



the pioneer

Established 1865

INSIDE



MONEY 10
ADANI TOUTS CASH, DOUBLE
DIGIT EBITDA GROWTH TO
REASSURE INVESTORS

NEW DELHI, FRIDAY FEBRUARY 21, 2025; PAGES 12 ₹4

www.dailypioneer.com

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



Adani Foundation pledges integrated 'Healthcare Temples' at Mumbai and Ahmedabad.

In our temples of health, seva will always come first.



At Adani, we believe that healthcare is a promise and not a privilege. Because everyone deserves access to world-class medical care, regardless of their background or financial situation. We also believe in creating a culture of continuous learning and innovation to advance medical science and improve patient outcomes.

That's why we are proud to announce the development of integrated Healthcare Temples in Mumbai and Ahmedabad, with many more to follow across India. These state-of-the-art facilities will encompass world class super-specialty hospitals, teaching hospitals, medical colleges, nursing colleges and cutting-edge research and incubation centers, with advisory support from Mayo Clinic.

Our commitment to seva drives our vision of a comprehensive healthcare ecosystem that integrates treatment, education and research, all designed to meet the unique healthcare demands of a healthier India.



Spread across 50 lac sq. ft.



2,000 medical students



2,000 beds



Will positively impact over 20 lac lives



Mumbai



Ahmedabad

सेवा साधना है, सेवा प्रार्थना है और सेवा ही परमात्मा है।

Delhi cabinet young with caste, gender and religion

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Cabinet of the new government-led by Rekha Gupta balances representation of all major communities that propelled the BJP to power in Delhi with a massive majority after 27 years.

In the February five Delhi Assembly polls, the BJP won 48 seats, with nine of its MLAs belonging to the Bania community. Chief Minister Rekha Gupta, a first-time legislator, belongs to the community. Along with CM Gupta (50), six newly elected MLAs — Pravesh

Sahib Singh, Ashish Sood, Manjinder Singh Sirsa, Kapil Mishra, Ravinder Indraj Singh, Kapil Mishra and Pankaj Singh — were administered the oath of office by Lieutenant Governor VK Saxena at the Ramlila Maidan here on Thursday. Manjinder Singh Sirsa, a third-time MLA

from the Rajouri Garden Assembly constituency who has been selected for the new Cabinet, is the Sikh face of the Bharatiya Janata Party in Delhi. Besides Rajouri Garden, the BJP has also won Hari Nagar and Jangpura which have a sizeable number of Sikh voters. Gandhi

Nagar MLA Arvinder Singh Lovely and Jangpura legislator Tarvinder Singh Marwah are the other Sikh MLAs of the BJP in Delhi. The party also inducted two Purvanchalis — Kapil Mishra and Pankaj Singh — into the Cabinet. The BJP's Jat face Parvesh Verma, who was a

frontrunner for the chief minister's post, was also inducted into the new Cabinet and is expected to get major portfolios. Senior leader and first-time MLA from Janakpuri seat Ashish Sood, who has been appointed a minister in the new government, is a well-known Punjabi leader of

the party. Moreover, the BJP, which tasted partial success in reserved assembly constituencies winning four of 12 such seats, appointed Ravindra Indraj as minister. He defeated sitting AAP MLA Jai Bhagwan Upkar in the Bawana seat by over 31,000 votes.

PRAVESH SAHIB SINGH

[Minister of PWD, Legislative Affairs, Irrigation, Flood Control, Water, Gurudwara Elections]



By setting himself up for possibly the biggest challenge of the assembly polls, Singh mirrored what Kejriwal had done in 2013 when the AAP chief pitched himself against another three-time Chief Minister Sheila Dikshit from the New Delhi constituency. While he defeated Kejriwal by a margin of around 4,000 votes, he has the distinction of winning with

record margins in the West Delhi Lok Sabha seat in 2014 and 2019. Singh holds an MBA degree from the Fore School of Management and has also been involved in social work through Rashtriya Swabhiman, a non-profit organisation founded by his father. Born on November 7, 1977, in Delhi, he showed interest in politics since childhood and joined the RSS as a Bal Swayamsewak in 1991.

MANJINDER SINGH SIRSA

[Minister of Food and Civil Supplies, Forest and Environment Planning]



A prominent Sikh leader in Delhi's political landscape, Manjinder Singh Sirsa is an active social worker who was involved in organising 'oxygen langars' during the Covid pandemic. The leader, who turns (53) on February 28, was on Thursday sworn in as a minister in the new Delhi government led by Chief Minister Rekha Gupta. He took the oath in his mother tongue Punjabi.

His induction into the Delhi cabinet is seen as the BJP's effort to strengthen its support among the Sikh community, which has been critical of the party over its handling of the farmers' agitation, most of whom were Punjab, over the now-repealed farm laws. He had secured victory over AAP's Dhanwati Chandel by a margin of 18,190 votes in the Delhi Assembly polls. A

three-time MLA from Rajouri Garden, Sirsa quit the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) to join the BJP in 2021. He first won the Rajouri Garden seat in 2013 on an Akali Dal ticket before switching to the BJP in 2017, winning subsequent elections under its banner. The Sikh leader has also been actively involved in various relief efforts like the ones launched after the natural disasters in Nepal, Chennai, Uttarakhand, and Jammu and Kashmir. Sirsa has served as the president of the Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee (DSGMC). As the DSGMC president in 2019, he played a key role in Covid relief efforts, organising langar sewa, providing assistance to doctors and nurses, arranging home delivery of food, and facilitating oxygen cylinder distribution.

ASHISH SOOD

[Minister of Home, Power, Urban Development, Education/Higher and Technical Education, Training]



A former Delhi University Students Union (DUSU) president who rose through the ranks to hold key posts in the BJP, Janakpuri MLA Ashish Sood is a prominent Punjabi face in Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta's Cabinet that was sworn in here on Thursday. He has been allocated Revenue, Environment and Food and Civil Supplies departments of Delhi government.

The first time MLA from Janakpuri included his parents' names, first his father's and then his mother's, while taking the oath as a Delhi government Cabinet Minister at Ramlila Maidan on Thursday. "Main (I) Ashish Shriram Madan Gopal Sood..." the newly sworn minister began his oath. Notably, Shriram Madangopal Sood is his father's name. Similarly, later in his speech, the minister mentioned his mother's name, saying, "Main (I) Ashish Sushila Madan

Kashmir unit. Like the new chief minister, Sood too is a former Delhi University Students' Union president - winning the election in 1989 - and served in various capacities in the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) including national secretary. He became the general secretary of the BJP Yuva Morcha in 2003 and within two years went on to become its national vice president.

Gopal Sood..." and continued his oath. Senior citizens present at the iconic Ramlila Maidan, who heard Sood's words, appreciated him for including his parents' names while taking the oath of the Minister's office. The first-time MLA from Janakpuri is known for his organisational skills and is currently in charge of the Goa BJP and the co-incharge of the party's Jammu and

KAPIL MISHRA

[Minister of Law and Justice, Labour and employment, Development, Art and Culture, Language and Tourism]



Commonwealth Games held in the national capital. He began his political career with the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) and was elected as a Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) representing Karawal Nagar in the Sixth Legislative Assembly of Delhi in 2015. He defeated BJP candidate and four-time MLA Mohan

Singh Bisht by a margin of 44,431 votes. Considered close to poet Kumar Vishwas, who was one of the founders of AAP, Mishra was inducted by AAP convener and then chief minister Arvind Kejriwal in his cabinet as the water resources minister in 2015. Mishra would level serious allegations against Modi, BJP and RSS inside and outside the Delhi Assembly.

Activist and now a Delhi minister, Kapil Mishra has undergone a complete transition - from being an avowed AAP member and a bitter critic of the BJP, RSS and Prime Minister Narendra Modi to a controversial politician often regarded as the "posterboy of Hindutva".

On Thursday, Mishra took oath as a minister in the newly formed Delhi government at a grand ceremony at the historic Ramlila Ground. His induction in the Rekha Gupta-led Delhi Cabinet is seen as a strategic move by the BJP as it consolidates its governance approach in the national capital. Mishra (44), was an activist before he started his political journey. He was actively involved in anti-corruption movements during the 2010

RAVINDER INDRAJ SINGH

[Minister of Social Welfare, SC and ST Welfare, Cooperative and elections]



First-time MLA Ravinder Indraj Singh, who took oath as Cabinet minister in the newly formed Rekha Gupta government in Delhi on Thursday, has been an active member of the BJP's Scheduled Caste (SC) Morcha. Singh is the Dalit face in the Rekha Gupta-led Delhi Cabinet. He is a member of the BJP's SC Morcha and has been working for the Dalit community for a long time.

A prominent Dalit leader in the Delhi BJP, Singh (50) has completed his higher education, earning a Bachelor of Arts degree from the Delhi University's School of Open Learning (SOL). He defeated Aam Aadmi Party's (AAP's) Jai Bhagwan Upkar from the Bawana (SC reserved) seat by more

than 31,000 votes. Singh has been associated with the party's SC Morcha and has played a key role in mobilising support for the party in North Delhi. His political journey is deeply rooted in Bawana, a constituency he now represents in the Delhi Assembly. Singh's father, Indraj Singh, had also served as an MLA from the

Narela constituency. According to his election affidavit, he has assets worth over ₹7 Crore, with no criminal cases registered against him. Besides Ravinder Indraj Singh, five other leaders — Parvesh Sahib Singh, Ashish Sood, Manjinder Singh Sirsa, Kapil Mishra and Pankaj Kumar Singh — were inducted into the Cabinet on Thursday.

PANKAJ KUMAR SINGH

[Minister of Health, Transformation, Transport and technology]



Debutant MLA Pankaj Kumar Singh, a Purvanchali face in the newly formed Rekha Gupta government, is a dental surgeon-turned-politician. Singh (48), sworn in as a minister on Thursday, has won from the Vikaspuri seat, defeating his nearest rival by over 12,000 votes. He is the general secretary of the Delhi BJP's Purvanchal Morcha.

The Delhi residents coming from eastern Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Jharkhand are referred to as Purvanchalis and they are dominant in several constituencies of the national capital. Singh said that the priorities before the new government are many and they include roads, hospitals, schools, drinking water supply and

cleaning of the Yamuna river. "The basic facilities which should be provided to the people of Delhi have not been given to them. Our efforts will be to provide facilities to the people of the national capital and to fulfil Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of a developed Delhi," he said. Singh has done his Bachelor's degree in dental surgery from Magadh University, Bodh Gaya, in Bihar in 1998. His inclusion in the Delhi Cabinet hints towards the party's political choices in Bihar which goes to polls later this year. He also served as a municipal corporation leader in the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) before being fielded by the party from the Vikaspuri seat.

CM Rekha Gupta performs Yamuna aarti after taking oath

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Hours after taking oath, Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta along with her Cabinet colleagues reached Vasudev Ghat to perform "Yamuna aarti" - inspired by the daily evening ceremony at the ghats of Ganga at Haridwar and Varanasi. The gesture — apart from being a political message of the party's comeback after 26 years — was also a reaffirmation of the BJP's promise to clean up the river that was once the lifeblood of the centuries-old city but is now little more than a drain. The party leaders then headed to the Delhi secretariat for the first Cabinet meeting. The pollution in the Yamuna river and cleaning it had become a major issue between the ruling Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) on the one side and



Newly sworn-in Delhi CM Rekha Gupta with BJP National Vice President Baijayant Jay Panda, state party President Virendra Sachdeva, Minister Parvesh Verma and others during Yamuna Aarti at Vasudev Ghat in New Delhi

opposition parties BJP and Congress on the other during the run-up to the Delhi Assembly elections. AAP convener and former Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal was attacked by both the BJP and the Congress over the highly polluted Yamuna. In its election manifesto, the "Viksit Bharat Sankalp Patra", the BJP had said it would set up a "Yamuna Kosh" for the revitalisation and the riverfront development project. For now, the four-fold plan for the clear-up announced by the Lieutenant Governor's office involves the removal of trash and silt from the river and the drains — including the Najafgarh drain that contributes the most to the pollution — expanding the sewage treatment capacity to 1,000 million gallons per day

and common effluent treatment plant capacity to 220 MLD. Gupta, along with Delhi BJP state president Virendra Sachdeva and her cabinet colleagues — Parvesh Sahib Singh, Ashish Sood, Manjinder Singh Sirsa, Ravinder Indraj Singh, Kapil Mishra and Pankaj Kumar Singh — performed 'Maa Yamuna puja' before conducting aarti ahead of the first cabinet meeting. Ram bhajans were played at the ghat, and slogans of "Jai Shree Ram" and "Yamuna Maiya Ki Jai" were raised. Earlier in the day, Gupta, the first-time MLA from Shalimar Bagh, was administered oath as the chief minister by Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena in a grand ceremony at the Ramlila Maidan. Her council of ministers was also sworn in.

BJP's return to power may end LG tussle

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The AAP government in Delhi had several run-ins with lieutenant governors over various issues in the past decade. However, with the BJP coming to power in the city after more than 27 years, many expect the relationship to improve, paving the way for smooth governance. A senior BJP leader said the LG being the head of the Delhi government holds a position of authority. "It means the elected dispensation in Delhi must work not only in cooperation with him but also attach requisite dignity to the constitutional office, a fact sorely neglected by the AAP," he said. The leader asserted that with the BJP in power both at the Centre and in Delhi, the fine balancing act with the LG office will no longer be an issue. The LG is appointed by the President on the advice of the Union government. According to BJP leaders, governance and public service delivery are likely to see major improvements now. Solving persistent issues like Yamuna pollution, and deteriorating civil infrastructure like roads, water supply, drainage and public transport are likely to receive a boost, besides a general upswing in overall governance and public service delivery, they said. The leader also asserted that the recurring issue of jurisdictional authority between the LG and an elected government, which remained a major bone of contention when AAP was in

power, is also likely to take a back seat now. VK Saxena, after taking over as Delhi LG in May 2022, had frequent confrontations with the AAP government on sanitation issues, Yamuna pollution levels, infrastructure and other matters related to policy and governance. The strained relations between the two sides had a major impact on governance. The LG, through his control over the services department and bureaucracy, kept the previous AAP dispensation on a tight leash. The Arvind Kejriwal-led AAP had hit back defiantly, accusing the LG of jeopardising governance and smooth delivery of services. Another BJP leader said the party respects constitutional authorities and always aims to serve the people by ensuring coordination and cooperation with them. Taking everyone together, the BJP will now work to make Delhi a "developed capital", the leader said. First-time BJP MLA from Shalimar Bagh Rekha Gupta was administered oath as the chief minister by Lieutenant Governor VK Saxena. Her Council of Ministers were also sworn in. Soon after taking charge of her office at the Delhi Secretariat, Gupta asserted that not a single day would be wasted in realising the "Viksit Delhi" mission and said the new BJP government would fulfil all the promises made to Delhiites. The BJP, which has been out of power in Delhi since 1998, won the February 5 assembly polls, dismantling the decade-long political dominance of AAP.

Delhi gets its ninth Chief Minister Ramlila Maidan turns saffron

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

First-time MLA Rekha Gupta sworn as Delhi's ninth Chief Minister on Thursday in the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) president JP Nadda, and Chief Ministers and Deputy CMs of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA)-ruled States. Choudhary Brahm Prakash from the Congress was the first chief minister of Delhi. He was the Chief Minister from March 17, 1952 to February 12, 1955. He was the Chief Minister for two years and 332 days. He had represented Nangloi Jat constituency. Gurmukh Nihal Singh who

represented from Darya Ganj constituency, was the second chief minister between February 12, 1955 and November 1, 1956. He had served as CM for one year and 263 days. The Legislative Assembly of Delhi was first constituted on 17 March 1952 under the Government of Part C States Act, 1951, but it was abolished on 1 October 1956. The legislative assembly of Delhi was re-established on January 2, 1992, following the enforcement of the Constitution (Sixty-ninth Amendment) Act, 1991, and the subsequent Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi Act, 1991. In 1993, Madan Lal Khurana, known as "Delhi ka Sher" (Lion of Delhi), became the first Chief Minister after the state Legislative Assembly was reinstated through the 69th Constitution Amendment Act, 1991. BJP had won 49 of the 70 seats, while Congress secured 14. Khurana's tenure was short lived. However, in 1995, his name was linked to the infamous Hawala scandal, and he stepped down after 27 months due to corruption allegations. After his resignation in 1996, Sahib Singh Verma replaced as the new Chief Minister. He remained as the Chief Minister for more than 31 months and forced to step down just months before the 1998 elections due to controversy over onion price hike.

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A sea of saffron engulfed the sprawling Ramlila Maidan on Thursday as thousands of BJP supporters gathered here to witness the oath-taking ceremony of Delhi CM Rekha Gupta. The venue was adorned with marigold flowers and betel leaves, while enthusiastic supporters chanted "Jai Siya Ram", waving party flags and raising slogans in jubilation. Around 50,000 people from different states and backgrounds gathered to witness the grand ceremony, which marked the BJP's return to power in the city after more than 26 years. Among them was an elderly woman in her 70s who had travelled all the way from Uttar Pradesh just to



BJP supporters during oath-taking ceremony at Ramlila Maidan

witness the event. "I have come here to see Narendra Modi. I am so happy today that I got this chance, even if it's from afar," she said with a smile. Amid the festive atmosphere, musicians played the shehnai and dhol, filling the air with patriotic melodies like "Teri Mitti Mein Mil Jawa" and "Maa Tujhe Salaam". The crowd

hummed along, their voices blending with the music, adding to the electrifying energy of the event. Sunita Gupta, a Janakpuri resident dressed in an orange saree, expressed her joy at seeing a woman take a significant leadership role. "I feel so proud that a woman is becoming our chief minister.

humbled along, their voices blending with the music, adding to the electrifying energy of the event. Sunita Gupta, a Janakpuri resident dressed in an orange saree, expressed her joy at seeing a woman take a significant leadership role. "I feel so proud that a woman is becoming our chief minister.

A FRESH BHAGYA REKHA FOR DELHI, ITS CHIEF MINISTER TAKES OATH



Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Ministers Rajnath Singh and Amit Shah and Lt Governor VK Saxena with newly sworn-in Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta and other ministers after the oath ceremony, in New Delhi Photo: Ranjan Dimri

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

First time MLA Rekha Gupta on Thursday was sworn in as Chief Minister of Delhi at Ramliya Maidan in the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, his Cabinet colleagues and chief ministers of National Democratic Alliance-governed states, among others.

Along with Gupta, leaders including Parvesh Verma, Ashish Sood, Manjinder Singh Sirsa, Ravinder Indraj Singh, Kapil Mishra and Pankaj Kumar Singh also took oath as ministers. Verma was the first MLA to take oath as the minister, followed by Sood, Sirsa, Mishra, Indraj and Singh. Mishra, the newly-elected legislator from Karawal Nagar, was a minister in the first Arvind Kejriwal-led Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) Government.

All the ministers took oath in Hindi, except for Sirsa who did so in Punjabi.

VIJENDER TAKES SPEAKER'S CHAIR



Gupta has been marshalled out of the Assembly by the Speaker on multiple occasions in the past 10 years File photo

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

The seasoned, affable, BJP leader holding the fort successfully for the party in Delhi Assembly, municipal corporation, as head of the State unit free from any controversies, Vijender Gupta, was named as Speaker of the new Vidhan Sabha on Thursday. Vijender will preside from the same chair which on several occasions had got him marshalled out of the proceedings of the Assembly under the chief ministership of AAP supremo Arvind Kejriwal.

Vijender won in 2015 and 2020 from Rohini constituency even as Kejriwal's wave swept Delhi assembly polls. Incidentally, Kejriwal and erstwhile speaker Ram Niwas Goel are no longer members of the new assembly.

As soon as Vijender was named as Speaker dramatic visuals of him being marshalled or dragged out of the Delhi Assembly went viral. He was previously also the leader of Opposition. Ten years ago, he was marshalled out of the Delhi Assembly amid much fury over allegedly derogatory remarks by a party colleague, OP Sharma, against then-AAP MLA Alka Lamba. Visuals from within the Assembly showed Vijender Gupta, dressed in a pristine white kurta-pyjama set - being lifted, shouting and twisting, by half-a-dozen marshals. The BJP leader even held tightly onto the furniture, fighting and resisting all the way out the exit.

Vijender return is likely spell more trouble for a battered AAP. After his election win last week, he promised that 14 pending reports on the Delhi government by the Comptroller and Auditor General of India would be tabled in the House.

Continued on page 4

Delhi Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena administered the oath of office to Rekha Gupta elected from Shalimar Bagh in noerth Delhi area and her council of ministers.

Her appointment makes her the fourth woman to hold the position in Delhi, following BJP's Sushma Swaraj, Congress' Sheila Dikshit, and AAP's Atishi and also the fourth BJP chief minister of Delhi after Madan Lal Khurana, Sahib Singh Verma and Sushma Swaraj. The 50-year-old MLA, who took charge of her office at the Delhi Secretariat in the afternoon, is also the only woman in the NDA team of chief ministers and the second in the country after TMC supremo Mamata Banerjee in West Bengal.

Congratulating the new chief minister, Modi expressed confidence that she will work for the city's development with full vigour.

Continued on page 4

AYUSHMAN FOR DELHI, CAG FOR AAP

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Amid expectations of major Announcements, the newly formed Delhi Cabinet headed by Chief Minister Rekha Gupta in her first cabinet meeting on Thursday approved a proposal reinstating the implementation of Ayushman Bharat Yojna (ABY) with Rs 5 Lakhs top-up and tabling of 14 Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) reports in the first sitting of the Assembly.

The cabinet also discussed the financial assistance scheme, which provides Rs 2,500 to women, aiming to support their welfare and empowerment. Speaking to reporters after the meeting, Gupta said in Hindi, "During the Cabinet meeting, we have taken two big decisions. The ABY, whose implementation had been held back by the previous government, will be implemented in Delhi with a top-up of Rs 5 Lakh from the state government. PM Narendra Modi had announced the scheme for the whole nation, but Delhi could not get its benefits because of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP). This will be done at the earliest after the formalities are completed."

"There are 14 CAG reports pending, which were not tabled by the previous government. They will be tabled during the first session of the Assembly. These decisions were taken today. We will take up our other commitments, give shape to each one of them and present them

before you soon," she added. Performance Audit on Regulation and Supply of Liquor in Delhi for 2017-18 to 2021-22, Public Health Infrastructure and Management of Health Services for 2023 and Performance Audit Report on Children in Need of Care and Protection for 2018-19 to 2020-21 are among 14 pending CAG reports.

The implementation of the ABY for medical insurance had become a major flashpoint between the AAP and the BJP. MPs from the BJP had also filed a petition in the Delhi High Court, seeking that the scheme be made available to people in the national capital.

Notably, the previous AAP government, led by former chief minister Arvind Kejriwal, had opposed the implementation of the Centre's Ayushman Bharat scheme in Delhi, saying that it would "amount to downgrading the healthcare initiatives already in place." The AAP government in Delhi had several run-ins with lieutenant governors over various issues in the past decade. However, with the BJP coming to power in the city after more than 26 years, many expect the relationship to improve, paving the way for smooth governance. After chairing the first Cabinet meeting on Thursday, Gupta announced the distribution of portfolios among her ministers, keeping with her finance, services, vigilance, revenue, women and child development among other departments.

Continued on page 4

Rahul Gandhi propelled by foreign hand: BJP



Congress leader Rahul Gandhi addresses a public meeting, at Shankarpur in Rae Bareilly PTI

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP and Congress on Thursday sparred over alleged funding by USAID for raising voter turnout in India with the former saying it was "reaffirmation" of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's assertion that foreign powers were trying to stop him from coming to power. Congress, meanwhile, demanded a white paper on the issue.

The ruling party said US President Donald Trump's latest remarks on the USAID funding to India was a "reaffirmation" of Prime Minister Modi's assertion during the 2024 Lok Sabha polls campaign that foreign powers were trying to stop him from coming

to power. Congress leader Rahul Gandhi has aligned himself with global networks seeking to undermine India's strategic and geopolitical interests while "acting as a tool for foreign agencies", alleged BJP's IT department head Amit Malviya, targeting the grand old party following the US president's remarks.

On Thursday, Trump once again questioned the USAID funding of USD 21 million for "voter turnout" in India and said "I guess they were trying to get somebody else elected".

In a series of posts on social media, Malviya said PM Modi had warned of foreign influence on multiple occasions during the 2024 election campaign.

He also posted a video in which Trump was heard making such remarks.

"Now, former (sic) US President Donald Trump has confirmed that there was indeed an attempt to influence the Indian election and install someone other than Prime Minister Modi," he said.

US President Trump's claim that money was being pumped into India to influence election results in the country is a "reaffirmation" of Prime Minister Modi's assertion during the 2024 campaign that foreign powers were trying to stop him from coming to power, the BJP leader added.

Targeting the Congress, Malviya alleged that ahead of the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, Rahul Gandhi was in London in March 2023, "urging foreign powers", from the US to Europe, to intervene in India's internal affairs.

"He has aligned himself with global networks seeking to undermine India's strategic and geopolitical interests acting as a tool for foreign agencies," the BJP leader charged.

Continued on page 4



Manipur Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla in Imphal after meeting top officials following the implementation of President's rule in the state File photo: PTI

Manipur Governor seeks surrender of illegal arms

PTI ■ IMPHAL

Manipur Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla has urged the people of the strife-torn state to surrender looted and illegally held weapons within seven days, assuring no punitive action would be initiated against those giving up arms during this period. However, Bhalla asserted that "strict action" would be taken after seven days.

"People of Manipur, both in the valley and hills, have suffered immense hardship for the last over 20 months due to a series of unfortunate incidents affecting peace and communal harmony," he said

in an appeal issued on Thursday. He said all communities in the state must come forward to ensure cessation of hostilities and maintenance of peace and order in the society so that people can return to their normal day-to-day activities.

"It is in this regard that I sincerely request the people of all communities, particularly the youths, to come forward and surrender looted and illegally held weapons and ammunition to the nearest police station, outpost, security forces camp within next seven days, effective from today," he said.

Continued on page 4

Centre cracks whip on OTT platforms

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Amid a row over vulgar jokes on social Amedia, the Centre has cracked the whip and warned OTT platforms against transmitting content that is prohibited by the law. In an advisory to over-the-top (OTT) platforms and self-regulatory bodies, the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting also asked them to strictly adhere to the Code of Ethics prescribed under the IT Rules-2021 while publishing content, including stricter adherence to the age-based classification of content.

I&B Ministry's advisory also asked self-regulatory bodies of OTT platforms to take appropriate proactive action for violation of the Code of Ethics by the platforms. The Ministry said it has received complaints from Members of Parliament, statutory organisations and public grievances regarding the alleged spread of obscene, pornographic and vulgar content published by certain publishers of online curated content (OTT platforms) and social media. "In view of the above it is advised that the OTT platforms adhere to the various provisions of applicable laws, and the Code of Ethics prescribed under IT Rules, 2021 while publishing content on their platforms, including stricter adherence to the age-based classification of content prescribed under the Code of Ethics," the advisory said.

It said the Code of Ethics, inter-alia, require OTT platforms not to transmit any content that is prohibited by law, undertake age-based classification of content, based on general guidelines provided in the Schedule to the Rules, implement access control mechanism



for 'A' rated content to restrict access to such content by a child, and also exercise due caution and discretion.

The advisory also comes in the wake of the Supreme Court suggesting regulation on content on social media platforms.

The apex court had flagged the "vacuum" in law when it comes to sharing content on platforms such as YouTube and said "all kinds of things were going on". The court's suggestion came following a row involving YouTuber Ranveer Allahbadia on the show India's Got Latent. The court was hearing a plea filed by him, where he sought clubbing multiple FIRs against him in the matter. The plea also sought protection from arrest.

The court issued notices to the states of Assam and Maharashtra over Allahbadia's remarks and stayed his arrest in the Guwahati and Thane FIR. Additionally, the court ruled that no further FIRs should be filed against him in the same matter.

Continued on page 4

Tradition, legacy and ancestry will meet Digital India

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Adding another feather to the Digital India movement, the Government has envisioned a unique way to digitise the century old multi-generation ancestry records commonly known as 'pothee' in custody of genealogy priests at various pilgrimage centres in India.

For instance next time a pilgrim visit Kashi Vishwanath temple in Varanasi, they may track the record of past visit to the temple by their ancestors or family members at the flip of their finger or click of a mouse.

For this, National Archives of India has envisioned a project to digitise multi-generation ancestry records seeking to harvest traditional knowledge and community repositories and preserve them as a cultural heritage.

"NIA has approached these priests and the project will begin with Madhya Pradesh's Ujjain," said NAI Director General (DG) Arun

Singhal in his address at opening session of the meeting of the South and West Asian Regional Branch of the International Council on Archives (SWARBICA) here.

India is hosting a meeting of SWARBICA after a long time, currently in the position of the treasurer of this regional body of the Paris-based International Council on Archives (ICA).

In his address, Singhal also shared some details and figures related to the NAI's "ambitious programme" of digitising 300 million pages in a period of two years, as part of its project that began last year.

"Before we started the project, our portal, Abhilekh Patal, was displaying about 10 million pages.

In the past 7-8 months, the number has grown from 10 million to 84 million pages.. Every day, we are scanning about 400,000 pages. It is a process going well," said the National Archives of India (NAI) DG. "Shortly, we are hoping we will complete 100 million pages, perhaps by end of April," he added.



Singhal said it was found during the course of this project that many documents had been left "untouched" in last 50-60 years and nobody had looked at them.

"And, we realised these are in urgent need of repair, and conservation was required. So, we had to spruce up our conservation

efforts simultaneously," he added. Another project taken up by the NAI is "harvesting of traditional knowledge and community archives". "In India, if you go to Gaya, Kashi, Allahabad (now Prayagraj), Badrinath, Kedarnath, Jagannath Puri, Dwarka, there are priests there who document every

visit by every pilgrim.

These documents are available with them. So, if you go there and tell them about your father's name, your grandfather's name, the place you belong to, they are able to come out with some documents, some 'pothis' (registers), which will contain genealogical records of such families," Singhal said. He underlined that these ancestry records may even have archival information related to ten generations of many families.

"This is traditional knowledge which has been put together in some 'pothis'. And, these 'pothis' can get destroyed. In a major flood in Kedarnath, some of these 'pothis' were wiped out," the NAI chief rued.

Singhal emphasised that children of many of these priests have taken up other career streams and even moved out of these old cities and, therefore, are "not interested in continuing this family tradition". These 'pothis' in all probability could end up getting locked up in some boxes and perhaps could go

waste, he cautioned. "So, we said, we will try to digitise all these information. And, we approached these priests. And, I am happy to inform, the priests in Ujjain have agreed. So, we will start with Ujjain, we will digitise their records," Singhal said.

"There are 'more than 25 places' in India where such records exist, he underlined. "If we can digitise all of them, collate and compare the information contained in these records, it can become a very valuable database," the NAI DG said.

Many people from India and broad travel to religious sites like Gaya in Bihar or Haridwar in Uttarakhand to perform rituals for attainment of salvation for souls of their deceased ancestors.

In Gaya, the 'Pitra Paksha Mela' is held annually on the bank of the Saryu River and 'Gayawal Pandalas' (genealogy priests) maintain records of multiple generations of people about their ancestors such as year of birth, pilgrimage, caste, and year of death and perhaps

even cause of death.

Similarly, in Ujjain and Haridwar, two of the four sites of Kumbh Mela in India, the other being Prayagraj in Uttar Pradesh and Nasik in Maharashtra, such priests diligently maintain ancestry records in 'pothis', stacks of which are stored physically in rooms and cupboards.

"Harnessing traditional knowledge and such community archives is another thing, we have discussed with SWARBICA. Perhaps, a blueprint for future collaboration could be discussed," Singhal said.

Union Culture and Tourism Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat in his address said the venue of the event — India International Centre (IIC) was also significant that allows space to voice different strands of opinions, as he welcomed participants from different counties who are attending the meeting of SWARBICA. This occasion should be used "to learn from each other and share best practices", he said.

Uddhav appeals unity for local polls

■ MUMBAI

likening himself to Japan where earthquakes are common, Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray said here that given the "shocks" he was receiving in the form of desertions by leaders and workers, he had become "Dhakka Purush" (shock resilient), as he fervently appealed to his party workers to remain "united" ahead of the local body polls. In his desperate bid to hold his flock together in the face of continuous poaching by the rival Shiv Sena faction-led by the deputy chief minister Eknath Shinde, Uddhav held

a meeting with party leaders, office bearers and elected representatives at his Bandra residence "Matoshri" in north-west Mumbai and pepped up the sagged morale of the party workers. Known for his sense of humour, Uddhav poked fun at himself over the recent desertions from his party when he said: "My situation has become like that of Japan where people do not realise the earthquakes and tremors they experience in a day. Even I have experienced so many political earthquakes that quakes no longer surprise me. In a way I have become a 'Dhakka Purush' (quake resilient). I am

just watching which deserter gives me how many blows. When I strike back, it will be such a big earthquake that no one will forget it". Uddhav said that in the face of ongoing desertions, he was in the process of rebuilding the party. "We are expecting the Supreme Court verdict in the party MLAs disqualification case soon. We expect the municipal corporation elections to be held in April-May this year. That being the case, I expect all of you to begin working for the party. We should not repeat the mistakes we made after the recent State Assembly polls," the Sena (UBT) president said.

It may be recalled that the Shiv Sena — which contested the recent State Assembly polls in alliance with the Congress and NCP (Sharad Pawar — won 20 seats out of the total 92 seats it had contested, while the Congress and NCP (SP) bagged 16 seats and 10 seats out of the total 102 seats and 85 seats that they contested respectively. Together, the Shiv Sena (UBT), Congress, and NCP won 46 seats, as against the 230 seats out of the total 288 seats collectively bagged by the ruling MahaYuti partners — comprising the BJP, Shiv Sena (Eknath Shinde) and NCP (Ajit Pawar).

In Delhi CM's village, youth prays standing for 22 days

■ STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI/JIND(HARYANA)

For the past 22 days, a 24-year-old from a Haryana village has been in a standing position round-the-clock, in what villagers claimed began with praying for the victory of BJP candidate Rekha Gupta in Delhi polls and later that she should become the chief minister. Hari Om Sharma, former sarpanch of Nandgarh, Thursday said, "Praveen neither sits nor lies down. He barely has some food and takes toilet breaks in between. Round-the-clock he is standing and his legs and feet have also got swollen." Sharma said when Rekha Gupta's ticket from Shalimar Bagh was announced by the BJP, Praveen took a vow that he will continuously pray and meditate so that she wins the elections. Later, after the poll results were declared, when Gupta's name started doing the round among the chief ministerial probables, Praveen continued to pray that she should become chief minister, Sharma said. "Now, he says he will continue like this for 19 more days to thank the Almighty as his prayers have been answered," the former sarpanch said. Praveen said he had been meditating in a standing position and praying for the last 22 days. "My prayers have been answered." He said he will continue in

standing position till he completes 41 days. Former sarpanch Sharma said Gupta's family shifted to Delhi in 1976. She was just two years old then, he said. "Her father Jai Bhagwan was a manager in a bank in Julana, Jind and later he shifted to Delhi. Rekha Gupta's grandfather Mani Ram had a shop in village," he said, adding that her family constructed a Shiv temple in the village. "Rekha Gupta used to visit village on occasions. Her uncle Sushil Kumar used to mostly stay in the village," said Sharma. "No one from our village even became an MLA. We also thank the BJP who reposed faith in her and made her chief minister," he said. Village Sarpanch Rohtash said entire village is very happy and in celebration mode since Wednesday. Several villagers of Nandgarh had already reached the national capital to congratulate Gupta. Hoshair Singh, another villager, said, "Rekha Gupta's family commanded great respect in the village." On her taking oath as Delhi CM, he said, "When a daughter of Haryana becomes chief minister of Delhi, what can be bigger happiness than this. We will invite her to her native village and accord a grand welcome."

JAC cancels class 10 Hindi, Science examinations

■ PTI ■ RANCHI

The Jharkhand Academic Council (JAC) on Thursday cancelled the class 10 board examinations for Hindi and Science subjects after the papers allegedly got leaked and went viral on social media, a JAC official said. The Hindi examination took place on February 18 and the Science paper was scheduled on Thursday. "All students, their parents, principals concerned, centre superintendents and officials concerned are informed that in the light of information received through social media and newspapers, the examinations of Hindi (Course A & Course B) subject held in the first sitting on February 18 and Science subject in the first sitting on February 20 are cancelled," JAC, a government body, said in a notice. It stated that the re-examinations in these subjects would be held later. The class 10 (matriculation) and class 12 (intermediate) board examinations began amid tight security across Jharkhand on February 11. Over 7.84 lakh students are enrolled to take both the board examinations, which are being conducted in two sittings. The class 10 examinations are scheduled in the first sitting (9.45 am to 1 pm), while the class 12 examinations are being held in the second sitting (2 pm to 5.15 pm). More than 4.33 lakh students are expected to appear for the class 10 examinations across 1,297 examination centres, while over 3.50 lakh students are likely to write intermediate examinations across 789 centres.

Delhi's new cabinet represents diverse communities from the city



Newly sworn-in Delhi ministers during the oath ceremony at Ramlila Maidan

■ STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Cabinet of the new government led by Rekha Gupta balances representation of all major communities that propelled the BJP to power in Delhi with a massive majority after over 26 years. In the February five Delhi Assembly polls, the BJP won 48 seats, with nine of its MLAs belonging to the Bania community. Chief Minister Gupta, a first-time legislator, belongs to the community. Along with CM Gupta (50), six newly elected MLAs --

Parvesh Verma, Ashish Sood, Manjinder Singh Sirsa, Kapil Mishra, Ravinder Indraj Singh, Kapil Mishra and Pankaj Singh -- were administered the oath of office by Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena at the Ramlila Maidan here on Thursday. Manjinder Singh Sirsa, a third-time MLA from the Rajouri Garden Assembly constituency who has been selected for the new Cabinet, is the Sikh face of the BJP in Delhi. Besides Rajouri Garden, the

BJP has also won Hari Nagar and Jangpura which have a sizeable number of Sikh voters. Gandhi Nagar MLA Arvinder Singh Lovely and Jangpura legislator Tarvinder Singh Marwah are the other Sikh MLAs of the BJP in Delhi. The party also inducted two Purvanchalis -- Kapil Mishra and Pankaj Singh -- into the Cabinet. The BJP's Jat face Parvesh Verma, who was a frontrunner for the chief minister's post, was also inducted into the new Cabinet and is expected to get major

portfolios. Senior leader and first-time MLA from Janakpuri seat Ashish Sood, who has been appointed a minister in the new government, is a well-known Punjabi leader of the party. Moreover, the BJP, which tasted partial success in reserved assembly constituencies winning four of 12 such seats, appointed Ravindra Indraj as minister. He defeated sitting AAP MLA Jai Bhagwan Upkar in the Bawana seat by over 31,000 votes.

TN CM asks Centre to help release fishermen

■ PTI ■ CHENNAI

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin on Thursday requested the Centre to take effective diplomatic measures to secure the immediate release of the state fishermen apprehended by the Sri Lankan authorities. Also, he sought the central government to convene the Joint Working Group meeting to find a permanent diplomatic solution to the fishermen issue.

In a letter addressed to Union External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, the CM drew the Centre's attention to yet another incident of apprehension of 10 fishermen along with their fishing vessels by the Lankan Navy on February 19. "The number of apprehensions of fishermen from Tamil Nadu by the Sri Lankan navy has rapidly risen in the past few months and immediate and continued diplomatic action

has to be taken to stop these apprehensions as the livelihood of the fishermen and their families are affected for long period," the Chief Minister said in the letter. "I therefore request you to kindly take effective diplomatic measures to prevent the arrests of the fishermen and to secure the release of all the apprehended fishermen and their fishing boats from the Sri Lankan authorities," he said.

Rahul Gandhi propelled by foreign hand: BJP

From page 3

Amid the row over alleged funding by USAID for raising voter turnout in India, the Congress demanded that the Indian government should bring out a white paper on the US agency's support to both governmental and non-governmental institutions in India over the decades. The Congress also dubbed US President Donald Trump's claims related to USAID as "nonsensical". The opposition party's assertion comes after President Donald Trump questioned the purpose of providing USD 21 million to India for "voter turnout". "Why do we need to spend USD 21 million for voter turnout in India? I guess they were trying to get somebody

else elected..." Trump has said. In a social media post, Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh said, "USAID is very much in the news these days. It was set up on November 3, 1961. Claims being made by the US President are typically nonsensical to say the least." "Even so, the Government of India should bring out a White Paper at the earliest detailing USAID's support to both governmental and non-governmental institutions in India over the decades," the Congress leader said. On February 16, the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE), led by billionaire SpaceX CEO Musk, listed items on which the "US taxpayer dollars were going to be spent" and the list

included "USD 21M for voter turnout in India". DOGE noted that all of the items have been cancelled. The list also included USD 29 million to "strengthening political landscape in Bangladesh", USD 20 million for "fiscal federalism" and USD 19 million for "biodiversity conversation" in Nepal as well as USD 47 million for "improving learning outcomes in Asia". While signing executive orders on Tuesday at Mar-a-Lago, Trump had said, "...And USD 21 million for voter turnout in India. Why are we giving USD 21 million to India? They got a lot of money there. One of the highest taxing countries in the world in terms of us. We can hardly get in there because their tariffs are so high."

Centre cracks whip on OTT...

From page 3

The bench of Justices Surya Kant and N Kotiwar Singh urged Allahabadia to cooperate with investigations. It also came down heavily on Allahabadia and instructed Additional Solicitor General Aishwarya Bhati to seek assistance from the Attorney General and Solicitor General on the matter. "We would like you (the government) to do something. If the government is willing to do something, we are happy; otherwise, we will not leave this vacuum and barren area," observed Justice Kant. The court has requested the presence of the Attorney General and Solicitor General at the next hearing. The court while coming down on Allahabadia, also refrained him from doing any shows till further notice. He was

represented by lawyer Abhinav Chandrachud, who had urged an urgent hearing in the matter before the Supreme Court. A joint statement by Mumbai and Guwahati Police confirmed that Allahabadia remained unreachable despite multiple FIRs against him. The National Women's Commission has also summoned Allahabadia, Samay Raina and others to appear before it in New Delhi. However, they cited safety concerns and prior engagements for not attending. Earlier, several complaints seeking legal actions were filed against popular YouTubers Samay Raina, Ranveer Allahabadia, Ashish Chanchalani, and Apoorva Mukhija over allegedly obscene and offensive remarks about parents in the show.

Manipur Governor seeks surrender...

From page 3

The governor said this single act of returning weapons can be a powerful gesture towards ensuring peace. "I want to assure you that no punitive action would be initiated if such weapons are returned within the stipulated time. Thereafter, strict action will be taken for possession of such weapons," he said. The Centre had imposed President's rule in Manipur on February 13, days after Chief Minister N Biren Singh resigned from his post led to political uncertainty in the northeastern state. The Manipur Assembly, which has a tenure till 2027, has been put under suspended animation, according to a notification issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs.

AK Mishra meets Naga groups for peace talks

■ PTI ■ KOHIMA

Centre's emissary for Naga peace talks, A K Mishra, on Thursday arrived in Nagaland to hold separate meetings with Naga groups, an official said. Upon his arrival, Mishra, who is also the Northeast advisor in the Ministry of Home Affairs, engaged in dialogue with the Working Committee of the Naga National Political Groups (NNPGs). In a statement, the media cell of WC NNPGs said that its leaders led by the newly inducted convenor M B Neokpa and working convenors P Tikhak Naga and Isak Sumi met the Centre's representatives headed by A K Mishra at Dimapur.

During the meeting, the WC NNPGs leaders apprised them of the recent developments and also the need for an early consolidated and inclusive political solution to the conflict, it said. The meeting also deliberated on developing political consensus among Naga political groups and stakeholders so as to expedite resolving the issue in a broad-based manner without excluding any stakeholder, it said. The ongoing efforts by various Naga civil society organisations to bring unanimity among conflicting Naga political groups has also been reviewed, the statement said.

A FRESH BHAGYA REKHA FOR DELHI, ITS CHIEF MINISTER TAKES OATH

From page 3

Shortly after the swearing-in ceremony, the Modi wrote on "X", "Congratulations to Smt. Rekha Gupta Ji on taking oath as Delhi's Chief Minister. She has risen from the grassroots, being active in campus politics, state organisation, municipal administration, and now MLA as well as Chief Minister. I am confident she will work for Delhi's development with full vigour. My best wishes to her for a fruitful tenure." He also congratulated the six new ministers in another social media post he congratulated Parvesh, Ashish Sood, Sirsa, Ravinder Indraj Singh, Kapil Mishra and Pankaj Kumar Singh on taking oath as Ministers in the Delhi Government. "She (Rekha) has risen from the grassroots, being active in campus politics, state organisation, municipal administration and now MLA as well as Chief Minister..." PM said. About 50,000 people convulsed into the historic ground, which has seen

many a rally and protest through the decades, festooned with marigold flowers and bunting. There was dance, music and drumbeats with many waving BJP flags, chanting "Jai Shri Ram", "Modi, Modi" and a bunch of enthusiastic supporters singing "Ram Ji Ko Keh Dena, Jai Arya Ram". The high on optics event was attended by chief ministers of states ruled by the BJP and its NDA allies - Maharashtra's Devendra Fadnavis, Andhra Pradesh's Chandrababu Naidu, Goa's Pramod Sawant, Haryana's Nayab Singh Saini and Meghalaya's Conrad Sangma. Union ministers, including Amit Shah, party chief JP Nadda, Rajnath Singh and Hardeep Puri, were there too to mark the occasion of the party adding one more electoral win to its kitty. Uttar Pradesh deputy chief ministers Keshav Prasad Maurya and Brajesh Pathak, and Andhra Pradesh's Pawan Kalyan were present too. Rekha's predecessors Athisi and Arvind Kejriwal were invited but they skipped the

ceremony however rebel AAP leader Swati Maliwal graced the occasion. Referring to the defeat of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) in the recent assembly elections, Shah said the people of Delhi have ended the reign of deceit and breach of promise and chosen BJP, which is the synonym of service and dedication. The senior BJP leader said the party government will make Delhi the best capital of the world by making it clean, beautiful and prosperous. After the ceremony, the new cabinet and other dignitaries headed for lunch at a hotel in the city. Later, Gupta reached the Delhi Secretariat to take charge as the chief minister of Delhi. She was accompanied by party leaders, including state BJP in-charge Bajiyant Panda and state president Virendra Sachdeva among others. After taking charge, Gupta told reporters not a single day would be wasted by her government in realising the "mission" of a "Viksit Delhi". "We will fulfil all the commitments made to the people of Delhi," she said.

Vijender takes Speaker's chair

From page 3

The reports, he claimed, would "expose how the AAP misled the people of Delhi with false promises while engaging in financial irregularities amounting to crores". Vijender also then hit out at the AAP, declaring the party had blocked BJP MLAs' efforts to table these CAG reports. Sources earlier said he was even on a shortlist for the Chief Minister's post, something that eventually went to Rekha Gupta. Gupta, who belongs to the Baniya community, won the Rohini Assembly seat for a third consecutive time, defeating AAP's Pradeep Mittal by over 37,000 votes. The veteran BJP leader has also served as the president of the Delhi BJP unit. Born on August 14, 1963, he graduated from Shri Ram College of Commerce. He cut his teeth in politics in 1980 with the Janata Vidyarthi Morcha and later became president of BJP's youth wing in 1995. Gupta first tasted electoral

Ayushman for Delhi, CAG for AAP

From page 3

Pravesh Verma will oversee the Public Works Department (PWD), Water, Legislative Affairs, the Irrigation and Flood Control Department, which manages the cleaning of the Yamuna River and Gurudwara elections. Ashish Sood has been given the Home, Power, Urban Development, Education, Higher Education, Training and Technical Education. Kapil Mishra has been appointed as the new Minister of Law and Justice, Tourism, Art and Culture, and will also hold the Labour Department portfolio. Manjinder Singh Sirsa has been assigned the Forest, Environment, Planning and Industries portfolio, along with the Food and Supplies Department. Ravinder Indraj Singh Indraj will hold the portfolio of Social Welfare, SC and ST Welfare, Elections and Cooperative. Pankaj Kumar Singh will oversee Health and Family Welfare, Information Technology as well as Transport. Hours after taking oath at the iconic Ramlila Maidan, Delhi

Chief Minister Rekha Gupta along with her Cabinet colleagues performed Yamuna aarti at Vasudev Ghat-inspired by the daily evening ceremony at the ghats of Ganga at Haridwar and Varanasi. Ram bhajans were played at the ghat, and slogans of "Jai Shree Ram" and "Yamuna Maiya Ki Jai" were raised. The party leaders then headed to the Delhi Secretariat for the first Cabinet meeting. Gupta, all smiles and wearing a jacket over a red saree, reminiscent of the dress code of BJP stalwart Sushma Swaraj, Delhi's new Chief Minister had a packed schedule on Day 1 of her government. Soon after taking oath along with her council of ministers of six leaders this afternoon, she went to her office at the Delhi Secretariat and met officials and leaders. Following the meetings and greetings, the first thing the chief minister did was to call a cabinet meeting. The new Chief Minister also went to meet with chief ministers of NDA government at a hotel. Earlier, Rekha Gupta took oath as the ninth Chief Minister of

Delhi at the historic Ramlila Maidan in the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and several NDA leaders and Chief Ministers. The event was attended by leaders such as Chandrababu Naidu, Pawan Kalyan, Devendra Fadnavis, Keshav Prasad Maurya, Amit Shah, JP Nadda, and many more. Flanked by her ministers, state BJP in-charge Bajiyant Panda and state president Virendra Sachdeva, Gupta took charge at the Delhi Secretariat, shortly after taking oath in a grand ceremony at the sprawling Ramlila Maidan. After assuming the charge, Gupta asserted that not a single day will be wasted in realising the "Viksit Delhi" mission. The 50-year-old ninth chief minister of Delhi also said that the new BJP government will fulfil all the promises made to the people of the national capital. "Not a single day will be wasted in realising our mission of a "Viksit Delhi" (developed Delhi). We will fulfil all the commitments made to the people of Delhi," she told reporters after taking the charge.

Cases filed against 101 accounts for spreading misinformation on Kumbh

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh Police have intensified their crackdown on misleading social media content and privacy violations related to the Mahakumbh, registering cases against 101 accounts across 10 incidents for spreading misinformation and objectionable material. Authorities have taken legal action against two social media accounts for allegedly posting and selling explicit videos of women pilgrims bathing at the sacred event. The crackdown follows directives from Uttar Pradesh Police Chief Prashant Kumar to combat offensive content related to the religious gathering. The police's social media monitoring unit detected that certain platforms were uploading videos of women pilgrims bathing and changing clothes, violating their privacy. A case was lodged at the Kotwali Kumbh Mela police station. On February 17, a case was registered against an Instagram



Devotees walk towards Sangam to take holy dip during the ongoing Mahakumbh Mela festival in Prayagraj PTI

account for allegedly posting inappropriate videos. Authorities have requested Meta, Instagram's parent company, to provide details of the account operator for further action, including possible arrest.

In another case, registered on February 19, a Telegram channel was found offering similar content for sale. Legal proceedings have been initiated, and investigations are ongoing. Following Chief Minister Yogi

Adityanath's directive to curb misinformation, police have launched a cyber patrolling initiative to monitor and counter fake news regarding the Mahakumbh. Several cases have been registered for spreading

misleading content. On February 19, police booked 26 accounts for linking a Pakistan-based video to a false claim about a Maha kumbh stampede. On February 14, 22 accounts misrepresented a video from Champawat, Uttarakhand, alleging a violent clash and stone-pelting at the Mahakumbh. On February 13, 15 accounts circulated a 2024 Bihar video, originally from a Pushpa 2 film promotion event, falsely claiming nationalist devotees had thrown slippers at army personnel at the Kumbh. On February 12, seven accounts falsely linked a 2021 video from Ghazipur, alleging bodies were floating in the Ganga due to a stampede. On February 9, 14 Twitter accounts misrepresented a Dhanbad, Jharkhand video, claiming UP Police assaulted devotees searching for missing family members. On February 7, a Facebook account spread false claims about crowd management efforts in the Sangam area, portraying it as a stampede.

No water to share with other states: Punjab CM

PTI ■ CHANDIGARH

Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann on Thursday said the state does not have a single drop of water to share with any other state. Mann stated this before the Ravi Beas Water Tribunal set up for adjudicating river water disputes between Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan. At a meeting with the tribunal led by its chairman Justice Vineet Saran, members Justice P Naveen Rao and Justice Suman Shyam, and registrar Rita Chopra, the chief minister reiterated that the state has no spare water to share with any other state and there is no question of sharing even a single drop of water with anyone. Punjab has no surplus water to share with any other state and reassessment of availability of water is required as per international norms, Mann said, according to an official statement. He also urged the tribunal members, who are in Punjab for a site visit of the Ravi water system, to deliver justice to the people of the state. Mann pointed out that Punjab's

76.5 per cent blocks (117 out of 153) are over exploited where the stage of ground water extraction is more than 100 per cent, whereas in Haryana only 61.5 per cent (88 out of 143) are over exploited. As most of the river resources of the state have dried up, it needs more water to cater to its irrigation needs, Mann said. However, Mann said the situation is so grim that Punjab only has scant water, which it is providing to its food growers. In such a scenario, there is no question of sharing even a drop of water with any other state, Mann said. The Punjab government has emphatically presented the issue of less availability of water on every platform, Mann said, adding that it is imperative to "protect the rights of our coming generations", the statement said. "The Punjab government is duty-bound to ensure that the interests of the state and its people are safeguarded by all means, and no stone will be left unturned for it," Mann asserted. The chief minister also apprised the tribunal that the Yamuna, like Ravi and Beas rivers, also flowed through the

erstwhile state of Punjab before re-organisation, but while apportioning river waters between Punjab and Haryana, Yamuna waters were not considered, whereas Ravi and Beas waters were duly taken into account for the apportionment. Mann said Punjab has been requesting for its association in the negotiations for allocation of Yamuna waters, but "our request has not been considered on the ground that no geographical area of Punjab falls in the Yamuna basin". Haryana is not the basin state of Ravi and Beas rivers, but Punjab is forced to share waters of these rivers with Haryana, Mann said, adding that if Haryana gets Ravi-Beas waters being a successor state of Punjab, Yamuna waters should also be shared with Punjab being a successor state following the same analogy. The Punjab government is making strenuous efforts to use canal water for irrigation purposes, the chief minister said. When he assumed charge as chief minister, only 21 per cent canal water was being used in the state, Mann said.

TMC, BJP MLAs compete in needling regional sentiments

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

A set of BJP and Trinamool Congress MLAs on Thursday competed against each other needling up regional and sub-regional slogans - the former once again asking for a separate North Bengal State and the latter demanding an exclusive State flag. Manoranjan Vyapari a TMC MLA from Hooghly while delivering a speech inside the Assembly "floated an idea" for an exclusive state flag for Bengal even as he reasoned, "There are quite a few States that have their distinct State songs and State flags, so why cannot Bengal have its own state flag. We already have a state song. Thanks to our Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee. I only offered a small idea to the House to ponder about it, besides there is no constitutional hindrance for having a state flag." Though there is no instance of a state flags some Indian states do have their own songs. These include Assam, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, as well as Bengal. The

BJP and the Left promptly reacted to the idea of a state flag wondering whether the TMC was plotting a secessionist plan. Union Minister and state BJP president Sukanto Majumdar chided Vyapari saying, "they came to Bengal after being kicked out of Bangladesh, now they are trying to divide India, but we warn them against any such sinister design, any poke at India's national sovereignty will be very ruthlessly dealt with." Not to drop behind North Bengal BJP MLA Shikha Chatterjee too roll out rolled out a competing idea: this time proposing to effect a partition of Bengal. Reportedly disgusted with lack of development of North Bengal she said if the Mamata Banerjee Government could not keep its promise then it should better let the northern part of the State go. "If you cannot develop North Bengal then it is better to bifurcate it," she said. "There has been tall promises made by the Government. They have constructed an Uttar Kanya (a second secretariat at Siliguri in North Bengal), just for the sake of it, nothing happens there.

My simple logic is if you cannot develop North Bengal simply let it get separated," Chatterjee an MLA from Dabgram Phulbari constituency adjoining Siliguri said. "This is not my call. This is the people's voice that I am raising. We are people's representatives and we have to listen to the refrains of the common voters regularly. There is massive unemployment problem, people have minimal facilities, there is continuous river erosion, hosts of other problems that the people are plagued with. They are asking us as to what we are doing in Kolkata. They are telling us to resign and return if we cannot do anything. So I am forced to raise this issue. If the Government cannot develop let them segregate North Bengal," she said. Though this is not the first occasion that a similar demand has been raised what makes Chatterjee's statements different is that it has for the first time made inside the Assembly and was recorded in the proceedings, experts said. Earlier other saffron

leaders like John Barla and the saffron MLA from Naxalbari had raised such demands too. When asked to comment on the issue Sukanto Majumdar however said that, "division of Bengal is not the party's stand," adding however that the party wanted a composite development plan for North Bengal. "We want the development of Bengal along the lines proposed by Dr Shyama Prasad Mukherjee. If regions like North Bengal are neglected then we will see if some other arrangement can be made, but we are not for division of Bengal," he said. State Parliamentary Affairs Minister Sobhandeb Chatterjee however accused the BJP for hatching divisive plans after having failed to win in elections. "They know that they are fast losing the ground beneath their feet. They have failed to win elections repeatedly in North Bengal too they have lost ground losing all the recent by-elections. So they are making a hue and cry for partitioning Bengal. But this will not only be not allowed. This will also boomerang against them," Chatterjee said.

Snowfall, rain end 50-day dry spell in Jammu and Kashmir

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

A fresh spell of snowfall in the plain areas across Jammu and Kashmir on Thursday ended the 50-day-long dry spell, and brought back smiles to the faces of the locals and the tourists reaching here to enjoy the scenic beauty of the ski resorts of Gulmarg, Sonamarg, and Pahalgam. In the Jammu region, Banihal top, higher reaches of Doda and Kishtwar, and the tourist resort of Patnitop and Trikuta hills near Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine also witnessed fresh snowfall. The reports of snowfall were also received from Peer Ki Gali and adjoining areas along Mughal road in Poonch district. Normal life was disrupted in Jammu city which along with other plains were lashed by rains, resulting in a considerable drop in the day temperature. The helicopter and ropeway service at the Vaishno Devi

shrine remained suspended during the day. However, the pilgrimage to the shrine continued without any disruption. The battery car service was also functioning normally along the trek. Due to the snowfall around Zojila area, the highway that connects Kashmir to Ladakh, was closed down for vehicular movement. However, the Jammu-Srinagar National Highway remained open and the traffic on the arterial road played without any disruption. According to the Met department areas like Gulmarg, Pahalgam, and Sonamarg received a fresh spell of snow while Srinagar witnessed rains, bringing the much-needed respite as multiple water bodies and springs had dried up due to no precipitation in the area. Earlier, the UT administration had to postpone the Khelo India Winter Games due to insufficient snow in the Ski Resort Gulmarg.

According to experts, the Weather pattern is changing drastically in Jammu and Kashmir. This year the 40-day-long period of Chillai Kalan was one of the driest periods in many decades. According to MET department, the Jammu division had recorded an 83 per cent rainfall deficit and Kashmir Valley recorded an 81 per cent deficit since the beginning of the New Year. The local water bodies across the Kashmir division are also drying up prompting Chief Minister Omar Abdullah to comment that the government will have to adopt a more proactive approach for water management and conservation in the coming weeks. Meanwhile, the MeT department has predicted a wet spell across the region in the next 24 hours. The MeT department has also forecasted that there is going to be a wet spell starting February 25th till 28th.

BJP to release 'Sankalp Patra' for civic elections on February 24

STAFF REPORTER ■ GURUGRAM

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has prepared its 'Sankalp Patra' (Resolution Letter) for the civic elections. The party will release this resolution letter on February 24. According to state party president Pandit Mohan Lal Badoli, the resolution letter will be released by Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini from Rohtak's BJP office. On Thursday, in the presence of state president Pandit Mohan Lal Badoli, Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini, and conveners of the resolution letter committee Vipul Goyal Vijayalok Advocate and other BJP leaders brainstormed for hours to prepare the resolution letter at the BJP's office in Gurugram. In the meeting, issues of the city and wards were discussed in detail and it was decided to prepare it in the next one or two days. Badoli said that the Sankalp Patra will live up to the expectations of the public. "If some more good suggestions come up for the Sankalp Patra, they will also be included in the next one or two days. He said that the Chief Minister and state leaders will be present on the occasion of releasing the Sankalp Patra on February 24 in Rohtak. The BJP would win the municipal elections by a big margin. The public is happy with the policies of the BJP and the public has given its blessings and formed the BJP government in the state for the third time," he said. "Now the victory of BJP candidates is certain in the municipal elections as well. There is a BJP government at the Center and in the state, and now BJP will win in the local body as well, due to this, the triple engine government in the state will do development work at a fast pace," he added.

Subhash Barala meets BJP officials for Gurugram municipal elections

STAFF REPORTER ■ GURUGRAM

Rajya Sabha MP and the BJP's Gurugram election in-charge Subhash Barala held a meeting with ward coordinators and Mahila Morcha officials regarding Gurugram and Manesar Municipal Corporation elections at the party's office in the Millennium City on Thursday. During the meeting, Barala egged on the workers and said that due to their hard work, the BJP would claim a big victory in the Municipal Corporation elections. On this occasion, Minister Krishna Bedi, District President Kamal Yadav, State Secretary Gargi Kakkar, MLA Mukesh Sharma, State Media In-charge Arvind Saini, State President of Mahila Morcha Usha Priyadarshi, State President of SC Morcha Satya Prakash Jarawata, Harvinder Kohli, Manish Gadoli, Ajit Yadav and outgoing Mayor Madhu Azad



BJP's Gurugram election in-charge Subhash Barala held a meeting for Municipal Corporation elections File Photo

etc were present on the stage. "It is only due to the officials and workers that the party has reached this position that the government has been formed with full majority for the third

consecutive time in Haryana," Barala said. He appealed to the workers to go among the people in coordination with each other and work to form a triple-engine

government. "The BJP government has been working for the last 10 years by taking decisions in the public interest without any discrimination. Under the leadership of Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini, the BJP government is taking the development of the state to new heights," Barala said. Slamming the Congress, he said that just as the Congress ceased to exist in the Delhi Assembly elections, the people will wipe out the Congress in Haryana too. He said that the policy of the Congress has always been to mislead the people. "Due to internal divisions, the leaders of the Congress work to confuse the people. The public has understood the deceitful politics of the Congress," he said. He claimed that the atmosphere is in favour of the BJP, and the public has made up its mind to form a triple-engine government.

Maha minister sent to two years jail in fraud case

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

In a major setback to the BJP-led MahaYuti government, a Nashik district court on Thursday sentenced State Agriculture Minister Manikrao Kokate of the NCP (Ajit Pawar) to two years' imprisonment and imposed ₹50,000 fine in the 1995 document tampering and fraud case. Delivering its judgement in the 30-year-old case, the Nashik district and sessions court convicted Manikrao Kokate and his brother Sunil Kokate in the documents tampering and fraud case and sentenced both of them to two years' imprisonment and imposed a fine of Rs 50,000 each on both of them. The court, however, acquitted two others named in the FIR of the case. With his conviction and sentence in a criminal case, Manikrao Kokate - a five-time MLA from Sinnar in Nashik district in north Maharashtra - faces the threat of losing not

only his minister's position but also his membership of the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly. In her verdict handing two years' imprisonment to Manikrao Kokate and his brother, 10th Addl. Chief Judicial Magistrate, Nashik Rupali C. Narwadiya said that though the reputation of Kokate - being state Agriculture Minister "if he is punished" in the case, "law cannot condone such illegal acts". "No doubt, the reputation of the accused no.1 being a minister of the state in the agriculture department may be ruined if he is punished. But simultaneously, the law cannot condone such illegal acts merely due to the fact that the person is having a reputable position in the society. In view of creating deterrence, it is essential to give a strong message to the society that commission of offence like cheating and forgery are not tolerable irrespective of the post, or reputa-

tion of the person, and that justice does not see the culprit's post," the Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate stated in 38-page judgement. The case against Kokate brothers was filed by their political rival and former minister Tukaram Dighole of the Congress. Dighole had alleged that the Kokate brothers had forged documents to fraudulently obtain flats in the Nirman View Apartment, located on College Road at Nashik's Yeolekar Mala locality. The Prosecution's case is that the Kokate brothers had claimed that they belonged to the low-income group (LIG), their income was lower than ₹30,000 each per annum and that they had no other properties, which allowed them to secure flats under the chief minister's 10 per cent discretionary quota. However, the subsequent investigations by the police revealed that they had falsified the documents to receive these benefits.

Mayawati rejects Rahul's alliance offer, calls Congress 'casteist'



File Photo

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Dahujan Samaj Party (BSP) Chief Mayawati on Thursday accused the Congress of 'dual character and casteist mindset', after Congress leader Rahul

Gandhi questioned her party's present political approach. "Wherever the Congress is strong or in power, it harbours hostility and casteist attitudes towards BSP and its followers. But in states like UP, where it is weak, it tries to mislead people by talking about an alliance with BSP. If this is not hypocrisy, then what is?" Mayawati said in a post on X. Mayawati's post came soon after Gandhi, on the first day of his visit to his Raebareilly Lok Sabha

constituency on Thursday, virtually accused her of staying away from anti-BJP front or the INDIA bloc during the 2024 Lok Sabha polls. "I wanted Behenji to fight alongside us against the BJP, but for some reason, she did not. That was deeply disappointing. If all three parties had united, the BJP would never have won," Gandhi said while interacting with Dalit students in Raebareilly. Congress and Samajwadi Party had contested the 2024 polls together in Uttar Pradesh and succeeded in limiting the BJP's advance in the most populous state winning 43 seats including Faizabad Lok Sabha seat. Hitting back at Gandhi, Mayawati accused the Congress of having a "dual character" and a "casteist mindset" towards BSP supporters. She further argued that past alliances with Congress had always been detrimental to

the BSP. "Whenever BSP allied with Congress or other casteist parties, our base vote got transferred to them. But this was never reciprocated. As a result, BSP always suffered losses," she said in her X post. Also targeting the BJP, she said, "They (Congress and BJP) have consistently opposed Dr BR Ambedkar, the BSP, its leadership, Dalit-Bahujan followers, and the reservation system." "Their policies have hindered the nation's constitutional goal of equality and welfare, which is deeply concerning," she said. Interestingly, Gandhi during his interaction with Dalit students had started by praising Mayawati. Gandhi spoke about BSP founder Kanshi Ram's role in Indian politics. "I believe Kanshi Ram Ji laid the foundation, and Behenji (Mayawati) built upon it," he said before questioning her present political stance.

Naxalites kill two as alleged police informers in Dantewada

PTI ■ DANTEWADA

Naxalites have killed two men after accusing them of being police informers in Chhattisgarh's Dantewada district, police said on Thursday. Baman Kashyap (29) and Anis Ram Poyam (38) were killed by unidentified assailants at their village Todma under Barsoor police station limits on Wednesday evening, a police official said here. After being alerted, a team of security personnel was rushed to the village which is located deep in the forest on Dantewada-Bijapur district border, he said. More details about the killing were awaited, he added. Kashyap, one of the victims, was working as a shiksha doot (temporary visiting teacher) at a

government school in the area. A pamphlet of the Aamadai Area Committee of East Bastar division of the Maoists, found at the spot, accused him of acting as a police informer, the police official said. Kashyap had provided information to Dantewada police about the movement of Maoists before the Thulthuli encounter of October 2024, the pamphlet alleged. On October 4, 2024, as many as 38 Naxalites were killed in an encounter with security personnel in the forested area between Thulthuli and Nendur villages in Abhujmaad area. With Wednesday's killings, Maoists have killed seven persons in separate incidents so far this year in Bastar division which comprises seven districts.

On February 6, Naxalites killed a former sarpanch (village head) in Dantewada district, while a 30-year-old man was hacked to death in Aranpur area of Dantewada on February 4. On February 3, Naxalites hacked to death two men, one of them their former colleague, in neighbouring Bijapur district. Earlier on January 26, Naxalites killed a 41-year-old man in Bhairamgarh area of Bijapur, accusing him of leaking information about the outlawed CPI (Maoist). On January 16, Naxalites killed a 48-year-old man in Mirtur area of Bijapur on the suspicion of being a police informer. According to police, 68 civilians were killed last year in separate incidents of Naxal violence in Bastar region.



www.dailypioneer.com

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

PAPER WITH PASSION

Delhi gets a woman CM

Rekha Gupta's appointment as Delhi's CM marks a historic milestone, making her the first woman to lead a BJP-ruled state

Rekha Gupta has been sworn-in as the Chief Minister of Delhi, marking a significant milestone as she becomes the fourth woman to hold this esteemed position in the national capital. Her ascension not only signifies the Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) return to power in Delhi after 27 years but also highlights a transformative shift in the city's political landscape. Gupta's appointment is historic, as she is the first woman to lead a BJP-ruled state. Her leadership is expected to bring a fresh perspective to Delhi's governance, focusing on inclusivity and development. Born on July 19, 1974, in Julana, Haryana, Rekha Gupta pursued her education in Delhi. She graduated from Daulat Ram College under Delhi University and later earned an LLB in 2002. Her legal background has equipped her with a strong foundation to navigate the complexities of political and administrative responsibilities. Gupta's political career commenced in 1992 with her involvement in the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) at Delhi



University. Her leadership qualities were soon recognised, leading to her election as the President of the Delhi University Students' Union (DUSU) for the 1996-97 term. She further expanded her political footprint by serving as a councillor from North Pitampura in 2007 and 2012, where she initiated various community development projects.

Her dedication to public service and effective governance paved the way for her election as the MLA from Shalimar Bagh in 2025, defeating AAP's Bandana Kumari by a significant margin. Rekha Gupta hails from a respected family that values community service and education. Her father was an officer at the State Bank

of India and her family relocated to Delhi when she was two years old. As the new Chief Minister, Gupta faces several pressing challenges. Delhi's persistent air and river pollution require immediate and sustained interventions to safeguard public health. Besides, addressing the city's infrastructure deficits, including transportation and public amenities, is crucial for enhancing the quality of life for residents. Building upon her campaign promises, Gupta aims to revamp government schools, ensuring quality education for all. Expanding access to free and efficient healthcare services remains a priority to meet the needs of Delhi's diverse population. Implementing programs such as monthly stipends for economically disadvantaged women reflects her commitment to social equity. Rekha Gupta's rise to the Chief Minister's office embodies a blend of experience, dedication, and a vision for Delhi's progressive future. Her leadership is poised to navigate the complexities of the capital's governance, striving for sustainable development and inclusive growth. Now that there would be a double engine government in Delhi, Delhiites can expect some radical changes in the city. The earlier dispensation was at loggerheads with the central government and so many of the policies and programs could not be implemented due to the tussle between the Centre and the State Government.

PICTALK



Tourists ride a hot air balloon in Kullu

PTI

Budget powers India's green transition with clean tech push

By balancing economic growth with environmental responsibility, the budget boosts India's long-term energy transition and reinforces its commitment to a greener future

While FM Nirmala Sitharaman's budget is tailored to drive consumption, propel long-term growth, and reinforce India's commitment to a greener world, proposals to power India's journey towards sustainability and net zero through various energy sector reforms, policies, and incentives stand out as they provide for a transformative shift in India's energy landscape. India's demand for power will continue to increase.

The country has set an ambitious target of achieving net zero by 2070, a tall order. The power sector accounts for nearly one-third of India's total greenhouse gas emissions. While a country like India can't eliminate its reliance on coal-fired power with one stroke, transformative reforms in the power sector couldn't and must not wait.

The path to carbon neutrality has to be paved with renewables. The Budget has provided the much-needed push to nuclear energy with the target of achieving 100 GW capacity by 2047 as part of India's long-term energy



transition strategy and achieving long-term economic and environmental goals.

The government wants to position nuclear energy as a significant pillar of the energy mix. This aligns with India's broader objectives of a Viksit Bharat that will be less reliant on fossil fuels. The proposal to launch a Nuclear Energy Mission will promote domestic capabilities, private sector participation, and enhanced deployment of advanced nuclear technologies such as small modular reactors.

With an outlay of Rs 20,000 crore for promoting research and development of SMRs, the government targets developing at least five indigenously designed and operational SMRs by 2033. The government will also bring in necessary amendments to the

Atomic Energy Act and Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act to facilitate the Mission and encourage private sector participation in nuclear power projects. This is a great initiative! The Budget proposal to incentivise electricity reforms and augmentation of inter-state transmission capacity by states will advance power distribution companies' financial health and capacity. Upon meeting the reforms initiated under the revamped distribution system scheme, states can borrow an additional 0.5 per cent of their gross domestic product over and above what they get under the FRBM Act.

This will significantly improve the efficiency of the power sector. These reform measures are part of the government's plans to support clean technology. The government also intends to promote clean tech manufacturing to improve domestic value addition and build a local ecosystem for solar cells, electrolyzers, wind turbines, high-voltage transmission equipment, and grid-scale batteries, among other technologies. The Budget marks a transformative step for India's renew-

able energy sector. The government's commitment to the 'Make in India' initiative and the new clean tech manufacturing policy will augment the development of solar PV cells, batteries, and other sustainable technologies locally in India.

These moves will contribute to the nation's clean energy journey while fostering sustainable economic growth. The full BCD exemption of the scrap of lithium-ion batteries, Lead, Zinc, and 12 more critical minerals will help boost battery manufacturing in India and promote more jobs for our youth. By reducing the BCD on solar panels by half to 20 per cent, the FM has provided animal spirits to the wind energy sector, which would further reduce the price of the panels and reduce India's imports by facilitating domestic production.

The increased allocation for solar power to promote rooftop solar projects is positive for solar module manufacturers and will boost RE capacity. (The writer is Director, Shirdi Sai Electricals Ltd; views are personal)



N VAMSI REDDY

able energy sector. The government's commitment to the 'Make in India' initiative and the new clean tech manufacturing policy will augment the development of solar PV cells, batteries, and other sustainable technologies locally in India.

These moves will contribute to the nation's clean energy journey while fostering sustainable economic growth. The full BCD exemption of the scrap of lithium-ion batteries, Lead, Zinc, and 12 more critical minerals will help boost battery manufacturing in India and promote more jobs for our youth.

By reducing the BCD on solar panels by half to 20 per cent, the FM has provided animal spirits to the wind energy sector, which would further reduce the price of the panels and reduce India's imports by facilitating domestic production.

The increased allocation for solar power to promote rooftop solar projects is positive for solar module manufacturers and will boost RE capacity. (The writer is Director, Shirdi Sai Electricals Ltd; views are personal)

A perilous challenge for India's soft diplomacy

The fate of Nimisha Priya, accused of murder in Yemen, hangs in balance. Her case tests India's diplomatic resolve to protect its citizens abroad



SANTHOSH MATHEW

In the volatile heart of Yemen's capital, Sanaa, an Indian national, Nimisha Priya, faces dire circumstances, accused of killing a Yemeni citizen. The charges are serious, but the true gravity of the situation lies in the potential consequences. Nimisha's case is not just about the allegation; it is a call for India to step forward decisively to protect one of its own. The environment in Houthi-controlled Sanaa is precarious, with little hope of a fair trial or a peaceful resolution. This situation, which has escalated into an international diplomatic challenge, demands India's immediate intervention. Yemen has been mired in conflict for years, with the Houthi rebels now in control of the capital. With power dynamics in constant flux and the justice system fractured, foreign nationals, especially from countries like India, are particularly vulnerable.

It is feared that Nimisha Priya, if left without diplomatic intervention, could face the harshest of outcomes, including arbitrary punishment or worse, in an environment where blood money—a custom rooted in Yemeni culture—may become a mode of resolution. This practice, deeply embedded in parts of the country, contradicts the ideals of modern justice and the humanitarian values upheld by India.

The Indian government has already taken significant steps to address the crisis. India's diplomatic response to this case has been commendable, with swift actions to ensure that the matter does not escalate further. Notably, Iran's Foreign Minister, Abbas Araghchi, raised the issue with the Houthi envoy, showing a growing recognition of the case's importance on the regional diplomatic stage. This cooperation reflects the urgency of India's intervention and highlights the potential for multilateral diplomacy to resolve the issue without resorting to traditional tribal customs like blood money.

More crucially, Nimisha Priya's situation places her life at risk due to the volatile political and security environment. The Houthi-controlled justice system may not provide the due process or fairness one would expect in a modern, civilized society. Foreign nationals are often treated with disdain, and Nimisha could fall victim to a miscarriage of justice. To prevent this, India must

leverage all diplomatic channels, including informal backdoor negotiations and Track Two diplomacy, which have proven effective in navigating complex international conflicts. India has a long history of maintaining close ties with the Middle East, and it is through these alliances that India can garner support for its position. Countries like Iran, which shares strong historical ties with India, have shown willingness to mediate in this case, as evidenced by Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi's intervention.

Track Two diplomacy is a critical tool in this regard. Informal dialogue through trusted intermediaries can often achieve results when official channels are bogged down by bureaucracy and political sensitivities. India's ability to operate through both formal and informal diplomatic avenues offers it a unique advantage in resolving this crisis and ensuring that Nimisha receives a fair and just resolution. The Indian government's actions to address this case are a testament to its commitment to protecting its citizens abroad. This case also highlights the

importance of India's soft power diplomacy. Indian nurses, who play a vital role in providing healthcare across the Middle East, are viewed not only as healthcare providers but also as cultural ambassadors of India. The protection of Nimisha Priya, a nurse working abroad, is thus more than just a personal concern. It reflects India's broader commitment to safeguarding its citizens and maintaining their trust in the government's ability to protect them. The Indian government's proactive measures, including diplomatic outreach and coordination with international partners, underscore the country's growing stature as a global player. As India's diplomatic outreach continues to develop, the importance of soft power—exemplified by its citizens abroad—becomes increasingly evident. Nimisha's case is not merely an isolated incident; it represents an opportunity for India to assert its influence and diplomatic capability on the global stage. The government's efforts to safeguard Nimisha Priya should be lauded.



leverage all diplomatic channels, including informal backdoor negotiations and Track Two diplomacy, which have proven effective in navigating complex international conflicts. India has a long history of maintaining close ties with the Middle East, and it is through these alliances that India can garner support for its position. Countries like Iran, which shares strong historical ties with India, have shown willingness to mediate in this case, as evidenced by Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi's intervention.

Track Two diplomacy is a critical tool in this regard. Informal dialogue through trusted intermediaries can often achieve results when official channels are bogged down by bureaucracy and political sensitivities. India's ability to operate through both formal and informal diplomatic avenues offers it a unique advantage in resolving this crisis and ensuring that Nimisha receives a fair and just resolution. The Indian government's actions to address this case are a testament to its commitment to protecting its citizens abroad. This case also highlights the

importance of India's soft power diplomacy. Indian nurses, who play a vital role in providing healthcare across the Middle East, are viewed not only as healthcare providers but also as cultural ambassadors of India. The protection of Nimisha Priya, a nurse working abroad, is thus more than just a personal concern. It reflects India's broader commitment to safeguarding its citizens and maintaining their trust in the government's ability to protect them. The Indian government's proactive measures, including diplomatic outreach and coordination with international partners, underscore the country's growing stature as a global player. As India's diplomatic outreach continues to develop, the importance of soft power—exemplified by its citizens abroad—becomes increasingly evident. Nimisha's case is not merely an isolated incident; it represents an opportunity for India to assert its influence and diplomatic capability on the global stage. The government's efforts to safeguard Nimisha Priya should be lauded.

By engaging with regional powers, leveraging backchannel diplomacy, and ensuring that international standards of justice are upheld, India demonstrates its growing leadership in global affairs. Through such strategic actions, India can also affirm its position as a nation that champions human rights and justice for all its citizens, regardless of where they are in the world. In conclusion, Nimisha Priya's situation presents a serious challenge, but it is also an opportunity for India to reaffirm its values and demonstrate its diplomatic maturity.

By taking swift and comprehensive action, India will not only save her life but also reinforce its reputation as a responsible global leader, protecting its citizens and upholding the ideals of peace, justice, and human dignity. India must continue to press forward, ensuring that Nimisha Priya's case is resolved with the fairness and respect she deserves, signalling a victory for Indian diplomacy on the world stage. (The writer is an associate professor; views are personal)

By engaging with regional powers, leveraging backchannel diplomacy, and ensuring that international standards of justice are upheld, India demonstrates its growing leadership in global affairs. Through such strategic actions, India can also affirm its position as a nation that champions human rights and justice for all its citizens, regardless of where they are in the world. In conclusion, Nimisha Priya's situation presents a serious challenge, but it is also an opportunity for India to reaffirm its values and demonstrate its diplomatic maturity.

By taking swift and comprehensive action, India will not only save her life but also reinforce its reputation as a responsible global leader, protecting its citizens and upholding the ideals of peace, justice, and human dignity. India must continue to press forward, ensuring that Nimisha Priya's case is resolved with the fairness and respect she deserves, signalling a victory for Indian diplomacy on the world stage. (The writer is an associate professor; views are personal)

(The writer is an associate professor; views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

SINS CANNOT BE WASHED

Madam — The article, 'Faith's double edged...' (February 20) presents valid points worth pondering over by one and all. Irrespective of the positive effects any religious faith is able to emit the rulers have, since centuries, found the best use of faiths to sentimentally tame the people to cover up their mistakes and misdeeds. Plunging the people in superstition continues to be a strategic ammunition in the hands of the rulers. Every rational argument and scientific inventions had to meet with a rigress and many a times fatal reaction from the rulers. Religious faith is an innate affair and the rulers should have no role to influence or denounce it. The rational behind the belief that a simple dip redeems all the accumulated sins in an instant is a matter to be pondered over. The same religion says no one can escape from paying for sins. It is also said that even death cannot redeem one of sins, and the sinner takes birth again to pay them off. The practice of committing sins and wiping them off with a holy dip promotes sinners to feel at ease or prevents them from committing sins.

The quest continues. It is strange indeed that a party questions the scheme of government funding pilgrimage by believers of a faith on one hand and spends thousands of crores to promote holy dip on the other. The simple visible fact is that for rulers it is a tool to tame the people and also to reap a good harvest of income. Our constitution is very clear with its secular character and directs the state to promote scientific temper. It is time the secular character of the ruling dispensation is analysed to set it on the right track. People resting their belief is not an issue, but the government using it or misusing it is definitely an issue. The course needs to be set on the right path before it takes ugly turns.

A G Rajmohan | Anantapur

SC CRITICISES OFFENSIVE SPEECH

Madam — Recently, the Supreme Court took a firm stand on the controversial statements made by YouTuber Ranveer Allahabadi, making it clear that "freedom

Protest over Nepalese student suicide



Nepalese student Prakriti Lamsal's death by suicide at Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology in Bhubaneswar is tragic and a wake-up call for the central government. KIIT seemingly disregarded Prakriti's complaints of harassment against an Indian student. Later, without investigation, it labelled her suicide a result of heartbreak. When hun-

dreds of other Nepalese students protested, they were bundled out to Cuttack railway station and told to stay away. In one viral video, two KIIT staff are reportedly heard shouting at them that the institute's expenditure on tuition and board exceeds Nepal's budget. Such arrogance! By this logic, Indians in the US should shop at Walmart with a sense of gratitude because the retail giant's revenue exceeds the central government's budget. Many had scoffed when a global survey claimed India was among the most racist countries. Our record on people from our own Northeast isn't great either. Surveys showed how they were stigmatised as 'Chinese' during the pandemic. India wants 500,000 foreign students a year by 2047 but is stuck at the 50,000 mark. Accepting what's wrong might be a good place to start.

R K Jain | Barwani

REKHA GUPTA BECOMES DELHI CM

Madam — Rekha Gupta officially took charge as Delhi's Chief Minister in a grand oath-taking ceremony at Ramlila Maidan, symbolising the BJP's political comeback after 27 years. The event saw the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Home Minister Amit Shah, and other prominent dignitaries. A seasoned political figure with a strong grassroots background, Gupta-formerly a student leader and three-time councillor-reaffirmed her dedication to tackling Delhi's pressing challenges, including curbing pollution, upgrading infrastructure, and improving public amenities. The BJP's sweeping victory, securing 48 out of 70 seats, reflects a decisive shift in voter sentiment. As the fourth woman to hold this office in Delhi, Gupta's leadership is expected to bring strategic governance reforms, with a sharp focus on environmental sustainability and administrative efficiency.

Neha Tomar | Ujjain

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



FIRST COLUMN

OVERCOMING GRIEF

A fragile mind, burdened by irrational fears and unresolved emotions, struggles to find clarity



RAVI VALLURI

Bill Maher writes, "Suicide is man's way of telling God: you can't fire me, I quit." But do brave men commit suicide? Fear, anxiety, emotional upheavals, unpleasant feelings, panic attacks and phobias are all symptomatic of a fragile and delicate mind. It is an expression of an unpleasant emotion caused by the threat of danger or pain.

A fragmented mind is invariably a victim of irrational fear. Such an individual is unable to distinguish between what is logical and what is not. People suffer from extreme or irrational fear or aversion. This is nothing but what is called phobia (the Greek word for fear). A contributor to the magnification of fear is our pent-up emotions. These emotions are not based on a rational or scientific thinking pattern. We end up reacting violently or irrationally rather than responding in a coherent and clear-sighted manner. Humans should be prudent to ponder that if left untreated this situation can become mourning regalia. A person can suffer from psychosomatic illnesses, loss of appetite, self-deprecatory behaviour or even schizophrenia. This has a multiplier effect in the form of morbid thoughts, persecution complexes and even hallucinations. An element of fear is perhaps required, because then we can patrol our fences. However, this needs to be distinguished from false bravado. Such an attitude will only be tantamount to mere filibustering or posturing. The brain is an organ and the mind is our intellect. The power of the mind needs to be magnified and enhanced to conquer fear. The mind is a movie theatre where the soap opera



of our life is enacted. We play, rewind and rerun an enormous number of movies. These are based on our idiosyncrasies and quality of thoughts. Thoughts are impacted by the kind of food we partake in (Tamasik, Rajasik, Sattvik), the company we keep and the amount of rest we take. The quality (guna) of food has a bearing on our disposition and approach to life. Tamasik food makes us sluggish, Rajasik food makes us feverish or anxious in disposition and Sattvik food makes us feel calm.

The first two lead us to fearful situations. If we are closeted to individuals who have a negative thought process, we imbibe such attributes and evince such a behavioural pattern. "Man is known by the company he keeps" is a very old adage and so is "man is born free but always is in chains". Suppose we have inspirational friends and achievers in our orbit, we will tread such a path. It is cardinal to have adequate physical and mental rest. If we are rested, then we are at peace and do not complain or quibble. Then we are physically and mentally alert and high-yielding. In our minds, we need to keep space to just dump the garbage that disappears into the recycle bin, never to appear again.

We need to pursue passions, hobbies, indulge in sports, participate in extracurricular activities, avoid negative company, take up initiatives, practice meditation, keep the mind occupied, footslog on the treadmill, go for long walks, go for treks, and read autobiographies of entrepreneurs and achievers. Others adopt the spiritual path by practising pranayama, learning yoga, undertaking the Art of Living course or observing the breath through the Vipassana technique.

These holistic techniques metamorphose the mind to be in the present moment and overcome fear. To conquer fear, we need to log out of our comfort zone so that the virus of fear does not enter our operating system. And if nothing works out, one should surrender to the Divine and feel grateful.

(The writer is the CEO of Chhattisgarh East Railway Ltd. and Chhattisgarh East West Railway Ltd. He is a faculty of the Art of Living; views are personal)

A year of cinematic innovation, AI controversies and global synergy



CHAITANYA K PRASAD

The global film festival circuit in 2025 is set to redefine storytelling, balancing tradition with cutting-edge innovation

Every year, the international film festival circuit brings forth a renewed sense of energy, enthusiasm, innovation and cinematic craftsmanship to audiences across the globe. Each festival curates a unique paradigm shift in content, programming, outreach and presentation, making every year distinct yet interconnected through the shared language of cinema.

The year 2025 is no exception. With the Berlinale 2025 already setting the tone, the world is getting a glimpse into the new formats, styles, and narratives that will dominate global screens this year. The Berlinale 2025 has kicked off the festival season, giving cinephiles a head start in understanding the emerging trends in storytelling. This year, the jury is presided over by acclaimed American filmmaker Todd Haynes, known for his originality, thematic focus, and innovative cinematic techniques that have spanned four decades.

The jury comprises a diverse matrix of global filmmakers, costume designers, film critics, and actors, ensuring that a wide spectrum of perspectives will shape the awards decisions. The challenge for the Berlinale jury, like many others in 2025, is whether to adhere to traditional cinematic standards or to adapt to new advancements, particularly the growing influence of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in filmmaking.

As storytelling tools evolve, the jury must decide how to balance imagination, tradition, and technological innovation while maintaining the core of cinematic expression. The Cannes Film Festival 2025, scheduled from May 13 to May 25, 2025, promises a blend of legacy and forward-thinking innovation. French actor Juliette Binoche has been named the President of the Jury, a role she describes with both humility and nostalgia. In her acceptance, Binoche said, "In 1985, I walked up the steps for the first time with the enthusiasm and uncertainty of a young actress."

I never imagined that, 40 years later, I would return as the President of the Jury," Binoche holds the rare distinction of winning the Best Actress Award at Cannes in 2010, Venice in 1994, and Berlin in 1995, along with a BAFTA and an Oscar, which she shared with Julianne Moore. Cannes 2025 is expected to continue its tradition of blending mainstream and experimental films, with AI-driven narratives anticipated to make a significant impact. The 82nd Venice International Film Festival, set to run from August 27 to September 6, 2025, will feature a dedicated section on the restoration of cinematic classics.

This addition acknowledges the importance of preserving the past while exploring the future of cinema. Venice remains a unique experience where audiences do not merely watch films but immerse themselves in living art and culture against the backdrop of one of the world's most extraordinary cities. As with Berlinale and Cannes, the Venice jury will face the challenge of evaluating films that push traditional boundaries. Will they reward those that adhere to classic storytelling structures, or will films leveraging AI tools for scriptwriting, editing, and visual effects find greater recognition?

The challenge will be to balance the classical, contemporary and tech-driven



THE INTERPLAY BETWEEN HUMAN CREATIVITY AND TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCEMENT IS BECOMING A CRITICAL ASPECT OF JURY DELIBERATIONS, PUSHING THE BOUNDARIES OF WHAT DEFINES AUTHENTIC STORYTELLING

tools of storytelling on the celluloid screen. AI's increasing role in filmmaking has sparked a debate across festival juries. Should AI-generated content be evaluated on par with traditionally crafted films? Festivals in 2025 are contemplating introducing new categories to accommodate AI-assisted storytelling.

The interplay between human creativity and technological advancement is becoming a critical aspect of jury deliberations, pushing the boundaries of what defines authentic storytelling. India is set to initiate a new platform within the global cinematic landscape with the inaugural edition of the World Audio Visual & Entertainment Summit (WAVES) scheduled to be held in Mumbai from May 1 to 5, 2025. WAVES 2025 aims to bring together the global media and entertainment (M&E) industry with global talent, fostering collaborations, business opportunities, and cross-cultural dialogue. It is an initiative of the Government to highlight and present India as a juggernaut of creative excellence, encourage co-productions, and promote film tourism and management holistically.

This summit is expected to catalyse growth by attracting international investments, sharing global best practices, and enabling policy discussions.

The four-day event curated along the four broad pillars of Broadcasting and Entertainment, AVGC-XR, Digital Media and Films is expected to create an unprecedented buzz and collaborative partnership amongst key stakeholders leading to a much-

needed global media dialogue, involving key stakeholders from B2B, B2C and B2G verticals. WAVES 2025 also aims to encourage the sharing of ideas and resources, positioning India as an attractive destination for media investments, partnerships, and collaborations and establishing India as a global content hub. Beyond the celebration of cinema, international film festivals have increasingly become instruments of soft power diplomacy.

These festivals act as avenues for cross-cultural dialogue, collaborations, and international partnerships. For countries like India, participating in such festivals goes beyond screenings and accolades; it is about leveraging the medium of cinema to strengthen diplomatic ties and cultural exchange. The insights gained from WAVES 2025 will be crucial for the 56th International Film Festival of India (IFFI) later in the year. IFFI must focus on curating an international jury that mirrors the diversity seen in Berlinale and Venice.

The festival can also benefit from introducing categories that acknowledge AI-generated content, thus staying in step with global trends. Moreover, IFFI 2025 has the potential to strengthen India's position as a hub for filming destinations, partnerships and collaboration. By promoting India's e-visa facility for filmmakers and highlighting scenic and culturally rich locations across the country, the festival can attract global filmmakers and producers.

The festival's role in soft power diplomacy can be further ampli-

fied by organising networking sessions with international delegates and facilitating collaborations that go beyond cinema into the realms of cultural exchange and education.

In the current scenario where geostrategic communication is critical, soft power diplomacy through film festivals will play a critical role in integrating cinema, people and excellence. The film festival circuit in 2025 is not merely about showcasing films; it is about witnessing a transformation in storytelling techniques, jury deliberations, and international collaborations.

The challenge for juries this year lies in balancing tradition with innovation, human creativity with technological advancements, and local narratives with global perspectives.

For India, 2025 stands as a pivotal year to strengthen its cinematic presence globally. WAVES 2025 and IFFI 2025 together offer an opportunity to not only showcase India's prowess in storytelling, weaving it with contemporary styles, but also to position the country as a forward-thinking, globally connected cinema powerhouse.

As the year unfolds, the world will watch closely to see how these festivals respond to the evolving dynamics of cinema, ensuring that the magic of storytelling continues to resonate across borders and generations alike. 2025 will surely be a game-changer for cinephiles and creative geniuses.

(The writer is former additional DG, DFF and Festival Director, IFFI; Inputs by Zoya Ahmad and Vaishnavi Srinivasan. Views are personal)

Beyond academics: How study abroad shapes personal growth and leadership skills

In an increasingly interconnected world, the decision to study abroad is no longer just about acquiring a degree. It is a transformative journey, one that shapes individuals

Studying abroad allows students to see the world through a different lens. By engaging with global issues firsthand, be it climate change, social justice, or economic policies, they gain a deeper understanding of how interconnected and interdependent our world truly is. This global perspective is invaluable in shaping informed leaders. It instils a sense of responsibility and encourages students to think beyond their immediate surroundings.

Leaders who understand global challenges and can approach them with a holistic mindset are better equipped to create meaningful change.

unique opportunities to build a global network of peers, professors, and professionals. These connections often serve as invaluable resources, providing insights, guidance, and opportunities long after graduation. Collaborating with people from different parts of the world teaches students how to harness diverse strengths and ideas to achieve common goals. They become adept at creating inclusive environments where everyone feels valued—a critical skill for leaders in today's multicultural workplaces.

Growth in Emotional Intelligence

Living away from home in an unfamiliar setting often stirs a range of emotions. These emotional highs and lows contribute significantly to the



DALJEET SANDHU

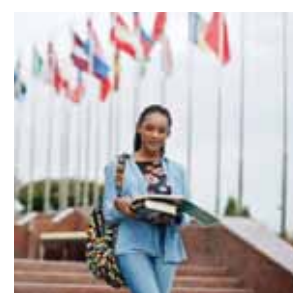
development of emotional intelligence. Students learn to manage their emotions, empathise with others, and build meaningful relationships despite cultural differences. Emotional intelligence, often considered more critical than IQ in leadership roles, is cultivated naturally during the study-abroad experience. Moreover, going through relationships in a

foreign setting teaches students how to build trust and rapport, even in challenging circumstances.

Communication and Interpersonal Skills

Effective communication is a cornerstone of leadership, and studying abroad is an excellent training ground for this skill.

Navigating a foreign environment requires students to communicate with clarity and intent, often across language barriers. They become adept at listening, interpreting non-verbal cues, and tailoring their messages to suit diverse audiences. Furthermore, participating in group projects, extracurricular activities, or even casual social interactions with peers from different cultural



contexts enhances interpersonal skills. Students learn to collaborate, resolve conflicts, and inspire those around them, qualities that define great leaders.

Building Resilience and Independence

Moving to a new country requires immense courage. From finding accommodation to dealing with administrative paperwork, students often have to manage tasks

that they may have never encountered before. The absence of a familiar support system forces them to rely on their abilities, building resilience and self-reliance. Moreover, students gain confidence as they navigate and overcome these hurdles. This newfound sense of independence not only shapes their identity but also prepares them for leadership roles where decisiveness and self-assurance are paramount.

Embracing Cultural Diversity

One of the most profound aspects of studying abroad is exposure to cultural diversity. Students find themselves immersed in a society that often operates on different values, customs, and traditions than their own. This

immersion fosters adaptability and open-mindedness, as they learn to respect and appreciate perspectives vastly different from their own. Engaging with peers from diverse backgrounds teaches valuable lessons in empathy and cross-cultural communication.

Whether it's understanding the nuances of a local festival, navigating a new language, or simply sharing a meal with someone from another culture, these experiences challenge preconceived notions and build cultural intelligence. In short, studying abroad is much more than an academic pursuit; it is a journey of self-discovery and transformation.

By embracing cultural diversity, building resilience, and

developing critical leadership skills, students emerge as well-rounded individuals ready to tackle the challenges of a globalised world. The lessons learned during this time extend far beyond the classroom.

They shape character, nurture empathy, and inspire vision—qualities that define true leaders. For those who take the plunge, studying abroad is not just an investment in their education but also a stepping stone toward becoming agents of change in an ever-evolving world. For students who choose to study abroad, the richness comes not just in knowledge but in the experiences that mould them into future leaders.

(The writer is CEO of Daltin AI Portal; views are personal)

SC stays Lokpal order on complaints against HC judges

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday stayed the Lokpal order on entertaining complaints against sitting high court judges saying it was "something very, very disturbing" and concerned the independence of the judiciary. A bench of Justices BR Gavai, Surya Kant and Abhay S Oka issued notice and sought responses from the Centre, the Lokpal registrar and the person who filed complaints against a sitting High Court judge. "Issue notice to the Union of India, Registrar, Lokpal of India and the complainant, returnable on March 18 at 10.30 am," the bench said. Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Centre, said a High Court judge would never fall within the ambit of the Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013. Dealing with Lokpal's order on

two specific complaints against the sitting High Court judge, the bench, issued an injunction from disclosing the name of the judge and directed him to keep the complaint confidential. The top court was dealing with a suo motu case initiated after the Lokpal passed the order on January 27. The bench directed the registrar concerned to mark the identity of the complainant and serve notice upon him at his residence through the registrar (judicial) of the High Court. "In the meantime there shall be stay of the order dated January 27, 2025 passed by the Lokpal of India..." it added. The top court went on to hold, "We injunct the complainant from disclosing the name of the judge against whom he has filed the complaint. The complainant is further directed to keep the complaint strictly confidential."



File photo

When the bench assembled, Justice Gavai told Mehta, "We propose to issue notice to the Union of India." Senior advocate Kapil Sibal, who also appeared in the matter, offered to assist the bench in dealing with the matter. "Something very very disturbing," said Justice Gavai. It is fraught with danger, Sibal said and sought a stay on the

Lokpal's order. "I think a law should be laid down," he added. The bench noted that Sibal and senior advocate BH Marlapalle had "graciously offered" to assist the court, as the matter was of "great significance" and concerned the independence of the judiciary. "Once the finding that the Lokpal has a jurisdiction stands stayed, I think they are aware what are the ramifi-

cations of this order. If they don't understand this, then we are here," said Justice Gavai. The bench has asked for the written submission to be filed in the meantime. The Lokpal passed the order on two complaints filed against a sitting additional judge of the High Court. The complaints allege that he influenced an additional district judge in the state and a judge of the same High Court slated to deal with a suit filed against the complainant by a private company to favour the firm. The private company, it was alleged, was earlier a client of the high court judge in question while he was practising as an advocate at the Bar. In its order, the Lokpal directed the complaints and relevant materials received in its registry in two matters be forwarded to the office of the CJI for his kind consideration. "Awaiting the guidance of the Chief Justice of

India, consideration of these complaints, for the time being, is deferred until four weeks from today, keeping in mind the statutory time frame to dispose of the complaint in terms of Section 20 (4) of the Act of 2013," said the Lokpal bench headed by Justice AM Khanwilkar on January 27. The Lokpal added, "We make it amply clear that by this order we have decided a singular issue finally — as to whether the judges of the high court established by an Act of Parliament come within the ambit of Section 14 of the Act of 2013, in the affirmative. No more and no less. In that, we have not looked into or examined the merits of the allegations at all." The order noted it would be "too naive" to argue that a High Court judge would not come within the ambit of expression "any person" in clause (f) of section 14 (1) of the 2013 Act.

Kirti Azad writes to Agriculture Minister over fertiliser shortage

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

Trinamool Congress MP Kirti Azad has written to Union Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, stating that reports from several states are indicating towards a shortfall in supply of fertilisers, and drew his attention to a written reply in the Lok Sabha in December last year that denied any shortage. In a letter dated February 11, Azad quoted a written reply given in the Lok Sabha by Chemical and Fertilizer Minister JP Nadda regarding the shortage of Di-Ammonium Phosphate (DAP) fertiliser during the ongoing Rabi season 2024-25. The ministry in its reply, claimed that against a pro-rata requirement of 35.52 LMT from October 1, 2024, to December 3, 2024, a total of 38.27 LMT of DAP had been made available across states, with a closing stock of 9.05 LMT as of December 3. "This response is not only evasive but also factually misleading. Reports from multiple states, including West Bengal, clearly indicate that there was a severe shortfall in the supply of fertilisers, directly contradicting the Ministry's assertion of adequate availability," Azad said. He said the Chief Secretary of West Bengal, in an official communication dated October 29, 2024, explicitly stated that despite repeated requests and approved allocations, the state received only 57,510 MT of DAP, which he said is less than one-third of its sanctioned requirement for the Rabi season. "This is an alarming gap that has severely impacted farmers at a crucial juncture in the agricultural cycle. Moreover, while the Ministry insists that sufficient stocks were available, ground reports reveal a grim reality. Farmers in various



File photo

regions struggled to procure fertilisers at critical sowing times, with many forced to stand in long queues or pay exorbitant prices in the black market," he said. He added that even more concerning is the ministry's selective silence on the inadequate supply of other fertilisers. He said in November 2024, West Bengal requested 2 lakh MT of NPK (nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium), but received only 1.16 lakh MT — a mere 58 per cent of what it demanded. "This is despite the fact that West Bengal produces over 20 lakh MT of chemical fertilizers annually. If a fertilizer-producing state itself faces such dire shortages, one can only imagine the plight of farmers in states that rely entirely on external supplies," he said. He urged the agriculture minister to take action in this regard. "Given the gravity of the situation, I urge the Ministry to take immediate corrective measures. This includes ensuring adequate and timely supplies of fertilisers, addressing logistical bottlenecks, and most importantly, acknowledging the existing shortfalls rather than evading responsibility," Azad said. "Any further delay will not only hurt farmers but also jeopardise the overall food security of the nation," he added.

Delhi High Court refuses to quash 2016 FIR against Maliwal

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court has refused to quash an FIR against AAP MP Swati Maliwal for allegedly disclosing the identity of a 14-year-old rape victim who succumbed to injuries. Justice Neena Bansal Krishna said Maliwal's claim that she was protected from prosecution as her actions were in good faith would have to be proved at an appropriate stage and there was no ground for closing the proceedings in the present plea. Delhi Police registered the FIR against Maliwal in 2016 when she was the chairperson of Delhi Commission for Women, and said there was a blatant violation of provisions of Juvenile Justice Act, which protect the identity of a minor victim of sexual offence. "Prima facie, offence under Section 74 read with Section 86 of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 is clearly disclosed. Insofar as the petitioner's claim that she has protection under Section 100 of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 for her actions done in good faith is concerned, it is her defence which is required to be proved in accordance with law at the appropriate stage," the court said on February 13. The judge added, "Therefore, there is no ground for quashing of the FIR and the proceedings..." Maliwal sought a court-monitored probe in the matter, saying despite the minor's death, the police did not invoke the murder charge in the FIR. The court said the prayer was infructuous as a chargesheet was filed in the two cases in relation to the incident and the cases were pending trial. It is now for the trial court to consider them and no fruitful purpose would be served by referring further investigation to an SIT, the court said.

Plans to enhance facilities for pilgrims at Ram temple

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
AYODHYA

The Ram temple trust in Ayodhya is working on plans to improve facilities to cater to the ever-increasing number of devotees visiting the shrine, officials said on Thursday. Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust secretary Champat Rai said that a serious discussion about enhancing facilities for pilgrims was held during a construction committee meeting. Rai also said that the temple will soon be illuminated with vibrant multi-coloured lights at night. A detailed discussion on this project also took place during the meeting. Considering the rising number of devotees and the large crowds expected during the upcoming Ram Navami festival, there was a serious discussion about expanding facilities, he said.



File photo

The need for micro-management in areas such as providing drinking water and shade during the summer were discussed in the meeting, Rai said. He said that currently, four to five lakh devotees visit the temple daily. "As a result, the Lord Ram has to remain awake for 18 hours as the temple opens open for longer durations," he said, adding that a decision regarding the enhancement of facilities will be made soon.

Delhi court convicts ex-MLA Kishore Samrite

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

Delhi court has convicted former Madhya Pradesh MLA Kishore Samrite for threatening to blow up Parliament in September 2022 if his demands were not met. Special judge Vishal Goghe, however, acquitted him of charges for possession of explosives and endangering life or causing injury through it. The court said upon examination of the substance found in a parcel he reportedly sent to the office of the Secretary General of the Rajya Sabha turned out to be "harmless in terms of their capability to cause an explosion". "While the articles of charge under Section 5(a) of Explosive Substances Act (endangering life through explosive substance), and Section 9B(1)(b) of Explosives Act (manufacturing, importing or exporting any explosive), remained not proved, it is nevertheless established that the accused



File photo

sent a letter with the threat to blow up the Parliament of India if his demands were not met," the court's February 18 verdict said. The court convicted him under Section 506 Part II (threat to kill or grievously hurt) of IPC which attracts a maximum punishment of seven years. The judge would hear arguments on the quantum of punishment on February 27. Samrite, a former MLA from Lanji in Madhya

Pradesh's Balaghat district, threatened to blow up Parliament and sent a letter of threat, containing certain demands, and a suspicious substance to the Rajya Sabha official on September 16, 2022. The judge said the articles sent to by Samrite contained a letter, a suspicious substance aside from a copy of the Constitution and the Indian flag. "The letter was explicit in expressing the intention to blow up the Parliament, using dynamite, on a specific date and time, ie, 11 o'clock on September 30, 2022 if the demands expressed in the letter by the accused were not met," the judge observed. Kishore Samrite was earlier with Samajwadi Party and filed complaint against Rahul Gandhi accusing him of rape and abducting of a woman from Amethi in 2008. But later in Supreme Court, he changed the stand and said he just signed in the complaint on the instructions of his party bosses.

ED attaches assets of pharma firm for 'illegal' export of drugs to Pak

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate on Thursday said it has attached assets worth a few crores of a Telangana-based pharmaceutical company under the anti-money laundering law on charges of illegally exporting over 18,000 kg of pharma drugs to Pakistan. A provisional order under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) was issued on Wednesday against the company Lucent Drugs Pvt Ltd Based in the Sangareddy district of the state. The attached assets include land, building and factory premises of the company and these are valued at Rs 5.67 crore, the federal probe agency said in a statement. The company or its directors could not be contacted immediately for their response to the ED action.

The money laundering case stems from a complaint filed by the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) against the company for "contravention" of psychotropic substances regulation laws, illegal export of Tramadol drug and forgery of documents relating to various export authorisations, the ED said. Tramadol is a synthetic opioid-like drug used as a painkiller. However, global anti-narcotics agencies have found that its shipments originating from India and other countries were being illegally diverted for use by ISIS terrorists operating in Syria and other locations apart from other terror groups like the Boko Haram of Nigeria. It was declared a "psychotropic substance" by India in 2018 and its sale in the country is regulated and monitored by the NCB. The ED said Lucent Drugs Pvt. Ltd. Has been in the business of manufacturing and export-

ing Tramadol to its overseas clients, including those based in Pakistan. It claimed that an investigation found that the company initially got a no-objection certificate (NOC) from the Central Bureau of Narcotics (CBN) to export Tramadol to Pakistan but later this authorisation was revoked. However, the promoters and directors of Lucent Drugs Pvt. Ltd. "illegally" re-exported 13,800 kg of Tramadol valued at Rs 4.12 crore to Pakistan through Denmark-based company CHR Olesen Pharmaceuticals and a second consignment of 5,000 kgs of Tramadol valued at Rs 1.33 crore through a Malaysia-based firm SM Biomed, the ED said. The company received export funds or proceeds of crime of Rs 5.46 crore in its bank accounts as a result of these "illegal" exports of Tramadol to Pakistan, it added.

Modi government putting India's national security at risk: Kharge

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Thursday criticised the Modi government over reports that China was settling 90 new villages along the Arunachal Pradesh border and accused it of putting India's national security, territorial integrity and sovereignty at risk. In a social media post, Kharge alleged that the priorities of the government headed by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi were "PR stunts" and "false advertisements" and "not national security". "Narendra Modi ji, you are adopting the policy of giving a 'red salute' to China instead of showing 'red eyes'. India's national security, territorial sovereignty and integrity are

paramount, the Modi government is putting it at risk," he said in his post in Hindi. Our allegation is made with great responsibility and is based on facts. China has started settling 90 new villages on the Arunachal border. Earlier, China had settled 628 such villages on our border, according to newspapers. "The Modi government promotes the 'Vibrant Villages Programme' on the border a lot; you have exaggerated it in Parliament. But the truth is that 90% of the funds of the 'Vibrant Villages Programme' have not been spent in the last two years. This scheme was launched in February 2023 and out of the Rs 4,800 crore allocated fund, only Rs 509 crore has been spent," he said. The Congress chief said in Himachal Pradesh, where 75



File photo

villages need to be improved, the Modi government at the Centre has given almost no funds for it. Kharge claimed that in December 2024, China announced plans to build the 'world's largest dam' on the Brahmaputra River, which could prove disastrous for our national security, environment and the north-eastern states. The Brahmaputra River, he

said, accounts for 30 per cent of India's freshwater resources, making its flow vital to India. The Congress president said according to a reply by the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) in the Rajya Sabha in 2022, your government said that "in March 2021, China adopted its 14th Five-Year Plan, which mentions plans for hydropower projects in the lower reaches of the Brahmaputra River". "This means that the Modi government was aware of this matter since 2021, but still, your government remained absolutely silent. It is clear Modiji, your Government's priority is PR stunts and false advertisements for itself, not the national security of India," Kharge said citing news reports of China building 90 new villages along the border in Arunachal Pradesh.

Bangladesh border force chief seeks to downplay attacks on minorities

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

Chief of Bangladesh's border guarding force on Thursday here sought to downplay the attacks on minorities in his country that took place after the fall of the Sheikh Hasina government, saying such reports were "exaggerated". Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) director general (DG) Major General Mohammad Ashrafuzzaman Siddiqui also said "many new issues" under the common heads were discussed during his high-level talks with an Indian delegation headed by BSF DG Daljit Singh Chawdhary here. The BSF chief, however, said the agenda points "more or less were the same with few changes here and there" as the Indo-Bangla border was a very "dynamic and active" border. This was the first high-level meeting of the two forces after the regime change in Bangladesh in August last year. Siddiqui, while speaking to reporters during a joint press conference with Chawdhary, asserted that authorities of his country took steps for the protection of the minorities as he



Border Guard Bangladesh director general Major General Mohammad Ashrafuzzaman Siddiqui with BSF DG Daljit Singh Chawdhary at the conference. Pioneer photo

gave example of his force "personally" extending security cover to Durga Puja pandals within eight km of their jurisdiction along the international border. The BGB DG also said they raised "objections" and "flagged here a number of cases" during the bi-annual DG-level talks with regard to the fencing being done by India along the International Border and has requested for a "joint inspection" before the work is done. "The attacks on minorities in the recent past, I would say, that this is an exaggeration and to be honest such attacks on minorities per se did not happen." He played down these

instances saying the "overall the law and order situation was not against the minorities, it was, may be, some bit of political problem but definitely that was not on the minorities." A recent report of the UN Human Rights Office had said "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" following the fall of the Hasina government last year. 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 Union home ministry, soon after the regime change in Bangladesh, had constituted a committee under the ADG BSF (eastern command) to "ensure safety of Indian citizens and people belonging to minority communities in Bangladesh." The BSF DG said the Indian side "urged" BGB during the meeting to ensure that the border remains absolutely secure and no infiltration happens on the border so that such incidents of Bangladeshis criminals attacking BSF personnel and local Indians do not happen. "The point on attacks on BSF and civilians by Bangladeshis miscreants was taken up...The government of India follows a non-lethal strategy (using non-lethal weapons first at the border)...At times taking advantage of night cover and breaching the fence some miscreants try to enter our territory and try to overwhelm or overpower the BSF personnel," Chawdhary said. On the issues related to fencing discussed during the three-

day talks that concluded on Thursday at the BSF headquarters, the BGB DG said they have "highlighted the number of potential cases" where the construction of development works close to the IB were being done and this was the "most focussed" agenda during the latest talks. He said 150 yards on either side of the zero line is considered a "no man's land" and both sides are not allowed to construct any permanent structure or any structure that has "defence potential", without the consent of the other party. "The communication gap occurs when the fencing is required within the 150 yards...Beyond 150 yards we don't mind at all how long, how heavy or how high the fence is made," Siddiqui said. Both he and the BSF DG said that they "hope to resolve these issues in the future" with the BGB DG saying a joint inspection will be carried out in such areas. Asked about the instances of illegal infiltration from Bangladesh into India, both the chiefs said such instances had actually gone down across the 4,096 km long IB, post August five of last year.

'Enthiran' plagiarism case: ED attaches director's assets over ₹10 Crore

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

Assets worth more than ₹10 crore of the director of 2010 movie 'Enthiran' facing charges of plagiarism and copyright violations have been attached under the anti-money laundering law, the Enforcement Directorate said on Thursday. This is possibly the first attachment of assets in the country under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), on grounds of plagiarism or copyright violation while making a movie, as per officials. A provisional order was issued on February 17 under the PMLA attaching three immovable properties of the director, S Shankar, the ED said in a statement. The total value of these assets is ₹10.11 crore, it said. The money laundering case stems from a complaint filed by Aarur Tamilnadan, author of a story titled 'Jiguba', against Shankar before a court at Egmore in Chennai on May 19, 2011. The complaint alleges that the storyline of the Tamil movie



'Enthiran' (Robot), directed by Shankar, was copied from 'Jiguba' thereby rendering Shankar liable for violations under the Copyright Act, 1957 and some sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), the ED said. 'Enthiran' was released in 2010 and featured Rajinikanth and Aishwarya Rai as the main lead. It grossed ₹290 crore worldwide, making it an all-time blockbuster at the time, the ED said. The federal probe agency said its investigation found that Shankar received a "substantial" remuneration of ₹11.5 crore for his "multi-faceted" contributions to 'Enthiran', including story development, screenplay, dialogues, and direction.

Further, an independent report by the Film and Television Institute of India (FTII) identified "striking" similarities between the story 'Jiguba' and the movie 'Enthiran'. This report, which examined narrative structure, character development, and thematic elements, lends significant support to the plagiarism allegations against Shankar, the agency said. "Based on the substantial evidence and records in hand, it has been determined that S Shankar has violated Section 63 of the Copyright Act, 1957; a violation now classified as a scheduled offence under the PMLA," the ED said.

Five high court judges challenge recent transfers in Pakistan's Supreme Court

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD
The controversy over the appointment of judges in the Islamabad High Court deepened on Thursday after five judges of the court challenged the recent transfers in Pakistan's Supreme Court.

Justice Dogar as acting Chief Justice of IHC, stating that he had only served two weeks in the high court before assuming administrative control. It also calls for Justices Khalid Soomro and Muhammad Asif to be barred from judicial work. The challenge comes following last week's appointment of Dogar as acting chief justice of the IHC, a move that sparked reservations among some judges over seniority. It is alleged that the authorities transferred three

judges, including justices Dogar, Soomro and Asif from Lahore, Sindh and Balochistan high courts, respectively, to the IHC to stop the appointment of any of the five judges as the chief justice. The legal fraternity and opposition Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf had opposed the move, with the PTI alleging that the transfers aimed to influence the cases of Imran Khan and his wife Bushra Bibi.

Justice Dogar as acting Chief Justice of IHC, stating that he had only served two weeks in the high court before assuming administrative control. It also calls for Justices Khalid Soomro and Muhammad Asif to be barred from judicial work. The challenge comes following last week's appointment of Dogar as acting chief justice of the IHC, a move that sparked reservations among some judges over seniority. It is alleged that the authorities transferred three

China begins repatriation of over 1,000 online scam workers rescued from Myanmar

PTI ■ BANGKOK
An airlift carrying more than 1,000 Chinese nationals had worked at online scam centres in eastern Myanmar began Thursday, after the rescued workers were taken across the border to Thailand and put on chartered flights to China. Thailand, China and Myanmar have coordinated efforts over the past month to shut down the scam centres that bilked victims around the world out of billions of dollars through false romantic ploys, bogus investment

repatriate the Chinese nationals, accompanied by police. Because of the large number of Chinese — the projected number so far is 1,041 — Thailand is allowing Beijing to handle most of their processing and investigations on their return to China. Thai officials told reporters on Thursday the rescued workers were being taken in batches of 50 across a bridge from Myanmar's Myawaddy to Thailand's Mae Sot, where they were processed — including with biometric scans — and sent on by bus to Mae Sot's airport.

There they boarded China Southern Airlines planes, and about 200 Chinese citizens "suspected of involvement in fraud" were flown to an airport in the city of Nanjing, China's official Xinhua news agency said. Thai authorities are overseeing the evacuation and processing of scam centre workers from other nations. Last week, some 260 people from 20 nations, including many from Africa, crossed from Myanmar into Thailand after they were reportedly rescued from scam centres.

Dogar made headlines when he was transferred to the IHC from the Lahore High Court (LHC). The move drew the ire of judges, lawyers and opposition parties as he was 13th on the seniority list of the judges but rose to the second position in IHC. He rose to the top and was appointed as acting chief justice after the elevation of his predecessor, Aamer Farooq, to the Supreme Court. His transfer to IHC and subsequent elevation was contested by five judges, including justices Mohsin Akhtar Kayani, Babar Sattar, Tariq Mehmood Jahangiri, Saman Rafat Imtiaz, and Sardar Ejaz Ishaq Khan, who claimed that they were senior to him and his appointment as chief justice was a violation of rules.

They filed a 49-page constitutional petition under Article 184(3) through senior lawyers Munir A. Malik and Barrister Salahuddin, arguing that the recent transfer of judges violated relevant rules. The petition contends that judicial transfers cannot be made without public interest

PUBLIC NOTICE
I, Geeta Bhargava W/o Late Vijay Bhargava R/o 43/401, Heritage City, Near M.G. Road Metro Station, Phase-II, Gurgaon, Haryana, 1. & my Late Husband Vijay Bhargava are Joint Owners Of Above Mentioned Property Bearing No. 43/401. My Husband Expired On 27.03.2024. After the death of my Husband Vijay Bhargava Left The Following Surviving Members in the my family. 1. Geeta Bhargava-74 Years-Wife, 2. Arty Bhargava-49 Years-Daughter, 3. Gauri Malhotra-48 Years-Daughter, 4. Ratra Hassan-45 Years-Daughter, None Other than Mentioned Above is the Survival member in family.

PUBLIC NOTICE
We, Vishal Chadha S/o Sh. Satpal Chadha & Varun Chadha S/o Sh. Vishal Chadha both partners of M/s Chadha Construction Co. wish to inform that we have taken Sh. Satpal Chadha S/o Late Sh. Devi Dayal Chadha as outgoing partner in the firm w.e.f 01-04-2025. We continuing partners are doing so voluntarily out of our free will. If anyone has any objection then please contact us at M/s Chadha Construction Co., D117 Mansarovar Garden, New Delhi-110015.

PUBLIC NOTICE
My client Sanjeev Kumar Sharma S/o Late S. T.C. Sharma R/o A-9/2A, Gali Chetram, Mayapuri, Delhi-110053, has debarred his son Sushant Sharma and his wife Aakanksha Tyagi both R/o above address, from all his movable and immovable property and severed all his relations from them due to their disobedience and undesirable activities. My client shall not be liable for any of their acts/misdeeds and transactions, if anybody deals with them, shall do so on his own risk. Avadhesh K. Tiwari Advocate Ch.No. D-624, Karkardooma Courts, Shahdara, Delhi-32

कार्यालय नगर पालिक निगम, (यांत्रिक विभाग) भोपाल
निविदा आमंत्रण सूचना
क्रमांक.192/यां.वि./2025 भोपाल, दिनांक 19.02.2025
निम्न कार्य हेतु म.प्र. लोक निर्माण विभाग में पंजीकृत टेकदारों से ऑनलाईन निविदा आमंत्रित की जाती है। विस्तृत विवरण Website <https://www.mptenders.gov.in> पर है।

क्रमांक	निविदा क्रमांक	कार्य का संक्षिप्त विवरण	अनुमानित लागत (रु. में)	निविदा क्रय करने का अंतिम	
				दिनांक	समय
1	2024_UAD_376913_2	CONST. OF RETAINING WALL, PARKING SPACE, AND SHADE NEAR SANKHEDI SHAMSHAN GHAT, W-83, Z-18 SECOND CALL	1,80,05,844/-	06-MAR-2025	05:30 PM

नोट:- संशोधन वेबसाइट पर ही देखे जा सकेंगे समाचार पत्रों में प्रकाशित नहीं होंगे।
कार्यालय नगरी (सिविल) नगर निगम भोपाल
नि.क्र. 1345/024/2025

PUBLIC NOTICE
(In case there is no will)
1. Flat/ Apartment No.CM633A, The Camellias, DLF Golf Links, Gurugram, Haryana, along with car parking Nos.633A-PB1-1, 633A-PB1-2, 633A-PB1-3, 633A-PB1-4 AND 633A-PB1-5, which has been Jointly allotted in the name of Late Shri Rajiv Krishan Luthra and Mrs Gayatri Luthra, W/o Late Shri Rajiv Krishan Luthra, R/o 3/15 Shanti Niketan, New Delhi 110021. By this notice we hereby inform that Shri Rajiv Krishan Luthra was expired on 10th May 2023.
2. Plot / House No. B-9/22 Qutab Enclave Complex Village, Chakkarpur, DLF City, Phase 1, Gurgaon, registered in the name of Late Shri RAJIV KRISHAN LUTHRA S/o Late Shri Anirudh Krishan Luthra, R/o 3/15 Shanti Niketan, New Delhi 110021, who expired on 10th May 2023.
3. Flat / Apartment at DLF Ridgewood Estate, Phase IV, DLF City, Gurgaon (earlier DLF Qutab Enclave Complex), which was registered in the name of Luthra & Luthra Law Offices, Proprietor- Shri Rajiv Krishan Luthra, S/o Late Shri Anirudh Krishan Luthra, R/o 3/15 Shanti Niketan, New Delhi 110021, who expired on 10th May 2023.
Accordingly, the name of Mrs Gayatri Luthra, Ms. Saneia Krishan Luthra and Ms. Arshia Krishan Luthra (Legal heirs of Late Shri Rajiv Krishan Luthra) are being noted in DLF Ltd./ Municipal record at Gurgaon in respect of the captioned Plot/House/Flat/ Apartment/ Property. If anybody has any objection to this, he or she may approach the DLF Ltd./ Municipal corporation office at Gurugram / undersigned within 21 days of publication of this notice.
Luthra and Luthra Law Offices India
1st & 9th Floor Ashoka Estate
24 Barakhamba Road
New Delhi - 110001
ksharma@luthra.com / msundaram@luthra.com

THE KANGRA CO-OPERATIVE BANK LTD.
C-29, Community Centre, Pankha Road, Janak Puri, New Delhi-110058
Phone: 011-2611942, 2501943, 2561144
E-mail: legal@kangrabank.com Website: www.kangrabank.com

APPENDIX IV
(See rule 6(1))
POSSESSION NOTICE
(For immovable property)

Whereas, The undersigned being the Authorised Officer of "The Kangra Co-operative Bank Ltd.", Head office at C-29, Community Centre, Pankha Road, Janak Puri, New Delhi - 110058, having its registered office at 1916, Chuna Mandi, Pahar Ganj, New Delhi-110005, under The Securitisation and Reconstruction of the Financial Assets & Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002, (54 of 2002) and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13(12) read with rule [3] of The Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002, the Bank had issued a demand notice on dated 24-09-2024, calling upon the Borrower & Mortgagor Sh. Navtar Singh Chouhan S/o.Lt. Yashpal Singh, R/o. H.No. G-3, Gali No.18, Near Yamuna Biodiversity Park, Jagatpur Extn., North Delhi-110084 also at Sh. Navtar Singh Chouhan S/o. Lt. Yashpal Singh, 5-38, Second Floor, Vardhaman Central Mall, Single Unit Local Shopping Centre, Nehru Vihar, Delhi-110054, and Sh. Navtar Singh Chouhan S/o.Lt. Yashpal Singh, C/O. M/s. Atom Power Quality Pvt.Ltd., 6th Floor, Tower-B, Plot No.8, Sector-127, Noida-201301, Uttar Pradesh, to repay the amount mentioned in the notice being Rs. 7,08,647/- (Rupees Seven Lakhs Eight Thousand Six Hundred & Forty Seven Only), together with further interest, penal interest and other charges as applicable to this Loan account from time to time, from the date of the notice till the date of payment, with in 60 days from the date of receipt of the notice.

The above mentioned Borrower & mortgagors having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the above named borrower, mortgagor and the public in general that the Bank has taken Symbolic Possession of the property described here in below in exercise of powers conferred under sub-section (4) of section 13 of The Securitisation and Reconstruction of the Financial Assets & Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002, read with rule [8] of The Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002, on this 15th day of February 2025.

The borrower & Mortgagors: In particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the mortgaged property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of "The Kangra Co-operative Bank Ltd.", for an amount of Rs.7,08,647/- together with further interest, penal interest and other charges as applicable to this Loan account from time to time, from the date of notice till the date of realization together with all the costs incurred by the Bank in realizing the said amount.

The borrower & Mortgagor attention is also being invited towards provisions of Sub-Section (8) of Section 13 of The Securitisation and Reconstruction of the Financial Assets & Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002, in respect of time available, to redeem the below mentioned mortgaged property/Secured Asset.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPERTY

The property under consideration is All that part and parcel of the COMMERCIAL PROPERTY i.e. SPACE BEARING NO. 5-38, (SECOND FLOOR) HAVING SUPPER AREA MEASURING 235 SQ. FT. APPROX. COVERED AREA 140 SQ. FT.) IN MULTI-STORY COMMERCIAL BUILDING CALLED VARDHAMAN CENTRAL MALL, SITUATED AT PLOT NO. SINGLE UNIT LOCAL SHOPPING CENTRE, NEHRU VIHAR, DELHI-110054, Falling Under the Registration of Sub-Registrar-I, Delhi/New Delhi.

(HARISH SHARMA)
AUTHORISED OFFICER
THE KANGRA CO-OPERATIVE BANK LTD.
HEAD OFFICE AT: C-29, COMMUNITY CENTRE, PANKHA ROAD, JANAKPURI, NEW DELHI-58.
Phone No.0113566419, 9810487543.

DELHI.
DATED : 15-02-2025

Save Financial Services Pvt Ltd
Corporate and Registered Office :- Unit No. 782, 7th Floor, Vegas Mall, Plot No. 6, Sector 14, Dwarka, New Delhi 110075

NOTICE UNDER SECTION 13(2) OF THE SECURITIZATION AND RECONSTRUCTION OF FINANCIAL ASSETS AND ENFORCEMENT OF SECURITY INTEREST ACT, 2002.

The undersigned being the Authorised Officer of Save Financial Services Pvt Ltd. (Formerly known as Karmyogee Finance India Pvt. Ltd.) having Corporate and Registered Office :- Unit No. 782, 7th Floor, Vegas Mall, Plot No. 6, Sector 14, Dwarka, New Delhi 110075, (hereinafter referred to as "SAVE"), and is engaged in the business of providing financial assistance to meet the needs of over millions of its customers all over India, hereby issues to you the following notice :-

Sr. No.	Name of Borrower/s & LAN	Date of NPA	Date of Demand notice / Amount	Total O/s Amount (Rs.) Future Interest Applicable
1	LOANAGR0000346 / 30.06.2019, 1. M/S SHUNDIRI TRANSPORTERS, 2. SAHUN DDIN S/O ALI MOHD, 3. RUKSANA W/O-SAHUN DIN	31.07.2021	11-Feb-2025 / Rs. 9,50,000/-	Rs. 20,03,613.87/- as on 29.01.2025

Mortgage Properties: ALL THAT PART AND PIECE OF PROPERTY BEARING KHATA NO. 103/117 KILA NO. 17(8-D) TEHSIL SOHNA, GURGAON, DISTRICT GURGAON, STATE HARYANA, PIN CODE-122002. BOUNDED AS UNDER:- EAST: ROAD 11 FT., WEST: PROPERTY OF MR. HAMID, NORTH: OTHER PROPERTY, SOUTH: ROAD 16 FT.

Further with reasons, we believe that you are evading the service of demand notice, hence this publication of demand notice. You are hereby called upon to pay Save Financial Services Pvt. Ltd. with in a period of 60 days of date of publication of this demand notice the aforesaid amount along with further interest, cost, incidental expenses, charges etc., failing which Save Financial Services Pvt. Ltd. will take necessary action under all or any of the provision of Sec. 13(4) of the said Act against all or any one or more of the secured assets including taking possession of this secured assets of the borrower/s. Further you are prohibited U/S 13(13) of the said Act from transferring either by way of sale/lease or in any other way the aforesaid secured assets. Please note that no further demand notice will be issued.
Date - 21.02.2025. PTD - HARYANA
Authorized officer, Save Financial Services Pvt. Ltd.

THE PIONEER CLASSIFIEDS

CHANGE OF NAME
I, Abhishek Kumar S/o Sanjay Kumar R/o H.No.-12, Gali No-7E, Om Tvs Showroom Molarband Extn, Badarpur, New Delhi-110044 declare that my name has been written in my birth certificate as Abhishek instead of Abhishek Kumar. My correct name is Abhishek Kumar.
PD(1546)C

I, Krishan Bahadur Thapa S/o No.13773063X Nk Govind Bahadur Thapa, R/o-Mahendra Nagar, W.No. 13, Nautanwa, Dist- Maharajganj, U.P.- 273164, have changed my name from Krishan Bahadur Thapa to Kireshn Bahadur Thapa, vide affidavit dated 20/02/2025 before Notary Public Delhi.
PD(1553)C

I, Sarita Barthwal W/o Ashish Barthwal R/o House No.-138, Old Gupta Colony, Vijay Nagar, Delhi-110009 have changed my name to POOJA BARTHVAL for all future Purposes.
PD(1547)A

I, Mina Kaur D/o IC-159814M Lt Col Late Madan Mohan Singh Kang, R/o-40, Shamsher Nagar (Defence Colony), BRS Nagar, Ludhiana, Punjab- 141012, have changed my name from Mina Kaur to Meena Kang, vide affidavit dated 20/02/2025 before Notary Public Delhi.
PD(1554)C

I, Umashankar Sachan Father of No.15422601L Hav Vikas Kumar, R/o- H.No. 199, VPO- Sajeti, Dist- Kanpur (Nagar), U.P.- 208001, have changed my name from Umashankar Sachan to Umashankar, vide affidavit dated 20/02/2025 before Notary Public Delhi.
PD(1549)C

I, Laxmi Ben, W/o- No.4288257N Sep Rathava Nandubhai Varsanbhai, R/o-Vill- Ratanpur, PO- Kapurai, Dist & Teh- Vadodara, Gujarat-390004, have changed my name from Laxmi Ben to Rathava Laxmiben Nandubhai, vide affidavit dated 20/02/2025 before Notary Public Delhi.
PD(1555)C

I, Vinod W/o Surendra Singh, R/o-Vill- Bar Ki Dhani, Teh- Udaipur Wati, Dist- Jhunjhunpur, Rajasthan-333022, have changed my name from Vinod to Vinod Kumari, vide affidavit dated 20/02/2025 before Notary Public Delhi.
PD(1550)C

I, Jyoti Kanwar W/o- No.13700594M DFR Rakesh Singh, R/o- E-3/65, Chanakya Place Part-1, Janakpuri C-1, D.K Mohan Garden, Delhi-110059, have changed my name from Jyoti Kanwar to Jyoti, vide affidavit dated 20/02/2025 before Notary Public Delhi.
PD(1556)C

I, Rajkumari Mother of No.15422601L Hav Vikas Kumar, R/o- H.No. 199, VPO- Sajeti, Dist- Kanpur (Nagar), U.P.- 208001, have changed my name from Rajkumari to Usha, vide affidavit dated 20/02/2025 before Notary Public Delhi.
PD(1551)C

I, Aparna Manoj, W/o JC-772120F Sub Manoj N, R/o-Nandanam, Mezhatthur (PO), Thrithala (VILL), Pattambi (TEH), Palakkad (DIST), Kerala-679534, have changed my name from Aparna Manoj to Aparna MS, vide affidavit dated 20/02/2025 before Notary Public Delhi.
PD(1557)C

I, Bikramjit Singh Brar S/o IC-159814M Lt Col Late Jagdish Singh, R/o- 36, Shamsher Nagar (Defence Colony), BRS Nagar, Ludhiana, Punjab- 141012, have changed my name from Bikramjit Singh Brar to Vikramjit Singh Brar, vide affidavit dated 20/02/2025 before Notary Public Delhi.
PD(1552)C

I, Anish Srivastava S/o Mahendra Prasad R/o A-04, Upper Ground Floor, Khanpur, Krishna Park, Devli, South Delhi-110080, have changed my name to Anish Kumar for all future purposes.
PD(1560)A

NATIONAL CONSUMER DISPUTES REDRESSAL COMMISSION
GOVT. OF INDIA (Constituted Under the Consumer Protection Act, 1986)
UPHARWA NAVY BHAWAN, 4th FLOOR, GPO COMPLEX, INA, NEW DELHI-110 023
Telephone No. 24680735, 24680756
E-Mail: fa.nredre@gmail.com

First Appeal No. 99/2023 WITH IA/15306/2023, IA/15307/2023 (Against the order dated 13 Jul 2021 in Complaint Number 340/2016 of the State Commission Delhi)

ASHOK KUMAR GOEL ...Petitioner/Appellant
Versus
M/S SKM REFCOM PVT LTD
...Opposite Party/Respondent(s)

To
1. Mr. SUMEET KUMAR MALHOTRA, (Director) Address- A-1706, Greenfield Colony, Faridabad, Haryana-121001

WHEREAS in the First Appeal No. 99/2023 filed against the order Date 13/07/2021 in Consumer Complaint No. 340/2016 arising out of the Order of the State Commission, Delhi you have been arrayed as Respondent.

AND WHEREAS hearing notice sent to Respondent-1 by registered post has been received back with postal remark "Address Left"

NOW THEREFORE, TAKE NOTICE through this publication to appear before this Hon'ble Commission in person or through your Counsel/ Authorized Representative on 17.03.2025 failing which the appeal will be disposed of on merits in your absence.
Dated this New Delhi the 31st January, 2025.
ASSISTANT REGISTRAR

PUBLIC NOTICE
We, do hereby informed to all general public and also to all competent authorities/govt. agencies that our client namely Sh. DEBA PRASHAD SAHOO son of LATE sh. BATA KRISHNA SAHOO Resident of PLOT NO.299, SECOND FLOOR, FRONT, INDRAPRASTHA COLONY, SECTOR-30-33, FARIDABAD, HARYANA-121003 who has having ownership right over the SELF ACQUIRED property bearing no. PLOT NO.299, SECOND FLOOR, FRONT, INDRAPRASTHA COLONY, SECTOR-30-33, FARIDABAD, HARYANA-121003. Our aforementioned client represents that the PLOT NO.299, SECOND FLOOR, FRONT, INDRAPRASTHA COLONY, SECTOR-30-33, FARIDABAD, HARYANA-121003 was purchased in the month of Dec. 2002 (03.12.2002) by his earning and loan from ICICI BANK for livelihood. That our aforementioned client also represents that on 20th September 2021 he executed a transfer deed of 50% of the said property in favour of his wife Smt. Navita Sahoo in love and affection, whereas on the very next day her attitude was surprisingly changed and her property greed was also exposed. That our aforementioned client also represents that he has also informed orally at home to his wife regarding withdrawing the aforementioned transfer deed dated 20.09.2021 due to aforesaid property greed. That our client also represented that all the property chain still in his possession since 03.12.2002 and continuously paying all the liabilities (house tax, electricity bills etc) till today towards the property bearing no. entire PLOT NO.299, SECOND FLOOR, FRONT, INDRAPRASTHA COLONY, SECTOR-30-33, FARIDABAD, HARYANA-121003. That our client also represented that he has made various efforts to cancellation/withdrawing aforesaid transfer deed but his wife did not cooperate and avoiding to visits concern sub-registrar office as per her oral commitments which was given on next day of execution of aforesaid transfer deed dt. 20.09.2021. Now it is hereby informed to all that my client has already withdrawn his consent for transfer of deed in favor of his wife Smt. Navita Sahoo since the date of 21.09.2021 and this information was also communicated to his wife on 20.09.2021 i.e. soon after the execution of transfer deed. It is hereby informed to all that my client has filed a civil suit bearing number CIS No: CS – 2203-2024 dated 01/08/2024 for cancellation of the aforesaid mentioned transfer deed (50% of the flat) at the Hon'ble Court in Faridabad and is at present sub-judice. That our client also represented that as per his well knowledge and information and also the oral commitment/assurance of his wife that she has not created any third-party interest at any point of time during this period. Now it is hereby informed to all including public authorities/concern govt. deptt. that my client has already withdrawn his consent regarding transfer of property dt. 20.09.2021, and if anyone found or raised any claim over the PLOT NO.299, SECOND FLOOR, FRONT, INDRAPRASTHA COLONY, SECTOR-30-33, FARIDABAD, HARYANA-121003 that shall be treated as null and void ab initio and my client also be instituted an appropriate legal action (civil as well as criminal complaints) if any one found in involving directly or indirectly dealing/creating any act(s)/contractual obligation/claims over the part or full PLOT NO.299, SECOND FLOOR, FRONT, INDRAPRASTHA COLONY, SECTOR-30-33, FARIDABAD, HARYANA-121003. This is for your kind information and issued in public interest.
20th February 2025
HARSH K. GAUTAM, Advocate
Managing Partner
For CENTRAL LAW FIRM ®

THE KANGRA CO-OPERATIVE BANK LTD.
C-29, Community Centre, Pankha Road, Janak Puri, New Delhi-110058
Phone: 011-2611942, 2501943, 2561144
E-mail: legal@kangrabank.com Website: www.kangrabank.com

APPENDIX IV
(See rule 6(1))
POSSESSION NOTICE
(For immovable property)

Whereas, The undersigned being the Authorised Officer of "The Kangra Co-operative Bank Ltd.", Head office at C-29, Community Centre, Pankha Road, Janak Puri, New Delhi - 110058, having its registered office at 1916, Chuna Mandi, Pahar Ganj, New Delhi-110005, under The Securitisation and Reconstruction of the Financial Assets & Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002, (54 of 2002) and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13(12) read with rule [3] of The Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002, the Bank had issued a demand notice on dated 24-09-2024, calling upon the Borrower & Mortgagor Sh. Navtar Singh Chouhan S/o.Lt. Yashpal Singh, R/o. H.No. G-3, Gali No.18, Near Yamuna Biodiversity Park, Jagatpur Extn., North Delhi-110084 also at Sh. Navtar Singh Chouhan S/o. Lt. Yashpal Singh, 5-38, Second Floor, Vardhaman Central Mall, Single Unit Local Shopping Centre, Nehru Vihar, Delhi-110054, and Sh. Navtar Singh Chouhan S/o.Lt. Yashpal Singh, C/O. M/s. Atom Power Quality Pvt.Ltd., 6th Floor, Tower-B, Plot No.8, Sector-127, Noida-201301, Uttar Pradesh, to repay the amount mentioned in the notice being Rs. 7,08,647/- (Rupees Seven Lakhs Eight Thousand Six Hundred & Forty Seven Only), together with further interest, penal interest and other charges as applicable to this Loan account from time to time, from the date of the notice till the date of payment, with in 60 days from the date of receipt of the notice.

The above mentioned Borrower & mortgagors having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the above named borrower, mortgagor and the public in general that the Bank has taken Symbolic Possession of the property described here in below in exercise of powers conferred under sub-section (4) of section 13 of The Securitisation and Reconstruction of the Financial Assets & Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002, read with rule [8] of The Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002, on this 15th day of February 2025.

The borrower & Mortgagors: In particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the mortgaged property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of "The Kangra Co-operative Bank Ltd.", for an amount of Rs.7,08,647/- together with further interest, penal interest and other charges as applicable to this Loan account from time to time, from the date of notice till the date of realization together with all the costs incurred by the Bank in realizing the said amount.

The borrower & Mortgagor attention is also being invited towards provisions of Sub-Section (8) of Section 13 of The Securitisation and Reconstruction of the Financial Assets & Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002, in respect of time available, to redeem the below mentioned mortgaged property/Secured Asset.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPERTY

The property under consideration is All that part and parcel of the COMMERCIAL PROPERTY i.e. SPACE BEARING NO. 5-38, (SECOND FLOOR) HAVING SUPPER AREA MEASURING 235 SQ. FT. APPROX. COVERED AREA 140 SQ. FT.) IN MULTI-STORY COMMERCIAL BUILDING CALLED VARDHAMAN CENTRAL MALL, SITUATED AT PLOT NO. SINGLE UNIT LOCAL SHOPPING CENTRE, NEHRU VIHAR, DELHI-110054, Falling Under the Registration of Sub-Registrar-I, Delhi/New Delhi.

(HARISH SHARMA)
AUTHORISED OFFICER
THE KANGRA CO-OPERATIVE BANK LTD.
HEAD OFFICE AT: C-29, COMMUNITY CENTRE, PANKHA ROAD, JANAKPURI, NEW DELHI-58.
Phone No.0113566419, 9810487543.

DELHI.
DATED : 15-02-2025

verka
THE PUNJAB STATE COOPERATIVE MILK PRODUCERS FEDERATION LTD.
SCO 153-155, SECTOR 34-A, CHANDIGARH-160022. EPABX NO. 0172-5041812,66
Notice Inviting a Tender
www.verka.coop

e- Auction is hereby invited for the purchase and supply of following items on NCFDI portal:-

Name of Work/Item	Period/Tentative Qty
Disposal of old Bardana (Jute Bags above 50kg).	Rate contract for three month

For registration:
Contact: +91 9998019608; +91 9978601585
Help Desk: +91-2692-283888
E-Mail: contracts_pack@ncfdimarket.com,
viendler.choudhary@nceml.in, divakar.juneja@nceml.in

NA/12/28205/2023/41854
Dy. General Manager (Purchase)

सर्व हरियाणा ग्रामीण बैंक
सम्प्रोक्त: पंजाब नेशनल बैंक
Head Office, SHGB Bhawan, Plot No. 1, Sector-3, Rohtak-124001 Haryana

PUBLIC NOTICE
KIND ATTENTION SH. SUDHIR KUMAR S/O SH. SUSHIL SHINGH, OFFICE ASSISTANT (I/JS), SARVA HARYANA GRAMIN BANK, HEAD QUARTER AT REGIONAL OFFICE GURUGRAM (R/O A-86, ARJUN PARK, NAJAFGARH, SOUTH WEST DELHI, DELHI-110043). You are hereby informed that a Charge Sheet dated 16.03.2024 was served upon you. Departmental enquiry has been instituted vide order dated 16.09.2024. Enquiry Officer sent enquiry notices vide letter dated 30.10.2024, 14.11.2024, 27.11.2024, 24.12.2024, 16.01.2025 & 23.01.2025 along with the information of next date of scheduled enquiry proceedings. All the correspondences in this matter are being sent to your all addresses as per bank record through registered post/speed post as well as ordinary post. But you neither responded nor participated in the departmental proceedings. Some of the posts were delivered, while others were returned for various reasons. This notice is being published to give you last opportunity to participate in the enquiry scheduled on 04.03.2025 at BO Gurugram Main under Regional Office, Gurugram at 10.00 AM. In case you fail to do so the Bank will proceed ex-parte in the matter.
Sd/-
DISCIPLINARY AUTHORITY CHAIRMAN

verka
THE PUNJAB STATE COOPERATIVE MILK PRODUCERS FEDERATION LTD.
SCO 153-155, SECTOR 34-A, CHANDIGARH-160022. EPABX NO. 0172-5041812,66
Notice Inviting Tender
www.verka.coop

e tenders are hereby invited for the purchase and supply of following items:-

Name of Work/Item	Period/Tentative Qty
For Verka Head Office, Chandigarh	
1. Dry Fruits	Half Yearly/
i. Badam	2275 kg
ii. kaju 4 Pc	4725 kg
iii. Kishmish	950 kg
iv. Pista	950 kg
v. Elaichi	2385 kg
2. Free flow grinded salt	Annual/ 1500 MT
3. 10 kg WMP Tins	Annual/ 65 K
4. Anyil Alcohol Grade 1	Annual/ 4000 Ltr
5. Calcium Carbonate	Annual/ 2100 MT
6. Paneer Bags 200 gm	Annual/ 38 Lac
7. Vitamin AD2 Premix	Annual/ 5 MT
8. Sulphuric Acid	Annual/ 112 MT
9. HDPE Paper Re-inforced Bags	Annual/
i. 39"x 22"	2.20 Lac
ii. 40"x 22"	45 K
iii. 45"x 22"	7 K
iv. 43"x 22"	3.10 Lac
10. IML Container	Annual/
i. 1kg (For Kheer)	4.50 Lac
ii. 5 Ltr (Ghee)	1.30 Lac
iii. 15 Ltr (Ghee)	10 K
iv. 17 Ltr for high fat Dairy	25 K
v. 5 Ltr (Cow Ghee)	20 K
vi. 15 Ltr (Cow Ghee)	5 K
11. Common Salt	Annual/ 700 MT
12. Curd and Kheer Cup	Annual/ 15 Crore
13. Aluminum Lids for Curd & Kheer Cups	Annual/
i. 95 mm	13 Crore
ii. 80 mm	2 Crore
14. Crown Corks	Annual/ 91 Lac
15. Malai Kulfli Pack	Annual/ 15 Lac
16. Parchment Paper	Annual/ 2.5 MT
17. Wooden Spoons for:-	Annual/
i. Kheer	1.01 Crore
ii. Ice Cream	27 Lac
iii. Sticks	1.5 Lac
18. Ice Cream Brick Carton	Annual/ 5 Lac
i. 700 ml	
ii. 1250 ml	
19. Milk Testing Equipment	Annual/
i. Lactometer	25 K
ii. Butyrometer	21 K

NOTE:
1. For complete details regarding above tender (NT), please visit our website i.e.

SEBI considers fast track offers for REITs, InvITs

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
Markets regulator, Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) on Thursday proposed a framework for undertaking fast-track follow-on offers by Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs) and Infrastructure Investment Trusts (InvITs) to make fundraising more efficient. Additionally, the regulator has proposed a lock-in provision of three years for preferential issue of units of REITs and InvITs allotted to sponsors. The SEBI has sought public comments by March 13 on the proposals. In its consultation process, SEBI proposed that 15 per cent of the units allotted to sponsors and sponsor group will be locked-in for a period of three years from the date of trading approval granted for the units. Further, the remaining units allotted to them will be

locked-in for a period of one year from the date of trading approval granted for the units. With regards to follow-on offer, SEBI said that the FPO is one of the mechanisms for raising funds subsequent to issue of units after initial public offer. SEBI proposed that REIT and InvIT making an FPO needs to ensure that they made an application to all stock exchanges on which their units are listed and seek an in-principle approval for listing of their units on such exchanges. They need to choose one of them as the designated stock exchange. The manager and the merchant bankers should be responsible for obtaining in-principle approval and final listing and trading approvals from the stock exchanges. The minimum public unit holding should be at least 25 per cent of the total outstanding units of the REIT on a post issue basis.

"A REIT or InvIT shall not undertake any further issue of units in any manner whether by way of public issue, rights issue, preferential issue, institutional placement or otherwise, except pursuant to a unit based employee benefit scheme (if any) during the period between the date of filing of the draft follow-on offer document/follow-on offer document for follow-on offer and the listing of the units or refund of application money," SEBI proposed. Further, REIT or InvIT should file the draft follow-on offer document, through the merchant banker with the Board, for its observations. The follow-on offer document, after incorporating the observations of SEBI, will be filed with the regulator and recognised stock exchanges. The merchant banker should, along with the filing of the draft follow on offer document, furnish due diligence certificate to SEBI.

Centre extends tenure of CEA V Nageswaran

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
The government on Thursday extended the tenure of Chief Economic Adviser (CEA) V Anantha Nageswaran for two years till March 2027. Appointments Committee of the Cabinet headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi approved the tenure of Nageswaran on contract basis up to March 31, 2027, sources said. Nageswaran assumed charge of the CEA on January 28, 2022 by the government. The office of CEA is responsible for giving advice to the government on various economic policies, and drafting of economic survey that is tabled in Parliament a day ahead of the Union Budget. Nageswaran, an academic and former executive with Credit Suisse Group AG and Julius Baer Group, succeeded K V Subramanian. His extension comes weeks after Economic Survey 2024-

25 projected a growth of 6.3-6.8 per cent for the next financial year amid Asia's third-largest economy showing signs of moderation. As per the government's advance estimates, the economy is expected to grow at 6.4 per cent in the current financial year. Prior to taking over as CEA, Nageswaran worked as an author, teacher and consultant. He has also been a part-time member of the Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister from 2019 to 2021. Besides, he has taught at several business schools and institutes of management in India and Singapore and has published extensively. Nageswaran holds a Post-Graduate Diploma in Management (MBA) degree from the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad. He obtained a doctoral degree in Finance from the University of Massachusetts in 1994 for his work on the empirical behaviour of exchange rates.

Adani touts cash, double-digit EBITDA growth to reassure investors

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
Adani Group on Thursday said it has enough cash to service debt obligations and that its business achieved record pre-tax profits in the 12 months ending December 2024 as it looked to reassure creditors and investors of a robust business profile. Cash balances exceed long-term debt repayments for the next 28 months, while portfolio-level cash balances were at ₹53,024 Crore, the port-to-power conglomerate said in a report for the first nine months of the financial year ending March 2025 released on Thursday. "Sufficient liquidity is maintained across portfolio companies to cover debt servicing requirements for at least the next 12 months," it said. The cash balance as of September 30, 2024, compared with the ₹59,791 Crore balance generated in the full 2023-24 financial year (April 2023 to

March 2024 or FY24 fiscal). Cash balance represents 20.5 per cent of gross debt. "These expanding cash flows have enabled consistent investments while keeping the leverage at an all-time low. As on September 30, 2024, FFO or cash after tax for the trailing 12 months was at ₹58,908 Crore," it said. The group has a strong asset base of ₹5.53 Lakh Crore built over three decades, according to the report. Adani said its gross assets to net debt ratio improved to 2.7 times during the first half of the current fiscal year compared to 2.63 times in the previous year. Gross debt stood at ₹2.58 Lakh Crore, up from ₹2.41 Lakh Crore at the end of FY24. After accounting for cash balance, net debt was ₹2.05 Lakh Crore, up from ₹1.81 Lakh Crore net debt at the end of March 2024. For the 12-month period ending December 2024, EBITDA touched ₹86,789 Crore, marking a 10.1 per cent

year-on-year growth. Adjusted for prior income, the growth stands at 21.3 per cent. In the December quarter alone, EBITDA rose 17.2 per cent to ₹22,823 Crore. According to the report, key to this growth are the emerging businesses under Adani Enterprises (AEL), including solar and wind manufacturing and airports. These businesses, part of AEL's infrastructure division, grew 45 per cent YoY in the December quarter and 33.3 per cent in the trailing 12-month period. Since FY19, the Adani Portfolio has shown strong growth, with EBITDA expanding at a CAGR of 25 per cent, despite challenges such as the Hindenburg report and the ongoing US indictment. Around 85 per cent of the group's profits come from its infrastructure businesses, particularly utilities and transport. The infrastructure sector globally is recognised as the sector that lends a high level of predictability for cashflows.

UP unveils ₹8.08 Lakh Crore budget

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ LUCKNOW
Uttar Pradesh Finance Minister Suresh Kumar Khanna on Thursday presented the state budget for the financial year 2025-26, totaling ₹8,08,736 Crore, with a strong push toward research, technology, and infrastructure development. The budget, which marks a 9.8 per cent increase over the previous year's outlay, allocates significant funds for key sectors, including education, healthcare, and agriculture. Highlighting the government's vision, Khanna emphasized that 22 per cent of the total budget has been earmarked for development projects, 13 per cent for education, 11 per cent for agriculture and allied activities, and six per cent for the health sector. "We have prioritised research, development, and IT to drive economic growth and technological innovation in the state," said Khanna during his budget speech.



Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath with state Finance Minister Suresh Kumar Khanna before the presentation of the state budget 2025-26 in the Assembly, in Lucknow

Welfare measures and economic growth
As part of its commitment to social welfare, the government plans to build new labor hubs at district headquarters, equipped with essential amenities such as canteens, drinking water, and sanitation facilities for construction workers. Aimed at tackling poverty, the 'Zero Poverty Abhiyan'-launched on Gandhi Jayanti in October 2024-continues to be a key initiative. Under this campaign, the government is working to identify the poorest families in each Gram Panchayat and help raise their annual income to at least ₹1.25 Lakh through targeted welfare programs. **Financial stability and economic expansion**
Khanna underlined the state's improving financial health, noting that Uttar Pradesh has been recognised as a "front runner" by NITI Aayog for its progress in healthcare, capital expenditure, and economic development. The state's fiscal deficit remains under control, while efforts to increase development

expenditure and reduce debt have shown positive results. According to a Reserve Bank of India (RBI) report, Uttar Pradesh ranks among the highest states in tax revenue collection, reflecting sound financial management. The state's economy, which faced challenges in 2017, has now doubled, with the Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) projected to reach ₹27.51 Lakh crore for 2024-25. Additionally, per capita income has surged from ₹52,671 in 2016-17 to ₹93,514 in 2023-24. **Healthcare and education enhancements**
The budget includes allocations for the establishment of six new forensic science laboratories in Ayodhya, Basti, Banda, Azamgarh, Mirzapur, and Saharanpur to strengthen crime investigation capabilities. In medical education, the government has earmarked ₹27 Crore for an autonomous medical college in Ballia and ₹25 Crore for a similar institution in Balrampur, aimed at expanding healthcare

services and medical training facilities in the state. For education, the state plans to introduce a new initiative offering free scooters to meritorious female students to promote higher education among women. In addition, investments will be made to enhance Science City, Science Parks, and Planetariums to encourage scientific awareness. **Commitment to growth and development**
Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, speaking after the budget presentation, said, "This budget is a blueprint for Uttar Pradesh's sustainable development. We are focusing on infrastructure, technology, education, and social welfare to ensure inclusive growth and economic progress for all sections of society." With its ambitious plans, the Uttar Pradesh government is positioning the state for accelerated growth, leveraging technology and strategic investments to build a robust and future-ready economy.

Musk's India Tesla factory would be 'very unfair' to US: Trump

PTI ■ WASHINGTON
United States (US) President Donald Trump has said if Elon Musk's Tesla built a factory in India to avoid that country's tariffs, it would be unfair to the US. Trump's comments came amid moves by him to increase tariffs significantly. On February 13, hours before Prime Minister Narendra Modi's bilateral meeting with Trump at the White House, the US President announced reciprocal tariffs. Trump in a recent interview said during their meeting he told Prime Minister Modi that India charges the highest tariffs in the world. Trump said it is "impossible" for Musk to sell a car in India. "Every country in the world takes advantage of us, and they do it with tariffs. It is impossible to sell a car, practically, in, as an example, India," he said. "If he (Musk) built the factory in India, that's okay, but that's unfair to us. It's very unfair," Trump said in the interview. Musk, who heads the Department of Government Efficiency, was also present during the interview. A few days back, electric carmaker Tesla opened recruitment for



President Donald Trump arrives to speak at the Future Investment Initiative summit in Miami Beach

various roles in India, including business operations analyst and customer support specialist. The move is viewed as a sign of the company's entry into the country. As per the job postings on the company's website, the posts are for the 'Mumbai Suburban' area. Trump during the interview

said he discussed the issue of tariffs with Modi. "I told Prime Minister Modi. Here's what you do. We are going to be very fair with you." When asked if the tariffs India charged were 36 per cent. Trump said, "Much much higher." Musk said, "It's 100 per cent on

- auto imports are 100 per cent." "Here's what we're going to do: reciprocal. Whatever you charge, I'm charging," President Trump said. "He (Modi) goes, 'No, no, I don't like that.' 'No, no, whatever you charge, I'm going to charge.' I'm doing that with every country."

Sensex, Nifty fall for third day on selling in blue-chips

PTI ■ MUMBAI
Benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty declined for the third day on Thursday as fresh tariff threats, weak Asian markets and foreign fund outflows hurt investor sentiment. The 30-share BSE Sensex dropped 203.22 points or 0.27 per cent to settle at 75,735.96. During the day, it tanked 476.17 points or 0.62 per cent to 75,463.01. The NSE Nifty dipped 19.75 points or 0.09 per cent to 22,913.15. Selling in frontline stocks HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank, ITC and the Maruti dragged down the key indices. Broader markets, however, bucked the trend with midcap and smallcap indices gaining more than one per cent. From the Sensex pack, HDFC Bank fell the most by

2.35 per cent. Maruti, Tech Mahindra, HCL Tech, ITC, ICICI Bank, Kotak Mahindra Bank and Bajaj Finance were among the major laggards. NTPC, Adani Ports, Mahindra and Mahindra, Tata Steel and IndusInd Bank were among the gainers. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth ₹1,881.30 Crore on Wednesday after a day's breather, according to exchange data. "Domestic equity indices experienced minor losses as rising concerns over potential US tariffs on Indian goods led to capital outflows. Additionally, the proposed trade policy is expected to exert inflationary pressures, with the latest Fed Minutes indicating that an interest rate cut may be delayed," Vinod Nair, Head of

Research, Geojit Financial Services, said. "Benchmark indices closed slightly lower on expiry day after a rangebound and volatile session. The FOMC minutes hinted that the US Federal Reserve might pause rate cuts due to inflation concerns," Satish Chandra Aluri, analyst, Lemonn Markets Desk, said. Among BSE sectoral indices, bankex dropped 0.50 per cent, followed by financial services (0.25 per cent), BSE Focused IT (0.10 per cent) and FMCG (0.04 per cent). Power jumped the most 2.19 per cent, followed by utilities (2.17 per cent), metal (2.02 per cent), services (1.86 per cent), oil and gas (1.66 per cent) and industrials (1.55 per cent). The BSE smallcap gauge jumped 1.32 per cent and midcap index climbed 1.18 per cent.

"Weak Asian market cues kept the mood sluggish with a negative bias through the session in the domestic market as investors continue to trade with caution. FIIs exiting Indian equities in droves over past few months have been making investors jittery, thus leading to risk averseness," Prashanth Tapse, Senior VP (Research), Mehta Equities Ltd, said. Among Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo, Shanghai and Hong Kong settled in the negative territory. European markets were trading mostly higher. US markets ended in positive territory on Wednesday. Global oil benchmark Brent crude went up 0.08 per cent to USD 76.10 a barrel. In the three straight days to Thursday, Sensex dipped 260 points while Nifty skidded 46 points.

Vedanta gets demerger nod

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
Vedanta Limited on Thursday said its shareholders and lenders have approved the splitting of the metals to oil conglomerate into five independent, sector-focused entities. In a stock exchange filing, Vedanta said 99.99 per cent of shareholders who voted for the demerger scheme, supported the move. Parallely, 99.59 per cent of the secured creditors, and 99.95 per cent of unsecured creditors of Vedanta Ltd voted in favour of the demerger. Mining tycoon Anil Agarwal launched the plan to overhaul the business in 2023 after failing to take Vedanta private in 2020. The five entities being created from the split would include Vedanta Ltd, which

would house the company's base metals. According to Vedanta's demerger scheme, every Vedanta shareholder will receive one additional share in each of the four newly demerged companies on the completion of the demerger process. The other companies that will be created out of the demerger are Vedanta Aluminium, one of the world's largest producers of aluminium, Vedanta Oil and Gas, India's largest private-sector crude oil producer, Vedanta Power, one of India's largest generators of power, Vedanta Iron and Steel - a company with a highly scalable ferrous portfolio; and Vedanta Limited - which will include the world's second largest integrated zinc producer and third largest silver producer - in Hindustan Zinc. Vedanta Ltd will also act as an

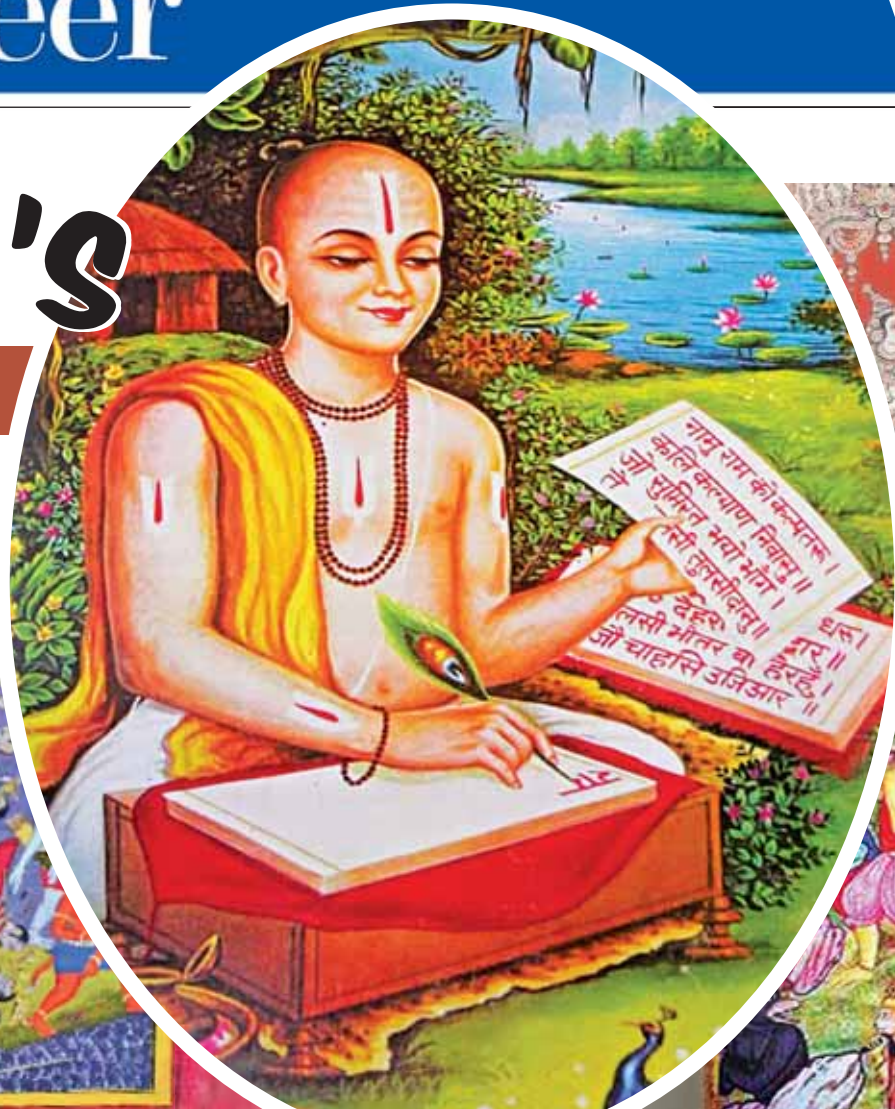
incubator for new businesses, including Vedanta's technology verticals. Of the 391.03 Crore shares of the company, 324.58 Crore or 83 per cent, voted on the demerger scheme. Of these, all but 42,186 shares were polled in favour of the demerger, according to the filing. As per Vedanta's demerger scheme, the demerger will create five independent companies of a global scale focussed on the mining, production or supply of aluminium, iron-ore, copper, oil and gas, and on generation and distribution of power. It will enable greater focus of the Vedanta management on the relevant businesses thereby allowing further streamlining of operations and more efficient usage of assets and leveraging of opportunities.

Boult expands Mustang partnership with new audio lineup

PNS ■ NEW DELHI
Boult audio continues its collaboration with Ford Mustang, introducing a new range of high-performance audio products. This latest launch builds on the success of their previous partnership, reinforcing Boult's position in India's fast-growing smart audio market and its commitment to bringing cutting-edge technology to consumers. Boult's collaboration with Mustang has significantly strengthened its position in the market, driving both brand recognition and business growth. Since the first launch in June 2024, Boult TWS saw a 55 per cent year on year growth, reflecting the strong demand for aspirational, high-performance audio products. Additionally, this partnership has fueled a 10 per cent market share increase in the ₹1500-₹2000 TWS segment, solidifying Boult's leadership in this competitive space. By combining cutting-edge technology with bold design, Boult continues to attract Gen Z and aspirational buyers looking for feature-rich wearables. "India's audio wearables market is expanding rapidly, and demand for aspirational, high-quality TWS products remains strong. Our expanded Mustang partnership strengthens our portfolio. The Mustang Q, Dyno, and Torq mark a milestone in our journey for sustainable growth in India's competitive audio market," said Varun Gupta, Co-Founder and CEO at BOULT.

THE RAMAYANA'S INFLUENCE IN ART & LIFE

A compelling anthology exploring the Ramayana's global influence on art, culture, ethics and spirituality, says SAKSHI PRIYA



Few epics have the same influence as the Ramayana. Its impact stretches far beyond the pages of a single book, reaching into cultures, beliefs and art across centuries and continents. *Ramayana in World Art and Thought - An Anthology of Diverse Perspectives*, edited by Padmashri Shovana Narayan, is a powerful example of the global reach of this ancient epic. This beautifully compiled coffee table book offers a deep dive into the heart of the Ramayana, exploring its impact on art, ethics, spirituality and morality.

With contributions from sixteen distinguished scholars, historians and artists such as Sharon Lowen, Lady Kishwar Desai and Rana Safvi, this anthology sheds light on the wide-ranging influence of the Ramayana and its presence in global thought and art.

The book is the recognition that the Ramayana, a work that has inspired over 300 versions across various cultures, has spread across geographical boundaries. Its stories and characters, from the heroic Rama to the devoted Hanuman, remain as relevant today as they were centuries ago. The book explores these themes, offering fresh perspectives on how the epic has shaped not only the moral and ethical landscapes of various societies but also their artistic and cultural expressions.

One of the most engaging essays in this anthology explores the historical ties between the city of Ayodhya and South Korea, offering a fascinating look at the ancient connections that link different parts of the world through the Ramayana. It's stories like these that highlight how this epic, originally

rooted in Indian tradition, has reached distant corners of the globe. Another compelling piece looks into the Mughal-era depictions of Rama, examining how the warrior prince's persona has been immortalised in art, illustrating his commitment to righteousness and justice.

However, it's not the epic's warriors who capture

attention. The book also highlights the immense strength and devotion embodied by the female characters of the Ramayana. The role of Sita, as a symbol of shakti and resilience, is explored in-depth, adding layers of meaning to her character that are often overlooked in traditional readings. Similarly, the devotion of Hanuman, whose loyalty and service to Rama have inspired countless followers, takes centre stage in several of the essays.

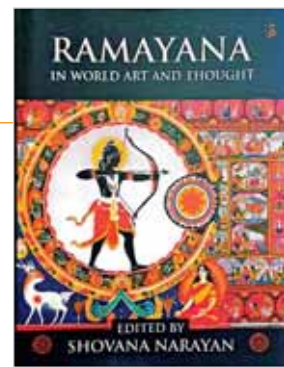
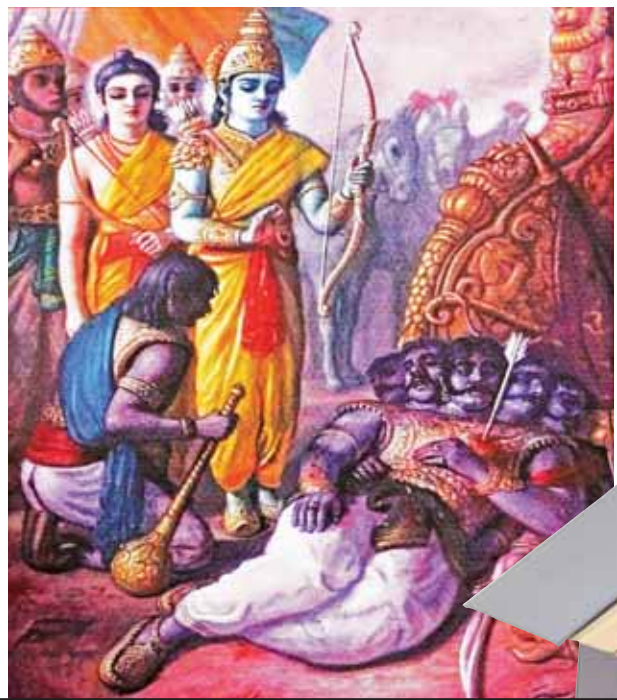
The anthology also examines the Ramayana's ecological landscape, reflecting how the epic portrays the diverse natural environments of ancient Bharatvarsha. This provides a unique perspective on how the Ramayana shapes human behaviour and connects humanity to the land, highlighting the relationship between moral values and the natural world.

In exploring these themes, the anthology highlights the remarkable ways in which the Ramayana has influenced not only Indian culture but also cultures across South and Southeast Asia. The essays trace how this epic was carried by traders, priests and adventurers across the seas, shaping the arts and beliefs of

distant lands. The Ramayana found its way into the hearts of the people of Southeast Asia, where it became deeply embedded in the region's performing arts, architecture and literature.

One of the more poignant contributions in this collection reflects on the changes brought about by the Partition of India and how the Ramayana's geographical ties to regions like Punjab have been lost in the process. Yet, as Lady Kishwar Desai notes, even amidst the upheaval, the ancient connections between the epic and the land continue to survive in local beliefs and archaeological discoveries. Through these insights, the anthology calls for a reevaluation of the spaces where the Ramayana once thrived, especially in regions like Punjab, where the story of Rama and his companions may have once been a living part of everyday life.

Ramayana in World Art and Thought is an insightful exploration of how an ancient text continues to shape the world we live in. It reminds us that the Ramayana is not only part of the past but remains influential today, affecting everything from art and culture to ethics and morality in the modern world. Whether you are a scholar or simply a reader interested in understanding how this epic has influenced global thought, this book will leave you with a deeper appreciation of the Ramayana's lasting legacy.



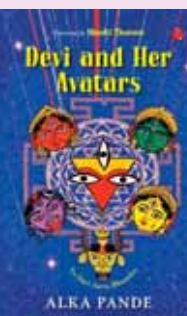
ABOUT THE BOOK

Book: *Ramayana in World Art and Thought*
 Edited by: Shovana Narayan
 Publisher: Shubhi Publisher
 Price: ₹2995/-

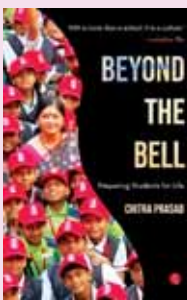
FEB READS



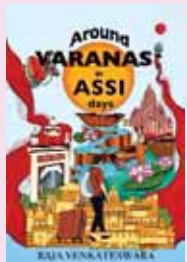
Book: *The Heroes Among Us: 25 Extraordinary Indians*
 Author: Sanjeev Sanyal and Sonia Mehta
 Publisher: Rupa Publication
 Price: ₹395



Book: *Devi and Her Avatars*
 Author: Alka Pande
 Publisher: Rupa Publication
 Price: ₹395



Book: *Beyond the Bell*
 Author: Chitra Prasad
 Publisher: Rupa Publication
 Price: ₹495



Book: *Around Varanasi in Assi Days*
 Author: Raja Venkateswara
 Publisher: Rupa Publication
 Price: ₹395

Plight of 1950s Tamil Nadu Weavers

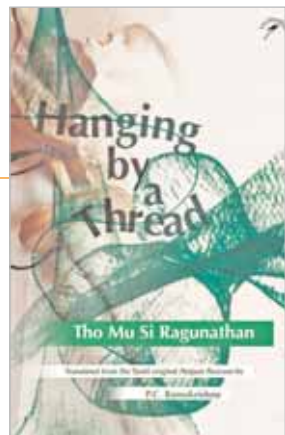
Hanging by a Thread talks about the struggles of weavers caught in the throes of social change, says ABHI SINGHAL



The English adaptation of *Tho Mu Si Ragunathan's* Tamil novel "Panjum Pasiyum," *Hanging by a Thread*, is a realistic account of the hardships that Tamil Nadu's handloom weavers endured in the 1950s. Due to a complicated web of political and economic constraints, this was a particularly difficult moment for these artisans. *Ragunathan's* work stands as a significant document of its time, vividly illustrating the weavers' plight and their resilience in the face of adversity.

The novel meticulously details the numerous obstacles confronting the handloom industry. Weavers faced stiff competition from the burgeoning mill cloth industry, which offered cheaper alternatives. The cost of yarn, a crucial raw material, soared due to the import of expensive American cotton. Simultaneously, a stagnation in exports led to a significant accumulation of unsold handloom stock, further exacerbating the weavers' financial woes. Adding to their burden were unscrupulous merchants who often exploited the vulnerable weavers. The government's apparent apathy towards their plight compounded these difficulties, leaving the weavers feeling abandoned and unheard.

Hanging by a Thread doesn't just focus on the economic hardships; it also takes you into the human cost of these struggles. The story centres on two families: that of *Thathulinga Mudaliar*, a



ABOUT THE BOOK

Book: *Hanging by a Thread*
 Author: Tho Mu Si Ragunathan
 Publisher: Niyogi Books
 Price: ₹650/-



prosperous but exploitative businessman, and *Kailasa Mudaliar*, a weaver deeply in debt to *Thathulinga*. Through the intertwined lives of their children - Sankar, Kamala, and Mani - the novel explores the personal impact of these broader economic forces. The reader witnesses how these challenges affect their relationships, aspirations, and daily lives, adding an emotional dimension to the narrative.

The novel's strength lies in its ability to weave together these personal stories with the larger

socio-political context of the time. It depicts the burgeoning movements of weavers in *Madurai* and *Ambasamudram*, driven to desperation, begin to organise and protest against the government. These protests, born out of necessity, become a powerful expression of their determination to secure their rights and livelihoods. *Ragunathan's* depiction of these collective actions is both moving and inspiring, showcasing the weavers' courage and solidarity.

The translation, "*Hanging by a Thread*," effectively holds the essence of the original Tamil work. The fluid language allows the reader to easily connect with the characters and their experiences. The various threads of the plot, the economic hardships, the human dramas, and the socio-political movements are skillfully interwoven, creating a rich and textured tapestry of life in 1950s Tamil Nadu.

"*Hanging by a Thread*" is an amazing example to the resilience of the human spirit and a reminder of the ongoing struggle for fair treatment and economic justice.

Stories of Fate & Morality

O.P. Arora's *The Other Choice*, is a deeply moving collection of stories exploring life's toughest choices

The Other Choice, is a captivating anthology of short stories that explores significant existential and moral dilemmas encountered by a common individual in modern society. This book, showcases a diverse array of human experiences, covering personal tragedies and extensive philosophical reflections. The anthology explores fundamental concerns of pain, justice, morality and the human condition via evocative writing and thematic depth. The book consists of 14 short tales, each addressing various aspects of human existence. Some narratives focus on personal problems and existential dilemmas, while others explore the wider socio-political context.

The introductory story, 'Man Has Gone Beyond Me,' presents a poignant depiction of a little girl contending with the irrational devastation of her family and residence. Her pain compels her to interrogate the reality of God, prompting a philosophical dialogue with an enigmatic divine being. In this story, *Arora* explores the problem of divine justice, why does evil persist if God is almighty and just?

For example, the stories 'The Green Light' and 'There Is No Eden Here' contest traditional concepts of righteousness by depicting individuals who confront ethical issues in a context where obvious moral boundaries frequently blur. Narratives such as 'Beyond the Dark' and 'Hollow Beats' portray protagonists grappling with inner turmoil, isolation and psychological anguish. The storylines develop in a manner that obscures the distinction between truth and perception, highlighting the alienation inherent in contemporary living. Certain narratives, such as 'They Know It Better' and 'The Intriguing Riddle,' explore the socio-political realm, question power dynamics, structural injustice and the erosion of innocence in a progressively fractured society.



ABOUT THE BOOK

Book: *The Other Choice (A Collection of Short Stories)*
 Author: O.P. Arora
 Publisher: Authorspress, New Delhi
 Price: ₹295/-

'Just One Day' distinguishes itself in *The Other Choice* as a psychologically deep and socially pertinent narrative that captivates readers with urgent themes of socioeconomic disparity, ethical relativism and existential longing. *The Other Choice* effectively engages with intricate philosophical concepts while preserving narrative tension and emotional profundity. The narratives do not provide simple conclusions, instead, they urge readers to contemplate their own moral and existential convictions. Nevertheless, certain narratives often become too didactic, with dialogues that verge on explicit philosophical explication. This enhances intellectual depth but sometimes diminishes the narrative's immersive effect. Moreover, the characterisation in specific narratives is often one-dimensional, with protagonists functioning more as conduits for concepts than as fully developed characters. For fans of existentialist literature and philosophical storytelling, *The Other Choice* is a must-read. Its thought-provoking narratives explore profound questions about existence.

— Dr. Shaleen Kumar Singh is Associate Professor and Head of English at Swami Shukdevanand College, Uttar Pradesh.

Real Madrid pushes Manchester City out of Champions League

PTI ■ LONDON

Kylian Mbappé scored a hat-trick, Erling Haaland stayed on the bench injured and Real Madrid dumped Manchester City out of the Champions League. Mbappé's stellar trio of goals in the fourth, 33rd and 61st minutes in a 3-1 win gave Madrid a 6-3 victory on aggregate over the 2023 champion in their two-leg knockout playoff.

"This has been the complete performance — attack, defense, with the ball and without the ball, we showed such high levels of quality," Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti said. "Almost the perfect night."

One superstar striker was watched by another from the sidelines. Haaland was not fit to start for an ultimately overmatched Man City because of a knee injury sustained late in a Premier League game Saturday.

Paris Saint-Germain beat French rival Brest 7-0, to run up a 10-0 aggregate score, and will play either Liverpool or Barcelona in the round of 16.

PSV Eindhoven ousted Juventus in the only one of the eight playoffs this week that went to extra time.

Defender Ryan Flamingo scored in the 98th minute for a 3-1 win on the night and 4-3 on aggregate. United States international Timothy Weah scored for Juventus.

"Honestly, we slipped up," Weah said. "I felt like they were more aggressive on the night and we lacked a bit of aggression and hunger."

In the early game Wednesday, Borussia Dortmund started with a 3-0 lead at home to Sporting Lisbon and was barely stretched in a 0-0 draw. Sporting's Champions League campaign imploded after coach Ruben Amorim left for Manchester United in November.

Mbappé mastery
Mbappé's first goal of the two-leg playoff in Manchester was a lucky miscue, a looping effort off his shin to level at 1-1 in what ended a 3-2 win.

His three goals in Madrid were classy and decisive. A first-time lob over City goalkeeper Ederson — who perhaps advanced too far, too soon — was followed by a low shot after leaving defender Joško Gvardiol on the turf.

The third was a powerful left-footer from the edge of the penalty area when he had lured six Man



City players toward encircling him. "I have always said I didn't come here simply to complete a dream," said Mbappé, a boyhood Madrid fan who never won a Champions League at Monaco and PSG. "I

want to play well, I want to mark an era."

Coach Pep Guardiola's injury-hit side — with Ballon d'Or winner Rodri out since September and Kevin De Bruyne now rarely starting — has looked like a

shadow of the heavyweight rival that met Madrid in each of the past three seasons, when each time the winner went on to lift the trophy.

Paris Saint-Germain hits 10
PSG has not lost anywhere since a Champions League defeat at

Bayern Munich three months ago, and the playoff against Brest proved a total mismatch.

Brest had impressed in its first European season but went out with a whimper at Parc des Princes, after a 3-0 loss in the home leg.

Wingers Bradley Barcola and Khvicha Kvaratskhelia scored in the first half. Midfielder Vitinha, Desiré Doué, left back Nuno Mendes, striker Ramos and Senny Mayulu netted after the break.

PSG also beat Brest 5-2 in a French league game this month.

Sporting slumps post-Amorim
With Ruben Amorim as coach, Sporting was unbeaten in four Champions League games and stood second in the 36-team standings. The team he left behind went winless in six Champions League games under two different coaches.

Dortmund also fired a coach midseason and newly hired Niko Kovac now has two wins on the European stage to offset two straight losses in the German league.

Still, Sporting's prospects to be in the Champions League next season look better than Dortmund's.

Portugal's champion advances direct to the next league phase and Sporting currently is top, two points clear of Benfica. Dortmund is 11th in the Bundesliga and could need to win this Champions League title to earn a place in the next edition.

Round of 16 draw
Real Madrid, PSG, Dortmund and PSV join Bayern Munich, Benfica, Club Brugge and Feyenoord, which all advanced Tuesday, as playoff round winners who will be unseeded teams in Friday's draw. They will host the first-leg games on March 4-5.

The top eight in the 36-team standings three weeks ago — Liverpool, Barcelona, Arsenal, Inter Milan, Atletico Madrid, Bayer Leverkusen, Lille, Aston Villa — skipped the playoffs round and are seeded in the round of 16 draw. They host second legs on March 11-12. The round of 16 is in a new, tennis-like seeded bracket for the knockout stage in the expanded competition format.

Madrid, as the 11th-place team in the standings and No. 11 seed already knew its next opponent would be Atletico or Leverkusen, who respectively placed fifth and sixth.



WPL: RCB eye hat-trick against Mumbai Indians

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Having set the pace with back-to-back emphatic victories, defending champions Royal Challengers Bengaluru would be eyeing a hat-trick of success against star-studded Mumbai Indians in a WPL match at home on Friday.

Smriti Mandhana's RCB hasn't put a foot wrong so far, be it chasing an imposing 200-plus target against Gujarat Giants or overhauling a tricky 140-odd runs against Delhi Capitals.

Their overall strength has come to the fore in the two games they have played this season and are now leading the five-team chart with four points and a healthy net run rate. No other team so far has won all its matches.

RCB would be guaranteed of an incredible reception when they play their first game this season at their iconic Chinnaswamy Stadium, and Mandhana, who had broken DC's back with a blazing 47-ball 81 in the previous game, would be eyeing an encore.

The India vice-captain has been in red-hot form, bagging the ICC Women's ODI Cricketer of the Year award for 2024 and also being named to the ICC Women's T20I Team of the Year, and that streak of genius was evident in the way she disdainfully amassed her runs against DC.

If it was a one-player show against DC, the resilience of the middle-order came to the fore against GG, whose lineup is a virtual who's who in

international women's cricket. The likes of Ellyse Perry, Raghvi Bist, Richa Ghosh and young Kanika Ahuja rose to the occasion to make the task look easy, winning by six wickets with plenty of balls to spare.

Though RCB looked a bit thin on the bowling front, leaking far too many runs with teenage pacer VJ Jositha conceding 43 in her four overs and Australian stalwart Georgia Wareham giving away 50 in her three overs, it was a much-improved bowling performance against DC.

But Mumbai Indians, the inaugural edition champions, would be tough customers with India captain Harmanpreet a hard taskmaster.

They did lose to DC despite Nat Sciver-Brunt's peerless batting (80 off 59 balls) and her 73-run run partnership with Harmanpreet, but the class and calibre of the side is something RCB would be wary of.

To add to the batting firepower is one of the most destructive top-order batters Hayley Matthews, along with Amelia Kerr. But MI's batting will still revolve around Sciver-Brunt, who has scored consecutive half-centuries, and Harmanpreet.

If the team wants to go the distance, the two will, however, need the help of others. On the bowling front, the side has performed admirably with Sciver-Brunt and Shabnim Ismail creating a lot of problems for the rivals with the pace they generate.

Having smile solves half the problem: MS Dhoni

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Even if it's tough to do... Just forgive and move on." Mahendra Singh Dhoni became a life coach for once to share his secrets for a stress-free existence, describing himself as a carefree person who would not give up on a good night's sleep by paying attention to what others think of him.

The 43-year-old former India wicketkeeper-batter, considered one of the game's greatest for captaining India to two World Cup titles in a storied international career, set a high benchmark for a leader with his calm and focused approach on the field.

He is now gearing up for what most believe is his final IPL season as a player with Chennai Super Kings and at an event here, he turned philosophical when asked to give advice to fans and followers.

"I think, keep life simple. Be honest to yourself, have gratitude towards people for whatever they have been doing for you. Don't always think, 'this is my birthright' and ask for more," the enigmatic big-



hitter said here on Wednesday evening during the launch of his app 'DHONI' powered by Single. Id where injured India keeper-batter Sanju Samson was also present.

"I know the whole app (DHONI) says 'thoda aur' (a little more), but the whole thing is to have that gratitude, to say thank you, to respect the elders (and) to give love to the younger ones," he added.

He then went on to stress on the need to have a forgiving attitude, which he feels is in short-supply right now.

"I always felt having a smile on your face solves half the problem. Even if you're not in a comfortable position, even if it's tough to do, have the power

to forgive. That is one thing that not many of us have," said the cricketer who has never responded to the personal attacks on him by anyone, including former teammates or critics, some of whom have even accused him of hurting careers.

"We have become a very revengeful people. Isne mujhe aisa bola, main aisa bola (He said something to me, I said something back)... Just forgive, move on, be happy in life, because whatever we do... When we're growing up, we always wanted to be happy in life," he further stated.

Dhoni said being careless towards a few things helps in balancing the pressure of day-

to-day life.

"We all feel the pressure. We always say the grass is greener on the other side. We always feel that his or her life is better, but what is important is how you manage that stress, how prepared you are," he said.

"I keep it very simple. Growing up, we were told 'you cannot be careless'. But I feel in today's environment, it is important to be a bit careless because you can't worry about each and everything that is happening around you. You cannot do things that are not in your control," he added.

Dhoni said those who are obsessed with perception are not particularly constructive. He felt not every opinion merits a response or even consideration.

"If you get carried away with what others are saying, what others are feeling, then that important thing of what needs to be done, often you are not really giving utmost attention to that," he said.

"I am a bit careless in life. I don't give everything my 100 per cent attention because I feel this is important, (or) that's not important," he explained.

Imam-ul-Haq replaces injured Fakhar Zaman in Pakistan squad

PTI ■ KARACHI

February 19.

"Unfortunately I am now out of ICC Champions Trophy 2025 but surely Allah is the best planner. Grateful for the opportunity. I will be backing our boys in green from home," Zaman posted on X.

The 34-year-old, who has played 86 ODIs and averages a little over 46, had suffered a muscle strain while fielding in the New Zealand innings and remained away from the field for most part of the innings.

The injury happened while he was chasing a ball to the boundary in the first over of the contest. Zaman's ouster is a blow to the side as he has been in reasonably good form.

He wasn't able to open the batting in the second innings on Wednesday, forcing Saud Shakeel to take stance as a stop-gap opener. Zaman batted at No.4, scoring scored 24 off 41, but seemed visibly struggling during his knock during the match which Pakistan lost by 60 runs.

The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) made the change after getting the approval from the International Cricket Council's Event Technical Committee. The match against India is to be held on Sunday at the Dubai International Cricket Stadium.

"Twenty-nine-year-old Imam, who has played 72 ODIs, was named as a replacement after Fakhar was ruled out due to an oblique injury," said an ICC media release. Zaman had suffered an injury during the opening Champions Trophy match against New Zealand here on

Pankaj Advani clinches 14th Asian Championship title

PTI ■ DOHA



Indian cue sports maestro Pankaj Advani has once again showcased his brilliance on the international stage, capturing an unprecedented 14th gold medal at the Asian Snooker Championship here.

The triumph comes just days after he won the National Snooker Championship in Indore, proving yet again why he remains the country's

most celebrated cueist.

Advani's victory in Doha adds to an already staggering list of accolades. He now holds five Asian snooker titles (across 15-red, 6-reds, and team formats) alongside nine Asian billiards titles, and his two Asian Games gold medals (2006, 2010) further highlight his dominance.

With this latest win, he inches closer to an unprecedented achievement — winning the National, Asian, and World Snooker Championships in a single calendar year.

Having already accomplished this feat in billiards, completing it in snooker would make him the only player in history to do so in both disciplines.

The final against Iran's Amir Sarkhosh was a battle of champions. Sarkhosh, a former Asian and world IBSF 6-red snooker champion, struck first, seizing an early lead. But Advani, known for his composure under pressure, responded in style.

Shami becomes fastest Indian bowler to reach 200 ODI wickets

PTI ■ DUBAI



Star pacer Mohammed Shami became the fastest Indian bowler to reach 200 ODI wickets during the ICC Champions Trophy (CT) match against Bangladesh on Thursday.

Returning to international cricket after a long injury layoff, Shami grabbed three wickets to reach the milestone in his 104th match and better former India pacer Ajit Agarkar's record of reaching the mark in 133 matches.

Jaker Ali, who made 68, was his 200th wicket.

Overall, the 34-year-old fast bowler is the second quickest

to 200 ODI wickets, behind Australian left-arm pacer Mitchell Starc, who needed 102 games.

One of India's finest seamers, Shami averages less than 25

in the ODI format and has already taken five fifers and 10 four-wicket hauls. Shami is the eighth Indian to complete 200 wickets in ODI cricket.

South Africa seek to shed chokers tag against Afghanistan

PTI ■ KARACHI

Debutants Afghanistan will aim to continue their impressive rise in white-ball cricket, while South Africa will once again attempt to shed the 'chokers' tag when the two sides kick off their Champions Trophy (CT) campaign here on Friday.

The inaugural Champions Trophy in 1998, which was called the Knockout Trophy at that time, remains the only ICC men's senior title that South Africa have secured despite having produced some of the world's greatest cricketers, especially in limited-overs format.

The Proteas boast of a well-balanced squad with a formidable batting lineup.

While skipper Temba Bavuma, Tony de Zorzi, Rassie van der Dussen, and Aiden Markram will anchor the top order, the big-hitting trio of Heinrich Klaasen, David Miller and Tristan Stubbs are well-equipped to provide the final flourish.

South Africa's biggest challenge heading into the tournament is their depleted bowling attack as key pacers Anrich Nortje, Nandre Burger, and Gerald Coetzee ruled out due to injuries.

Known for his pace, aggression, and the knack of striking at crucial moments, Kagiso Rabada will be the Proteas' key weapon in both the powerplay and death overs.

Marco Jansen, too, will be

expected to step up significantly. His ability to build pressure and deliver impactful spells will be crucial.

Meanwhile, Lungi Ngidi will be looking to rediscover his rhythm and confidence after a below-par showing in the recent tri-series.

In the spin department, Keshav Maharaj and Tabraiz Shamsi will have vital roles. Since the 2023 ODI World Cup, South Africa have won only four of the 14 ODIs they have played. They enter the tournament on the back of a six-match losing streak. But one cannot overlook the fact that they were not able to field a full strength team in any of these games due to multiple reasons.



Clubbed alongside an off-colour England, injury-plagued Australia and Afghanistan, South Africa have a good chance of advancing to the knockout stage. But the Afghans could

prove to be the proverbial banana peel. The war-torn nation has emerged as strong contenders to make the semifinals. Their impressive

performances in recent ICC events include dominant wins over England, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka in the 2023 ODI World Cup and reaching the semifinals of the T20 World Cup last year.

They have proved more than once that they are no longer underdogs but a force to be reckoned with.

The Adghans have won four of their five bilateral series since the ODI World Cup, including one against South Africa in the UAE.

Their biggest strength expectedly remains their spin attack comprising the redoubtable Rashid Khan, Mohammad Nabi and left-armers Noor Ahmad and Nangeyalia Kharote. They will play all three group

matches in Pakistan where spin will be a decisive factor.

Pacer Azmatullah Omarzai has been a key figure in Afghanistan's ODI success, with his ability to swing the new ball providing them the powerplay edge.

Fazalhaq Farooqi will be another crucial weapon with ability to provide early breakthroughs and effective variations at the death.

In the batting department, Rahmanullah Gurbaz and Ibrahim Zadran will once again be expected to provide a solid start.

Their weakness, however, lies in their middle order, which has often struggled to maintain momentum. This inconsistency has been a concern, and addressing it

will be crucial for their success in the tournament.

Squads:
South Africa: Temba Bavuma (c), Tony de Zorzi, Marco Jansen, Heinrich Klaasen, Keshav Maharaj, Aiden Markram, David Miller, Wiaan Mulder, Lungi Ngidi, Kagiso Rabada, Ryan Rickelton, Tabraiz Shamsi, Tristan Stubbs, Rassie van der Dussen, Corbin Bosch.
Afghanistan: Hashmatullah Shahidi (c), Ibrahim Zadran, Rahmanullah Gurbaz, Sediqullah Atal, Rahmat Shah, Ikram Alikhil, Gulbadin Naib, Azmatullah Omarzai, Mohammad Nabi, Rashid Khan, Nangyal Khazro, Noor Ahmad, Fazalhaq Farooqi, Farid Malik, Naveed Zadran.