31.12.2023) | Year to date figures for current period ended (31.12.2024) | Year to date figures Year to the previous year ended (31.03.2024) | |
| 1. Total income from operations (net) | 5707.87 | 2827.13 | 4889.55 | 9922.14 | 9029.26 | 10214.36 |
| 2. Net Profit / (Loss) for the period before Tax and Exceptional items | (338.34) | (191.42) | 173.71 | (582.85) | 3.47 | 18.51 |
| 3. Net Profit / (Loss) for the period before tax and after Exceptional items | (338.34) | (191.42) | 173.71 | (582.85) | 3.47 | 18.51 |
| 4. Net Profit / (Loss) for the period after tax and Exceptional items | (496.07) | (99.13) | 172.70 | (626.79) | 13.88 | 95.97 |
| 5. Total Comprehensive Income for the period [Comprising Profit / (Loss) for the period (after tax) and Other Comprehensive Income (after tax)] | (496.07) | (99.13) | 172.70 | (626.79) | 13.88 | 79.80 |
| 6. Equity Share Capital (Face value Rs 10 each) | 1025.98 | 1025.98 | 1025.98 | 1025.98 | 1025.98 | 1025.98 |
| 7. Other equity | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 8. Earnings per share for discontinued & continuing operations (of Rs. 10/-each): | | | | | | |
| (a) Basic | (4.84) | (0.97) | 1.68 | (6.11) | 0.14 | 0.94 |
| (b) Diluted | (4.84) | (0.97) | 1.68 | (6.11) | 0.14 | 0.94 |

Notes:

- The above results were reviewed by the Audit Committee and approved by the Board of Directors at their respective meetings held on February 12, 2025.
- The standalone results have been prepared in accordance with the Companies (Indian Accounting Standards) Rules, 2015 (Ind AS) prescribed under Section 133 of the Companies Act, 2013 and other recognised accounting practices and policies to the extent applicable.
- The company is engaged in the blankets business, therefore, there is only one reportable segment in accordance with the Accounting Standards on Segment Reporting (Ind AS 108). Hence segment reporting is not applicable to the company.
- The blankets business is seasonal in nature and accordingly financial results for the quarter are not representative of the whole year.
- Previous year/quarter figures have been regrouped wherever required.

By Order of The Board
For Prakash Woolen & Synthetic Mills Limited
Vijay Kumar Gupta
Whole Time Director & CFO
DIN: 00335325

Place : Village Amhera (Amroha)
Date : 12th February 2025

ORIENTAL NAGPUR BETUL HIGHWAY LIMITED

Regd. Off.: Unit No 307A, 3rd floor, Worldmark 2 Asset Area No 8,
Hospitality Dist. Delhi Aerocity, New Delhi - 110037.
E-mail: onbhinvestors.relations@orientalinfrastructure.com; CIN: U5400DL2010PLC203649
FINANCIAL RESULTS FOR THE QUARTER AND NINE MONTHS ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2024
(₹ in Millions)

| Sl. No. | Particulars | Quarter Ended 31.12.2024 (Un-audited) | Quarter Ended 31.12.2023 (Un-audited) | Year Ended 31.03.2024 (Audited) |
|------------|--|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1 | Total income from operations (net) | 1,019.67 | 952.42 | 3,918.30 |
| 2 | Net Profit/(Loss) for the period (before Tax and Exceptional Items) | 469.78 | 497.03 | 2,020.75 |
| 3 | Net Profit / (Loss) for the period before tax (after Exceptional Items) | 469.78 | 497.03 | 2,020.75 |
| 4 | Net Profit / (Loss) for the period after tax (after Exceptional Items) | 436.37 | 495.83 | 1,973.07 |
| 5 | Total Comprehensive Income for the period [Comprising Profit/(Loss) for the period (after tax) and Other Comprehensive Income (after tax)] | 436.79 | 495.87 | 1,973.09 |
| 6 | Paid up Equity Share Capital | 181.35 | 181.35 | 181.35 |
| 7 | Reserves (excluding (excluding Debenture Redemption Reserve) | 8,541.15 | 7,692.75 | 8,269.23 |
| 8 | Securities Premium | 3,443.66 | 3,443.66 | 3,443.66 |
| 9 | Net Worth | 10,999.19 | 9,479.21 | 9,942.89 |
| 10 | Paid up Debt Capital/Outstanding Debt | 17,830.28 | 20,098.18 | 18,969.53 |
| 11 | Outstanding Redeemable Preference Shares | - | - | - |
| 12 | Debt Equity Ratio | 1.77:1 | 2.12:1 | 2.13:1 |
| 13 | Earnings Per Share (of Rs 10/- each) | | | |
| 1 Basic: | 24.09 | 27.34 | 108.80 | |
| 2 Diluted: | 24.09 | 27.34 | 108.80 | |
| 14 | Capital Redemption Reserve | - | - | - |
| 15 | Debture Redemption Reserve | 1,376.70 | 1,605.12 | 1,491.82 |
| 16 | Debt Service Coverage Ratio | 1.03:1 | 1.10:1 | 1.14:1 |
| 17 | Interest Service Coverage Ratio | 2.06:1 | 2.01:1 | 2.00:1 |

Notes:

- The above is an extract of the detailed format of the un-audited financial results filed with the Stock Exchange under Regulations 52 of the SEBI (Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015. The full format of the un-audited financial results are available on the websites of the National Stock Exchange (NSE) and the listed entity (<http://www.nagpurbetulhighway.in>).
- For the other line items referred to in Regulation 52(4) of the SEBI (Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015, pertinent disclosures have been made to the Stock Exchange and are available on the websites of the National Stock Exchange (NSE) and the listed entity (<http://www.nagpurbetulhighway.in>).
- The un-audited financial results have been reviewed by the Audit Committee and approved by the Board of Directors of the Company at its meeting held on February 12, 2025.
- The financial results of the company have been prepared in accordance with Indian Accounting standard prescribed under Section 133 of the Companies Act, 2013.

For and on behalf of Board of Directors of Oriental Nagpur Betul Highway Limited
Sd/-
Rajesh Yadav
Director
Place: New Delhi
Date: February 12, 2025
DIN: 08397240

SAANEH INDUSTRIAL INVESTMENTS LIMITED

Regd. Office: Delton House 4801 Bharat Ram Road 24 Daryaganj New Delhi -110002
CIN: L74899DL1980PL060079, Phone No. 011-45795859, Website: <https://sanehi.in/>, E-mail: sanehitd@gmail.com

STATEMENT OF UNAUDITED FINANCIAL RESULTS FOR THE QUARTER AND NINE MONTHS ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2024

(Rs. In Lakhs)

| S. No. | Particulars | Standalone | | | Consolidated | | |
|-------------------|---|---------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| | | Quarter ended | Nine Month ended | Quarter ended | Quarter ended | Nine Month ended | Quarter ended |
| | | 31.12.2024 (Unaudited) | 31.12.2024 (Unaudited) | 31.12.2023 (Unaudited) | 31.12.2024 (Unaudited) | 31.12.2024 (Unaudited) | 31.12.2023 (Unaudited) |
| 1 | Total income from operations (net) | 4.10 | 4.10 | 1.07 | 18.52 | 26.47 | 23.93 |
| 2 | Net Profit for the period (before Tax, Exceptional and / or Extraordinary items) | 3.41 | 0.27 | (0.28) | 16.83 | 20.84 | 19.31 |
| 3 | Net Profit for the period before Tax (after Exceptional and / or Extraordinary items) | 3.41 | 0.27 | (0.28) | 16.83 | 20.84 | 19.31 |
| 4 | Net Profit for the period after Tax (after Exceptional and / or Extraordinary items) | 3.06 | (0.07) | (0.28) | 10.04 | 9.03 | 19.31 |
| 5 | Total Comprehensive Income for the period [Comprising Profit for the period (after tax) and other Comprehensive Income (after tax)] | 880.20 | 1,371.25 | 287.01 | 3,316.41 | 5,145.05 | 1,105.91 |
| 6 | Equity share capital (Face Value of Rs.10/- each) | 24.00 | 24.00 | 24.00 | 24.00 | 24.00 | 24.00 |
| 7 | Earnings Per Share (before extraordinary items) (Face Value of Rs. 10/- each) | | | | | | |
| (a) Basic (Rs.) | 1.28 | (0.03) | (0.12) | 4.18 | 3.76 | 8.05 | |
| (b) Diluted (Rs.) | 1.28 | (0.03) | (0.12) | 4.18 | 3.76 | 8.05 | |

NOTES:

- The above is an extract of the detailed format of Unaudited Quarterly Financial Results filed with the Stock Exchange under Regulation 33 of the SEBI (Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015. The full format of the Quarterly Financial Results are available on the Stock Exchange Website (www.sei-india.com) and on Company's Website (<https://sanehi.in/>).
- The above results have been prepared in accordance with principle and procedures of Indian Accounting Standards (Ind AS) as notified under the Companies (Indian Accounting Standards) Rules, 2015 as specified under section 133 of the Companies Act, 2013.
- The above Unaudited Financial Results (Standalone and Consolidated) were reviewed by the Audit Committee and approved by the Board of Directors of the Company at their respective meetings held on February 11, 2025.

For and on behalf of the Board
Sd/-
Vivek Gupta
Director
DIN No.: 00035916

Place : Delhi
Date : February 11, 2025

ReNew Fazilka Solar Power Private Limited

CIN No. : U40108HR2015PTCO05470
Regd. Office : ReNew Hub, Commercial Block-1, Zone-6, Golf Course Road, DLF City Phase-V, Gurugram 122009, Haryana, India
Corporate Office : ReNew Hub, Commercial Block-1, Zone-6, Golf Course Road, DLF City Phase-V, Gurugram 122009, Haryana, India Phone No. : 124 489 6670/80

Statement of Standalone Unaudited Financial Results for the quarter and nine months ended December 31, 2024

(Amounts in INR millions, except share and per share data, unless otherwise stated)

| Particulars | Quarter ended 31 December 2024 | Quarter ended 30 September 2024 | Quarter ended 31 December 2023 | 9 months ended 31 December 2024 | 9 months ended 31 December 2023 | Year ended 31 March 2024 |
|--|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------|
| | (Unaudited) | (Unaudited) | (Unaudited) | (Unaudited) | (Unaudited) | Audited |
| Total Income from Operations | 40 | 35 | 40 | 126 | 122 | 238 |
| Net Profit for the year (before Tax, Exceptional and/or Extraordinary items) | 46 | 41 | 32 | 144 | 129 | 182 |
| Net Profit for the year before tax (after Exceptional and/or Extraordinary items) | 46 | 41 | 32 | 144 | 129 | 182 |
| Net Profit for the year after tax (after Exceptional and/or Extraordinary items) | 35 | 30 | 23 | 107 | 96 | 134 |
| Total Comprehensive Income for the year [Comprising Profit / (Loss) for the period (after tax) and Other Comprehensive Income (after tax)] | 35 | 30 | 23 | 107 | 96 | 134 |
| Paid up Equity Share Capital | 21 | 21 | 21 | 21 | 21 | 21 |
| Reserves (excluding Revaluation Reserve) | 6,601 | 6,567 | 6,431 | 6,601 | 6,431 | 6,494 |
| Securities premium | 6,063 | 6,063 | 6,063 | 6,063 | 6,063 | 6,063 |
| Net worth | 6,642 | 6,608 | 6,497 | 6,642 | 6,497 | 6,534 |
| Paid up Debt Capital / Outstanding Debt | 2,898 | 3,114 | 3,259 | 2,898 | 3,259 | 3,259 |
| Outstanding Redeemable Preference Shares | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA |
| Debt Equity Ratio | 0.43 | 0.47 | 0.50 | 0.43 | 0.50 | 0.49 |
| Earnings Per Share* (face value of per share INR 10) (for continuing and discontinued operations) | | | | | | |
| 1. Basic: | 8.69 | 7.42 | 5.67 | 26.33 | 23.46 | 32.89 |
| 2. Diluted: | 8.69 | 7.42 | 5.67 | 26.33 | 23.46 | 32.89 |
| Capital Redemption Reserve | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA |
| Debture Redemption Reserve | 216 | 95 | 33 | 116 | 33 | 53 |
| Debt Service Coverage Ratio* | 1.04 | 1.12 | 1.57 | 2.15 | 3.88 | 3.05 |
| Interest Service Coverage Ratio* | 1.71 | 1.55 | 1.49 | 1.70 | 2.02 | 1.92 |
| Current Ratio | 5.73 | 4.59 | 4.51 | 5.73 | 4.51 | 4.11 |
| Long Term Debt to Working Capital | 0.69 | 0.70 | 0.73 | 0.69 | 0.73 | 0.73 |
| | | | | | | |

New tax bill introduces Tax Year, omits Assessment Year

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The simplified Income Tax bill 2025, which brings in the concept of 'tax year' and abolishes the archaic and complicated terms 'previous' and 'assessment years', is likely to be introduced in Parliament on Thursday.

The bill comprises 536 sections, 23 chapters and 16 schedules in just 622 pages. It does not bring in any new taxes, but only simplifies the language of the existing Income Tax Act, 1961. The six-decade old legislation has 298 sections and 14 schedules. It had 880 pages when the Act was introduced.

The new bill seeks to replace the Income Tax Act, 1961 which has become too voluminous due to the amendments made over the last 60 years. The new law is expected to come into effect from April 1, 2026.

The new bill has omitted redundant sections, like those relating to Fringe Benefit Tax. The bill is free from



Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman at the Parliament House complex presenting the 'Union Budget 2025-26' -PTI

'explanations or provisos', thereby making it easier to read and comprehend.

Also, the word 'notwithstanding', which was used extensively in the Income Tax Act, 1961, has been done away with in the new bill and almost everywhere replaced with the term 'irrespective'.

The bill uses shorter sentences and has been made reader friendly with the use of tables and formulae. Tables have been provided for provisions relating to TDS, presumptive taxation, salaries, and deductions for bad debt. The 'Taxpayer's Charter' has been included in the bill which outlines the rights and

obligations of the taxpayers. The bill replaces the term 'previous year' as mentioned in the Income Tax Act, 1961 with 'tax year'. Also, the concept of assessment year has been done away with. Currently, for income earned in the previous year (say 2023-24), tax is paid in assessment year (say 2024-25).

This previous year and assessment year (AY) concept has been removed and only tax year under the simplified bill has been brought in.

Once introduced in the Lok Sabha likely on Thursday, the Bill will be sent to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Finance for further deliberations.

The Statement of Objects and Reasons of the new I-T bill said that the Income-tax Act passed in 1961 has been subjected to numerous amendments since its passage 60 years ago. "As a result of these amendments the basic structure of the Income-tax Act has been overburdened and language has become complex, increasing cost of compliance for taxpayers and hampering efficiency of direct-tax administration," it said. Tax administrators, practitioners and taxpayers had also raised concerns about the complicated provisions and structure of the Income Tax act.

Trump readies matching tariffs on trade partners

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

United States (US) President Donald Trump is taking additional action to upset the world trade system, with plans to sign an order as soon as Wednesday that would require that US tariffs on imports match the tax rates charged by other countries.

"It's time to be reciprocal," Trump said earlier this week. "You'll be hearing that word a lot. Reciprocal. If they charge us, we charge them."

The president had suggested that the order would come on Tuesday or Wednesday. But when Tuesday passed without the tariffs being officially announced, Trump was asked if he would sign the order on Wednesday and Trump answered: "We'll see what happens."

As Trump has unleashed a series of tariffs after being in power for less than a month, he has fully taken ownership of the path of the US economy.

It's a bet that his economic ideas can eventually deliver meaningful results for voters,

even if by Trump's own admission the import taxes could involve some financial pain in the form of inflation and economic disruptions. For all of Trump's talk, the impact will likely depend on the details of the tariffs and how other nations respond.

A reciprocal tariffs order could amount to a substantial tax hike to be shouldered largely by US consumers and businesses as the Census Bureau reported that the country had total imports of \$4.1 Trillion last year. The tariffs could set off retaliatory measures by trading partners that could coil growth around the globe and reset where the United States stands with allies and rivals alike.

By signing the order, Trump would fulfil his long-standing pledge to raise taxes on most imported goods, a clear break with his recent White House predecessors who saw tariffs as either targeted tools to use strategically or barriers worth lowering.

Trump has broken with that precedent by saying he wants to return the United States to

the 1890s when taxes on imports were the government's dominant source of revenues. But should job gains never materialise and should inflation stay high, it's an easy line of attack for Democratic lawmakers and candidates that Trump helped the ultrawealthy at the expense of the middle class.

"No matter which way you slice it, costs are going to climb for consumers," Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer of New York said earlier this month. "I will work with my colleagues to undo this mess, get costs down and get these billionaires out of the way."

Trump put 10 per cent tariffs on China over its contributions to the production of the illicit drug fentanyl, and China has taken retaliatory measures. He said he is ready if necessary on March 1 after a 30-day suspension, to put tariffs on Mexico and Canada over his belief they should do more to fight illegal immigration and drug smuggling.

Samsung to upskill teachers

ABHI SINGHAL ■ NEW DELHI

Artificial Intelligence is reshaping the education landscape, making classrooms more interactive and personalised. AI-driven tools help educators analyse student performance, customise lesson plans, and enhance engagement through digital platforms.

Recognising this shift, Samsung has introduced a new initiative called Galaxy Empowered, aimed at upskilling 20,000 teachers across the country by 2025. This community-led program will equip educators with modern teaching techniques and digital tools to enhance classroom learning.

The initiative was launched in New Delhi in the presence of Olympic Gold Medallist Abhinav Bindra, who emphasised the importance of equipping teachers with the right resources to improve education standards.

The program will provide teachers with training through workshops, online courses, and certification programs, ensuring they stay ahead in an evolving educational landscape. Samsung's Galaxy Empowered aims to transform classrooms by integrating technology into



daily lessons. Teachers will learn to use interactive apps, digital platforms, and gamification techniques to make learning more engaging for students. The program also focuses on hands-on training, giving educators access to mentorship opportunities and specialised curriculum support.

The initiative is structured around three main components: technology upskilling, hands-on training, and networking opportunities. Educators will have access to flexible online courses, in-person bootcamps, and a library of resources. In addition, they can connect with

fellow teachers, industry experts, and thought leaders through exclusive events and panel discussions. Participants in the program will also receive special benefits, including discounts on Samsung devices such as smartphones, tablets, and laptops. Additional perks include extended warranties, free insurance, and time-limited offers on consumer electronics. Through Galaxy Empowered, Samsung is making a significant contribution to the education sector, ensuring that teachers have the necessary tools and knowledge to prepare students for a technology-driven future.

Retail inflation slows to five-month low

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Continuing the downward trend, retail inflation fell to a five-month low of 4.31 per cent in January, mainly due to a decline in the prices of vegetables, eggs, and pulses.

The Consumer Price Index (CPI)-based retail inflation was 5.22 per cent in December and 5.1 per cent in January 2024. The previous low inflation was in August 2024 at 3.65 per cent. The CPI has been on a decline since October.

The inflation in the food basket was 6.02 per cent in January, the lowest after August 2024 when it was 5.66 per cent.

There is a decline of 91 basis points in headline inflation of January 2025 in comparison to December 2024 and it is the lowest year-on-year inflation after August 2024, the National Statistics Office (NSO) data showed. According to the data, the top five items showing the highest year on year inflation were coconut oil (54.2 per cent), potato (49.61 per cent), coconut (38.71 per cent), garlic (30.65 per cent), peas (30.17 per cent).

On the other hand, the key items having the lowest year on year inflation in January were jeera (-32.25 per cent), ginger (-30.92 per cent), dry chilies (-

11.27 per cent), brinjal (-9.94 per cent), LPG (excluding conveyance) (-9.29 per cent). Last week, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) years effected a rate cut of 25 basis points after a gap of five years to spur growth as inflation was in its comfort zone. The central bank has been mandated by the government to ensure CPI remains at four per cent with a margin of two per cent on either side. NSO further said a significant decline in headline and food inflation in the rural sector was observed in January 2025. It was 4.64 per cent in January compared to 5.76 per cent in the preceding month.

The food inflation in the rural sector was 6.31 per cent in comparison to 8.65 per cent in December 2024. Similarly, urban inflation witnessed a sharp decline from 4.58 per cent in December 2024 to 3.87 per cent in January. Food inflation decreased from 7.9 per cent in December to 5.53 per cent in January 2025. Housing inflation rate was marginally higher in January 2.76 per cent over December.

"The significant decline in headline inflation and food inflation during the month of January, 2025 is mainly attributed to decline in inflation

of vegetables, eggs, pulses and products, cereals and products, education, clothing and health," NSO said.

The data further showed that top five states which had higher inflation than the national average in January were Kerala (6.76 per cent), Odisha (6.05 per cent), Chhattisgarh (5.85 per cent), Haryana (5.1 per cent), and Bihar (5.06 per cent). The lowest inflation was in Delhi at 2.02 per cent. The NSO collects price data from selected 1,114 urban markets and 1,181 villages covering all states and UTs on a weekly roster.

Commenting on the data, Aditi Nayar, Chief Economist, ICRA said the CPI inflation fell appreciably sharper than expected to a five-month low, led primarily by food items, vindicating the unanimous rate cut effected by the RBI's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) last week.

"Looking ahead, ICRA believes that the growth-inflation outlook suggests that there is room for another 25 bps rate cut in either the April or the June 2025 meetings. The exact timing of the same would depend on the incoming data, global developments, and the movements in the USD and INR pair," she added.

Equity investors' wealth erode by ₹18 Lakh Crore

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Investors suffered an erosion of ₹18 Lakh Crore in six days of market fall, where the BSE benchmark Sensex tanked three per cent, amid continuous foreign fund outflows and trade war worries.

The 30-share BSE Sensex, which had tanked more than 900 points intra-day, ended at 76,171.08, down by 122.52 points or 0.16 per cent following a recovery in bank stocks in the last hour.

During the day, the benchmark tanked 905.21 points or 1.18 per cent to sink below the 76,000-level and hit a low of 75,388.39.

Since February 4, the BSE bellwether gauge has slumped 2,412.73 points or 3.07 per cent.

The market capitalisation of BSE-listed firms slumped ₹18,04,418 Crore to ₹4,07,46,408.11 Crore (\$4.69 Trillion) since February 4.

From the 30-share Sensex pack, Mahindra and Mahindra, ITC, Power Grid, Reliance Industries, IndusInd Bank, Adani Ports, Titan and

Infosys were the biggest laggards. Bajaj Finserv, Tata Steel, Larsen and Toubro, UltraTech Cement, Kotak Mahindra Bank and Tata Motors were among the gainers.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth ₹4,486.41 Crore on Tuesday, according to exchange data.

"Markets were extremely choppy and gyrated sharply in intra-day trade. After crashing over 900 points in early trade, markets recouped lost ground in late trade but select profit-taking in IT, banking and auto stocks saw benchmarks end marginally lower," Prashanth Tapse, Senior VP (Research) at Mehta Equities Ltd, said.

The BSE smallcap gauge declined 0.49 per cent and midcap index went lower by 0.45 per cent.

"Equity markets displayed resilience today, with Nifty rebounding nearly 250 points from the day's low to close at 23,045, down just 26 points (-0.1 per cent)," Siddhartha Khemka, head, research, wealth management at Motilal Oswal Financial Services Ltd, said.

Sensex, Nifty fall for sixth day dragged by FII outflows

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Stock markets closed lower for the sixth straight day on Wednesday with Sensex falling by 122 points on unabated foreign fund outflows and trade war worries.

The 30-share BSE Sensex, which had tanked more than 900 points intra-day, closed at 76,171.08, down by 122.52 points or 0.16 per cent following a recovery in financial stocks in the last hour.

During the day, the benchmark tanked 905.21 points or 1.18 per cent to sink below the 76,000-level to hit a low of 75,388.39.

The NSE Nifty dipped 26.55 points or 0.12 per cent to 23,045.25, marking its sixth straight day of losses. Intra-day,

it tumbled 273.45 points or 1.18 per cent to 22,798.35, falling below the crucial 23,000-mark. Since February 4, the BSE bellwether gauge has slumped 2,412.73 points or 3.07 per cent, while the Nifty tanked 694 points or 2.92 per cent.

From the 30-share Sensex pack, Mahindra and Mahindra, ITC, Power Grid, Reliance Industries, IndusInd Bank, Adani Ports, Titan and Infosys were the biggest laggards. Bajaj Finserv, Tata Steel, Larsen and Toubro, UltraTech Cement, Kotak Mahindra Bank and Tata Motors were among the gainers.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth ₹4,486.41 Crore on Tuesday, according to exchange data. "The Indian market saw a slight

recovery from the sharp intraday declines, however, overall sentiment remained weak due to elevated broader market valuations and muted Q3 earnings growth. Concerns over excessive valuations are expected to sustain the ongoing consolidation phase," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services, said.

Additionally, uncertainty regarding the impact of metal tariffs added to market caution, Nair said.

"The upcoming release of US CPI inflation data will provide further market direction," he added.

In Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo, Shanghai and Hong Kong ended in the positive territory. European markets were trading higher.

Rupee falls eight paise against USD

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The rupee failed to sustained its recovery and depreciated eight paise to close at 86.87 (provisional) against the US dollar on Wednesday due to a firm American currency and unending outflow of foreign funds.

According to forex traders, rupee stayed firm initially but lost grounds amid volatile domestic equity markets that also added to the trend of withdrawal by foreign institutional investors.

They said the easing crude oil prices supported the Indian currency at lower level but at the same time the currency markets saw muted participation awaiting cues from the inflation and

industrial output data to be released by the government.

At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 86.44 and moved between the high of 86.36 and the low of 86.91 against the greenback during intra-day. The unit ended the session at 86.87 (provisional) against the dollar, registering a fall of eight paise from its previous close.

On Tuesday, the rupee appreciated 66 paise, logging the maximum single-day gain since March 3, 2023, to close at 86.79 against the US dollar.

The steep surge came a day after the unit plunged to near 88 per US dollar-level during intra-day on Monday, though the currency ended the session with gains at 87.45 against the greenback.

SEBI slaps ₹2.83 Crore notice to ex-TV anchor

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Market regulator, Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) and has sent a demand notice to Pradeep Bajinath Pandya, who was anchoring stock market shows on a television channel, and seven other entities for failing to pay ₹2.83 Crore fines that have been imposed in connection with fraudulent trading activities.

Apart from Pandya, Toshee Trade, Mahan Investment, Manish Vasanti Furiya (HUF), Manish Vasanti Furiya, Alpa Alpesh Furiya, Alpesh Vasanti Furiya (HUF) and Alpesh Vasanti Furiya were also sent notices to pay the fines.

The demand notices came after these entities failed to pay the

penalties imposed on them by the SEBI in June last year.

The markets regulator warned that assets, including bank accounts of Pandya and other entities, will be attached if they failed to make the payment within 15 days of the notices issued on February 7.

In seven separate demand notices, SEBI has directed these entities to pay ₹2.83 crore, including interest and recovery costs within 15 days.

In June last year, SEBI had barred Pandya and seven other entities from the securities market for five years and imposed a fine of ₹2.6 Crore collectively for indulging in fraudulent trading activities.

Pandya was the host and co-host of various shows at CNBC Awaaz till August 2021, while

Alpesh Furiya appeared on the television channel as a guest and external expert and gave stock recommendations on his X handle.

A high correlation was noted between the stock recommendations given by Pradeep Pandya on the show 'Pandya Ka Funda' and the buy-today-sell-tomorrow trades and intra-day trades executed by Alpesh Furiya and connected entities during the period from November 2019 to January 2021.

Alpesh Furiya, capitalised on this privileged information, executed trades through his own accounts and those of related entities, positioning himself to profit before the recommendations were publicly aired, it added.

Equity mutual funds see ₹39,688 Crore inflow in January

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Investors' confidence in equity mutual funds remains strong with the segment attracting ₹39,688 Crore in January, driven by sharp inflow in small cap and flexi-cap schemes, even as market volatilities continued. However, this was 3.56 per cent lower than the net inflow of ₹41,156 Crore registered in December. The latest fund infusion by investors also marks the 47th consecutive month of inflows into the segment, according to data released by Association of Mutual Funds in India (AMFI) on Wednesday.

Moreover, inflows into systematic investment plans (SIP) came at ₹26,400 Crore, a tad lower from December's ₹26,459 Crore. The SIP assets under management stood at ₹13.2 Lakh Crore, which is

around a fifth of the overall pie. "Despite market volatility, SIP contributions remained robust, totalling ₹26,400 Crore for the month. We will continue to educate investors to stay invested through phases of volatility with a focus on disciplined, long-term approach to wealth creation," Venkat Chalasani, Chief Executive, Amfi, said.

The decline in equity fund inflows occurred amid sluggish equity markets, with the BSE Sensex dropping by 1.28 per cent in January.

The investors' focus towards making the most of the market fall in January can also be gauged from the fact that around 30.7 Lakh new folios were added in January, Himanshu Srivastava, associate director-manager research, Morningstar Investment



Research India, said. Further, volatility in the Indian equity markets, combined with geopolitical uncertainties and anticipation of the Union Budget, led to a decline in equity mutual fund AUM, Jatinder Pal Singh, CEO, ITI Mutual Fund, said.

The assets under management

₹15,331 Crore inflow in December. The midcap category saw inflows of ₹5,148 Crore in January 2025, while the smallcap category witnessed inflow of ₹5,721 Crore, the data showed.

The small and midcap schemes of mutual funds continued to attract investors with inflows highlighting their preference for these segments largely driven by the high returns that they have generated over the last few years, Srivastava said.

The large schemes, which are being recommended by a slew of experts as a safer bet, saw inflows rising to ₹3,063 Crore in January from ₹2,010 Crore in December, while inflow in flexi-cap category grew to ₹5,697 Crore from ₹4,731 Crore.

Apart from equities, debt funds

registered an inflow of ₹1.28 Lakh Crore in the month of January, against an outflow of ₹1.27 Lakh Crore in December. The inflow in debt funds was primarily in the overnight, ultra-short duration, low duration and money market funds along with liquid funds which offset the outflows in debt funds with a maturity of over one year, Sanjay Agarwal, senior director, CareEdge Ratings, said.

Additionally, the inflows into gold Exchange Traded Funds (ETFs) to the tune of ₹3,751 Crore indicate a shift toward safer assets during uncertain times.

The overall assets under management of mutual funds came at ₹67.25 Lakh Crore as on January 31, 2025 as compared to ₹66.93 Lakh Crore in the previous month.

INBRIEF

GURU NANAK DEV UNIVERSITY INTER-DEPARTMENT GIRLS' CRICKET TOURNAMENT CONCLUDES



AMRITSAR: Under the able guidance and support of Vice Chancellor Prof (Dr) Karamjeet Singh the Guru Nanak Dev University successfully organised the Inter-Department Cricket (Girls) Tournament as part of the Fit India program initiated by the Government of India.

GAUTAM SOLAR AIMS FOR 5 GW BY 2025

NEW DELHI: In a record-breaking achievement, Gautam Solar has established a state-of-the-art solar module manufacturing plant in Bhiwani, Haryana, within just one year.

CPA AUSTRALIA, ASSOCHAM HOST GLOBAL SUMMIT ON SUSTAINABLE GROWTH IN INDIA

NEW DELHI: New Delhi witnessed a landmark global summit on 'Accelerated Value Creation for Sustainable Growth', jointly hosted by CPA Australia and ASSOCHAM. The event brought together industry leaders to explore emerging cross-border trends and local challenges.

Bhaker finishes second in 25m pistol at National selection trials

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Double Olympic medallist Manu Bhaker finished second in women's 25m pistol in her return to competitive shooting after Paris Olympics as Rhythm Sangwan emerged winner in the event on day five of the Rifle/Pistol National Selection Trials (Group A) here on Wednesday.

Paris Olympics bronze medallist Swapnil Kusale and Arya Rajesh Borse also won the men's 50m rifle 3 positions (3P) T1 and the women's 10m air rifle T2 events at Dr Karni Singh Shooting range (DKSSR) here. Haryana's Rhythm beat Bhaker -- who won a bronze each in the women's individual and mixed team events in the Paris Olympics -- for the top spot after a couple of shoot-offs from the final group that had four other Olympians in the fray.

Swapnil was next, a class apart in the men's 3P T1 final, while Borse registered a memorable triumph in a high-quality high scoring women's air rifle T2 final, falling just one short of the world record score achieved at the same venue.

Rhythm wins via shoot-off

Manu has been relentless in her first competition after the Paris Games, topping the women's 25m pistol trials for a second straight time, her



294 in the second rapid-fire qualifying round in the morning giving her a total of 591. Punjab's Simranpreet Kaur Brar, among the most consistent shooters in recent times in the event, was second with 588.

Also making the final eight cut were four other Olympians -- Rahi Sarnobat (588, 3rd), Esha Singh (586, 4th), Heena Sidhu (580, 5th) and Sangwan (578, 7th), setting up a thrilling decider.

In the end, Rhythm and Manu were tied with 37 hits after the 10-series of

five shots each, and both the shooters needed two shoot-offs to be separated, the former prevailing 4-3 in the second after both had tied 4-4 in the first.

Simranpreet finished third.

Swapnil, a class apart

Swapnil qualified for the men's 3P T1 final with a smooth 592 out of 600, which gave him third spot on the leaderboard.

Navy's Kiran Ankush Jadhav topped with a sublime 596, while another top 3P shooter Akhil Sheoran was second with 593.

In the final, however, Swapnil led after the first five shots of the first kneeling position right till the end, pulling away expertly after every stage of the gruelling event. He ended with a 465.1, 2.6 ahead of Akhil, who was second. Veteran Chain Singh finished third.

Arya triumphs in women's air rifle

Maharashtra's Arya, another shooter in rousing form, won the women's 10m air rifle T2 trial after an intense final.

Newly-crowned national champion Ananya Naidu set the tone with a scorching 53.1 after the first five-shot stage and continued to lead the field till the 20th shot of the 24-shot final.

Two-time Olympian Elavenil Valarivan gave her company for most part of the contest with Arya at sixth after 10 shots.

Then from the 11th to the 21st shot, Arya shot nothing below 10.4, ending the string with a perfect 10.9 to take the lead, as Mehuli Ghosh climbed up to beat Elavenil to the podium.

As both Arya and Ananya went into the final two shots on the same score (231.9), the former nailed a couple of 10.8s to finish with 253.5. Ananya also finished with two high 10s to her credit but fell 0.5 short in the end calculations.

Saint-Etienne fans banned from French league game

PTI ■ PARIS

Saint-Etienne supporters have been banned by French authorities from traveling to Marseille for this weekend's Ligue 1 game between the two clubs with the biggest fan bases in France.

In an order published Wednesday, France's interior ministry said there is a "real and serious risk of confrontation" between the rival fans.

Second-placed Marseille takes on struggling Saint-Etienne at the Stade Velodrome on Saturday.

While Marseille vs. Paris Saint-Germain remains the biggest match in French soccer, and is known as "Le Classique," Saint-Etienne and Marseille have a special rivalry of their own. They were the two most decorated clubs in French football before PSG started its dominance after Qatari investors took over in 2011.

Saint-Etienne -- which has 10 league titles to its name, one more than Marseille -- dominated French football during the 1960s and '70s. Mediterranean club Marseille



became one of Saint-Etienne's strongest rivals after regaining a spot in the topflight in 1966. Marseille, still the only French club to win the Champions League (in 1993), finished runner-up behind "Les Verts" in 1970 and won its first title in 23 years ahead of Saint-Etienne in 1971.

Although their rivalry softened eventually with Saint-Etienne's sporting decline, both clubs still enjoy the support of a national fan base and their matchups are always intense.

Off the field, relations between Marseille and Saint-Etienne fans have been marked by animosity for decades.

Justifying its decision to ban away fans at the Velodrome, the interior ministry said "this strong antagonism has on several occasions led to serious clashes requiring the intervention of the police, some of whose members have been injured, and to the throwing of missiles and the lighting of fireworks."

In March 2024, Saint-Etienne fans ambushed Marseille fans on a motorway and threw stones at their bus convoy. In response, Marseille supporters got off their bus to attack a Saint-Etienne supporter who had reportedly announced their arrival.

Marseille is second in the French league, 10 points behind runaway leader PSG. After 21 matches, Saint-Etienne is languishing in 16th place in the 18-team league.



Algerian boxer Imane Khelif says she has 'never stayed down'

PTI ■ PARIS

Algeria boxer Imane Khelif, who found herself in the middle of a bitter divide about gender in sports during the Paris Olympics, has denounced "false and offensive" accusations from the International Boxing Association.

"I have been knocked down more times than I can count. But I have never stayed down," Khelif said late Tuesday on her Instagram account.

The IBA said this week it will file criminal complaints against the International Olympic Committee in the U.S., France and Switzerland. The Swiss-based IOC allowing female boxers Khelif and Lin Yu-ting to compete and win gold medals in Paris last year "may serve as grounds for criminal prosecution," the IBA claimed.

Khelif responded by saying she "will take all necessary legal steps to ensure that my rights and the principles of fair competition are upheld."

"Those responsible of these actions must be held accountable, and we will pursue all available legal avenues to ensure that justice prevails," she added.

The Russian-led IBA has been banished from the Olympics but it cited an executive order on transgender athletes by United States President Donald Trump to justify the criminal complaints.

Khelif said the IBA has "again made baseless accusations that are false and offensive, using them to further their agenda. This is a matter that concerns not just me but the broader principles of fairness and due process in sport."

The IOC has consistently said the boxers from Algeria and Taiwan, who were assigned female at birth and identify as women, complied with all the rules for the Olympic tournament. Both also competed in Tokyo in 2021 and did not win medals.

Khelif and Lin were disqualified from the 2023 world championships run by the IBA, which said they failed eligibility tests.

"The two female athletes mentioned by IBA are not transgender athletes," the IOC reiterated on Monday.

Khelif advanced through the Olympic Games amid international scrutiny and unfounded speculation about her sex. Despite being born and raised as a woman, she found herself at the center of Western debates about gender, sex and sports after failing unspecified eligibility tests for women's competition from the IBA in 2023.

"I have seen adversity before," Khelif said. "I have fought through every setback, every false accusation, every attempt to erase me. And I have won. Each obstacle has only strengthened my resolve."

Jamshedpur FC look to prevail over NorthEast United in ISL

PTI ■ JAMSHEDPUR

Jamshedpur FC will look to bounce back from their away loss to Bengaluru FC and remain in contention for the top-2 place finish when they host NorthEast United in their Indian Super League (ISL) match here on Thursday.

Jamshedpur have 34 points from 19 games on the back of 11 wins and a draw to be at the third spot in the standings. Their aim will be to stay in contention for the second spot which FC Goa occupy currently with 36 points.

The top-2 finishers do have to compete in the single-leg eliminator since they directly qualify for the semi-finals.

NorthEast United, on the other hand, are at sixth spot with 29 points and they have competition from Odisha FC (24), Kerala Blasters FC (24), and Punjab FC (24) who are closely following them. The Highlanders have drawn thrice and won once in their



previous five matches. Earlier this season, the Highlanders had claimed a thumping 5-0 victory against the Red Miners in Guwahati. Another triumph would make Jamshedpur FC the seventh opponent against whom the visitors complete a league double in the competition.

Jamshedpur, however, have not faced losses in any of their five home fixtures against NorthEast United,

drawing thrice in the process. Notably, the Highlanders are the only side against whom Jamshedpur have kept multiple home clean sheets (three) in the competition.

Jamshedpur FC have been on an encouraging run at home in the current campaign, emerging victorious in eight of their 10 games. The Highlanders are unbeaten in their previous four games on the road, and the last time they registered

such a longer stretch was for five encounters between October-December 2018.

Jamshedpur FC head coach Khalid Jamil is not reading too much into the reverse fixture.

"In our last match against them, we didn't get a good result. We need to approach this match positively and work hard," he said.

NorthEast United FC head coach Juan Pedro Benali has a straightforward mindset ahead of the coming match, which is to earn three points.

"Jamshedpur FC are a very dangerous team. Any mistake against them can lead to a goal. We need to win as many points as possible and qualify for the playoffs," Benali said in the pre-match press conference.

The two sides have played each other 15 times in the ISL, with Jamshedpur FC winning six games and NorthEast United FC emerging victorious thrice. Six matches have produced draws.

Kerala enters Ranji Trophy semifinals

PTI ■ PUNE

Kerala produced a Kdoughty batting effort to hang on to a draw against Jammu and Kashmir, and progressed to the Ranji Trophy semifinals on the back of a slender 1-run first innings lead here on Wednesday.

Player of the match Salman Nizar (44 not out, 162 balls, 8x4) and Mohammed Azharuddeen (67 not out, 118b, 9x4 2x6) saw off nearly 43 overs during their unbroken 115-run alliance for the seventh wicket as Kerala made 295 for six in their second innings.

Their partnership was enough for Kerala, overnight 100 for two, to see off the final day's proceedings, and set up a semi-final meeting with former champions Gujarat from February 17.

This will only be Kerala's second appearance in the Ranji Trophy last four round after the 2018-19 season. They had lost to eventual

champions Vidarbha by an innings and 11 runs at Wayanad last time.

"We believed in ourselves and took it (partnership) through the blocks of 10 runs each. J&K bowlers were also made our task tough. It was a similar approach we had adopted in the first innings," said Nizar during the presentation ceremony.

The left-handed batter had also made a vital unbeaten 112 in Kerala's first innings and stitched an 81-run alliance with Basil Thampi to give Kerala a crucial 1-run lead.

"We tried our best, but unfortunately we could not go all the way in this match. Credit to Kerala batters. But we are proud of the way we fought till here, and hopefully, we can achieve more," said J and K skipper Paras Dogra after the match.

Jammu and Kashmir left-arm spinner Abid Mushtaq also received an on-the-spot warning by field umpires for chucking.

Sri Lanka beat Australia by 49 runs

PTI ■ COLOMBO

Asalanka scored a career-mentioned by IBA are not transgender athletes," the IOC reiterated on Monday.

Khelif advanced through the Olympic Games amid international scrutiny and unfounded speculation about her sex. Despite being born and raised as a woman, she found herself at the center of Western debates about gender, sex and sports after failing unspecified eligibility tests for women's competition from the IBA in 2023.

"I have seen adversity before," Khelif said. "I have fought through every setback, every false accusation, every attempt to erase me. And I have won. Each obstacle has only strengthened my resolve."



Avishka Fernando fell in the next over when he was caught by Australia captain Steve Smith off fast bowler Aaron Hardie, who took 2-13 in six overs.

Kusal Mendis (19), Kamindu Mendis (5) and Janith Liyanage (11) fell in quick succession to leave the hosts precariously placed on 55 runs for five wickets.

But Asalanka and Dunith Wellalage's 67-run partnership off 68 deliveries for the sixth wicket provided Sri Lanka with a base for a competitive total.

Wellalage made a useful 30 off 34, including a six and two boundaries, before being caught by Smith off spinner Matthew Short.

Sri Lanka looked in trouble again at 135-8 after losing two more quick wickets, but No. 10 batter Eshan Malinga came to Asalanka's assistance by keeping his captain company in a 79-run ninth wicket stand in which he contributed just one run.

Asalanka hit 127 off 126 deliveries, including five sixes and 14 fours.

Fast medium Sean Abbott took 3-61.

Sri Lanka fast bowler Asitha Fernando struck in the first over of Australia's chase by trapping Short lbw with no score on the board. In his second over he had Jake Fraser-McGurk caught and bowled. Cooper Connolly and Smith, too, were dismissed quickly to leave Australia at 31-4.

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Torrent Group becomes majority stakeholder in Gujarat Titans

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

Healthcare major Torrent Group became the majority shareholder of Gujarat Titans after acquiring 67 percent (2/3rd) stake from current owners CVC, the IPL franchise announced on Wednesday.

The transaction is subject to customary closing conditions and approvals, including from the BCCI.

"Torrent Group has entered into a definitive agreement to acquire majority stake of 67% in the renowned Indian Premier League (IPL) franchise, Gujarat Titans (Irelia Sports India Private Limited) from Irelia Company Pte Ltd ("Irelia") -- currently fully owned by funds managed or advised by CVC," the press release stated.

"As part of the deal, Irelia will retain a substantial minority stake of 33% in the franchise," it further stated.

The CVC in 2021 had bought the Gujarat franchise for INR 5625 crore and incidentally Torrent was one of the bidders.

The current valuation of GT

is believed to be INR 7500 crore and as per IPL sources, Torrent has paid something to the tune of Rs 5025 crore to acquire two-third stake.

The deal is a win-win situation for both as CVC has not only retained one-third share but also got back 89 percent of the amount originally invested in buying the team.

Speaking on the occasion, Jinal Mehta, Director, Torrent Group, said, "With the acquisition of a majority stake in the Gujarat Titans, we are excited to have the opportunity to elevate our fan experience and unlock new growth avenues in the years to come."

Siddharth Patel, Managing Partner at CVC, commented: "We are excited to announce this deal, which marks the beginning of a new chapter in India's most popular sporting event and our team Gujarat Titans.

"Our participation in Indian Cricket started strongly, securing the Gujarat franchise, winning the IPL title in our first season and emerging as runners up in our second season."

Sachin, Pooja and Sawan win gold in National Games

PTI ■ DEHRADUN

Javelin thrower Sachin Yadav of Uttar Pradesh, 18-year-old high jumper Pooja Singh of Haryana and long distance runner Sawan Barwal of Himachal Pradesh rewrote National Games records and won gold medals on the concluding day of athletics competition here on Wednesday.

In the absence of the likes of Neeraj Chopra and Kishore Jena, 25-year-old Yadav sent his spear to a Games-record distance of 84.39m in his fifth attempt to win the gold and establish himself as one of the top javelin throwers in the country.

He bettered the earlier Games record of 82.23m set by Rajinder Singh in the 2015

edition. "My goal was to achieve the World Athletics automatic qualification mark (85.50m) but missed it," Yadav said at the post-event interaction.

"I'm close to my goal and should be able to achieve 85.50m in the next competition."

Yadav's 84.39m now ranks as the fifth career-best throw by an Indian after Chopra (89.94m), Jena (87.54m), Shivpal Singh (86.23m) and Davinder Singh Kang (84.57m).

Uttar Pradesh swept the medals with Rohit Yadav -- another member of 80m club -- winning the silver with a performance of 80.47m while state-mate Vikash Sharma took home the bronze with 79.33m. It was Yadav's fourth 80m-plus

throw, having joined the elite club in 2023 with a 80.27m during the Federation Cup. In June, he won the title in the Indian Grand Prix 3 with a throw of 82.69m, which was his earlier personal best before Wednesday's record-breaking effort.

He threw 80.04m during the National Open Championships qualification round in September last year.

Daughter of a mason from Fatehabad district of Haryana, Pooja cleared 1.84m to defend the women's high jump gold she had won in the 2023 edition, bettering the earlier Games record of 1.83m set by Swapna Barman of West Bengal in the 2022 edition of the Games.

Pooja, who has a personal best of 1.85m -- a national U20

record -- which she had produced last year, used to train on makeshift high jump pit made up of sacks of hay when she started the sport.

She won a silver medal at the Asian U20 Championships in 2023, a gold in the Asian U18 Championships the same year and finished sixth at the Hangzhou Asian Games last year.

Gobika K of Tamil Nadu won the silver after clearing 1.79m while Abhinaya Shetty (1.77m) of Karnataka took home the bronze.

Barwal won the men's 5000m in a time of 13 minute and 45.93 seconds, bettering the earlier Games record of 13:50.05s set by G Lakshmanan of Services in the 2015 edition. It was his second gold and second Games record in this

edition. He had clinched the men's 10,000m title on Saturday with a Games record time of 28:49.93s, bettering the earlier mark of 28:54.29s set by Gulveer Singh in the 2022 edition in Gujarat.

The 26-year-old Barwal was a bronze medal winner at the 2023 Asian Half Marathon race. He also won the 2024 Delhi Half Marathon title among the Indians.

Gagan Singh of Haryana was second with a time of 14:00.04s while Sunil Dawar of Madhya Pradesh finished third with 14:01.33s.

In the women's 400m hurdles, Tamil Nadu's Vithya Ramraj pocketed her third successive National Games gold, adding to her top of podium finish in the 2022 and 2023 editions of the Games.

Ramraj, who jointly holds the national record of 55.42 seconds along with the legendary PT Usha, clocked 58.11 seconds to win the gold.

The 26-year-old Ramraj, a member of the Indian 4x400m relay team that took part in the 2024 Paris Olympics, joined women's 100m hurdler Jyothi Yarraji and men's 110m hurdler Tejas Shiree in winning gold in three successive Games.

It was, however, a below-par performance from Ramraj as her timing was more than one second off the mark from her Games record of 56.67 seconds she had set in the 2022 edition.

Tamil Nadu finished 1-2 as Shreevarthani SK took home the silver with a time of 59.86 seconds, while Maharashtra's Neha Dhable (1:00.52) secured the bronze.

India thrashes England by 142 runs, sweeps series 3-0

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD
A robust batting front led by the Shubman Gill's attractive century heralded India's 142-run hammering of England in the third and final ODI as the hosts completed a dominant 3-0 clean sweep to culminate preparations for the Champions Trophy, here on Wednesday. India ticked all the remaining boxes with vice-captain Gill (112) following up his twin fifties earlier in the series with a seventh ODI ton of his career while middle-order mainstays Virat Kohli (52) and Shreyas Iyer (78) pushed India to a formidable 356 in the first half. Indian bowlers then took over the mantle to complete the England demolition job, bundling out the visitors for a mere 214 in 34.2 overs to complete a comprehensive victory — their second largest in ODIs in terms of runs against a familiar opponent. There was no change in the script for England, who came crashing down against spin after a sparkling start against

pace, which was provided by the pair of Ben Duckett (34) and Phil Salt (24) in tow. The slowness of the surface aided Indian bowlers as strike-making became difficult as the match progressed. Duckett took charge of England's response early on but played one shot too many. After smacking Arshdeep Singh (2/33) for four consecutive boundaries around the park in the fifth over, he again went after the left-arm seamer but was deceived by the 'pace off' knuckle ball. The mishit was collected cleanly by India skipper Rohit Sharma at mid-off and Arshdeep soon bounced out Salt, albeit off a slower one which the batter hit meekly to Axar Patel for a simple grab. Tom Banton gave a good example of himself playing his first ODI against India, hitting a couple of attractive reverse sweeps against spinners but he could not push on beyond a 41-ball 38 with four fours and two sixes. Joe Root perished for just 24 when an inside edge off Axar (2/22) crashed into his



stumps and Harshit Rana (2/31) hastened the end of England's resistance by getting the rid of Harry Brook (19) and Jos Buttler (6) in quick succession. From 84/2 after 10 overs, England's resolve petered out as Indian bowlers tightened the screws with regular strikes and the visitors also lacked gumption on a pitch which remained true in its nature. Earlier, Gill led the way with a fluent 112 while Kohli and Iyer also cashed in on ideal conditions in their last outing before the Champions Trophy, helping India set a 357-run target. Gill anchored India's innings en route to his seventh ODI ton — 112 off 104 balls (14x4s, 3x6s) which also took his average past 60 in the format — while putting on two century stands with Kohli and Iyer to consolidate for India. The India vice-captain Gill also achieved the unique feat

of scoring a century each across the three international formats at the same venue. Gill, meanwhile, has also scored an IPL hundred here at the Narendra Modi Stadium. Attacking the fast bowlers and spinners alike, Gill's knock was replete with rich strokes particularly down the ground. The opener displayed immaculate footwork at the crease early on to take the attack to the opposition and remained resolute to score off spin, until he was cleaned up by Adil Rashid (4/64). On his part, Kohli took his time to find the rhythm and when he did, the batting mainstay looked hitting his strides. Kohli made the most of a juicy overpitched delivery from Mark Wood which he drove through the covers for his first four, then got on top of the ball from Saqib Mahmood to swat it for another boundary through mid-wicket and punished the England pacer for being wayward as he cut him for his third four. While his stroke play was compelling in the run-a-ball fifty for his 73rd half-century, there were elements of struggle against leg-spinner Rashid. Rashid continued to have wood over Kohli as soon after he raised his bat for fifty, the England spinner had him caught behind with a loopy leg-break that took an outside edge before settling in the wicketkeeper's gloves. This was the fifth time Rashid has dismissed Kohli in ODIs. Kohli was stranded 37 runs short of becoming only the third batter ever to make 14,000 ODI runs, missing a personal landmark like his teammate Rohit Sharma earlier in the innings. It is expected to be completed during Champions Trophy. Coming off a terrific century in second ODI, Rohit (1) could not even get a start as a delivery from Wood which was angled in, straightened enough to take the outside edge and Phil Salt collected a sharp catch. Iyer only had himself to blame for missing out on a triple-digit score after he was caught behind on a delivery fired down the leg stump by Rashid, one that he needlessly chased and edged.



Starc withdraws, Smith to lead Australia in Champions Trophy

PTI ■ SYDNEY
Steve Smith-led Australia will be without their frontline pace attack at the Champions Trophy (CT) after fast bowler Mitchell Starc withdrew from the tournament citing personal reasons. The ODI World Cup holders have been forced to make several changes to their 15-member provisional squad due to injuries to captain Pat Cummins, pacer Josh Hazlewood, and all-rounder Mitchell Marsh, along with Marcus Stoinis' surprise retirement. "We understand and respect Mitch's decision," Chair of men's selectors George Bailey said on Wednesday. "Mitch is deeply respected for his commitment to international cricket and the priority he places on performing for Australia." Starc, who appeared to be in discomfort due to a left ankle issue during the latter stages of the final Test in Galle last week, will also miss the upcoming ODI series in Sri Lanka starting Wednesday. "His well-documented ability to play through pain and adversity, as well as forgoing opportunities in other parts of his career to put his country first, should be applauded," Bailey added. Cricket Australia said Starc has requested privacy and will

not be commenting on his decision. The development comes as a major blow for Australia, who will be without the three pacers — Cummins, Hazlewood and Starc — who played a crucial role in their 2023 ODI World Cup victory. "His loss is, of course, a blow for the Champions Trophy campaign, but it provides an opportunity for someone else to make their mark on the tournament," Bailey said. Smith, who is leading the side on the tour of Sri Lanka, will captain the team in the absence of Cummins and Marsh during the tournament, which will be played across Pakistan and the UAE. "The squad has changed significantly over the past month due to untimely injuries and the retirement of Marcus Stoinis," Bailey remarked. Pacers Spencer Johnson, Nathan Ellis, Sean Abbott, and Ben Dwarshuis have been named in Australia's final 15-man squad for the Champions Trophy. "The upside is that we have been able to call on players who have had international exposure and success over the past 12 months," Bailey said. "A strong core of some of our most experienced players will provide a strong foundation in our attempt to win this edition of the Champions Trophy."

India, England teams support BCCI's 'Donate Organs, Save Lives' campaign

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD
India and England cricket teams took the field for the third and final ODI here on Wednesday wearing green armbands to support the BCCI's initiative of "Donate Organs, Save Lives" campaign. The BCCI informed this in a statement shortly after the commencement of the match here at the Narendra Modi Stadium. "Both teams are wearing green armbands to support BCCI's initiative 'Donate Organs, Save Lives'. The initiative is spearheaded by ICC Chairman Mr Jay Shah," the BCCI release stated. The initiative was announced by ICC chairman and former BCCI secretary Shah on Monday.



Shah wrote on X, "On the occasion of the 3rd ODI between India and England in Ahmedabad on February 12th, we are proud to launch an awareness initiative — 'Donate Organs, Save Lives.' "Sport has the power to inspire, unite, and create lasting impact beyond the field. Through this initiative, we urge everyone to take a step towards giving the greatest gift of all — the gift of life. "One pledge, one decision, can save multiple lives. Let's come together and make a difference!" he added. The initiative was supported by several Indian players, including Virat Kohli and vice-captain Shubman Gill. "Score the ultimate century. Your organs can help others live beyond your lifetime. Register as a donor and make every life count," Kohli said in a video shared by the BCCI. Gill added, "Be the captain of life. Just like a captain leads the team to victory, you can lead someone to life by pledging to donate your organs." Other Indian cricketers to support the initiative were batters Shreyas Iyer and KL Rahul. "One donor can save up to eight lives. Pledge today and hit a six for humanity," Iyer said. Rahul added, "Play the ultimate winning shot. Your decision to donate your organs can be the match winning moment in someone's life. Be a hero off the field too."

has long been one of the most iconic players in the history of the competition. He also holds the distinction of being the only player to win two consecutive Golden Bats (for the highest run-getter) in the tournament. His remarkable achievements include being named the Player of the Tournament in the 2013 edition, as well as holding the record for the most centuries in Champions Trophy history. "Some of my most cherished cricketing memories come from playing in the Champions Trophy. In the coming weeks, we will see the world's best teams pouring their heart and soul into every match, with everything they have worked for on the line," said Dhawan.

Shikhar Dhawan among four event ambassadors for Champions Trophy

PTI ■ DUBAI
Former India opener Shikhar Dhawan was on Wednesday named as one of the four event ambassadors for the ICC Champions Trophy (CT) to be held in Pakistan and Dubai from February 19 to March 9. Besides Dhawan, the ICC has also named Pakistan's 2017 Champions Trophy winning captain Sarfaraz Ahmed, former Australia all-rounder Shane Watson, and New Zealand's legendary fast bowler, Tim Southee as event ambassadors. The quartet will write guest columns and will also attend matches, sharing their thoughts on the event, where the world's best eight teams will compete for the top



honour. "It is such a special feeling to be part of a Champions Trophy, and to be given the opportunity to enjoy the upcoming edition as an Ambassador is an honour," Dhawan said in an ICC release. "It's the ultimate competition where it's all on the line, and that is what makes it such a thrilling spectacle. It's a tournament full of passion, pride, and determination, and that's what makes it such a thrilling and emotional journey for everyone. As India's highest run-scorer in the Champions Trophy, with an outstanding 701 runs across two editions, Dhawan

ahead with Rana. According to skipper Rohit Sharma, ineffectiveness with the old ball led to Siraj's omission from the marquee event. On that count, Rana has already given them two examples of his ability to strike when the white ball loses its luster. In his T20I debut, Rana was the sixth bowler, a much-debated concussion substitute for Shivam Dube, and walked away with game-changing figures of 3 for 33. In ODIs, Rana went for a few runs, but showed the gumption to bowl across three spells in three various passages of the match.



Ghazanfar ruled out of both Champions Trophy and IPL

PTI ■ KABUL
Teenage Afghanistan off-spinner AM Ghazanfar has been ruled out of both the ICC Champions Trophy (CT) and the IPL due to a lower back fracture that will keep him on the sidelines for at least four months, the country's cricket board announced on Wednesday. Left-arm spinner Nangeyalia Kharote, originally named as a reserve, has replaced the 18-year-old in the main squad for Champions Trophy, which will be held in Pakistan and the UAE from February 19. The 20-year-old Kharote is a left-arm spinner and has played seven ODIs and six T20 Internationals since making his debut last year. Ghazanfar sustained the injury during Afghanistan's tour of Zimbabwe late last year, sidelining him for "at least four months." "AM Ghazanfar has been ruled out of the ICC Champions Trophy due to a fracture in the L4 vertebra (located in the lower back), specifically in the left pars interarticularis," the Afghanistan Cricket Board (ACB) posted on X. "He sustained the injury during Afghanistan's recent tour of Zimbabwe and will be sidelined for a minimum

of four months, remaining under treatment during this period," it added. The IPL is scheduled to take place from March 21 to May 25 and Ghazanfar was to make his maiden appearance at the event after being bought by Mumbai Indians. The ACB also informed that off-spinner Mujeeb Ur Rahman will continue to miss ODI action "until he has fully recovered," despite playing for Paarl Royals in the SA20 through January and early February. Mujeeb, who was not included in the provisional squad for Champions Trophy, last played an ODI during the 2023 World Cup. Afghanistan will begin their Champions Trophy campaign against South Africa on February 21 in Karachi, followed by matches against England and Australia. **Afghanistan squad for Champions Trophy** Hashmatullah Shahidi (capt), Ibrahim Zadran, Ikrām Alikhil (wk), Rahmanullah Gurbaz (wk), Sediqullah Atal, Rahmat Shah (vice-capt), Azmatullah Omarzai, Gulbadin Naib, Mohammad Nabi, Rashid Khan, Fareeh Ahmad, Fazalhaq Farooqi, Nangeyalia Kharote, Naveed Zadran, Noor Ahmad.

India adopts high-risk-high-reward approach in squad selection

PTI ■ BENGALURU
It aligns with head coach Gautam Gambhir's high-risk-high-reward approach but can India's Champions Trophy squad, having lost its game-changing pace talisman Jasprit Bumrah to injury, deliver the goods at the ODI showpiece? The answer to that question is not particularly straightforward given the audacious calls taken to decide the final 15. The selection risks start with the drafting in of five spinners. The Dubai-bound flight will feature Ravindra Jadeja, Axar Patel, Washington Sundar, Kuldeep Yadav and Varun

Chakravarthy in a spin-heavy bowling attack. Harshit Rana has replaced Bumrah with the more experienced Mohammed Siraj relegated to the group of non-travelling reserves alongside young batter Yashasvi Jaiswal and all-rounder Shivam Dube. India's matches will be held in Dubai, a venue where pacers have found more success traditionally in the 50-over format. Available data shows that the Dubai International Cricket Stadium, where India will play all their matches, has hosted 58 ODIs since 2009, and pacers have taken 466 wickets here at an average of 28.6 and economy of 4.8.

The spinners have combined to take 334 wickets till now at the DICS, and their average goes up to 30 but with a slightly better economy of 4.2. "The Dubai surface has a bit more carry than say in Sharjah, and the pacers here have found some good success and that's why Pakistan has picked more pacers in their squad, though they are supposed to play only a couple of matches here," a former national selector told PTI. "If you use the new ball well, then you can have a good purchase there. I am not faulting the selection of Varun. He is in good form, but I would have liked to see one more experienced pacer in



that side, someone like Siraj," he added. **Spinners' role in Dubai** From outside, having five spinners looks like an over-estimation of the conditions. But the management took a chance with Chakravarthy because of his excellent recent form. Chakravarthy has been trusted to deliver in a multi-nation

tournament, after his failure to do so in the T20 World Cup 2021 at the same venue. What might have tilted the scales in his favour is the fact that none of India's league stage opposition in the Champions Trophy — Bangladesh, Pakistan and New Zealand — have played him before. The way he managed to trouble England in the ongoing home series on account of being an unknown entity for the visitors also worked to his advantage. But on the flip side, it leaves Kuldeep Yadav in peril. With Jadeja and Axar being the first-choice spinners considering their batting

pross, the fight for the third spinner's slot will be between Kuldeep and Chakravarthy. If India follows the template of the recent second ODI against England at Cuttack, Chakravarthy can pip the left-arm wrist spinner, at least in the initial stages of the Champions Trophy. **Why Siraj was overlooked** Another selection paradox is placing Rana ahead of Siraj as Bumrah's replacement for a tournament in which teams will have to do the tight-rope walk of three matches in the league phase. Conventional thinking says that experience more than explosiveness matters in such events, but the wise men went