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: DELHI I LUCKNOW I BHOPAL I BHUBANESWAR I RANCHI I RAIPUR I CHANDIGARH I DEHRADUN I HYDERABAD I VIJAYWADA

RASHTRAPATI BHAVAN **SLAMS THE CONGRESS**



New Delhi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE **NEW DELHI**

the Rashtrapati Bhawan on Friday reacted strongly over the Congress leaders' comments on President Droupadi Murmu's address to the joint session of the Parliament terming the remarks are "in poor taste, unfortunate and entirely avoidable".

The Rashtrapati Bhavan which has never responded to such political remarks, in a statement said such comments hurt the dignity of the high office and therefore

are "unacceptable". Soon after the President concluded her address to the joint sitting of both the Houses, Congress leaders Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA

Tn a jibe at the Congress and Tother Opposition parties, Prime Minister Narendra

Modi on Friday came out

with a tongue-in-cheek comment by mentioning that

it could be perhaps the first

time ever since he took over

as PM in 2014 that there has

been no attempt from abroad

to destabilise our legislative functions before the start of a

"This is the first session I am

seeing in the last 10 years in

which there has been no attempt to stoke a fire from

any foreign corner," the prime minister said briefing the

media before the start of the

The PM also took a swipe at

Opposition parties, saying that there were people abroad ready to do mischief before

every session since 2014 and

there was also no dearth of those here who would fuel

With Modi-led NDA's third

term to bring in its first full-

term to bring in its first full-fledged budget on Saturday, the PM said he prayed that Goddess Lakshmi, who is associated with wealth, will bless the poor and middle class. He expressed confidence that this Budget

session will infuse new confidence and energy in attaining the goal of Viksit

Parliament session.

Budget session.

such attempts.

Bharat' by 2047.

NEW DELHI

were seen discussing the speech. "The poor lady, the President, was getting very rn an unprecedented move, tired by the end...She could hardly speak poor thing," Sonia was heard saying in a video doing the rounds on

social media.

The President's office said it believes that "it might be the case that these leaders were not acquainted with the idiom and discourse in Indian languages such as Hindi, and thus formed a wrong impression". In any case, such comments are in poor taste, unfortunate and entirely avoidable, the statement said.

the President was getting very Bhavan would like to clarify that nothing could be farther and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra from the truth. The President

Modi takes a pot shot at the Opposition

Session of Parliament in New Delh

as women, he also said a mechanism has been

designed for the participation of younger Parliamentarians

in further nurturing the 'Viksit Bharat'. "Especially for

young MPs, it is a golden opportunity, because the

opportunity, because the more awareness and participation... In the House today, the more fruits of a developed India they will see before their eyes. And therefore, this is a priceless opportunity for the young MPs," Modi said.

Abad of the tabling of the

Ahead of the tabling of the Economic Survey, the PM said his government has been

working in mission mode in

its third term for an all-round

development and asserted

that innovation, inclusion

and investment have shaped

its economic agenda. Modi

The prime minister also also shared that several hinted new initiatives for the historic bills will be taken up

was not tired at any point. Indeed, she has believed that speaking up for the marginalised communities, for women and farmers, as she was doing during the course of her address, can never be tiring," the statement

said.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi addresses the media on the first day of the Budget

poor and middle class as well during the Session and will

become

Prime Minister Narendra Modi too launched a scathing attack on the Congress, accusing its "shahi parivar" of insulting President Droupadi Murmu, who hails from a tribal background. In a direct response to Congress leaders' purported remarks on entirely avoidable, the Murmu, Modi, at a public statement said.

"These leaders have said that the President was getting very people think they are the proportion of the pro tired by the end and she could masters of the country. The hardly speak. Rashtrapati arrogance of the Congress royal family has once again

been exposed." Continued on page 8

laws

important

comprehensive debate to

decisions will be taken during

the Session to empower

women to ensure they get

equal rights and any sectarian

or faith-based discrimination is removed," he said. Modi

also expressed confidence

that every MP, especially the

young ones, will contribute to the agenda of 'Viksit Bharat'

Stressing on the mantra of

'Reform, Perform and Transform, Modi said fast-

paced development has to be

achieved and the maximum

emphasis is on reform. He

said the state and Central

governments have to perform

together and one can see

Continued on page 8

during the session.

transformation

public participation.

strengthen the country.

"Particularly,

Indian economy defies global slowdown



With Sanskriti (culture) and Pragati (progress) moving in tandem, India stands on the brink of an economic transformationone that is propelling the nation towards becoming the world's economy. Driven by the guiding principles of Reform, Perform, and Transform, the government has laid a robust foundation for economic expansion through bold policy measures, strategic interventions, and a commitment to inclusive

despite which. economic

The data speaks volumes. India's GDP expanded by an

(FY15-FY24), broad-based report, private investment commitments surged from cent to 6.8 per cent in the financial year 2025-26 (FY26) ₹1.6 Lakh Crore in FY24 to ₹2.45 Lakh Crore in FY25. Private Final Consumption The public sector, particularly in infrastructure Expenditure (PFČE)-a cornerstone of aggregate demand-is projected to grow

critical catalyst, with General Government Capital Formation (GFCF) growing at 13.1 per cent, outpacing overall investment growth between 2019 and 2023.

development, has been a

government's The commitment to high-quality capital expenditure evident. with capital spending now constituting

World

Source: IMF WEO (January 2025)

market and developing economies

Chart I.2: Steady growth outlook

across country groups

AEs

Note: AEs- Advanced Economies, EMDEs- Emerging

■2024 **■**2025

expenditure, up from 13 per cent in FY21. Additionally, the National Monetisation Pipeline (NMP) has unlocked ₹3.86 Lakh Crore worth of private capital across key infrastructure sectors. enhancing long-term growth potential. Infrastructure development remains a cornerstone of India's growth strategy, with a paradigm shift from a project-based approach to a corridor-based one. The National Highway Network has expanded from 91,287 km in 2014 to 1.46 lakh km in 2024. Airport infrastructure investments exceeded ₹91,000 Crore

(FY20-FY25) to modernise key hubs and expand air traffic capacity.

4.2 4.2

EMDEs

from 3 MTPA in FY24 to 21 MTPA in FY25. Renewable energy has seen remarkable progress, with installed capacity reaching 456.7 GW as of November 2024, of which 47 per cent comes from renewables. Meanwhile, the Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) has transformed rural water accessibility, with tap water connections rising from 17 per cent in 2019 to 79.1 per cent in 2024. Despite external headwinds, India's services exports continue to offset a widening

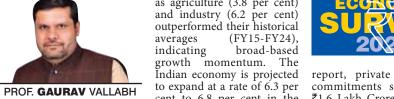
RNI No. 2016/1957

merchandise trade deficit. In response to shifting global policies, India is expanding its trade footprint into highvalue sectors such as biotechnology semiconductors, computing. quantum Strategic partnerships in ΑI, space, telecommunications further

bolster India's positioning as a leader in advanced technology industries. India has made remarkable strides in research and development (R and D), with patent filings more than doubling since 2014-15 and patent grants increasing seventeen-fold. However, Gross Expenditure on R and D (GERD) remains at 0.64 per cent of GDP, significantly lower than global counterparts like China, Japan, and the US, where business-funded R and D exceeds 70 per cent. Strengthening industry-academia collaboration and fostering innovation-led entrepreneurship remain key imperatives for the next phase of economic transformation.

Continued on page 8

as agriculture (3.8 per cent) per cent of total efficiency has surged, with operational capacity growing



at 7.3 per cent, underscoring

robust household spending,

particularly in rural areas. A

consumption has been

evident in rising sales of two-

wheelers, three-wheelers, and

tractors, signalling increased

purchasing power and

consumer confidence. A

resurgent manufacturing

sector is a cornerstone of

India's economic revival, as reflected in its Purchasing

Managers' Index (PMI),

which has consistently

December 2024, the PMI

averages, fueled by strong

order books, rising exports,

and resilient domestic

Business sentiment remains

overwhelmingly positive,

with firms anticipating

higher production, improved

order inflows, and greater capacity utilisation in the

coming quarters. The Production-Linked Incentive

(PLI) scheme has played a

pivotal role in attracting

reinforcing India's position as

remains the backbone of

India's economic expansion.

According to the RBI's latest

global manufacturing

in the

long-term

investments,

Investment

zone.

remained

expansionary

surpassed

demand.

coming

private

powerhouse.

strong

rebound

GUEST REPORTER

third-largest growth. At the heart of this transformative journey is the global

Economic Survey 2024-25, turbulence, presents a confident yet pragmatic assessment of Îndia's economic trajectory. While economies worldwide grapple with geopolitical uncertainties, supply chain disruptions, and inflationary pressures, India continues to global headwinds, reaffirming its status as one of the fastest-growing major economies.

impressive 6.4 per cent in FY25, driven by a resurgence in rural demand, a boom in infrastructure investment, and a stellar performance by the services sector. Kev economic contributors such

Kejriwal accuses CM Saini of conspiracy to poison Yamuna

RAJESH KUMAR NEW DELHI

n a startling revelation, Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) supremo Arvind Keiriwal on Friday accused Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini of hatching a "conspiracy" to "influence" and force half of Delhi's and force half of Denns
population to thirst due to
the "poisonous" Yamuna
to defame his party water to defame his party ahead of the Assembly polls

on February 5 by sending highly-polluted waters to the national Capital. In his six-page written reply addressed to the chief election commissioner (CEC), AAP chief raised serious allegations against Saini and said the Haryana Chief Minister orchestrated a 'conspiracy' to influence the Delhi assembly election. He demanded that a criminal case should be filed against Saini regarding the 'poisonous' Yamuna issue. In the response to the Commission's

second notice, Kejriwal clarified that his earlier statements, which referenced the Yamuna being "poisoned," were made in the context of the rising ammonia levels in the water and were not intended to suggest any malicious intent outside of this environmental crisis. Warning that water could be used as a weapon to win elections if the EC fails to act, he said he was shocked that the poll body did not pass any order for the Haryana Chief Minister but chose to "hound" him. Continued on page 8

AAP national convener Arvind Kejriwal with Punjab CM Bhagwant Mann and AAP MP Sanjay

Singh before leaving to meet Election Commissioners, in New Delhi

Eight AAP MLAs resign before polls

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

In a major setback to the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), eight MLAs have resigned, ahead of the coming Delhi Assembly polls on February 5.
The MLAs who resigned are Naresh
Yadav (Mehrauli), Rohit Kumar
(Trilokpuri), Rajesh Rishi
(Janakpuri), Madan Lal (Kasturba
Nagar), Girish Soni (Madipur), Pawan Sharma (Adarsh Nagar), and Bhawna Goud (Palam). Sources said these MLAs were disgruntled after

being denied tickets for the February 5 polls and were touch with other parties. BS Joon (Bijwasan) was the first AAP MLA who gave his papers. Most of the MLAs shared their resignation letters on social media and slammed AAP over corruption and other issues.

Reacting to the development, South Delhi BJP MP Ramvir Singh Bidhuri said the ship of Aam Aadmi Party is sinking, that is why seven MLAs have resigned from the party.

Continued on page 8



Poonch encounter: two terrorist killed

MOHIT KANDHARI JAMMU

A lert troops of the Indian army neutralised two heavily armed Pakistani terrorists in the fierce gunfight along the line of control in the Khari Karmara area of Poonch early Friday morning. This is the first major incident of terrorist-related violence in the last two years in the Khari Karmara area of Poonch.

According to local reports, the movement of a group of heavily armed Pakistani infiltrators was detected by the troops late Thursday evening while they (Pakistani infiltrators) were attempting to sneak inside the Indian territory taking advantage of the raging forest fires in the forward area.

The security forces in the region were already conducting massive combing and search operations based on local intelligence inputs about the suspected movement of terrorists in the upper reaches of Rajouri and Poonch.

In a post on X, the Nagrota-based White Knight Corps also confirmed the terrorist movement was detected last night at the Line of Control in the Poonch Sector.

"The terrorist movement was detected last night at the Line of Control in the Poonch sector. Alert troops swiftly engaged the infiltrating terrorists, triggering an intense and heavy firefight. The anti-terrorist operation continued through the night, leading to the

neutralisation of two terrorists. The search of the area thus far has resulted in the recovery of several weapons and war-like stores", White Knight Corps posted on X.

Continued on page 8

Ahead of polls and lucrative offers, Delhi students split on AAP and BJP

SANYA PANDEY NEW DELHI

With Assembly polls inching closer, several students of Delhi University and other higher educational institutions, residing in North Campus, have opined that the ruling Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) has failed on various fronts in the last 10 years and there should BJP's "double-engine" government for better development and welfare of the

people of national capital.

Though these students' are hoping for change in power in Delhi, some still have reposed their faith on AAP asserting that in the run-up to the Assembly elections, the BJP and Congress announced galore of "freebies", while the ruling dispensation has already delivered what it had promised in last polls. They were also of the opinion that

Delhi would witness a fierce contest between the AAP and BJP. The Congress, which has announced "five guarantees" including Rs 2,500 per month to every woman under the 'Pyari Didi Yojana', and eyeing to

Didi Yojana', and eyeing to return to power highlighting the works done by the previous Sheila Dikshit-led government in Capital, did not find a mention. Navya Malhotra, a first-time voter, highlighted various

issues including pollution and sanitation, which she has claimed the AAP government has totally failed to address in the last 10 years. She said the BJP should be given a chance this election.

Talking to the Pioneer, the 18-year-old said, "I feel this time BJP should come to power in Delhi. The AAP has been saying that they were not able to do the work for the people because Arvind Kejriwal and his team members were put behind bars and Delhi doesn't have statehood. But, 10 years is a very long period. They didn't do

through

much." "Kejriwal had talked about the slum areas, especially JJ colony, that he will take care of such places. But, he failed to take any appropriate steps for waste management. It has become such a big problem. He hasn't taken

care of this," she said. Referring to pollution, Navya said," The AAP government has



File photo: Ranjan Dimri/The Pioneel

completely failed. Because of definitely important to give a pollution, students' we were not chance to the BJP. Some people able to go to schools, colleges. are following Narendra Modi Our time was wasted. So it is because he is saving Hindutva,

Referring to BJP's manifesto, she

said, "In the BJP's manifesto, they are giving those things that Kejriwal has offered to people. But there are also different things like giving Rs 2,1000 to pregnant women, so the rural/lower sections will get monetary help.
Kejriwal had also talked about
monetary help, but overall
development didn't work out quite well."

Mentioning the law and order situation, Navya said, "As a first time female voter, I feel safety in Delhi is a prominent issue, because I still can't freely roam out of my house at night. Éven if I go downstairs I have to be quite

while some people are following him, because genuinely they cannot see any better party than while some people are following vigilant. The AAP has installed cameras. Are they functional? vigilant. The AAP has installed cameras. Are they functional? Women safety is very prime. Delhi which has been given the title of 'rape capital', if that can be changed by a 'double-engine' government BJP, then why not 'Har Har Modi'." 'Har Har Modi'. '

Notably, the law and order of Delhi comes under the Union Home Ministry.

She also accused the incumbent AAP MLA from Timarpur Dilip Pandey for not doing enough to mitigate the issues concerning the people of the constituency and said the BJP should be given a chance.

The AAP this time has fielded turncoat Surinder Pal Singh (Bitto), BJP Surya Prakash and Congress Lokendra Chaudharv.

Continued on page 8



NOTICE

My name is erroneously recorded on the Aadhaar card as Bitola wife Charanju whereas my correct name in other records is Sharda Devi. I should be known or known by this name as Sharda Devi wife Charanju resident of Salempur Kon Lakhimpur Kheri.

NOTICE

Be it known to all that I, Ravindra Kumar (Army No 7782924 L) am resident of Pithforwan post Barhuti, Kala district Rohtas Sasaram bihar. In my service record, my mother's name is registered as Hiramata Devi, date of Birth 01.07.1948 which is wrong. In my Aadhar Card, my mother's correct name is Heera Moti Devi, date of Birth is 01.01.1949 which is correct. In future they be known and identified by their correct name and date of Birth for all purposes

NOTICE

I am Shaan son of Mohd Kafeel (Madhur Mishra), resident-636/41, Shivnagari Takrohi, Indiranagar, Lucknow, I have voluntarily renounced Islam and now have adopted Hinduism and have changed my name to Shaan Mishra. In future I should be known as Shaan Mishra in all documents.

NOTICE

I, Mrs. Rashida Begam, W/o Zahid Ali, R/o 536/2/377, Madeyganj, Post-Nirala Nagar, Lucknow, before marriage, my name was Raseed Khatoon.After marriage, my name changed to Rashida Begam, which is now my official name. Raseed Khatoon and Rashida Begam are same person

NOTICE

I,am Umashankar S/o Shyam Bihari, temporary address Village-Baidolia, Post-Shivpur, Thana-Gaur, District-Basti (Uttar Pradesh) 272163, current address is 4th Corps S.C.B. Lucknow (U.P.). The spelling of my daughter's name has been changed to Annushka in the registration form of class 9 of Kendriya Vidyalaya SGPGI Lucknow, which is wrong. The correct name is Anushka Yadav, which is the same in the Aadhar card, birth certificate and mark sheet

NOTICE

I Naman S/O 733024-F Sgt Ajay Kumar Singh R/O Plot No-1 Shakti Nagar, Near Power house, P.O Harjindar nagar Kanpur-208007. Changed my name Naman (Old) to Naman Singh proposed name vide affidavit dated 29 Jan 2025 at kanpur Nagar.

NOTICE

I Smt.Malti Dinesh Malaviya W/o Shri Dinesh Shanker Malaviya, R/o 8/67, Arya Nagar Kanpur Nagar,I Married With Shri Dinesh Shanker Malaviya in year 1986, So Before Married My Name Was Km. Malti Awasthi after marriage my name is Smt. Malti Dinesh Malaviya.

आवश्यकता है

SKY LAW COLLEGE Natkur, Chandrawal, Sarojini Nagar, Lucknow-226002

आवश्यकता है LL.B. 3 Years & 5 years गठ्यक्रम में प्रवक्ताओं एवं प्राचार्य / विभागाध्यक्ष की १- प्रवक्ताओ की कुल संख्या- २० २-प्राचार्य की संख्या - ०१

(अ) लखनऊ विश्वविद्यालय के मानकानुसार। (ब) बार काउन्शिल ऑफ इण्डिया के मानकानुसार — नोट -

. पदों की संख्या घट-बढ़ सकती है। . ६४ वर्ष तक अभ्यर्थी आवेदन कर सकते है। नियुक्ति तथा वेतन संविदा पर तथा राज्य सरका नखनंऊ विश्वविद्यालय की परिनियमावली व रल्लेखित नियमानुसार होगी। इच्छुक अभ्यर्थी इस विज्ञापन की प्रथम तिथि से इक्कीस (21) दिनों वे भीतर प्रबन्धक स्कार्ड लॉ कालेज, को नवीनतम गसपोर्ट फोटो एवं समस्त शैक्षित प्रपत्रो के साथ प्रबन्धक स्काई लॉ कालेज, को सादे कागज पर

भावेदन करें। स्काई लॉ कालेज, मो०- ८१७४८१६१९१, ९१९८००३८८८, Emai ID- lawcollegesky@gmail.com पता- स्काई लॉ कालेज, नियर स्काई पब्लिक स्कूल नटकुर

Woman alleges harassment, physical assault by in-laws

Awoman has accused her father-in-law and brotherin-law of physical assault and harassment Krishnanagar police station area, police said here on Friday. In her complaint, the woman alleged that her father-in-law boasted about his influence as a senior citizen with strong connections, claiming her pleas against him would be ignored, while her brother-in-law asserted that his powerful network of friends made him immune to police action.

The complainant stated that at around 7:30 pm on January 16, her brother-in-law barged into her room at their LDA Colony residence and demanded that



NOTICE

I, Zeenat wife of Mohd Kafeel (Madhur Mishra), resident-636/41, Shivnagari Takrohi, Indiranagar, Lucknow, have voluntarily renounced Islam and now have adopted Hinduism and have changed my name to Deepmala Mishra. In future, I should be known as Deepmala Mishra in all

NOTICE

I, Mohd Kafeel son of late Mohd Jalil, resident of 636/41. Shivnagari Takrohi, Indiranagar Lucknow, have voluntarily renounced Islam and have now adopted Hinduism and have changed my name to Madhur Mishra. In future, I will be known as Madhur Mishra in all documents and I have changed the name of my two minor children Armaan to Armaan Mishra and Mannat to Akshita

NOTICE

My name is erroneously recorded on the Aadhaar card as Bitola wife Charaniu whereas my correct name in other records is Sharda Devi. I should be known or known by this name as Sharda Devi wife Charanju resident of Salempur Kon Lakhimpur Kheri.

NOTICE

Jc No.JC877958H ,Nb.Sub Manoj Kumar Unit 314 Med regt.R/O village -Harichandapur Shuklapur Bhagat Teh.Bilgram Dist.Hardoi (UP)Declares That in my Service records my Wife Seema Dev's name is wrongly written as Sima Devi.But her correct and actual name is Seema Devi for all future purposes.

NOTICE

My name in my passport is Mujeen Khan and my wife's name is Fatima, which is wrong. The correct name is Mo. Mujeen Khan and my wife's name is Amina Begum. I want to be known and identified by my correct name in future. Mo. Mujeen Khan son of Ayub Khan, resident of Sharafat Nagar, New Rahimabad Bijnor, Lucknow.

NOTICE

I have changed my name from MEENA AGRAWAL To MEENA AGARWAL, Meena Agarwal W/o Uttam Kumar Agarwal R/o X/1/135, Krishna Puram G.T. Road Harjinder Nagar Kanpur

NOTICE

I have changed my name after marriage from BISMA KABEER to SHAMEEN SAIF W/o Mohammad SAIF AZIM R/o 70/59, Shitla Bazar, Jajmau, Kanpur -10. In future I would be known & recognise by this name only.

she and her husband leave the house. When she asked him to discuss the matter after her husband's return, he allegedly abused her, grabbed her by the throat, and pushed her against the wall.

"As I became helpless, he pressed my mouth and slapped me multiple times. At the same time, my father-in-law arrived, hurling abuses and threatening to kill me if I was not thrown out of the house," she alleged. She further alleged that her brother-in-law threw her to the ground and kicked her in the

"During the incident, my children were downstairs. When my husband returned around 8:30 pm, my brother-in-law beat him too. My younger daughter was also injured in the process," she alleged.
To protect themselves, she and

her husband fled to her father's house nearby. Her father later sent her brother Ashish to mediate with the accused, but he was allegedly abused and assaulted as well.

The woman also accused her brother-in-law of repeated harassment, stating that he had entered her bedroom and kitchen multiple times, touching her inappropriately. "When I objected, he would abuse me. On one occasion, he even hit me on the head, causing an

"My husband stays out for work, and for the past 13 years, I have been forced to live outside the house. I have endured this physical and mental torture out of fear of public shame, but now I feel helpless. I have even thought of ending my life along with my two daughters because I can no longer bear the harassment," she added.

She alleged that her father-inlaw frequently threatened them, claiming, "I am a senior citizen. Wherever I go, I will be heard. I have connections in high places, and you won't be able to do anything to me." Following her complaint, the police registered a case under relevant sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) and have begun a probe.

MAN, KIN HELD FOR Molesting Girl, Robbing her Mobile

Meanwhile, a man and his brother-in-law have been arrested following an encounter after they allegedly molested a girl and robbed her mobile phone in the PGI area, police said here on Friday. The accused were apprehended behind the Apex Trauma Centre on Thursday night. As per reports, Jitendra Kumar Rawat, a resident of Sector M-1 in Ashiyana, was shot in the

leg during the exchange of fire. His brother-in-law, Shani Gautam, was also taken into custody.

According to DCP (East) Shashank Singh, PGI police were conducting checks near the trauma centre in Vrindavan Sector-18 late Thursday night when they spotted Jitendra and Shani approaching on a bike. When officers signalled them to stop, the duo opened fire. The police retaliated in self-defence, injuring Jitendra. Jitendra was later taken to the hospital. The police recovered the stolen mobile phone, a pistol, and the bike used in the crime.

The accused, both catering workers, were returning from work when they spotted two girls walking near Sparsh Hospital in Sainik Nagar. Jitendra stopped his bike under

the pretext of asking for directions. When one of the girls, sensing something suspicious, attempted to make a call, they left. However, they returned later, and one of them grabbed the girl and molested her. When the victim's friend picked up a stick and confronted them, they snatched the girl's

The entire incident was captured on CCTV, aiding the police in tracking down the

mobile phone and fled.

Probe begins into misappropriation of recovered cash, jewellery

Aprobe has been initiated into the alleged misappropriation of gold and cash recovered from the robbers involved in the Chinhat bank heist. Earlier, two robbers were

killed, one sustained bullet injuries, and the others were apprehended by a special team of the DCP (Lucknow East Zone). Besides, 13 policemen from the

special squad of the DCP, including a woman constable, were reassigned after the team was disbanded following complaints of alleged misappropriation of the recovered goods.

festival

kicks off

Lucknow (PNS): The 16th

edition of Sanatkada Lucknow

Festival kicked off on Friday, featuring a unique theme, 'Lucknow ke Gali-Kooche',

which explores the festival

through the lens of the com-

mon people and their per-

The team shared their experi-

ences of curating this theme, having researched over 60

alleys in Lucknow, from which

25 were shortlisted based on

various aspects such as archi-

tecture, commerce, history,

famous personalities, crafts,

the syncretic culture of

Lucknow, and lesser-known

The festival was inaugurated by Tasveer Hasan, Nagma Parveen, and Vishal Sharma,

the core team members behind

Tasveer and Nagma introduced

the festival, highlighting how it was first launched in 2010 as a

tribute to the crafts of Awadh.

At the inauguration, a film

titled 'Humari Gali Humari

Duniya' premiered, offering a

glimpse into life in the alleys of

Following the inauguration was the Qissagoi event, where

Sabika presented unheard sto-

ries from the lively neighbour-

hoods of Mashakganj. These tales captured the essence of the

lives and experiences of the

people who form this fascinat-

ing community. Husn-e-Karigari was a first-of-

its-kind showcase of hand-

crafted masterpieces by select-

ed master craftspersons. The

exhibition featured exquisite

handicrafts and launched

apparel that incorporated

Awadhi crafts such as chika-

nari, zardozi, kamdani, and

Sameer Rahat, an award-win-

ning music composer based in

Mumbai, explored the depths

of human experience through

the poetry of his legendary

Urdu poet parents, Anjum Rehbar and Rahat Indori.

tukri, with a modern twist.

spective of a 'gali'.

monuments.

the event.

Lucknow.

suspicions of irregularities in the recovery of items after the lockers of Indian Overseas Bank in Chinhat were broken into and crores of rupees were

ADCP (East) Pankaj Singh has initiated an investigation

BANK HEIST

into the matter. According to Singh, notices have been issued to the officers involved in the special squad, including the woman constable, to record their statements. During the investigation, a sub-inspector and two constables who were on leave will also be questioned by the probe team.

Sources indicate that among those removed from the special squad, some have no direct involvement in the alleged misappropriation. The police will also interrogate the arrested accused to determine how much jewellery was recovered from them.

Additionally, the alleged mastermind of the gang, Vipin, will be questioned. Vipin, along with his aides, is said to be responsible for executing the bank heist. The investigation aims to uncover whether any of the errant policemen had any links to Vipin or other gang members.

Sanatkada **70-year-old woman** keeps tradition of shahane bangles alive

SHARMILA KRISHNA

Seventy-year-old Bano is the only woman in the Lucknow district still making 'lakh chooris', also known as 'shahane' bangles. She was honoured at the inaugural ceremony of the Sanatkada festival for her significant contribution to the art and for preserving this dying craft. Scientist Saman Habib, who is part of the Sanatkada team and conducted extensive research on Bano, shared insights about both the art form and the artist. Saman explained that the brightly coloured shellac bangles, often decorated with silver patterns and embedded mirror pieces, are a staple in celebrations throughout Awadh.

"From wedding ceremonies to the festival of Sawan, shahane bangles are ordered, purchased, and gifted among family and friends. These bangles were traditionally crafted by skilled women artisans in their homes in Lucknow and Kakori, with materials sourced from Surat, Kanpur, and Firozabad. In Kakori, there was a tradition of making these vibrant bangles during Sawan, along with the custom of dyeing leheriya dupattas. Both items were packaged in baskets and sent to girls in neighborhoods and families," she added. "The raw material, capra (shel-

lac), is very soft and its quality must be ensured. Some of this shellac is placed in a clay pot with burning wood or coals, where it is melted with imli (tamarind) color, which turns it orange. The hot shellac is then rolled out to a specific thickness and wrapped around a cylindrical wooden block called a 'sail' to form the bangle shape. Usually, three such bangles are heated using a 'siraq' and joined together to create a broad bracelet on the wooden block. A 'thapi' is used to flatten it, ensuring one side has a slight-



ly larger diameter than the other." She continued, "While still warm and soft, the bracelet is decorated with coloured foil (panni), thin strips of silver foil, and small mirror pieces."

'The work requires sitting close to the hot clay pot, which is easier to manage during the winter months. Shahane bangles are delicate and must be stored carefully in the hot summer to prevent them from becoming misshapen," Saman explained. Bano, she added, is one of only two remaining artists of this fad-

ing art form. "Mina in Lucknow and her sister-in-law Bano in Kakori are the only two practitioners left. They learned the craft from their families, but Mina has since stopped practising. They are part of the fourth generation of shahane artisans, and most likely the last. Old families from Lucknow, Kakori, Barabanki, and surrounding areas still patronise these artisans, but rising material costs and the higher price of the bracelets have made them increasingly inaccessible to local women who once wore them with pride," she said.

In their extensive research, it was found that Bano is the sole person actively working to preserve this dying craft.

"She learned the art from her grandmother, and she still makes the bangles on order, as the process is complex and time-consuming," Saman shared. Despite the challenges, Bano is supported by her son and daughter, who help her in

Protesters seek transparency in PhD entrance, JRF/NET results

The Sanyukt Chhatra Morcha (SCM) staged a protest at Lucknow University, demanding the release of the PhD entrance exam question papers, re-verification of JRF and NET results, and the proper implementation of the reservation policy.

The protesters accused the university administration of negligence and a lack of transparency in the admission process, which they claim is negatively impacting the future of many deserving candidates. A memorandum was submitted to the admission coordinator, urging immediate action on these critical issues.

The protesting students also called for the suspension of the ongoing admission process

until the verification of results is completed and the PhD entrance exam question papers are made public. They highlighted concerns about the improper implementation of the reservation policy in several departments, which they argued has resulted in injustice for marginalised students.

They demanded a thorough review and reallocation of seats according to reservation norms.

Speaking at the protest, Harshvardhan, convenor of AISA, Lucknow University, said, "Several students have reported discrepancies in the JRF and NET evaluations. If the administration is confident in its process, why not allow reverification? Students deserve a fair and just evaluation." Prem Prakash Yadav, state executive of SCS, stated, "The refusal to release the PhD entrance exam question papers raises serious concerns about transparency. We demand that the university make the question papers public and ensure a fair admission process." Shubham Kharwar from

NSUI, Lucknow University, criticised the administration, stating, "The university's failure to implement the reservation policy in some departments is unacceptable. Higher education must be accessible to all sections of society, and we demand immediate corrective

action." The Sanyukt Chhatra Morcha warned that if their demands are not addressed soon, they will escalate their movement and take further action against the administration.

2 patients undergo Rezum procedure at RMLIMS

Lucknow (PNS): The urology and renal transplant department of at Dr Ram Manohar Lohia Institute of Medical Sciences (RMLIMS) has successfully performed the Rezum procedure on two patients who were deemed unfit for conventional transurethral resection of the prostate (TURP) surgery, a senior doctor said.

The team was guided by head of the department, Prof Ishwar Ram Dhayal. The Rezum procedure was specifically chosen for these patients, who had multiple co-morbidities, including coronary artery dis-ease, uncontrolled diabetes, hypertension, bleeding disorders, stroke, and those on blood thinners that could not be stopped.

Prof Dhayal explained that the Rezum procedure is a minimally invasive, non-surgical treatment for benign prostatic hyperplasia (BPH), also known as an enlarged prostate. This innovative approach uses

water vapor therapy to shrink the prostate tissue, offering effective symptom relief and improving quality of life. The surgical team included Prof Alok Srivastava, Prof

Sanjeet Singh, Dr Shivani, Dr Nandan, Dr Nitesh, Dr Praveen, Dr Himanshu, and Dr Abhishek.

From the anaesthesia team, Prof PK Das and Dr Shareef were also present.

LU PhD scholar selected for Laura Bassi Scholarship

Lucknow (PNS): Shivangee Dubey, a PhD scholar from the biochemistry Department Lucknow University, has been selected for the Laura Bassi Scholarship for the Winter 2024 session.

As part of the award, she will receive editorial editing assistance worth USD 1,000. "A total of about 1,000 applica-

tions were submitted worldwide for the Laura Bassi Scholarship, and only 14 candidates were selected as awardees. Among them, Shivangee is one of just two awardees from India. The Laura Bassi Scholarship, established in 2018, aims to provide editorial assistance to postgraduates and junior academics whose research focuses on neglected topics within their disciplines. The scholarships are awarded three times a year. Laura Bassi (1711-1778) was the first woman to hold a professorship in Europe and the second woman to earn a doctorate," LU spokesperson Durgesh Srivastava said. Shivangee is pursuing PhD under the guidance of Prof

Siddhartha Mishra. Her research focuses on cancer biology and therapy, particular-ly in cancer bioinformatics and drug discovery.
"She is addressing the critical

challenges in managing triple-negative breast cancer (TNBC), a subtype of breast cancer that is difficult to treat and causes high mortality in women. The prevalence of TNBC in India is around 30% of all breast cancer cases, higher than the global average of 25%. TNBC is difficult to diagnose and requires specific therapies. Shivangee's study aims to identify TNBC-specific hub genes and pathways to better understand the molecular mechanisms using bioinformatics and in-silico computational biology. Several hub genes contributing to the progression of breast cancer have already been identified," Mishra explained.

He also noted that the study explores natural flavonoids as potential therapeutic agents, introducing a novel herbal-based approach to TNBC treatment. This could help enhance the efficacy of chemotherapy while reducing its side effects," he said. Vice-Chancellor Prof Alok Kumar Rai congratulated Shivangee on the award and encouraged her to continue her impactful

PARADIP PORT AUTHORITY e-TENDER CALL NOTICE No. EM/PED-03/2025 No. EM/PED/TECH-03/2025/118 Date:28/01/2025

Name of the work - Management of Power Distribution System of Paradip Port Authority. Estimated Cost: Rs.22,20,30,322/- only excluding GST. Last date & time of submission of bid: dt. 19/02/2025 up to 18:00 Hrs.

Refer our Website for details https://enrocure.gov.in/enrocure/ann Sd/- Executive Engineer (E), PED-II PPA/PR/60/2024-2025 dtd.31.01.2025

e/Sealed tenders are hereby invited for the purchase and supply of following items: Sr.No. Name of Work/Item Period/Tentative Qty i. Vitamin AD3 04 MT 04 MT 02 Month Vitamin E-50 b) Drilling and installation of 1 No. new tubewell at Verka Patiala Dairy. For Verka Bathinda Dairy
a) 80 ML paper cone sleeve with sugar rolled.
i. Strawberry Black current Carame b) Lids for 80 ML ice cream cone. 5 Lac Strawberry Black current c) Ice cream cones 40 ML for ice cream Butter scotch
 Chocolate
 d) Lids for 40 ML for ice cream cones 20 Lac 20 Lac Butter scotch
 Chocolate
 125 ML IML cups for Ice cream Cookies and Crumb Muddy Chocolate 50000 No's 50000 No's 50000 No's Almond Camival American Nut 50000 No's Kaju Anjir 50000 No's Mango Strawberry Pink Guava 20000 No's 20000 No's 20000 No's Litchi f) Polyfilm for 60 ML bar and ice cand i. Choco delight 2500 kg 1000 kg 500 kg 500 kg Rabri kulfi Mango bar Cola bar Orange bar Mango duet Black current 1000 kg 1000 kg 500 kg Rajbhog 2000 kg Pista No Added Sugar 2000 kg 2000 kg One year with extension b) e- Tender for hiring of vehicles for supply of Milk and Milk Products c) Hiring of can route vehicles for lifting of milk from DCS to MCC capacity 1 ton to 2 01.03.2025 to 28.02.2027 Supply of indonesian Steam Coal 1500 MT For Verka Ludhiana Dairy
Hiring of vehicles (Tampoo/Trucks)for supply of Verka Products/ Ghee/SMP etc. between One year with extension Verka Ludhiana Dairy and other stations For Verka Faridkot Dairy
Hiring of :a) Insulated road milk tanker for transportation of milk from MCC's to various milk plants Cap.10000 kg-2 Cap.15000 kg-1 in Punjab etc. on rate contract. b) Pick up or its equivalent vehicle for lifiting the milk from MPCS/DF to MCC at route 5 02 No's c) Ice factory at sadiq (Cap.20000 ltr per day) 01 No. the state of Punjab.

1. For complete details regarding above tender (NIT), please visit our website i.e. www.verka.coop & e Tendering portal i.e. eproc.punjab.gov.in. 2. Corrigendum, if any, will be uploaded on website only

NA/12/27843/2023/41301 Dated CHD :- 1/31/2025

Dy. General Manager (Purchase)

Maha Kumbh: Many pilgrims forced to walk long distances

PTI PRAYAGRAJ

Tt is quarter to 10 pm on Thursday. A group of more than a dozen pilgrims, tired after a nearly 30-km walk to and from Triveni Sangam, take a rest for a while on the side of a road near a mustard field on the outskirts of Prayagraj. It is still eight km for them to

find the next transport bus and reunite with fellow devotees from Rajasthan at Beli Kachar for their onward journey.

Ghanshyam, one of the pil-grims, told PTI, "We have been walking from Triveni Sangam as no transport was available. Police officers helped us at a crossing but after that, we found no water, tea stalls or transport options along the roadside."

Devotees continue to face transportation challenges, with many forced to walk long distances in search of transport.

The Maha Kumbh, considered among the holiest Hindu pilgrimages held once every 12 years on the banks of Triveni Sangam, started on January 13 and will continue till February 26. So far, nearly 30 crore devotees have taken a dip at the confluence of Ganga, Yamuna and Saraswati in the ongoing megaspiritual gathering.
Some had initially gone to the

bus stand but said they could not find any transport.
"The police are assisting the

devotees in boarding private vehicles but the drivers are refusing to move ahead unless they get long-distance passengers," Baboolal, another devotee who claimed he walked for several kilometres, said.

"We took a dip at Sangam at midnight and have been walk-

Suresh, a pilgrim from Sawai Madhopur in Rajasthan said his group completed their Maha Kumbh bath. They had heard about the stampede during Mauni Amavasya but they did not appear to be deterred by the tragedy which killed 30 people and injured 60.

After the Maha Kumbh, they planned to visit Kashi Vishwanath in Varanasi and the Ram temple in Ayodhya. A new route, opened before Maha Kumbh, connects Stanley Road to Malaka Chauraha and is known as the "Steel Bridge

Route".

Many pilgrims said large parking areas have been set up in Beli Kachar, about 10 km from the main city, to enable pilgrims to easily park their vehicles before they are cleared to proceed to Triveni Sangam through any available transport or else on foot. There are small shops and toilets near the parking areas but the entire 10-km stretch, with sections of both paved and unpaved roads, from there to the city generally remains deserted.

Several ordinary devotees were seen walking long distances on foot because not everyone was lucky enough to find the much-in-demand shuttle or e-rickshaw. A policeman engaged in assistance duty near the Beli Kachhar Parking 2 told PTI: "All vehicles are being parked here and from here devotees are mostly proceeding to the ghats on foot

Anup Verma, who brought an elderly pilgrim from Guwahati to Maha Kumbh, recounted his ordeal. "Our car was parked 15-20 km away in Sahanason. On ing since morning. A long, tir- Thursday, we somehow reached



An aerial view of buses and other vehicles piled up in a jam at Andawa to Saison road owing to huge rush of devotees at the Maha Kumbh Mela 2025, in Prayagraj

Bank Road but all routes were barricaded, leaving us with no transport. We had to walk all the way," he told PTI.

"An elderly man in our group fell ill on the way. We somehow reached Sahanason hungry and thirsty. We could board our car on the highway only after the

traffic cleared," he added. Thousands of pilgrims returning from Maha Kumbh remain stranded at Varanasi Cantt and Banaras railway stations. Some devotees said they missed their trains due to the rush while others were stuck because of train cancellations.

Bobby Maya Limbu from Sonitpur in Assam said she had visited Maha Kumbh with her group and taken a holy dip

at Sangam on February 26 before travelling to Ayodhya. She reached Varanasi on February 30. "Our train was on Thursday but we missed it due to the heavy crowd," she said. Dinanath, a devotee from Gaya, said he and his family had been stuck in Varanasi for two days. "On Thursday, we tried to board

that we felt suffocated and had to get off," he said. Since then, they have been staying at a shelter outside the platform. Prayagraj District Magistrate Ravindra Kumar Mandar said on Thursday evening, "All devotees (who had come for Mauni Amavasya)

are returning. The police have

been instructed to remove

our train but it was so crowded

diversions and barricades. There will be no restrictions on vehicle entry on January 31, February 1 and February 4." He added that diversions would only be in place on February 2 and 3 for the Basant Panchami bathing festival. "There is a separate process for vehicle entry in the Mela area, which will be communicated by the

"There are no vehicle restrictions in Prayagraj Commissionerate," he added. Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Prayagraj Ajay Pal Sharma told PTI on Friday that the traffic situation in the district had returned to normal. "Apart from the usual addition-

fair authorities and the DIG," he

al traffic due to Maha Kumbh. the situation is under control. We are coordinating with various departments to ensure a smooth traffic flow and regulating it at critical points," Sharma

Assistant Commissioner of Police (Traffic) Shailendra Singh Parihar said, "We are focusing our resources on major crossings, which also serve as entry points for incoming traffic. Congestion has been observed in areas like Gohania."

He added that restrictions on external vehicles had been lifted. "Vehicles from outside can now reach designated parking areas in Maha Kumbh. We are also regulating their movement," Parihar said.

Judicial probe panel visits stampede spot, hospital

three-member judicial A commission set up by the Uttar Pradesh government to probe the Maha Kumbh stamprobe the Mana Kumon stam-pede reached Prayagraj and vis-ited the incident spot at Sangam Nose on Friday, an official said.

The panel is headed by Harsh Kumar, a retired judge of the Allahabad High Court, and comprises former director general of police (DGP) VK Gupta and retired IAS officer DK Singh.

"The commission is holding meetings with officials concerned here. We may also visit the incident spot later in the day," an official told PTI earlier in the day.
Sangam Nose is a triangular

landmass that is sandwiched between the river Ganga in the north and the river Yamuna in the south, before they merge. In the afternoon, the panel visited Sangam Nose, where the stampede took place, accompa-nied by Mela Adhikari Vijay Kiran Anand, DIG Vaibhav Krishna, and SSP Rajesh Dwivedi, who kept briefing

the panel members. The panel moved around the area amid heavy security comprising scores of personnel from the state police and Rapid Action Force, holding a rope cordon around the commission members and officers.

From there, the commission went to the Swaroop Rani Nehru Hospital in the city, where those injured in the stampede are admitted. They interacted with some patients, their kin and hospital staff for an update on the situation, it was learnt. By 5 PM, the panel returned to Circuit House before departing for Lucknow. "I don't want to comment right now. Today we just visited the spots and reviewed the situation," panel head Harsh Kumar said in a brief statement to reporters.

The panel was formed in the wake of an early Wednesday stampede that killed 30 devotees at Sangam Nose where they had gone for a dip on the occasion of Mauni Amavasva. The commission has a month to wrap up its investigation but will try to expedite it. Kumar had said on Thursday.

According to police, the stampede broke out as the crowd jumped barricades, crushing those waiting for their turn on the other side.

The judicial panel's visit comes even as millions of devotees flocked to the Maha Kumbh to partake in the Hindu pilgrimage held once every 12 years on the banks of Triveni Sangam the confluence of Ganga, Yamuna, and mythical

Prayagraj unites to support massive influx of devotees

PNS/PTI ■ MAHAKUMBH NAGAR

People from every corner of Uttar Pradesh have stepped up to support and assist the massive gathering of devotees at Mahakumbh Nagar. Inspired by Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, individuals from all religions, classes and communities are coming forward to aid the pilgrims. Residents of Prayagraj, along with those from Lucknow, Ayodhya, Kashi, Pratapgarh, Sultanpur, Kaushambi, Chitrakoot, and Mirzapur are actively arranging food and water for the devote According to a government spokesman, doctors, teachers and volunteers from various fields have also joined the efforts to serve the pilgrims. Witnessing an unprecedented influx of devotees, even robotic surgeons from England and leading heart and vascular specialists from across India are stepping in to provide medical

assistance. In an extraordinary gesture of hospitality, schools and religious institutions have opened their doors to accommodate visitors, the spokesman pointed out. In Prayagraj, a 65-member team from The Pom Academy distributes free food and water at the railway station and surrounding areas. Food packets are also being provided via mobile vans to those fac- an example for the entire ing commuting challenges. Additionally, 12 school rooms have been prepared for temporary lodging, while staff from various schools are seen actively helping devotees on the

With the support of the UP government, a diverse group of professionals - from robotic surgeons from England to local teachers - are dedicated to serving the devotees at Maha Kumbh, the spokesman added. At Apollo Hospital in Lucknow, a team of doctors provides online medical assist: grims, with renowned vascular surgeon Dr Yashpal Singh offering virtual consultations. Additionally, Dr Waliullah Siddiqui, a specialist in robotic surgery from England, has travelled from Lucknow to Prayagraj to provide direct medical care.

Similarly, Dr Avinash Kumar Singh, a leading cardiologist from Medanta Hospital, is diagnosing and prescribing medicines online for pilgrims from Lucknow and Ayodhya.

Many volunteers distribute water and food packets to the devotees along the routes leading to Prayagraj from Ayodhya, Sultanpur and Pratapgarh.

The people of UP are showcasing an extraordinary confluence of faith and humanity, setting nation, the spokesman claimed. Upon entering Prayagraj, one is immediately immersed in an atmosphere of devotion, social harmony and goodwill. Every day, a sea of devotees arrives at Mahakumbh Nagar to take a holy dip in the sacred Triveni. In a remarkable display of unity, Muslim community members extended their warm welcome alongside Sanatan devotees. Outside the Jama Masiid in the Chowk area, a large gathering of people greeted the pilgrims with chants of

them farewell. Dr Anjali Kesari, a local, summed up the sentiment: "In Allahabad, we don't see the Maha Kumbh pilgrims as out-siders, we are hosts and they are our guests." She shared how her neighbourhood in Chowk, close to the railway station, banded together to serve food to weary pilgrims.

Har Har Gange', offering flow-

ers and angavastram as a ges-

ture of reverence before bidding

Many locals have cleared up spaces outside their homes for visitors to rest at night. "For us, Kumbh is not just a religious fair; it is a confluence of humanity," Dr Kesari said.

City hotels are not far behind in lending a pro bono hand to the weary. Alok Singh, who runs a Vitthal Hotel in Civil Lines, has converted his 100-bed dormitory into a free rest stop for pil-

grims.
"After taking a holy dip, many devotees are exhausted when they return to Civil Lines and head towards the railway station. It's a part of Prayagraj's culture to help others, and this is our way of contributing," he

Dr Mrityunjay Parmar, an assistant professor in the English Department said in the aftermath of the stampede, Allahabad University opened its campus and hostels to returning pilgrims before they under took their journey.

Apart from accommodation, the university campus has been designated as a holding area for Kumbh, where officials and students are working together to arrange meals for pilgrims. In the old city area, Yadgar-e-Husaini Inter College, a Muslim minority institution established in 1942 near GT Road, opened its doors for the pilgrims to take a rest. The college is close to the bus stand and the Civil Lines Railway Station.

Dr Krishna Singh, a dentist running a bhandara late into the night for devotees on Harshvardhan Marg in Sector 17 of the fair, said, "We keep the bhandara open late so that no one goes hungry. Here, it operates from 5 pm to 2 am.

Over 700 trains run in two days to help devotees return home

Mahakumbh Nagar (PNS): The Mauni Amavasya festival at the Maha Kumbh witnessed more than eght crore devotees taking a holy dip in the Sangam. The flow of devotees continued into the second day of the festival, with about two crore devotees taking the sacred bath on January 30. To ensure the safe and smooth movement of crores of devotees, the Prayagraj Railway Division operated a record number of over 400 Mela Special trains in the past two days, successfully transporting more than 20 lakh devotees to their destination stations. In view of the massive crowd, pilgrims were sent safely through designated holding areas and colour-coded shelters.

On January 29, over 400 Mela Special trains departed from various railway stations across the city. On January 30, an additional 300 trains, including additional 500 trains, including approximately 175 special trains, were run. In just two days, the Prayagraj Railway Division successfully facilitated the travel of over 20 lakh devotees, ensuring a smooth and organised return journey

for all. Most of these trains were operated from Prayagraj Junction, and special trains were also run from Naini, Chheoki, Subedarganj (NCR), Prayag, Phaphamau (NR), and Rambagh and Jhunsi stations (Northeast Railway).

Govt concealing stampede death figures: Akhilesh

Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav, on Friday, accused the Uttar Pradesh government of concealing the true number of deaths at the Maha Kumbh in Prayagraj, alleging that officials are withholding information to avoid paying compensation.
"The government is hiding the

number of people who died in Kumbh as they don't want to pay the compensation. The families of the deceased must be informed at the earliest and a list of all those who lost their lives should be made public," Yadav said.

He said even the religious leaders and sages had come out openly against the author-ities, accusing the Uttar Pradesh government of spreading falsehood over the cause of stampede and consequent casualties.

The Samajwadi Party president alleged that Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath had lost the confidence of the people as the government was hiding the number of people who died during the stampede. The comments come in the wake of the pre-dawn stampede at the Sangam area

of the Maha Kumbh early Wednesday as millions of pil-grims jostled for space to take a holy dip on the occasion of one of the most auspicious days of Mauni Amayasya. The stampede claimed at least 30 lives and left 60 injured.

Yadav asked the Uttar Pradesh government to provide medical care, food and clothes to devotees affected at the Maha Kumbh.

Giving suggestions to the state government regarding the arrangements at the Maha Kumbh, Yadav in a post on X said, "Appeal should be made to open dhabas at various places day and night for food and water and organise bhandaras."

"Arrangements should be made to transport medical and paramedical staff from across the state to the people trapped in remote areas through two-wheelers of volunteers," he added in the same

Yadav said, "Supply of petrol and diesel should be ensured to the vehicles trapped for miles around the Maha Kumbh and across the state. Medicine shops should be allowed to remain open day

Four more IPS, 3 PPS officers deployed for Basant Panchami

Lucknow (PNS): Following the stampede in Maha Kumbh, the Uttar Pradesh government is making more efforts to ensure peaceful Shahi Snan on the occasion of Basant Panchami on coming Monday. To strengthen the security forces, the government has sent four superintendents of Police (SPs) and three additional superintendents of Police (Addl SP) level officers to Prayagraj for Maha Kumbh

The four IPS officers include Deependra Nath Chaudhary, Lakshminiyas Mishra R Dhari Chaurasia and Shravan Kumar Singh. Apart from this, Addl SPs Vikas Chandra Tripathi, Om Prakash Singh and Praveen Kumar Yadav have also been sent to Maha Kumbh.

Earlier, after the tragic accident in Prayagraj Maha Kumbh, the government had deployed a team of five more experienced officers at Sangam Nose. These officers included one IAS and four PCS officers. These are the officers who have previously served in Prayagraj. Senior IAS officers Ashish Goyal and Bhanu Chandra Goswami, who served as divisional commissioner and district magistrate in Prayagraj during Kumbh in the year 2019, have already been deployed in Maha Kumbh.

Prez speech gives no hope of welfare measure: Mayawati

Former chief minister of Uttar Pradesh and Bahujan Samaj Party supremo Mayawati, on Friday, reacted strongly to the speech of President Droupadi Murmu before Budget 2025, claiming that she had no hope of any "welfare" agenda for the common people. The BSP chief has reacted on the social media site X. Mayawati wrote, "In the inauguration of the first budget session of Parliament after the Lok Sabha elections, the speech of the President is less of a consolation than a relief and hope for crores of poor, hardworking and middle class Bahujans suffering from tremendous inflation, poverty, unemployment, GST tax burden, reduction in domestic savings etc. in the

country. The BSP chief wrote: "The policy of the Centre should focus on eradicating the pain and suffering of the poor, labourers, farmers, middle class etc.

Instead of increasing the number of a handful of big capitalists and rich people and giving them every kind of benefit, the government should concentrate on welfare of the Bahujan community only then public interest is possible in future." Deshhit is incomplete without 'Sarvajan Hitaya and Sukhaya', she added. On the first day of the budget session of the 18th Lok Sabha on Friday, President Droupadi Murmu addressed the joint sitting of both the houses of Parliament. President Murmu started her address by expressing her views on the Maha Kumbh accident. She praised the schemes of the Central government in her address. She said that 70+ elderly people got the benefit of Ayushman, and the loan limit for small businessmen was doubled. Also, the target of three crore new houses will be achieved soon. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman will present the budget for the

Procedures made for demolition of unauthorised constructions

The Uttar Pradesh government has formulated a set of procedures for the demolition of unauthorised constructions. The rules will apply to all municipal bodies and urban development authorities. The agencies have been directed to take steps for serving notices, granting opportunity for personal hearing, before passing a final order on carrying out demolition.

The latest directions were issued by the state Urban Development Department to all local bodies on January 27 for compliance, and before that, an order was also issued by Chief Secretary Manoj Kumar Singh on January 15, to ensure compliance with different directions/orders issued by the Supreme

The directive issued to urban agencies state that no demolition should be carried out without prior show-cause notice being issued to the affected party and agencies must wait for 15 days from the date of receipt of notice to order a demolition.

'We further direct that if the statute provides for an appellate opportunity and time for filing the same, or even if it does not do so, the order will not be implemented for a period of 15 days from the date of receipt thereof... An opportunity should be given to the owner/occu-

pier to remove the unauthorised construction or demolish the same within a period of 15 days," the order says. To prevent allegations that such notices are often backdated, an intimation of

serving of notice should be sent to the office of the district magistrate by email, and an automated reply acknowledging receipt of the mail should be issued by the office of the district magistrate.

Rules also mandate that every municipal/local authority shall assign a dedicated digital portal within three months, and the details of serving/pasting of notice, the reply, the show-cause notice, and the order passed thereon should be available on the portal. The designated authority shall also

give an opportunity to hear the person affected, and the minutes of the hearing shall be recorded. Rules also stipulate that the final order of demolition should mention if the unauthorised construction is compoundable (can be regularised upon payment of charges/fee); details of any portion of the unauthorised/non-com-

poundable, and it should also mention

why demolition is the only option

available. The any violation of these rules would lead to the initiation of contempt proceedings in addition to prosecution against officials concerned.

Eight devotees killed in road accident

Lucknow (PNS): A vehicle carrying pilgrims from Prayagraj after the Maha Kumbh bath met with an accident on Friday on the highway near Kusumhi Kala under Nandganj police station of Ghazipur district. Eight people died in the accident while 12 people were injured. The injured were admitted to the district hospital. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath took cognisance of the accident. He expressed condolences to the bereaved families of the deceased.

The chief minister asked the district administration officials to provide proper treatment to the injured. Along with this, he has also wished for the speedy recovery of the injured. Superintendent of Police Dr Iraj Raja said that eight devotees had died in the mishap. About 20 devotees from Bansgaon Gorakhpur were returning home by pickup after taking bath in Prayagraj Maha Kumbh, when this accident happened near Revasa village of Kusumhi under Nandganj police

station area. Meanwhile, an FIR has been registered against a man from Bareilly after a video of him making outrageous comments about women at the Maha Kumbh surfaced online, police said on Friday. A case has been registered against Sabir Hussain, a resident of Mirganj in Bareilly, under Section 353 (spreading false information, rumours) of the BNS at the Mirganj police station after investigation of the video of insulting comments about women at the Maha Kumbh, said CO Anjani Kumar Tiwari. Deputy Inspector Yatendra Kumar has said in the FIR that a viral post was received in which Hussain, a resident of Mirganj, broadcast fake news on Kumbh. It was said in the complaint that women are being stripped naked in the Yogi government.

Yogi conducts aerial survey of Ayodhya

commencement of Maha Kumbh, a massive surge of devotees has flooded Prayagraj. Many pilgrims are also traveling to Ayodhya and Kashi for darshan. In light of this, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath conducted an aerial survey of Ayodhya on Friday to assess the arrangements. He reviewed the situation and issued necessary directives to ensure smooth management and convenience for the devotees.

For the past few days, Ayodhya has been witnessing an unex-pected surge in devotees, with

Lucknow (PNS): With the lakhs arriving daily from across the country and abroad to seek the blessings of Ram Lalla. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath is closely monitoring the situation to ensure seamless arrangements for the devotees. During an aerial survey, Chief Minister Yogi issued directives to effectively manage the growing crowd, maintain smooth traffic flow, and further enhance facilities.

Under his leadership, the administrative team remains fully prepared, ensuring that devotees can have a hassle-free darshan experience.

Corporate and Services Department, Star House, Vibhuti Khand, Gomti Nagar, Zonal Office, Vibhuti Khand, Gomti Nagar, Zonal Office, Bank of India

Requirement of Premises For Shifting of

Gosaiganj Branch

Detailed Notification inviting offers for Shifting of our Gosaigan Branch, Lucknow Zone within 1-1.5 Km from the existing Branch Premises is available on our web site www.bankofindia.co.in. Prescribed format for submission of offer may be obtained from our Office at Bank of India, Star House, Gomti Nagar, 1- Vibhuti Khand, Lucknow- 226010 OR may be downloaded from our Website

www.bankofindia.co.in. Last date for submission of offer is up to 05.02.2025 up to 4.00 PM.

Date: 01.02.2025

Deputy Zonal Manager

Providing excellent services to Maha Kumbh devotees our priority: Sharma

 $D_{(DC)\,\text{Kaushal Raj Sharma}}^{\text{ivisional Commissioner}}$ said that providing excellent services to the devotees coming to Maha Kumbh is our priority. He visited Shri Kashi Dham here on Friday and inspect the arrangements. He said we are ensuring that the devotees do not face any kind of difficulty and adequate arrangements are being made for security and medical facil-

Sharma directed the officers concerned to fix the darshan period in the temple as per the situation of each day in view of the number of devotees. He said in view of Maha Kumbh, better facilities are being provided to the devotees visiting Shri Kashi Vishwanath Dham. All facilities being provided in the Dham are also being inspected frequently by the DC apart from other officers. including District Magistrate S Rajalingam, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Vishwa Bhushan along with top police officials and arrangements are being being closely monitored. Besides, the Dham administra-



Divisional Commissioner KR Sharma inspecting Kashi Vishwanath Temple in Varanasi on Friday.

tion is ensuring proper clean-liness, water supply, traffic system, security arrangements, medical facilities and other essential services. The convenience and safety of the devotees is being given priority by the temple administration. The officials visited various places and gave necessary instructions to improve the arrangements.

Meanwhile, the District Disaster Management Authority has ensured tight arrangements to make the

Kashi visit of the devotees safe and smooth as a large number of devotees are also coming to Varanasi. Along with proper arrangements for safety and protection of devotees coming to Varanasi from possible accidents/ disasters, advisory has also been issued from time to time to general public in view of Maha Kumbh. Adequate number of medical teams along with ambulances have been deployed at major places of the district where large number of

department has been kept on alert mode to deal with disasters like fire. A 24X7 control room has been set up for the assistance and information of the devotees, whose telephone number is 0542-22970111. About 40 holding areas have been established in the district for the devotees to rest where adequate number of mattresses, quilts, drinking water, toilets, mobile toilets etc have been arranged and in each holding area, along with nodal officer, sanitation workers have also been deployed. By motivating the voluntary organisations of the district, lunch packets are being distributed to devotees in the holding areas. For the convenience of devotees, toilets already established in the district have been displayed on hoardings at various places through maps. To reach the holding areas established for the devotees, maps have been displayed through hoardings at major markets, intersections etc of the district. In view of

safety of devotees, NDRF and

Water Police personnel have

been deployed at the ghats.

BJP sets up Seva Sahayog camps PIONEER NEWS SERVICE VARANASI

 $T^{he\ Bharatiya\ Janata\ Party}_{(BJP)\ is\ fully\ engaged\ in}$ serving the devotees arriving in large numbers in Kashi, Mirzapur and other districts for worship during ongoing Maha Kumbh in Prayagraj. Under the leadership of BJP Kashi area president Dilip Patel, party workers are providing breakfast, food and other necessary help to the devotees. The administration has made arrangements for accommodation in various schools, where BIP workers are also helping in transporting the devotees. Proper parking arrangements have also been made.

The BJP has set up Seva Sahayog camps at many places in the city, where food and other facilities have been arranged for devotees. Regional party president was present in the Seva Sahayog camp set up in Chandpur (Lahartara) since Friday morning and khichdi, apple, laai laddu and hot tea are being continuously distributed to devotees. Patel said after the Mauni Amayasya bath of Maha Kumbh in Prayagraj, devotees from every state are reaching Kashi in large numbers. In view of huge crowd of devotees, BJP workers



are engaged in service so that no one faced any inconvenience. Patel said party workers are constantly working in coordination with the administration so that the devotees do not face any problems like accommodation, food and transportation. He appealed to BJP workers,

public representatives as well as social service organisations, business groups and youth units to come forward and cooperate in this holy work of service so that the devotees coming to Kashi do not face any problem. He said the guest is a form of God has been our 'sanskaar' (culture) and this is the time to make it a reality. On the occasion Nagendra Singh Raghuvanshi, Rajesh Rajbhar, Suresh Singh, Arvind Patel, Ashwani Pandev, Madhukar Pandey, Hemant Singh, Gyan Patel, RD Yadav, Amit Patel 'Rinku', Ghanshyam Patel, Sunil Mishra, Brijesh Patel, Ashok Mishra and Shashi Vishwakarma were also present.

Ganga Aarti on Varanasi ghats stopped till Feb 5

uthorities have stopped Athe Ganga Aarti performed on the ghats of Varanasi for the general public till February 5, considering a surge in crowd. Police Commissioner Mohit Agarwal has appealed to the people of Kashi not to leave their house unnecessarily and to cooperate with the devo-

Ganga Seva Nidhi President Sushant Mishra on Friday said the Ganga Aarti per-formed at Dashashwamedh Ghat will remain closed for the general public till February 5.

Similarly, the committees per-forming Ganga Aarti at Sheetla Ghat, Assi Ghat and other ghats have also appealed to the general public, visitors and devotees not to come for it till February 5. A large number of devotees returning from Prayagraj Maha Kumbh are still stranded at Varanasi Cantt and Banaras railway stations. Many devotees said that they could not catch their train due to the excessive crowd. In addition, hundreds have stranded at stations due to the cancellation of some of

Bobby Maya Limbu from Assam's Sonicpur said she had come to Prayagraj with her group and bathed at Sangam Ghat on January 26 and reached Varanasi on Thursday to board a train, but could not, because of the rush.

Dinanath from Gaya district, said he had been stranded in Banaras with his wife and children for the last two days. On Thursday, he tried to catch the train, but due to suffocation had to get down. Since then, he is staying in a

night shelter built off the platform. Rajat Singh, the night shelter manager, said the shelter was built especially to cater to the passengers coming to Kumbh. Though one can stay for a night there, there no food arrangement, he Cantt Assistant said. Commissioner of Police Vidush Saxena said after ever since the Mauni Amavasya, the influx of devotees has increased in Kashi. He said security forces are constantly patrolling the station. Saxena urged the devotees to defer coming to Varanasi for a few days till the crowd abates.

Medical arrangements made for pilgrims in Kashi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE VARANASI

Droper medical arrange-Pments have been ensured for the devotees coming to Varanasi in view of Maha Kumbh Mela as per the instruc-tions of Divisional Commissioner Kaushal Raj Sharma. For this Deputy Chief Medical Officer Dr Piyush Rai has been nominated as the nodal officer at the district level. A total of 20 government sector and 21 private sector hospitals have been identified for the devotees coming to the entry points and major places of the district so that immediate medical facilities can be provided to them in case of any



A devotee being rushed to hospital in Varanasi on Friday.

emergency. Beds have been trict. Besides, private sector reserved in the identified government hospitals of the dis-

hospitals have been directed to provide free first aid to the vis-

iting devotees and refer them to government hospitals as per need. Medical teams with ambulances have been deployed at Cantt, Manduadih, Shivpur and Kashi railway stations of the district. Medical teams with ambulances have been deployed at Kashi Krishak Inter College, Jagatpur Degree College and Rajatalab flyover bridge, which have been temporarily constructed as bus stops. Besides, medical teams have also been deployed at Shri Kashi Vishwanath temple on 24-hour basis and medical team has been deployed at Lalita Ghat for devotees coming from Dashaswamedh Ghat. Ayushman Arogya Mandir is

already operating in Shri Kashi Vishwanath Dham premises, where medical team is deployed. In view of the large number of devotees coming from Kashi Vishwanath temple and other ghats, a medical team with ambulance has been deployed at Chittaranjan Park. In view of large number of devotees in the district and to work in coordination with the police department, a medical team has been deployed on a 24-hour basis at Godowlia police outpost. So far, medical facilities have been provided a total of 11,301 devotees, including 5,877 men, 4,801 women and 623 children, by

Prayers offered for stampede victims

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE VARANASI

Prayers were offered at Rajghat here on Friday to seek salvation for those killed in the recent stampede during Maha Kumbh. Expressing deep sorrow over the tragic incident, tribute was paid on the banks of Ganga while wishing for the speedy recovery of the injured. After Mauni Amavasya bath in Prayagraj, thousands of devo-tees took a holy dip in Mokshadayini' Maa Ganga here. A public awareness campaign for cleanliness was run at Rajghat under the joint aegis of Namami Gange Ganga Vichar Manch and 137 CETF 39 GTC Ganga Task Force. District coordinator of



Namami Gange Ganga Vichar Manch Shivam Agrahari and Ganga Task Force Subedar Devendra Basnet made people aware about cleanliness since morning. Through loudspeakers the bathers were appealed to maintain cleanliness and safety on the banks of Ganga.

People were prevented from using soap and shampoo while bathing. They were instructed to bathe behind the barricades. Ganga Task Force personnel, including Jai Vishwakarma, Bhim Singh and Vishal Agrahari were present during the programme.

Extra workers deployed for cleaning of ghats



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE VARANAS

reeping in mind the conve-Keeping in milia the convenience of the devotees coming to Varanasi in view of Maha Kumbh, the Varanasi Municipal Corporation (VMC) has arranged drinking water tankers and mobile toilets at various places in the city. Drinking water tankers have been installed at a total of 44 places and 23 mobile toilets at Kumbh shelter places (night shelters), railway/bus stations

The mobile toilets installed are being cleaned continuously keeping the convenience of the general devotees in mind and direction indicators related to toilets/urinals have been installed at 800 different places in the city. A total of 186 public toilets in the city run by the VMC are being cleaned sever-

al times a day. Besides, 700 additional sanitation workers have been deployed for continuous cleaning of the ghats of the Ganga river who are continuously doing so. The VMC is continuously getting additional cleaning work done in the streets along with major roads like Dashashwamedh, Godowlia, Assi, Chowk, Kal Bhairav etc. All health inspectors and zonal sanitation officers of the VMC are continuously monitoring the cleanliness system.

Besides, a total of 80 temporary night shelters have been built by the VMC at various places in the city, in which adequate arrangements have been made for the stay of a total of 4,000 people in 13 permanent and 67 temporary night shelters already operating.
Arrangements have been made

in all the said night shelters for beds, blankets, drinking water, toilets, bonfires/ heaters, propleaning, roasted gran gery, milk/biscuits for children, food, care takers in three shifts etc. Free food is also being distributed to the devotees staying in shelter homes. The VMC officers are continuously monitoring the night shelters every day and a help desk control room has been set up in Kashi Integrated Control Command Centre for any complaint and problem. The help desk is being operated in three shifts of eight hours each for the complaints received on toll free number 1533. The concerned are being informed for prompt disposal of complaints. separate register has also been kept for this purpose. Hoardings/flexes etc have been installed at railway/ bus stations and other public places to publicise the helpline number. Directional boards/flexes etc have been installed on major routes and intersections to inform the devotees about the night shelters and to facilitate their access. The facilities are also being publicised on the social media platforms-Facebook, Twitter/X, Instagram of VMC for the convenience of

Prof Mohan gets award

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR $F^{\rm ormer\ Director,\ National}_{\rm Sugar\ Institute\ (NSI),\ Prof}$ Narendra Mohan, has been

conferred the "Best Talent & Knowledge for Sugar and Ethanol Industry" Award at the Sugar-Ethanol and Bioenergy Awards (SEIA 2025) during th and Ethanol International Conference. The award which is considered as "Oscar Award" in the sugar industry was given by famous TV and cine star Hina Khan at a ceremony held at New Delhi on Thursday. This award recognises remarkable achievements



of Prof Mohan whichare driving progress and inspiring excellence in the sugar, ethanol and bioenergy industries.

Conference on innovative Al solutions for SUD on Feb 3, 4

Chhatrapati Shahu Ji Maharaj University (CSJMU) is all set to host a two-day National Conference on Innovative AI Solutions for Sustainable Urban Development (SUD) on February 3 and 4. This conference will bring together vice-chancellors, academicians, policymakers, and industry leaders from across the country. The event is being organised under the aegis of the Association of Indian Universities (AIU) in collaboration with the Chhatrapati Shahu Ji Maharaj University and the Kotak School of Sustainability at IIT Kanpur.

(PNS): The The conference will be held under the leadership of CSJMU Vice-Chancellor Prof Vinay Kumar Pathak and Prof Manindra Agrawal, Director of IIT Kanpur. The inaugural session will take place on February 3 at IIT Kanpur, while the closing session on February 4 will be held at CSJMU. The event is expected to witness the participation of more than 20 vice-chancellors, 36 faculty members from various higher education institutions (HEIs), and 54 participants from 20 innovative startups. The conference will focus on leveraging AI for the development of sus-

40 ticket vending machines installed

The installation of ticket vending machines (TVMs) has now been completed following the successful setting up of automatic fare collection (AFC) gates at all five understations of Kannur Metro along this stretch: Chunniganj, Naveen Market, Bada Chauraha, Nayaganj and Kanpur Central. A total of 40 ticket vending machines have been installed across these stations, Managing Director (MD) of Uttar Pradesh Metro Rail Corporation Limited (UPMRC) Sushil Kumar visited the under-construction stations of Corridor-1 during his visit to Kanpur on Thursday, where he reviewed the progress of ongoing works

in various departments. Kanpur Metro has installed TVMs at new stations ahead of the expansion of passenger services, providing a convenient alternative to the ticket counter. Passengers can select their destination station on the machine and deposit the corresponding fare. Once a note is inserted, the machine automatically accepts it and issues a ticket along with any necessary changes. The ticket, featuring a QR code, can then be scanned at the AFC gate to enter the station. Passengers can use the TVMs to recharge their NCMC Go Smart Cards for metro travel. Each station

has been equipped with 8 TVMs. The installation of automatic fare collection gates has also been completed at all five stations between Chunniganj and Kanpur Central. After being set up at Chunniganj, Naveen Market, Bada Chauraha, and Kanpur Central,



AFC gates have also been installed at Nayaganj station. These gates are used for ticket verification, allowing passengers to scan the QR code on their ticket to enter and exit the paid areas of the station. In total, 59 AFC gates have been installed across this stretch from Chunniganj to Kanpur Central. MD Sushil Kumar visited the under-construction stations of Kanpur Metro on Thursday, accompanied by senior officials from various departments. The visit began at Kanpur Central Station and included several other construction sites along the route. The MD said, "The Kanpur Metro team is fully committed to expanding passenger ser-vices from Motijheel to Kanpur Central. Key systems such as the tunnel ventilation system,

Third Rail, escalators, AFO gates and ticket vending machines have already been installed at stations on this stretch. We are on track to begin regular trial runs of metro trains up to Kanpur Central soon." He highlighted the rapid pace of both corridors of the Metro network. The tunnel construction work from Transport Nagar to Kanpur Central in Corridor-1 (IIT-Naubasta) is progressing swiftly and in Corridor-2 (CSA-Barra-8), the first tunnel of the 'up-line' has been completed from Rawatpur to Corridor-2 depot ramp. "We are confident that this momentum will continue and all work will be completed as planned," he added.

MISHAP: An elderly woman died killed while four others were injured when an unidentified vehicle rammed into their car from behind near Maholi village turn in Maharajpur police station area early on Friday morning. The car overturned on the highway after being hit by the unidentified vehicle and all the passengers were trapped into it. Residents rushed to the spot and rescued them. In the incident, an elderly woman was killed while four others were injured and sent to CHC, Sarsaul, for treatment. The deceased was identified as Asha Rathaur (60), wife of Sitaram Rathaur.

BLW Truck Machine Shop achieves historic feat



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE VARANASI

 $T_{(\text{TMS})}^{\text{he Truck Machine Shop}} \, \,$ Locomotive Works (BLW) has achieved a historic feat by manufacturing the highestever number of 124 electric loco bogies in this month. This not only reflects the pro-

duction capacity of BLW but also proves its high quality and technical excellence. Earlier, the maximum number of 104 loco bogies were manufac-

tured in November 2022. To commemorate this historic achievement, BLW General Manager (GM) Naresh Pal Singh on Friday reached the

TMS and offered prayers as per rituals and dedicated this bogie to the service of the nation. The heads of the departments, senior officers, members of the Staff Council and a large number of employ-ees were present. Congratulating the entire team of TMS for this great achievement, the GM said, "BLW is setting new dimensions in the field of loco production. This achievement will play an important role in accelerating the Atmanirbhar Bharat Mission of Indian Railways." He said this new record has been made possible due to the hard work of the dedicated officers and employees of

Atulya Ganga Cyclothon arrives at Prayagraj Cantt



Prayagraj (PNS): The Atulya Ganga Cyclothon-2025, a 12member cyclist team of a military veteran NGO, on their fourth edition of Atulya Ganga Parikrama, arrived at Prayagraj Parikrama, arrived at Prayagraj Cantt on Friday. They were flagged in by Major General Rajesh Bhat, General Officer Commanding, Purva UP and MP Sub Area. The 11-day cyclothon, started pedalling on January 21 from Uttarkashi and has covered 1,100+ km to reach

Maha Kumbh, with a message of people's participation for Plastic-free Ganga. Lt Col Malviya of 137 TA Bn (Ganga Task Force) also joined the cyclothon by cycling from

Kanpur to Prayagraj.

ARRESTED: The Mauaima police arrested five wanted accused involved in a case of assault over an old dispute. Thw action was taken under a special campaign being run on the instructions of the police commissioner.

Devotee saved from drowning

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE VARANASI

The alert National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) personnel rescued a devotee from drowning when a boat capsized following a collision between two civilian boats near Man Mandir Ghat in Ganga river here on Friday. The boat was carrying six passen-gers for visiting the ghats of Varanasi.

After the incident, the NDRF team deployed in the Ganga river started the rescue operation immediately, demonstrat-ing its promptness and efficien-

The team took prompt action and rescued one passenger safely and took him to the shore. The other five passengers managed to swim to safety.

Online tax collection portal launched



Regional Manager Santosh Kumar Maharana launched the online tax collection portal at a function organised in the auditorium of Nagar Palika, Konch, on Thursday. MLA, Konch Madhogarh assembly Moolchandra Niranjan, Chairman, Nagar Palika Pradip Kumar Gupta, Executive Officer Pawan Kumar Maurya, Lead District Manager Sandeep Kumar Sinha and other eminent persons of the city were present. Maharana said this is a

Kanpur (PNS): Indian Bank

rare initiative jointly launched by the Indian Bank and Nagar Palika. He said this initiative was taken at 25 nagar palikas of Uttar Pradesh and was the fourth launch in Konch in the state on Thursday. Legislator Moolchandra Niranjan, Nagar Palika Chairman Pradip Kumar Gupta and Nagar Palika EO Pawan Kumar Maurya also addressed the gathering and thanked the Indian Bank for providing this facility to people. Chief Manager Jugal Kishore proposed the vote of thanks.

President highlights government's success in social and economical reforms

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE **NEW DELHI**

 $P^{\text{resident Droupadi Murmu}}_{\text{on Friday here said the}}$ pace of work has tripled in the third term of her government which has worked with strong determination to lift the economy out of the state of "policy paralysis".

Addressing both the Houses of Parliament assembled together in the Lok Sabha chamber, she said the nation was witnessing major decisions and policies being implemented at an extraordinary speed, with the highest priority given to the poor, the middle class, the youth, women, and farmers.

"My government is infusing new energy through unprecedented achievements in this Amrit Kaal of India's development journey. The pace of work has tripled in this third term," President Murmu said in her 60-minute speech, peppered with occasional protests from the opposition benches. In an address to the two Houses at the beginning of the first session of Parliament every year, the president outlines the vision of the government and this is considered a policy statement.

The address also outlines the

views of the government on key issues and also gives out a broad roadmap for the future. At the outset, President Murmu condoled the deaths of pilgrims at the Kumbh congregation at Prayagraj on Mauni Amavasya on Wednesday when millions of faithful had gathered from all over the country to bathe at the confluence of the Ganga, Yamuna and the mythical Saraswati. She also paid tributes to former prime minister Manmohan Singh, who passed away recently. President Murmu listed out the

achievements of the govern-ment including building houses for three crore additional families, welfare of tribals, issuing property cards for the rural folks, building rural roads and extending the health insurance scheme to six crore citizens above the age of 70 years. The government has also

made swift progress on critical issues like 'One Nation-One Election' and the 'Waqf Act Amendment'," she said. The President said India was

setting an example for the world by emerging as a pillar of economic, social, and political stability in an environment of global instability. She said the world has placed its "trust" in



India's "strength, policy, and intent". In this context, President Murmu especially mentioned key groupings such as Quad, BRICS, Shanghai Cooperation Organisation and

The President said the government has taken "historic" initiatives to ensure defence of

security and "highly encouraging results" were seen in achieving self-reliance, especially in the defence sector. She lauded the Indian Space Research Organisation for launching 100 missions from the spaceport at Sriharikota and asserted that the day was not far when an

Indian citizen will travel to

space aboard the indigenously

developed Gaganyaan space-

"My government has worked with strong determination to lift the economy out of a state of policy paralysis. Despite global concerns such as the COVID-19 pandemic, its aftermath, and war-related uncertainties, the Indian economy has demonstrated remarkable

stability and resilience, proving its strength," she said. The President said the government has also implemented several significant measures to promote Ease of Doing Business and introduced the GST system with the spirit of 'One Nation, One Tax' which has been benefiting all states across the country.

Noting that development is truly meaningful when its benefits reach the person standing at the last rung of society, the President said initiatives like the construction of 12 crore toilets under the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, 10 crore free LPG connections under the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana, ration for 80 crore needy citizens, the Saubhagya Yojana, and the Jal Jeevan Mission have given poor the confidence that they can live with dignity.

When poor people are provided with a dignified life, it instills a sense of empowerment that helps them fight poverty. Due to such efforts, 25 crore people have overcome poverty and are moving forward in life. They have formed a Neo Middle Class, a group that is infusing new energy into India's growth journey," she said. President Murmu said digital fraud, cybercrime and emerging technologies such as deep fakes pose challenges to India's social, economic, and national security.

She asserted that the government has consistently worked on policies of multi-dimensional and inclusive develop-

Therefore, while emphasising on physical infrastructure, equal efforts have also been made by my government for a social infrastructure revolution," she said. Noting that the government in the past ten years has written new chapters of progress, one of which is the golden milestone of India's digital revolution, the President said today, India has emerged as a major global player in the field of digital technology. "The launch of 5G services in

India, alongside other leading nations, stands as a significant milestone in this journey. India's UPI technology has also impressed many developed countries. More than 50 per cent of the world's real-time digital transactions now take place in India. "My government has utilised digital technology as a tool for social justice and equality. Digital payments are no longer confined to select individuals or classes. Today, even the smallest shopkeeper in India benefits from this facility," the President said.

She said there is conducive environment for development in Jammu and Kashmir after the abrogation of Article 370. The President noted that the Lok Sabha and assembly elections were conducted in a peaceful manner in Jammu and Kashmir and the people deserve commendation for this achievement. The President said the Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla rail link project has been completed, connecting the nation from Kashmir to Kanyakumari through railway

"Under this ambitious project, the Chenab Bridge has been constructed, which is the highest railway bridge in the world,' she said.

Murmu said India's first rail cable-stayed bridge, the Anji Bridge, has been completed and the work on the Shinkun La tunnel was also progressing successfully.

"Upon completion in the near future, it will be the world's highest tunnel, ensuring yearround connectivity between Ladakh and Himachal Pradesh," she said.

Economic Survey moots easing of regulations in health, education sectors for 2024 Lok Sabha polls



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE **NEW DELHI**

 $T^{\text{he Economic Survey 2024-}}_{25 \text{ on Friday mooted with-}}$ drawal of regulations or making compliance voluntary with disclosure where the market can do an effective job in the areas of health and education. Pitching for "trust-based regulation", the survey said that tight regulations increase compliance and supervision

burden on the already stretched state capacity. Trust-based regulation backed up by transparency and disclosure on the part of the reg-ulated deserves a chance, said the pre-Budget document while noting that regulatory happen without being fixated

"The government's focus on rural infrastructure, housing, and livelihoods reflects a comprehensive 'welfare for all'

approach," it noted. By improving rural connectivity, sanitation, housing, access to drinking water, and

social inclusion, alongside supporting microfinance, SHGs (self-help groups), and localisation of SDGs (sustainable development goals), these initiatives ensure inclu-

sive development. Together, they uplift rural communities, bridging gaps in equity and quality of life, the survey said.

It pointed out that regulatory institutions in the areas of health and education must constantly balance the needs of the society and that of the ease of provision of such services by the providers.

"Where the market can do an effective job, regulations can either be withdrawn or compliance made voluntary with disclosure. Tight regulations increase the compliance and supervision burden on state capacity that is already stretched. This gives rise to unfulfilled expectations on the part of the public," the survev said.

Therefore, it added, "For India institutions need to evolve to to receive the demographic idend in full in th years, regulatory institutions need to evolve to focus on allowing outcomes to happen without being fixated on inputs.'

The survey further said, Trust-based regulation backed up by transparency and disclosure on the part of the regulated deserves a chance.'

Regulators must develop their assessment parameters and report on their own effectiveness transparently, it said, adding, "There is no better way to demand right behaviour than to set an example. While the education and health system has made significant progress through various initiatives aimed at achieving national goals, the survey said, "There is a critical need to enhance the delivery mechanisms".

By rethinking and improving these systems and integrating innovation and technologies, one can ensure that benefits effectively reach the last mile and are fully realised by those who need them most, it added.

The survey noted that the Indian economy's growth story emphasises a welfareenhancement approach by the government, focusing on empowering all citizens and ensuring the efficient delivery of welfare measures.

aim to provide opportunities for everyone, enabling them to achieve their professional and personal goals, it said, adding that "with the focus on education, health, skilling, and innovation, with improved social and economic infrastructure, the aim is to achieve welfare for all".

BJP spent ₹1,737.68 Crore



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

The Bharatiya Janata Party spent ₹1,737.68 crore for the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, according to the expenditure report submitted by the party to the Election Commission of

Of the total amount, ₹884.45 crore was spent on general party propaganda, while ₹853.23 crore was allocated for candidate-related expenses. Around ₹611.50 crore was

spent on media advertisements print and electronic media, bulk SMS campaigns, and promotional content across cable, websites, and TV channels. The party also spent ₹55.75 crore on publicity materials such as posters, banners, hoardings, and flags to bolster its election outreach. Additionally, the BJP's expen-

diture on public meetings, processions, and rallies - including arrangements for stages, audio setups, barricades, and vehicles stood at ₹19.84 crore.

Campaign-related travel expenses formed another significant portion of the party's budget.

The travel expenditure of star campaigners authorised by the party's central headquarters amounted to ₹168.92 crore, while ₹2.53 crore was spent on the travel of other party leaders. The BIP, which secured a third consecutive term in the genermass outreach and publicity campaigns, as evident from its spending Additionally, the gross receipts

patterns. from the date of announcement of state elections to the date of their completion were Arunachal Pradesh ₹5,552.57 crore, Sikkim ₹5,552.41 crore and Odisha ₹5,555.65 crore.

VP calls for constructive debate in Parliament

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar on Friday underscored the need for constructive debate and dialogue in Parliament, saying the era of dis-ruption should end and make way for meaningful discussions. His remarks came ahead of the Budget session of Parliament.

While addressing the 33rd Foundation Day of the National Commission for Women (NCW), he said what the country truly needs is an opposition that is both constructive and cooperative.

There will now be more debate, dialogue, discussion, deliberation, and not disturbance or disruption in this Parliament," the Raiva Sabha chairman said. highlighting the importance of a cooperative opposition. Reflecting on women's empow-

erment, he lauded the recent reservation for women in legisachievement. "Now we have reservation for women to the extent of one-third," he said, adding the country is witnessing an affirmative ecosystem that supports women's aspirations. However, he cautioned that with increased aspirations come greater challenges, requiring regulation of energy and



The vice president stressed that India's progress is incomplete without the active contribution of women. "I have no doubt that without the contribution of half of humanity, neither the planet can be happy nor the nation can progress," he asserted.

On the role of the NCW, Dhankhar urged the Commission to focus on information dissemination and constructive persuasion rather than sensationalism. "Strength is but in the realisation of limitations. Your limitations define your power," he said, advising the Commission to set a new trend where creating headlines through coercive mechanisms should be the last priority. He also called on the media to exercise sensitivity, cautioning that it is easy for journalists to

Dhankhar praised Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman for setting a record in budget presentations and serving as a beacon for aspiring women

create sensational narratives.

"From development of women, we are marching into womenled development," he said, adding this concept is not new to India but deeply embedded in its civilisation.

The vice president acknowledged that subtle discrimination against women, especially in work places and politics, remains a significant challenge. He urged the NCW to draft a national plan to address these issues, emphasising that men's inclination to dominate women must come to an end.

This dominance is psychologically depressing for women, and we must create a system where fiscal rewards compensate them adequately," he said. Stressing the need for authentic gender equality, Dhankhar remarked that policy-making requires a thought process shaped by experience.

He asserted that India's journey towards becoming a developed nation will be powered by its women adding India's rapid growth has made it the most aspirational nation in the world. "When you are aspirational, 'ye dil maange' more," he said.

SC orders EC to preserve video clips of polling



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE **NEW DELHI**

 $T^{he\, Supreme\, Court\, on\, Friday}_{directed\ the\ Election}$ Commission of India to preserve video clips of the polling during the pendency of the pleas against the decision to increase the maximum number of voters per polling station from 1,200 to

A bench comprising Chief Justice Sanjiv Khanna and Justice Sanjay Kumar passed the order the counsel for the Election Commission of India (ECI) sought time to respond to the PIL filed by one Indu Prakash Singh. Singh has challenged the panel's communications in August 2024 for increasing the number of voters per polling stations in each constituency.

"The counsel appearing for respondent number 1 prays for further time to file affidavit. Let the affidavit be filed within three weeks from today. We deem it appropriate to direct respondent no 1 to maintain the CCTV recordings as they were doing earlier," the bench said.

The top court on January 15 sought responses from the Centre

and the poll panel on Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh's plea against the recent amendments, including no public access to CCTV, to the 1961 election rules. Singh said the decision to increase the number of voters per polling booth was arbitrary and not based on any data. On October 24, the top court refused to issue any notice to the poll panel but allowed the petitioner to serve the copy to the standing counsel of the ECI so that its stand on the issue is

The petitioner contended the poll panel's decision would impact the voters during the ensuing assembly elections in Maharashtra, Bihar and Delhi.

Singh said elections were normally held for 11 hours and it took about 60 to 90 seconds to cast a vote, and therefore 660 to 490 persons could cast their vote in a day at one polling station with one EVM.

Considering the average voting percentage to be 65.70 per cent, it was perceivable that a polling station prepared to accept 1,000 electors saw around 650 turn up. Singh's petition said there were booths where the elector turnout was in the range of 85-90 per

"In such a situation, about 20 per cent of voters will either end up standing in the queue beyond the voting hours or due to long waiting times, will abandon exercising their right to vote. Neither is acceptable in a progressive republic or a democracy," it

SC refuses to entertain PIL against special treatment for VIPs in temples

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

The Supreme Court on Friday refused to entertain a PIL against the practice of charging an additional fee for "VIP darshan" and according of preferential, selective and special treatment" to a certain class of people in temples. A bench comprising Chief Justice Sanjiv Khanna and Justice Sanjay Kumar said it was for the society and temple management to decide the

pass any direction. While we may be of the opinion that no special treatment should be given but this court cannot issue directions. We do not think it is a fit case to exercise jurisdiction under Article 32 of the Constitution.

issue and the court cannot



However, we clarify that dismissal of the petition will not bar the appropriate authorities from taking appropriate action as required," the bench said. Advocate Akash Vashishtha, representing the petitioner, argued there is some Standard Operating Procedure required as there are 12 Jyotirlingas and this completely arbitrary prac-

tice of "VIP darshan". The top court was hearing a plea filed by Vijay Kishor Goswami, 'sevait' at Shri Radha Madan Mohan Temple in Vrindavan, on the issue.

The plea said the practice vio-lated the principles of equality enshrined in Articles 14 and 21 of the Constitution, as it dis-criminated against devotees unable to afford the fee.

The petition also raised several concerns about the additional fee charged for an expedited access to temple deities. The plea said charging fee ranging between Rs 400 and Rs 500 for the special darshan privileges created a divide between the affluent devotees and those who were unable to afford such charges, particularly disadvantaged women,

persons with disabilities, and

senior citizens.

It said that despite representations made to the home ministry, only a directive was issued to Andhra Pradesh, while other states like Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, and Madhya Pradesh remained unaddressed.

The plea, therefore, sought a direction to declare the levying of the additional fee violative of the constitutional rights of equality and religious free-

It sought directions to ensure

equal treatment for all devotees in temple premises and framing of standard operating procedures by the Centre to ensure equitable access to temples. The plea further sought setting up of a national board to oversee the management and administration of temples

PM Modi's US visit on the horizon to strengthen strategic partnership

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

Tndia and the US are working on an early visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to the US, Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said here on Friday. Modi and US President Donald Trump held a telephonic conversation on January 27. This was their first phone conversation since the American leader's inauguration last week.

The two sides are working on an early visit of Prime Minister Modi to the US to further deepen India-US Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership," Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said. "Specific dates for the visit would be announced at the appropriate time," he said. He also said India is working with US authorities for early extradition of Mumbai terror accused Tahawwur Rana. On January 21, the US supreme court rejected Rana's review petition paving way for his extradition to India. "We are now working with the

He said three Indian nationals have gone missing in Iran and India has taken the issue with Tehran strongly. "The matter has been raised with the Iranian embassy in Delhi and with the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Tehran," Jaiswal said.

US side on procedural issues for

early extradition to India of the

accused in the Mumbai terror

attack," Jaiswal said.

SC rejects plea for 'Urs' at razed shrine over Gir Somnath demolitions

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

The Supreme Court on Friday rejected a plea seeking to hold "Urs" festival between February 1 and February 3 at a dargah (Muslim shrine) razed in Gujarat's Gir Somnath district during a demolition drive.

A bench of Justices B R Gavai and Augustine George Masih observed the submissions of solicitor general Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Gujarat author-

ities that unauthorised constructions, including temples on the land belonging to the government, were demolished. Mehta said no activities, including Hindu religious rituals, were allowed on the land in question

which was encroached upon earlier. The bench observed Mehta's contention that the land belonged to the government and unauthorised constructions, including the temples, were demolished. The applicant's counsel said "Urs" festival was held at the site of the razed dargah for many years but authorities on January 30 denied per-

"If at all they (authorities) are saying they are having an apprehension that there will be some law and order problem, I will suggest one thing... 20 people will go for some time, they will perform the rituals and come out," the

applicant's counsel said. It was a structure made before 1299 AD, added the counsel. "Is there a structure now?" asked

the bench. The counsel said it was demolished and argued it was a protected monument. Mehta said the demolition drive

applied to all religions.
"Whatever was unauthorised, is demolished. This is undisputedly a government land," he said. While the bench told the applicant's counsel that authorities had demolished temples too, it told Mehta no religious functions at the site should be allowed by the authorities. While rejecting the application, the bench said the

prayer couldn't be granted without hearing the main matter. When the bench told Mehta that it had recorded his statement that no religious rituals would be permitted there, the law officer referred to an order passed by the top court in the main matter.

He said his statement was recorded that the land would remain under the control of the government. On January 27, the top court said it would hear after three weeks the pleas, including a contempt petition against the

Gujarat authorities for allegedly demolishing residential and reli gious structures in Gir Somnath district without its prior nod. On September 28 last year, a

demolition drive was carried out to reportedly clear encroachments on public lands near Gujarat's Somnath temple. In its affidavit filed in the apex court, the Gujarat government justified its demolition action, saying it was an ongoing drive for removing encroachments on www.dailypioneer.com

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-PAPER WITH PASSION-

The Chinese challenge

China's rapid advancements—evident in breakthroughs like DeepSeek—are challenging US superiority like never before

or decades, the United States has been the undisputed global leader in cuttingedge technology, from artificial intelligence (AI) and quantum computing to defence innovations and space exploration. However, China's rapid advancements in these fields, fueled by a mix of state-driven initiatives, talent acquisition, and aggressive R&D investments, are now posing a serious challenge to the US supremacy. The emergence of DeepSeek, a Chinese Al model rivaling OpenAl's GPT-4, is just one example of how Beijing is closing the technological gap. China's ambitions extend far beyond Al. It has made remarkable strides in many areas. It is a direct result of China's 'vision 2025' which is translating into reality. China has developed the Jiuzhang quantum computer, which demonstrated computational speeds exponentially faster than classical supercomputers. Meanwhile, the US remains engaged in its own quantum pursuit through companies like Google and IBM, but China's government-backed approach provides



Despite US sanctions aimed at crippling China's semiconductor industry, Beijing has made breakthroughs, notably with Huawei's 7nm Kirin chip, defying expectations. The US remains dependent on Taiwan's TSMC, but China's relentless pursuit of self-reliance is narrowing this gap. Even in space tech, China is surging ahread. China's Tiangong space station, its Mars and lunar exploration programs, and its ambitions in satellite-based internet rival those of NASA

and SpaceX. This places China on an equal footing with the US in space dominance. However, Washington is not sitting idle in the face of this challenge. The US has adopted a multi-pronged strategy. It has stepped up its effort to contain China. The Biden administration had imposed restrictions on Chinese firms like Huawei and Al chip exports to limit their technological growth. The US is deepening ties with the European Union, Japan, and India to counterbalance China's rise in emerging tech. Initiatives like the CHIPS Act and QUAD alliances are designed to limit Beijing's access to critical tech. Besides, companies like OpenAI, Google, and IBM are receiving government backing to maintain an edge over Chinese Al firms. In this tech war India, though lagging, is trying to cope albeit at a slow pace. While it has growing ties with the US, it also maintains strategic independence. India too is investing heavily in AI startups and quantum computing research. With the government's Semicon India initiative, India aims to become a global semiconductor hub, attracting investments from Intel, TSMC, and others. Indeed, India is emerging as a significant player in the global tech landscape. As this race unfolds, the global order in technology will be reshaped in ways that will define the 21st century.



A folk artist at the 'Jaipur Literature Festival' (JLF), in Jaipur

dered just how many airports exist in the United States? ■ Take a wild guess. The number is staggering—nearly 19,000! That's right. With a population of around 330 million, America has built an extensive network of airports, ensuring seamless connectivity across the

needs a take off

India's aviation sector

India's aviation sector is at a crossroads, grappling with an acute

shortage of airports despite its vast population and growing economy

Even more striking, out of these, just 29 are classified as international airports. This glaring disparity is more than just a number—it is a reflection of India's challenges in aviation infrastructure and the pressing need for expansion. Let's take an even closer look by comparing West Bengal to the United Kingdom. Both regions have a similar population, yet their aviation networks couldn't be more different. The UK boasts around 150 airports, while West Bengal has just three passenger airports-Kolkata, Bagdogra, and Andal. This difference is not just a matter of convenience; it high-

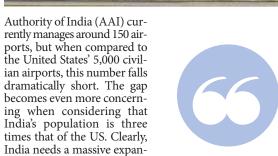
country. Now, compare this to India, a nation with three times

the population, yet managing with only around 500 airports.

lights lost economic opportunities and underscores the urgent requirement for infrastructure development. In nations like the US and the UK, air travel is an everyday convenience—affordable, efficient, and integral to daily It allows people to skip traffic, save time, and stimulate economic growth. Meanwhile, in India, air travel is still seen as a luxury,

accessible only to a privileged few.India's aviation network is wholly insufficient for its growing demand. With only 29 international airports and about 500 total airports, the infrastructure is struggling to keep pace with the needs of domestic and international travelers. Airports in major cities such as Delhi, Mumbai, and Bengaluru are perpetually overcrowded, leading to delays, congestion, and inefficiency.

In contrast, vast portions of the country, especially smaller towns and rural areas, remain disconnected, relying on outdated modes of transportation like rail-ways and highways. The Airports



sion in its aviation infrastruc-IN A COUNTRY AS ture, and it needs it urgently. The consequences of this lim-VAST AND ited aviation network are significant-reduced regional POPULOUS AS INDIA, connectivity, hindered tourism, and slower econom-AIR TRAVEL MUST ic growth. India must take BECOME A decisive steps to address this issue. A bold vision for the FUNDAMENTAL future should include con-NECESSITY, structing at least 1,500 new air-AVAILABLE TO By ensuring that an airport is PEOPLE ACROSS ALL within 100 kilometers of every major population center, India **ECONOMIC** can unlock the economic potential of its smaller towns BACKGROUNDS. and rural areas. The advantages of a well-developed air travel **EXPANDING THE** network are crystal clear. Air AVIATION NETWORK travel is not just the fastest mode of transportation; it is WOULD MAKE also the safest and most efficient. In a country where FLIGHTS MORE roads and railways are often AFFORDABLE AND congested and prone to delays. a robust aviation network can PRACTICAL FOR A alleviate pressure on existing transport systems, making LARGER SEGMENT movement across the country OF THE POPULATION

ate thousands of jobs, attract investment, and boost regional economies. Improved air connectivity would enhance business operations, enable easier travel for tourists, and offer the general population a practical alternative to timeconsuming road and rail journeys. Of course, developing new airports requires significant investment and time, but India has the potential to explore innovative solutions. One such approach is the conversion of highways into emergency runways—a model successfully implemented in the United States. This concept could be adapted for India, where strategically modifying highways to accommodate small aircraft could provide crucial air connectivity to remote regions without the high costs associated with building entirely new airports. Implementing such a strategy in states like West Bengal, could be a game-changer. These adapted road-runways could serve as cost-effective

number of airports would cre-

al disasters. Across the Western world, air travel has evolved into an indispensable part of daily life. It is widely accessible, efficient, and affordable. In India, however, flying is still

THE EDIT

alternatives for enhancing air

connectivity, benefiting both

times of crisis, such as natur-

perceived as a luxury, something beyond the reach of the average citizen.

This perception needs to change. In a country as vast and populous as India, air travel must become a fundamental necessity, available to people across all economic backgrounds. Expanding the aviation network would make flights more affordable and practical for a larger segment of the population.

India stands at a crucial juncture in its aviation journey. The country's rapid economic growth and massive population necessitate an equally rapid expansion of its air travel infrastructure. Government initiatives such as the UDAN scheme, which aims to enhance regional air connectivity, are a step in the right direction, but much more needs to be done. The goal should be to develop at least 1,500 new airports in the near future, ensuring that every region, particularly underserved areas like West Bengal,

is well-connected. Exploring innovative ideas like highway-runways, making everyday commuters and air travel more affordable, and emergency responders in significantly increasing the number of airstrips are al essential steps toward closing India's aviation gap. The need for a robust aviation infrastructure is urgent, and the time to act is now.

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

A 90-hour workweek: Path to success or recipe for burnout



S N Subrahmanyan CMD Larsen and Toubro, has sparked intense debate with his proposal for a 90-hour workweek, drawing sharp criticism

SN Subrahmanyan, CMD of Larsen and Toubro, recently ignited a heated debate while expressing his regret over not being able to call employees to work even on Sundays. He also suggested a 90-hour work week—a figure that surpasses even the 70-hour work week advocated by Infosys founder NŘ Narayana Murthy. His comment assumes added significance when there is already a renewed debate in India on work pressure after the death of 26-year-old Ernst & Young employee, Anna Sebastian Perayil. And call it a quirk of fate, or merely incidental, L&T has now eaten a humble pie after its bid for a tender to build six submarines was shot down by the Ministry of Defence. Subrahmanyan's comment has been singularly dismissed by several corporate chiefs, including Anand Mahindra, Chairman, of Mahindra Group; Sanjiv Puri, CMD, ITC Limited; Harsh Vardhan Goenka, the current chairman of RPG Enterprises; Nalin Negi, BharatPe CEO; Rajiv Bajaj, Managing Director of Bajaj



Auto; and even Sanjeev Sanyal, Economist Member of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Economic Advisory Council. The circular issued by the Ministry of Labour and Employment of India, the Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, 2020, strictly says that no worker shall be required or allowed to work, in any establishment or class of establishments for more than eight hours in a day or fortyeight hours in a week.

As per the International Labour Organisation (ILO) as of January 11, 2024, the average weekly working hours per employed person

across 10 of the world's largest economies is in: the United States, 38 hours per week; in China, 46.1 hours per week; Germany, 34.2 hours per week; Japan 36.6 hours per week; India 46.7 hours per week; United Kingdom, 35.9 hours per week; France, 35.9 hours per week; Brazil, 39 hours per week; Italy, 36.3 hours per week; Canada, 32.1 hours per week. However, India ranks 13th among the world's most overworked countries. With 46.7 average working hours per week, India faces a persistent culture of extended work schedules. The World Health

Organisation also highlights

excessive work as a major public health concern linked to occupational diseases. According to the International Labour Organisation's data. Luxembourg enjoys the highest productivity with \$166.1k in terms of GDP per hour worked, with an average working week schedule of 35.6 hours. Ireland stands second with \$139.1k GDP per hour worked with an average work-week schedule of 35.6 hours.

Whereas India has a labour productivity of \$10.7k GDP per hour worked with an average work-week schedule of 46.7 hours. The latest report, by Mc Kinsey Health Institute says that investing in employee health can substantially increase economic returns.

Research by the Institute in collaboration with the World Economic Forum indicates that enhanced employee health and well-being could generate up to \$11.7 trillion global economic value.

(The writer is a journalist and news anchor and writes oncorporate affairs, finance; views expressed are personal)

INDIA'S AI MISSION

The economic benefits are

also immense. A surge in the

more seamless.

ports in the coming years.

Madam — This refers to the news report, "India prepares to take on ChatGPT, Deepseek" (January 31). The sensational launch of the Chinese start-up DeepSeek's AI system known as R1 has left the West dumbstruck. DeepSeek's claim that it developed R1 at 50 times the cheaper cost than OpenAI's ChatGPT with matching performance created mayhem in financial markets on January 30 as the Nasdaq witnessed its biggest wipeout in histo-

Nvidia, the leading AI chip maker, was hit the worst as its stock price plunged 17 per cent. After American President Donald Trump termed DeepSeek a "wake-up call" for the US and urged US companies to stay competitive, fierce competition in the AI market is imminent. Amid these eye-opening developments, India has planned to build its world-class foundational models within less than one year under its ambitious India AI Mission. This shows India's global aspirations to become a frontrunner in the AI industry. In the last few vears, India has resolved to develop advanced technologies indigenously and shed its dependency on other countries. India is aggressively developing its semiconductor industry to boost self-reliance, economic growth, and technological leadership under initiatives like the India Semiconductor Mission and PLI scheme.

Manoj Parashar | Ghaziabad

FOCUS ON ECONOMIC REVIVAL

Madam— Apropos, "Indian economy on fast lane," The Pioneer, January 30. With signs of a slowdown in the economy getting more pronounced, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman who will be presenting the Union Budget today. The budget must not only address the weary private investment scenario in the country but also address the consumption slowdown. The eco-

nomic growth is slowing, with GDP

ISRO'S 100th rocket launch: Yet another milestone



SRO has added yet another feather to its cap with its 100th launch of GSLV, its most trusted workhorse rocket, from Sriharikota in 46 hard work and dedication. years and is planning to launch another hun-

likely to grow at less than 7 per cent for how the government sees the current at least the next three years, including the current one. The anaemic growth of the economy has already led to moderation in consumption a trend that has been on the show for a couple of years. The central bank has consciously put a leash on consumption-related lending as it sees it as an area of concern. With inflation continuing to remain high, the RBI has been holding interest rates at higher levels, further discouraging borrowers from taking loans for discretionary consumption.

All these factors have weighed down on corporate India, which has been slow in announcing new projects and investments. This shows in lower private investment numbers. As a result, the economy is now facing a vicious cycle, which the budget can break. In this backdrop, the government will have to loosen its purse strings a bit, let the people have more money in their hands, and give some more sops to corporations to prod them into investing. How it achieves these goals would depend on

dred of them in the next five years. GSLV is capable of launching satellites for both geosynchronous orbit (when it appears motionless from a point on the equator-primarily used for weather and communication and is placed at a very high altitude of about 42,000 km) and sun-synchronous orbit (when the satellite is passing over the same location at the same local time-used for imaging, weather forecasting, spying, and global observation at low altitudes of about 700 km, capable of capturing high-resolution images as a result).

This launch has put India in a much better situation to be self-reliant in its technology, giving a boost to its economy, defence, and spatial dominance in the near future. The ISRO scientists need to be applauded for their timebound achievements and speed through their

R S Narula | Patiala

N Sadhasiva Reddy | Bengaluru

MIDAIR CRASH IN AMERICA KILLS 67

Madam —An American Airlines flight with 67 people aboard, including 4 crew members, collided with an Army helicopter while landing at Ronald Reagan National Airport near Washington DC in the nearby Potomac River. The US has the safest airspace in the world. The diversion of the air jet to land on a smaller runway just before landing may be a cause.

Also, the Army helicopter did not go up and down in the air over the river. The midair collision of the flight and the Army helicopter is more surprising in this digital age. The accident was preventable, and Trump blaming Obama and Biden's policies for the mishap is

unacceptable N R Ramachandran | Chennai

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FIRST COLUMN

A DIVINE CONVERGENCE OF LOVE AND LIBERATION

The Kumbh Mela has been a beacon for seekers, drawing masters and devotees alike



JAGATGURU SAI MAA LAKSHMI DEVI

or centuries, great masters have been drawn to the Kumbh Mela, captivated by its spiritual magnetism. What is it that pulls us here? It is the profound energy of devotion, the irresistible force of divine love. Love itself is a magnet, and those who live in devotion radiate this magnetic power, naturally attracting others to them. Nowhere else on Earth do millions—crores upon crores—gather in unwavering dedication, chanting the name of the Divine, immersed in sadhana day and night. They come to bathe in this sacred energy and carry it forth into their lives, spreading its radiance wherever they go.

This Maha Kumbh is unlike any before it, offering an unprecedented caliber of cosmic energy. It is a spiritual phenomenon of global significance, where the highest frequencies of Source energy descend upon humanity. The grace of enlightenment is being bestowed, and the awakening of souls is unfolding.

Here. the sublime state of Soruba Samadhi will begin—a transformation that elevates both consciousness and matter itself. Cellular structures are being regenerated, linking human DNA to the divine imprint, connecting us to the immortal essence within. There is nothing quite like the experience of Kumbh. Imagine millions of souls gathering in one place, each radiating spiritual energy, creating an immense vortex of power. In this sacred space, we transcend our human identities and recognise ourselves as Atmas—pure souls



united in a grand cosmic dance. This collective energy is a force of love, light, and enlightenment, dissolving karmic burdens and opening the path to a majestic, divine life.

Though the present age presents its challenges, those who remain steadfast on the spiritual path will undergo profound transformation. The portals of the cosmos are open, offering liberation and awakening. The world we see is but an illusion—a play of maya where all is transient except our love for the Divine. This love is our dharma, our ultimate purpose. The body, the mind, and the material world constantly change, but the eternal truth, Sathya, remains unchanged. We are that truth—Sat-Chit-Ananda, lat Iwam Asiand our sadhana is to awaken to and embody this realization.

At the Kumbh, in the embrace of Mata Ganga, we surrender and transform. The sacred waters purify us, activating the divine blueprint within. In this powerful vortex, we align with the highest expressions of Sanatana Dharma, experiencing profound spiritual elevation. This year, the influx of divine light is immense, inviting us to merge with its boundless brilliance and bliss. The ancient traditions of Moksha and enlightenment are more alive than ever. This is a time for purification, for letting go of attachments and the illusion of mortality. Sanatana Dharma, founded on selfless service, was exemplified by Adi Shankaracharya, who taught the wisdom of one-

Dharma—the eternal law—sustains creation itself. Regardless of the many religious paths, all stem from this universal truth. We have lived Dharma through countless lifetimes, whether we remember it or not. Kumbh Mela is a powerful catalyst for spiritual growth, drawing seekers from all over the world. Even those from lands where devotion is rare undergo profound shifts, their minds finding peace and their hearts blossoming. Here, millions chant together, and divine forces work to elevate collective consciousness. This is a time of great spiritual revolution, heralding the dawn of Sathya Yuga. Open your heart. Receive the blessings of your soul. Step into your truth

and embrace the new age that is upon us. (The writer is a spiritual guru; views are personal)

From OpenAI to DeepSeek: The fight for supremacy



With China rapidly closing the AI gap and geopolitical tensions shifting from military might to algorithmic dominance, the world is entering a digital cold war



magine a computer's hard drive containing a replica of your brain, connected to a high-speed internet. Your biological brain may become irrelevant when the machine not only possesses your mind but also gains control over everything you identify as 'who you are'. This is what General Artificial Intelligence (AGI) truly represents - the vast, unexplored frontier we are hurtling towards. The year begins not only with the most unpredictable politician in America reclaiming the Oval Office but also with an AI race that, once dominated by American startups, is now being swiftly overtaken by China at a significantly lower cost. We have crossed the Rubicon, heading towards an unknown destination; the consequences remain uncertain, and no one can predict what lies ahead.

The AI arms race, gaining unprecedented velocity, is propelling us into an era where the very foundations of intelligence, humanity, and civilisation are being deconstructed at an astonishing pace. Humanity, having long contended with the challenge of technology reshaping its self-perception, is now facing an existential dilemma unlike any before. The revolutions of Copernicus, which dethroned Earth from its presumed centrality in the cosmos, and Darwin, whose theory questioned humanity's divine distinction from the animal kingdom, fundamentally redefined our place in the universe. But neither of these paradigm shifts eroded the core of what it meant to be human. Artificial intelligence, however, threatens to do precisely that. AGI poses a question so starkly profound that it demands our full intellectual engagement: What happens when the very attribute we have long considered uniquely human—the capacity to reason, to create, to understand—becomes replicable, scalable, and infinitely more efficient, to the point where machines not only rival but surpass our cognitive limitations? What becomes of the human essence when faced with entities capable of thinking faster, learning more swiftly, and ultimately transcending us in once inconceivable ways? This week, the new race in AI has surged ahead, with China unveiling the results of its years of intensive experimentation. The release of Qwen 2.5, followed

by DeepSeek—an inexpensive yet formi-

dable competitor to models like GPT-4 from OpenAI—has upended the established order. This shift is not merely a matter of technological rivalry; it signifies a profound realignment in global power, where the currency of influence is no longer military might or eco-nomic clout, but data control, computational resources, and technological ingenuity.

The new cold war is not one of armaments but of algorithms and information—an intellectual race whose stakes extend far beyond economic primacy to the very survival of human civilisation itself.As AI advances, it forces us to confront deeply uncomfortable truths about our nature. For millennia, humanity has positioned itself at the apex of intelligence on Earth, a secret of being a superspecies. Yet what occurs when our very creations—machines—begin to outshine us in those same domains? BECOMES A When we no longer retain exclusive dominion over intelligence. how does this fundamentally alter

OF OUR our sense of identity? Are we, like the alchemists of INTELLECTUAL FRAMEWORK— YET ONE THAT **OPERATES** FASTER, MORE EFFICIENTLY, AND WITH AN ABILITY TO LEARN THAT FAR **EXCEEDS** HUMAN POTENTIAL

ITS MOST

ADVANCED

FORMS,

antiquity, on the verge of realising that we no longer control our fate, but have given birth to entities that might one day supplant us? The very nature of intelligence itself is now irreversibly in question. Cognitive architectures, once the exclusive province of the human brain, are now being mirrored and surpassed by machines. AI, in its most advanced forms, becomes a reflection of our intellectual framework—yet one that operates faster, more efficiently, and with an ability to learn that far exceeds human potential. This is not merely an augmentation of human capabilities; it heralds the dawn of a new epoch, where human and machine cognition converge, indistinguishable and perhaps inseparable. As we approach this unnerving future, we must ask ourselves whether we

entities that may one day rival or eclipse us.

Will we, as a species, embrace coevolution, finding a new equilibrium in our relationship with machines, or will we cling to the false myth of human exceptionalism, attempting to subjugate or destroy the very creations we have birthed?

The decisions we make now will echo far beyond our survival, influencing the very nature of intelligence and the future trajectory of all life on Earth. The geopolitical ramifications of this technological revolution are as profound as its existential implications. Powerful nations with vast resources for research, development, and energy will continue to dominate the future, while smaller countries may face unprecedented crises, including crises concerning their own identity.

As AI becomes embedded in the infrastructure of global politics, we are entering an era of digital empires—systems of control as potent as any traditional nationstate, commanding not only information but the very nature of human interaction. In this new digital cold war, the battle is not merely for technological supremacy, but for control over the global political system itself. Is the rise of AI an essential leap forward in humanity's evolution, or does it signal the twilight of human rele-

Some may argue that AI is a necessary tool, a portal that helps protect us from the danger of total annihilation. Others, however, may see it as a harbinger of obsolescence, a point of no return when our creations ascend to power and render us irrelevant. However, there is a subtler, more philosophical interpretation of this transformative shift: Perhaps the advent of AGI is not our fall from grace, but the birth of a new chapter in are philosophically, politically, and socially prepared to co-exist with transcend the biological con-

straints that have long defined us. Like our ancestors who tamed fire and invented the wheel, we may soon wield AI as a tool that propels us to new heights. The fusion of human and artificial intelligence could lead to a post-human condition—not one of extinction, but of surpassing the boundaries of our biological form and entering a phase of hybridised existence. This, of course, depends on our ability to confront the ethical and political structures that accompany the rise of AGI.

The true challenge is not whether we will create machines that surpass us in intelligence, but whether we have the wisdom to ensure they remain our allies rather than adversaries. We must learn to coexist with these new intelligences, integrating them into our societies in ways that enhance, rather than diminish, our humanity. This is the existential challenge of our time one that will determine whether the era of artificial intelligence will culminate in annihilation or transcendence.

Ultimately, the measure of our humanity will not lie in our ability to create machines that rival us in intelligence, but in our capacity to retain those qualities that define us: empathy, creativity, and the willingness to evolve in response to monumental change. If we can meet this challenge, the future—however uncertain—will hold at least the promise of our fragile humanity. If not, we may find ourselves consigned to the dustbin of history, supplanted by the very entities we have created. Are we prepared to face the unknown abyss, or will we cower in fear, clinging to the comforting illusions of the past? The future, it seems, is no longer entirely within our grasp—but perhaps this is precisely the kind of leap forward we need to ensure our survival.

> (The writer is a journalist and policy analyst. Views expressed

Elevating CSR in India: From compliance to impact-driven transformation

While many corporations are genuinely committed to social welfare, issues like fund misallocation, tokenism and unethical practices threaten the integrity of CSR

Responsibility (CSR) in ✓India has significantly progressed over the past decade. Introduced as a legal mandate in 2013, CSR has evolved from a mere compliance obligation to a fundamental requirement, with organisations across various industries incorporating social welfare into their core operations. However, as we continue into 2025 and beyond, there is an urgent need to elevate the current CSR practicesensuring they are effective, accountable, and transparent. While many companies have shown a sincere commitment to social impact, others have unfortunately fallen into the

Social backs and paybacks. Additionally, the emergence of corporations establishing their NGOs presents a mixed picture; while some are genuinely committed to their missions, many operate as "skeleton NGOs," where staff often demand kickbacks and the intended social welfare purpose gets lost.

A New and Enhanced Era for

CSR Compliance Compliance remains an important aspect of effective CSR. However, it is not just about meeting the mandatory spending requirement but also about ensuring that every rupee spent reaches where it was originally intended directly benefiting those in vicious traps of misallocation need. While many corporaof funds, tokenism, and ques- tions have dutifully allocated tionable practices like kick- the mandated 2 per cent of



GEETANJALI CHOPRA

their profits towards social welfare, there is still a need for a more robust system to ensure regular oversight and realtime monitoring of fund utilisation and project outcomes. With stronger and more transparent laws, we can ensure that funds reach the intended beneficiaries, fostering trust between the government, corporations, and communities

Ensuring Integrity in CSR: Addressing Kickbacks and Paybacks One of the biggest challenges facing CSR today is the lack of trust caused by unethical practices. Often, when intermediaries or implementing agencies misappro-priate resources for personal gain, the integrity of CSR initiatives is compromised. To address this issue, it is vital to introduce strict anti-corruption policies and establish independent monitoring mechanisms.

When corporations know they are being monitored or supervised, they will think twice before engaging in malprac-

Ensuring integrity is not just about preventing financial losses; it is about preserving the trust of communities that often



rely on CSR for a better future. Impact-Driven CSR

CSR should move beyond compliance; it needs to be impact-driven. The focus should shift from merely fulfilling legal obligations to measuring the difference being made on the ground. Strengthening accountability will ensure CSR is not reduced to a token gesture but becomes

a genuine agent of transformation. Moreover, corporations should also embrace innovation in their CSR approaches. Whether it is by using technology to improve healthcare access in rural areas, providing quality education through digital platforms, or addressing climate change with green initiatives, one must think beyond traditional models and adopt solutions that leave a lasting impact.
The Role of Stakeholders

Accountability is not just the sole responsibility of corporations; other stakeholders governments, NGOs, and civil society—also have an essential role to play in shaping the future of CSR. The government must act as an active regulator, ensuring companies adhere to guidelines while incentivising innovation and collaboration. On the other hand, NGOs, as implementation partners, must continue to bring grassroots expertise and ensure that every rupee spent a difference. Communities must also be empowered to hold corporations accountable. By involving local stakeholders in the planning and execution of projects, we can create a feedback loop that enhances transparency and boosts the on-theground impact of CSR initia-

The Way Forward

The ongoing changes to the CSR framework present a golden opportunity to usher in a new era of accountability and impact. This calls for a change that ensures CSR initiatives are not only executed with integrity but with genuine purpose. The government, too, must play its part by introducing reforms that incentivise genuine efforts while penalising any kind of malpractice.

If implemented correctly, this strengthened CSR framework can ensure that social welfare is not merely a checkbox for corporations but a collective mission to uplift the underserved. As stakeholders in this ecosystem-corporates, nonprofits, government, and the public-we must all push for a transparent and impactful CSR environment. Only then will CSR in India live up to its promise of creating a better world for all.

(The writer is founder an d president, Wishes and Blessings NGO; views expressed are

Dikshit

criticises

dodging

Kejriwal for

public debate

STAFF REPORTER NEW DELHI

ongress leader Sandeep Dikshit Friday said that he

had challenged Aam Aadmi Party chief Arvind Kejriwal

for a debate at Jantar Mantar

Dikshit, who is fighting the Delhi Assembly polls against

Kejriwal in the New Delhi seat

said, "The aim of the debate

was to expose the failures and

false promises of the Kejriwal government using its own

but he did not turn up.

Parliament panel discusses regulating | Road accident in Punjab online news, strengthening media laws leaves 11 dead, 15 injured

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Several members of a parliamentary committee on Friday pitched for strengthening laws related to the media and bringing news portals and OTT under their ambit as its chairman Nishikant Dubey raised issues like "rampant" paid news and some news channels turning to sensationalism for TRPs. Most members of the standing committee on Communications and Information Technology were of the view that the Press

Council of India (PCI) Act, which covers the print India, must be strengthened and new portals should also come under its jurisdiction, sources It is an odd scenario that the

PCI, a quasi judicial body, can take cognisance of a report in a newspaper but cannot do the same if the report appears

Modi takes a

the Opposition

pot shot at



on the same newspaper's portal, sources said. Similarly, the Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Act covers news channels but not the streaming platforms also known as OTT (Over The Top) services, they added. The committee on Friday reviewed "implementation of

laws related to all forms of media" in the meeting. In his remarks, Dubey

expressed concern over "rampant" paid news aimed at suppressing reality and presenting rosy pictures. Gullible people take it as truth, he added.

The BJP MP, sources said, also

flagged the headwinds facing traditional newspapers due to digital disruption and declining readership. Regional and vernacular media are facing severe financial crunch, he added. Dubey said fake news is playing "havoc" in the country, especially during elections, and added that media trials of sensational cases sometimes affect its legal course and shape public

opinion adversely.
In order to boost TRPs (Television Rating Points), many TV news channels focus on sensationalism over

serious journalism and TV debates often turn into a platform for shouting matches and mud-slinging, he said, adding that crime and celebrity news receive disproportionate coverage, sidelining important issues, according to sources.

"Ethical boundaries are crossed many a time due to lack of strong regulatory mechanism," he said. Noting that the media plays a

kev role as a communicator between government and people, he said conflict of interest among media owners, journalists and political entities affects the credibility of news. Key functionaries from the

Information and Broadcasting ministry, Prasar Bharti, Press Registrar General and Press Council of India were among those who appeared before

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Eleven people were killed and fifteen were injured in a collision between a pickup van and a canter truck in this district on Friday, police said.

The pick-up van was carrying mainly those working as waiters, who were going to attend a function at Jalalabad. The accident took place near a village in Guruharsahai sub-division, police said. The injured were undergoing treatment at hospitals, said police. various

Ferozepur's Senior Superintendent of Police, Saumya Mishra said that soon after the accident, teams from "Sadak Suraksha Force" (SSF) reached on the spot and started the rescue operation.

Police said they are investigating the reason

behind the accident which occurred at around 8 am. Deepshikha Sharma, Deputy Commissioner said that some of the critically injured were referred to the Guru be injured. Gobind Singh Medical College in Faridkot, while

ambulances had "Five reached the spot immediately after the incident", said the DC, while adding that the administration will bear the cost of treatment of those who are injured.

few others were admitted at

Civil Hospital in Jalalabad.

Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann and many other leaders from various parties expressed grief at the loss of lives in the accident and wished speedy recovery to the injured.

"In Ferozepur this morning, there was news of a major accident due to a collision between a canter and a pickup vehicle, in which the news of the tragic death of waiters going to the wedding ceremony has been received and some people are said to

"I pray to God for the peace of the departed souls and the speedy recovery of the injured. The Puniah government stands with the affected families in this difficult time," Mann posted

Shiromani Akali Dal leader Sukhbir Singh Badal, in his post on X, said, "Deeply saddened to learn about a fatal road accident near Guruharsahai in Ferozepur district this morning. Heartfelt condolences to the bereaved families & prayers for the speedy recovery of the injured. May all those affected by this tragic event find strength during this difficult period".

official data." However, Kejriwal did not turn up for the debate, he claimed.

In a statement, Dikshit pointed out that Kejriwal had promised permanent housing for slum dwellers and said thousands of houses built under the Congress government in 2013 still remain unallocated, lying in ruins in areas like Narela.

The Congress government, under then chief minister Sheila Dikshit, had set up 30 water treatment plants, but the AAP government has not built a single new plant in the last decade, he said.

The son of the former chief minister claimed that during her mother's rule, Delhi had 14,000 kilometres of water pipelines which has only increased to 15,300 kilometres

1.56 Crore voters to

From page 1

"Ours is a young country... The youth of 20-25 years of age today, when they will be 45-50 years-old, they will be the biggest beneficiaries of a developed India. At that stage of their age, they will be sitting in that place in the policy making system... They will proudly move forward with a developed India," said the PM.

'Those who had joined the freedom struggle in 1930, 1942... The entire youth generation of the country was engrossed in the freedom struggle, and the fruits of that were reaped by the generation that came after 25 years," Modi said.

Similarly, these 25 years would be marked by the intention of people to achieve a prosperous and developed India through their resolve and reach the pinnacle through their achievements, participate in Delhi polls

Delhi's Chief Electoral Officer R Alice Vaz on Friday said around 1.56 crore voters are set to exercise their electoral franchise in the Delhi Assembly election on February 5 as voter-friendly measures have been put in place for the smooth polling

process.

To facilitate voting, 13,766 polling stations have been set up across 2,969 polling premises. Of these, 733 polling stations are designated for persons with disabilities, Vaz said. Around 1.56 crore voters, including 83.76 lakh men, 72.36 lakh women, and 1,267 individuals from the third gender will cast their ballot on February

The Delhi Election Office has introduced several voterfriendly measures to ensure a smooth polling process. include ramps, wheelchairs, medical teams,

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI crèche services, themed polling stations, a queue mobile management application and a home voting option for senior citizens and persons with disabilities, she said.

Vaz emphasised that over 1 lakh polling personnel have been deployed, and all polling stations will have essential amenities under the Assured Minimum Facility (AMF) policy. These include waiting areas, drinking water, toilets, ramps, and wheelchairs. Paramedical staff with basic medical kits will also be stationed at polling centres. To enhance voter experience,

210 polling stations will be set up as Theme-Based Model Polling Stations with additional facilities, she said. Moreover, 70 polling stations -- one in each assembly constituency -- will be fully managed by women staff. Another 70 polling stations will be operated entirely by promote inclusivity and an equal number of youth-centric polling stations will be set up to encourage young voters, the CEO said.

The "Vote From Home" initiative will allow 6,488 senior citizens aged 85 and above, along with 1,051 persons with disabilities, to cast their votes from home, ensuring accessibility for all eligible voters, she stated. "To help voters locate their

polling stations, a colour-coded system will be used, with details mentioned on the Voter Information Slip. Additionally, 4,217 wheelchairs will be made available for easy mobility," said Vaz.

Addressing Model Code of Conduct (MCC) violations, Vaz stated that the cVIGIL app has received 5,244 complaints, with the highest number from North District (1.049) and the lowest from Shahdara (136).

BJP Dalit candidates slam Kejriwal

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Dalit candidates of BIP for the upcoming Delhi assembly elections on Friday condemned the attack on Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's statue in Amritsar in Punjab, and criticized the silence of Arvind Kejriwal and Bhagwant Mann, questioning their dedication to the Dalit

community BJP candidates Dushyant Kumar Gautam, Rajkumar Anand, Advocate Privanka Gautam, Rinku Kumari, Khushi Ram Chunar, Deepak Valmiki, Deepti Indora, and Kamal Bagri addressed a joint press conference accusing Kejriwal's silence of exposing AÁP's anti-Dalit stance.

"If Kejriwal cannot speak up for Baba Saheb today, he will remain silent tomorrow if an MLA from the Dalit community faces injustice?" they asked. They also pointed out that Kejriwal has never Ŕajya Sabha given representation to a Dalit or appointed a Dalit Deputy Chief Minister in the past decade.

Connect e-Platform has

optimised supply chains. Despite these reforms, access

Poonch encounter: two terrorist killed

From page 1

According to official sources, terrorist handlers operating from across the line of control were desperately trying to push more and more Pakistani infiltrators inside the Indian territory ahead of the summer months. A team of NIA personnel had also searched houses of PoK-based terrorist operatives in the Rajouri district to expose their network of Over Ground Workers, providing logistics support to these Pakistani infiltrators.

The drone movement was also detected along the line of control in the Mendhar sector of Poonch in the runup to the Republic Day celebrations. The Indian army had opened firing on the Pakistani drones after it attempted to breach the Indian air space.

persons with disabilities to Seven AAP MLAs resign before polls

From page 1

He said that when the ship of a party like Aam Aadmi Party starts sinking, then a situation of stampede is created in the In a letter addressed to party party. "The same is happening with AAP," he said

Madan Lal, the outgoing MLA from Kasturba Nagar, claimed on Friday that he and six other party MLAs had resigned from AAP's primary membership. Lal said they had also sent their resignation letters to Delhi Assembly Speaker Ram Niwas Goel.

Palam's Bhavna Goud in her resignation letter directed her disappointment at party chief Arvind Kejriwal. "I have lost faith in you," the MLA said. Naresh Yadav was earlier the Mehrauli candidate. He was south Delhi's Mehrauli convicted by a Punjab court constituency for 10 years. in a Ouran desecration case in Yaday. December and sentenced to convicted and sentenced to a two-year jail. When the AAP released its fifth list of candidates for the Delhi Quran desecration case.

February 5, the party Mahender announced Chaudhary as its Mehrauli candidate, replacing Naresh Yadav.

convenor Arvind Kejriwal, Yadav said, "I dedicated my entire life to politics and worked under your leadership with utmost honesty and dedication. I made every effort to realize your vision and also contributed 100% to fulfilling the responsibilities given to me. However, today, the party has drifted from its core ideology, and good people who want to work honestly are being sidelined, while those involved in corrupt practices are being given a place in the organization." He represented was convicted two-vear term in November by a Punjab court in the 2016

announced him as its candidate despite the conviction.

Bhupinder Singh Joon, who was replaced from Bijwasan, said, "The voices of sincere workers and public representatives are often sidelined, and critical decisions are made without consultation or consensus. Moreover, the focus on selfpromotion rather than addressing core public issues become deeply disheartening." Rohit Kumar Mehraulia, the

Trilokpuri MLA who resigned today, in a post on X said he joined AAP during the Anna Hazare-led movement against corruption, with the hope of securing social justice for the Valmiki Dalit and communities.

Mehraulia said the AAP promised to uplift these communities, but failed to address crucial issues such as scrapping contract-based labour and ensuring temporary workers are absorbed permanently. Janakpuri's Rajesh Rishi also

cited growing disenchantment with what he called the AAP's departure from its core values. In his resignation letter, he criticised the AAP for betraying the principles of corruption-free governance and transparency it was founded on. Rishi, another former supporter of Anna Hazare's anticorruption movement. alleged the party has become a "cesspit of nepotism and

corruption." The AAP's candidate list for the upcoming Delhi elections shows that the party has fielded new candidates, including Mukesh Goel from

Adarsh Nagar, Pravin Kumar from Janakpuri, Surendra Bhardwaj from Bijwasan, and Joginder Solanki from Palam, replacing the resigning MLAs. Elections to the 70-member

Delhi Assembly will be held on February 5 and the votes counted on February 8.

Indian economy defies global slowdown

labor market transformation is evident in a decline unemployment from 6per cent in 2017-18 to 3.2 per cent 2023-24. Formal employment has seen rapid expansion, with EPFO subscriptions surging from 61 lahks in FY19 to 131 lahks in FY24. Encouragingly, 47 per cent of new payroll additions are in the 18-25 age group, highlighting a youth-driven workforce averaging. workforce expansion. The integration of AI-driven employment solutions will be pivotal in shaping India's future labour market dvnamics.

experiencing The listings rose from 17per cent in 2023 to 30per cent in 2024, reflecting growing investor confidence.

accounts increasing by 33 per cent YoY to 18.5 crore. However, India's corporate bond market remains underdeveloped, with bond market capitalisation at 18 per cent of GDP, significantly lower than Korea (80 per cent) and China (36 per cent). Strengthening policy measures to deepen bond market participation remains a crucial area for financial sector reform. The MSME sector is the backbone of India's economy,

skyrocketed, with demat

playing a critical role in employment generation and GDP growth. To support this vital sector, the government has introduced several key India's financial sector is reforms, including the Selfan Reliant India (SRI) Fund, providing ?50,000 Crore in nation's share in global IPO equity funding for high-listings rose from 17per cent in 2023 to 30per cent in 2024, platforms such as MSME Samadhan and CHAMPIONS Retail Portal have streamlined participation has also compliance, while the Trade

to institutional capital remains a challenge, underscoring the need for further deregulation and enhanced credit availability. The Economic Survey 2024-25 reaffirms India's position as an economic powerhouse, driven by robust GDP growth, expanding investments, and a resilient infrastructure framework. With unwavering policy commitment, strategic commitment, foresight, and an innovationdriven agenda, India is not just navigating global uncertainties-it is shaping the future of the global economy. The journey towards a \$5 Trillion economy is not a distant dream but an inevitable reality propelled by Reform, Perform, and Transform.

The writer is a professor of finance at Xavier School of Management, XLRI

Rashtrapati Bhavan slams the Congress

While the ruling BJP also launched an all-out attack on the grand old party saying they were "deeply were disrespectful" and underscored the opposition's "continued disregard" for the dignity of the highest constitutional office. Congress hit back and said every person in India has respect and empathy for President Murmu but the BJP leaders cannot digest Sonia Gandhi's "empathy" for her health.

Modi alleged that the Congress members belittled

Murmu with their remarks on her speech. "The Congress roval family does not accept anyone from the Dalit, and OBC Adivasi, communities who rise above their circumstances. They insult them at every step," he

said. BJP national president J P Nadda said the former Congress president of the phrase 'poor thing' to refer to the President is deeply disrespectful and underscores the opposition's continued disregard for the dignity of the highest constitutional

Sabha MP and daughter of Sonia, Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, said her mother has the utmost respect for the President and that it is very unfortunate that her remarks have been "twisted by the

media". She also hit out at the BJP's demand for an apology over the issue, saying it should first apologise for "ruining the country".

"My mother is a 78-year-old lady. She simply said that 'the President must have been tired reading such a long speech, poor thing. She fully office. respects, in fact she has the Amid the row Congress Lok utmost respect for her (the

President). It is very unfortunate that this kind of a thing is twisted by the media," Priyanka Gandhi said talking to media.

Hitting back, Congress leader Gaurav Gogoi said in Sonia Gandhi's empathy for President Droupadi Murmu health cannot be digested by the men in BIP. "Will the BIP answer for the disrespect shown to President Murmu when she was not invited to the inauguration of the Parliament or the Ram Mandir in Ayodhya?" the Deputy Leader of the Opposition in Lok Sabha

Kejriwal accuses CM Saini of conspiracy to poison Yamuna

From page 1

"Whatever illegal punishment you may wish to impose on resolve the crises, but despite me under the instruction of the BJP is a small price to pay remained unresolved. "The the BJP is a small price to pay for it, and I welcome it with open arms," he added. Accompanied by Delhi and Puniab chief ministers Atishi and Bhagwant Mann, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) national convenor went to the EC's office and submitted his reply personally. The AAP leaders also carried three bottles of ammonia-mixed water for the election commissioners to drive home their point. Kejriwal also claimed that the water being supplied from Haryana to Delhi has high levels of ammonia. AAP national convenor alleged that the ammonia levels started increasing very sharply from

ppm a few days later. Kejriwal alleged that Delhi

CM Atishi contacted Saini to chief minister of Delhi called up the chief minister of Haryana in the last week of December and requested him to either take steps to reduce ammonia or provide additional water to dilute it. ammonia or Though CM Haryana assured me that he would take the necessary steps, however, he did not. Subsequently, CM Delhi again called him several times. After a few calls, Chief Delhi. Minister of Haryana stopped

said in the letter. "There was a deliberate conspiracy on the part of Haryana CM, who happens to be from BJP, to influence 15 Jan onwards (around 3.2 Delhi elections by sending "Equally baffling is the CEC's ppm on 15 Jan) and reached 7 highly polluted waters to refusal to direct Haryana to

taking CM Delhi's calls," as

Delhi. He knew very well that this would create artificial water scarcity in Delhi, whose blame would lie on the AAP government in Delhi. This would have rendered almost half of Delhi without water and would have created huge public misery for almost 10 million people of Delhi who would have gone without water," he said in the letter.

The AAP supremo also accused the CEC of "complete silence and inaction" over "blatant violations" of the Model Code of Conduct allegedly by BJP leaders in Delhi. Kejriwal also questioned the "baffling alacrity" of the CEC to act against him, even though he was "merely" raising an issue of "very high public importance" and had averted a huge public crisis in Delhi.

stop polluting Delhi's waters," he said. "If the CEC continues

ignoring the widespread practice of purchase of votes with cash and goods by the BJP, you will end up normalising this corrupt practice as well," he said, while claiming that evidence in the form of videos and people's statements were acknowledged.

India is known worldwide as the bedrock of democracy, he said, adding, "The CEC, with its clear act of omission and negligence of corrupt practices by the BJP, looks set to tarnish this image of India globally."
"If no action is taken against

the Haryana government and the BJP leaders involved in corrupt practices it will be amply clear to everyone that Election Chief Commissioner keeps the

interest of the ruling party over public interest. Unfortunately, I can't be expected to be silent on this and tow this line out of fear or expectations of favour. My only concern is the health and safety of the people of Delhi and I will fight for the protection of our democratic principles," he added. Before visiting the Election Commission's office, Kejriwal

told media that the language of second notice hints that the poll body has already decided their action. He alleged that the poll body is "shooting the messenger" by targeting the AAP for raising its voice. The Yamuna water issue has emerged as a crucial political matter ahead of the Delhi assembly election, with Kejriwal pointing fingers at BJP-led Haryana the government for deliberately contaminating the water.

Ahead of polls and lucrative offers, Delhi students split on AAP and BJP

From page 1

Echoing similar sentiments, Aksh, a B Pharmacy student and a resident of Vijay Nagar Single Storey in North Campus, said, 'I will probably support BJP, because that is the mood of Delhi I feel right now. There are only two major parties-AAP and BJP. There is least mention of Congress in Delhi."

Asserting that the middle class is really troubled under the AAP, he said, "The middle class is really troubled under the AAP. They feel their money is not properly used."
Stating that the condition of Delhi overall has deteriorated, Aksh said, "There are traffic problems, and a poor drainage system. AAP had

promised about better schools etc, but these things have not really happened. Kejriwal has increased the trend of freebies. But the thing is freebies won't help in the development of the country. " "There is no chance to give votes to AAP. We had already given them a chance, trusted them, and thought they would do something different, but they did nothing," he said. Expressing a similar opinion,

Prajwal, a law graduate, said, "If we look into the last two decade, there was not very good governance in Delhi. There should be a change this time and I feel this time the BIP will form the

there should be a change after every five years, he said, "There should be a replacement of AAP in Delhi. AAP is in power in Delhi because of the freebies. The BJP has been in power at the Centre since 2014, and India has emerged as a global plaver." Raees, a student of the Delhi

University, however, opined that AAP will retain the power in Delhi, "Right now, we can notice that it is AAP versus BJP right now in Delhi. It will be a close contest this time. But I feel AAP will only come back to power."

Asserting that AAP's basic vote bank is women voters, he said, "The way they are giving government." freebies to women, i Stating that in democracy, them to gain votes." freebies to women, it will help

Lithuanian prez backs Trump's NATO defence spending goal

 $S_{ing}^{ecuring}$ an end to the fighting in Ukraine must take place with Kyiv's full involvement and come with more defense spending by regional countries to avoid any future Russian aggression, according to Lithuania's president.

Gitanas Nauseda, the president of the Baltic coastal nation, told The Associated Press in an interview Thursday that a settlement negotiated without proper deterrent measures would allow Russia to consolidate its forces and prepare for further aggression in the region. Nauseda said that even when a ceasefire is reached in Ukraine, 'you cannot believe that the intentions of Russia will be just to stop and do nothing".

They will use this break in order to consolidate, to strengthen the military capabilities and to strike again in the future," he told the AP in Vilnius. "And then the main question is, what will be the next target of Russia? Ukraine, maybe. Baltic countries,

Lithuania, which was occu-

1990, is increasingly worried about the ongoing brutal war in Ukraine and the aggression of its neighbour Russia.

Its geographical position – bordering Russia's Kaliningrad exclave to the west and Moscow's proxy Belarus to the east — make it vulnerable to a potential broader conflict launched from the Kremlin even after an eventual end to the war, Nauseda said.

You can never feel safe living in this part of the world, because we have this neighbor, and we will still have it after one hundred or two hundred years," Nauseda said of Russia. "You always have the threat from the East, and you must be aware and take all the necessary precautionary measures in order not to be attacked."

"This is not individual countryby-country conflict," he added. This is a challenge of Putin towards NATO."

Unacceptable' if ceasefire plans exclude Kyiv The country recently became the first member of the NATO military alliance to commit to raising its defence spending to at least 5 per cent of its overall national pied by the Soviet Union until economic output, as called for

by US President Donald

A longtime critic of NATO countries that do not spend more on defence, Trump has threatened he would not defend alliance members that fail to meet defense spending goals. While some European countries have signalled upping their spending to Trump's desired 5 per cent of GDP would be an economic burden, other nations on the alliance's eastern flank, including Lithuania, have greeted the

proposal as a necessity. Before Trump took office ear-lier this month, questions over how he would engage with the war in Ukraine loomed over European countries as some speculated he would roll back the crucial military aid provided by the administration of President Joe Biden.

But after his inauguration, Trump threatened to impose sanctions and tariffs on Moscow, and urged Russian President Vladimir Putin to 'settle now and stop this ridiculous war".

Nauseda said the new US administration must ensure that Kyiv is fully involved in negotiations to end the fighting, and that a resolution to the conflict should not be drawn up bilaterally between Moscow and Washington.

"It would be unacceptable if the peace would be set behind the doors and without the involvement of Ukraine," he said. "Ukraine paid a very high price in this war. Ukraine lost many human lives. Infrastructure, facilities and houses are destroyed. The Ukrainian people deserve the right to set the conditions of this peace."
"I think that President Donald

Trump understands that: no peace negotiations without Ukraine," he added.

Another security concern fac-

ing Lithuania and the region is a series of events that have damaged undersea cables and gas pipelines in the Baltic Sea. At least 11 Baltic cables have been damaged since October 2023. Most recently, a fibre optic cable connecting Latvia and the Swedish island of Gotland reportedly ruptured on Sunday. NATO launched a new mission dubbed "Baltic Sentry" earlier this month to protect the underwater infrastructure vital to the economic well-being of the region. Although cable operators note that sub-sea cable damage is commonplace, the frequency and concentra-tion of incidents in the Baltic have heightened suspicions that damage might have been deliberate.

To address those concerns, Nauseda said, "It is time for us to show some muscle."

"NATO and the EU should take more responsibility in surveying the Baltic Sea, bringing additional maritime capabilities to prevent such incidents in the future," he said. Some politicians in Lithuania have objected to the country raising its military expenditures, already among the highest relative to GDP in the 32-member NATO alliance. But Nauseda said Lithuania must show that it can be responsible for its own defence. "This is an absolutely clear priority for this country, as a frontline country, that we have to spend more," he said. "Of course, we can rely on the support of our allies in NATO. But it would be naive to expect that somebody will care about our security if there will be clear indications that we are not able to defend ourselves?

US Prez mum on pulling out troops from Syria

President Donald Trump is declining to say whether he intends to maintain current US troop levels in Syria. We'll make a deter-mination on that," Trump told reporters on Thursday when asked if he intends to withdraw US troops deployed to Syria to fight the Islamic State group. "We're not involved in Syria. Syria's its own mess. They got enough messes over there. They don't need us involved with everything."
The US had said for years

that there were about 900 troops in Syria, but the Pentagon acknowledged in December that US troop levels had surged to about

There has long been friction between the US and Syria's neighbours - Turkiye and Iraq - about the ongoing presence of American forces in Syria and the need to keep them at a particular level. Israel meanwhile has urged the US to maintain a presence in the country.

Trump said just before rebels ousted Syrian leader Bashar Assad in December in that the US military should stay out of Syria. Trump is also not giving up on the idea of Egypt and Jordan taking in Palestinians from the Gaza Strip, even as the leaders of both countries have flatly rejected the idea. "They're going to do it," Trump said in exchange with reporters on Thursday, when asked whether he could force Egypt and

Jordan to take in Palestinians from the wartorn territory. "We do a lot for them and they're going to do it."Trump does have

leverage to wield over Jordan and Egypt, two strategically important US allies that are heavily dependent on US aid.

Trump first floated the idea last week, saying he would urge the leaders of the two Arab countries to take in Gaza's now largely homeless population, so that "we just clean out that whole thing." He added that resettling most of war-torn Gaza's population of 2.3 million could be temporary or long term.

Human rights groups have already accused Israel of ethnic cleansing, which United Nations experts define as a policy designed by one ethnic or religious group to remove the civilian population of another group from certain areas "by violent and terror-inspiring

US aid agency in upheaval during foreign assistance freeze

Washington (AP): Trump administration changes have upended the US agency charged with providing humanitarian aid to countries overseas, with dozens of senior officials put on leave, thou-sands of contractors laid off, and a sweeping freeze imposed on billions of dollars in foreign assistance. Secretary of State Marco Rubio defended the pause on foreign assistance Thursday, saying "the US

on to leight assistance intursual, saying the US government is not a charity." Aid organisations say the funding freeze — and deep confusion over what US-funded programmes must stop work as a result — has left them agonizing over whether they could continue operating programmes such as those providing round-the-clock nutritional support to extremely malnourished infants and children, knowing that closing the doors means that many of those children would die.

Current and former officials at the State Department and the US Agency for International Development say staffers were invited to submit requests to exempt certain programs from the for-eign aid freeze, which President Donald Trump imposed Jan. 20 and

the State Department detailed how to execute on Jan. 24. Three days later, at least 56 senior career USAID staffers were abruptly placed on administrative leave.

Three officials said many of those put on leave were lawyers involved in determining what programmes might qualify for waivers, helping write proposals and submitting those waiver requests as they believed they had been invited to do. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity for fear of reprisal. A Trump administration directive that aid organizations interpret as a gag order has left them unwilling to speak publicly for fear of permanently losing US funding. In an internal memo Monday about the staffing changes, new acting USAID administrator Jason Gray said the agency had identified "several actions within USAID that appear to be designed to circumvent the President's Executive Orders and the mandate from the American peoble.""As a result, we have placed a number of USAID employees on administrative leave with full pay and benefits until further notice while we complete our analysis of these actions," Gray wrote. A former senior USAID official said those put on leave had been helping aid organizations navigate the "confusing process" to seek waivers from the aid pause for specific life-saving projects, such as continuing clean water supplies for displaced people in war zones

BRICS nations warned against replacing US dollar

President Donald Trump has once again warned that he will impose 100 per cent tariffs against BRICS nations if they attempt to replace the US dollar in international trade, telling them to go and find "another sucker nation."

BRICS is an intergovernmental organisation of ten countries —Russia, India, China, South Africa, Egypt, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Iran and the United Arab Emirates. "The idea that the BRICS countries are trying to move away from the dollar, while we stand by and watch, is OVER," Trump said on Thursday in a post on Truth Social, a social media platform owned by him.

Trump said he wanted a commitment from these "seemingly hostile" coun-



President Donald Trump signs a document in the Oval Office at the White House,

tries that they would neither create a new BRICS currency nor back any other currency to replace the "mighty" US dollar.

"Or they will face 100 per cent tariffs, and should expect to say goodbye to selling into the wonderful US economy," Trump said. "They can go find another

sucker nation. There is no chance that BRICS will replace the US dollar in international trade. or anywhere else, and any country that tries should say

hello to tariffs, and goodbye to America!" Trump threat-Although Trump has repeatedly criticised BRICS nations against any move to float their own currency, this is his strongest opposition to it

In December too, Trump warned BRICS nations

so far.

against such a move. BRICS is an intergovernmental organisation of ten countries -Russia, India, China, South Africa, Egypt, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Iran and the United Arab Emirates.

BRICS, formed in 2009, is the only major international group of which the US is not a part.

Over the past few years, a few of its member countries, in particular Russia and China, are seeking to have an alternative to the US dollar or create BRICS currency.

India, an important pillar of BRICS, has said it was against de-dollarisation. External Affairs Minister S

Jaishankar in December said India had never been for de-dollarisation and there was no proposal to have a BRICS currency.

Palestinians walk past a mosque destroyed by Israeli airstrikes in Nuseirat, Gaza Strip, Friday days after a ceasefire deal between

Serbian student protesters march ahead of major blockade of Danube bridges

AP INDJIJA

Adriver in Belgrade, rammed a car into a silent protest in the Serbian capital on Friday, slightly injuring one woman, the third such incident in weeks. The incident happened in downtown Belgrade during 15 minutes of silence observed daily throughout Serbia at noon when a canopy collapsed at a railway station in the northern town of Novi Sad on November 1. Video footage showed the woman, wearing a doctor's white coat, being thrown to the pavement. Pro-government thugs have repeat-edly attacked the protesters, many of them students, twice ramming cars into demonstrations. Two people were seri-ously injured in the previous attacks. After spending a freezing night out in the open, hundreds of striking students on Friday resumed their 2-day

anti-graft protest march from the capital, Belgrade, to the northern city of Novi Sad, where they plan to blockade where they plan to blockade three bridges over the River Danube this weekend. The bridge blockade is planned for Saturday to mark three months since the huge con-crete construction at the railway station collapsed in Novi said on November 1, leaving 15 people dead. What started two months ago as a protest against suspected corruption in construction contracts has developed into the most seri-ous challenge in years to the country's powerful populist leader, President Aleksandar

Along the way to Novi Sad, the students were greeted by cheering citizens, honking their car horns or coming out of their homes with offers of refreshments and food.

When they reached the town of Indjija on Thursday, roughly halfway along their 80-kilo-meter (50-mile) route, they were welcomed with fireworks and cheers from residents. Although most of them spent the night out in the open in a soccer field, the freezing tem-

peratures did not dampen

their desire for major changes in the corruption-ridden Balkan state. Nevena Vecerinac, a student, said she hoped the protesters' demands that include the pun-

ishment of all those responsi-ble for the rail station tragedy will be fulfilled. "We will make it to Novi Sad,"

she said. "Yesterday's walk was easy. It's cold now, but we can make it. We all have the same goal." We need support from all people. With this energy and mood I hope we can do it, otherwise there will be no brighter future," said Luka Arsenovic, another student marcher.

Many in Serbia believe that the

collapse of the overhang at the train station was essentially caused by government corrup-tion in a large infrastructure project with Chinese state companies. Critics believe graft led to a sloppy job dur-ing the reconstruction of the Novi Sad train station, poor oversight and disrespect of

existing safety regulations.

Monthslong demonstrations have already forced the resignation of Serbia's prime minister Milos Vucevic this week, along with various concessions from authorities which were ignored by the protesters who say that is not enough. Vucic and other officials have shifted from accusing the stu-dents of working with foreign powers to oust him, to offering concessions or issuing veiled threats.

Pro-government thugs have repeatedly attacked the students, twice ramming cars into protests.

Istanbul mayor testifies over legal probes against him

Istanbul (AP): Police on Friday fired tear gas to disperse a group of protesters who clashed with officers outside an Istanbul courthouse while rallying in support of the city's mayor, who was called to give testimony in two new legal probes against him.

Ekrem Imamoglu, a potential future leader of Turkiye's main opposition Republican People's Party, or CHP, and a possible challenger to President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, testified before prosecutors for two hours.

The testimony was in connection with comments he made about a chief prosecutor and a court expert. Critics argue that these probes are part of an effort to remove Imamoglu from the political scene. The politician has already been

convicted of charges of insulting members of Turkev's Supreme Electoral Council and faces a political ban if his conviction in 2022 is upheld by a high court. He is also on trial on charges that he was involved in the alleged rigging of bids in a tender dating back to 2015. Thousands of supporters gathered outside the Caglayan courthouse to protest the legal actions against Imamoglu. Tensions escalated when riot police blocked a CHP bus, which serves as a podium for politicians, from approaching the courthouse. The move led to clashes between the protesters and the police, who responded with tear gas. It was not clear if any arrests were made.

Imamoglu later addressed the crowds from the top of the bus at another location. "Today's issue is an issue of justice, an issue of seeking rights and justice," the mayor said. "Unfortunately, today's issue stems from a conspiracy that is being set up against Istanbul." Imamoglu, 53, was first elected to lead Istanbul in March

His win was a historic blow to Erdogan's Justice and Development Party, which had controlled Istanbul for a quar-

Sunita Williams sets record for total spacewalking time by woman

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

Indian-origin astronaut Sunita Williams has broken the record for total spacewalking time by a woman by log-ging 62 hours and 6 minutes of spacewalk.

Williams and her colleague Butch Wilmore, who have been stranded on the International Space Station (ISS) since June 2024, conducted a spacewalk on Thursday.

The duo ventured outside the ISS to remove degraded radio communications hardware and collect samples that may show whether microorganisms exist on the exterior of the orbiting

laboratory.
The spacewalk began at 7:43 am Eastern Time (ET) and concluded at 1:09 pm ET, lasting 5 hours and 26 minutes. It was the ninth spacewalk for Williams and the fifth for a post on X.



'NASA astronaut Suni WIlliams just surpassed former astronaut Peggy Whitson's total spacewalking time of 60 hours and 21 minutes," NASA said in

She surpassed Whitson's record for total spacewalking time by a female astronaut. Williams now has 62 hours and 6 minutes of total spacewalk time, fourth on NASA's all-time list, according to NASA.

In 2012, during a trip to the ISS Williams became the first person to finish a triathlon in son to finish a triatmon in space, during which she simulated swimming using a weight-lifting machine and ran on a treadmill while strapped in by a harness so she wouldn't float away. Williams, 59, and Wilmore

went on what was meant to be an eight-day mission to the ISS aboard Boeing's Starliner in June 2024.

However, technical issues including helium leaks and thruster malfunctions meant that the Starliner was unsafe for their return.

NASA plans to bring them back to Earth in late March aboard a spaceship built by SpaceX, a rival company of Boeing. Despite these setbacks, the astronauts have continued their work aboard the ISS while awaiting a safe journey home.

Myanmar's military govt extends state of emergency by 6 months

AP BANGKOK

Myanmar's military gov-ernment on Friday announced another six-month extension of its mandate to rule in preparation for elections it has said will be held this year, as the country enters its fifth year of crisis.

However, it did not announce an exact date for the polls. The military declared a state of emergency on February 1, 2021, when it arrested the country's leader, Aung San Suu Kyi, and top officials from her government in an army takeover which reversed years of progress toward democracy after five decades of earlier militarv rule.

The takeover sparked an armed resistance movement, with powerful ethnic minority militias and people's defense forces

that support Myanmar's main opposition now controlling large parts of the country.

The military government is currently facing its greatest challenge since taking power and is on the defensive in much of the country. However, it is still able to hold onto much of central Myanmar and big cities including the capital, Naypyidaw.

State-run MRTV television reported on Friday that the National Defence and Security Council decided unanimously to grant an extension of emergency rule after Senior Gen. Ming Aung Hlaing, the head of the military government, argued that more time was needed to restore stability to the country to hold national elections.

The council is nominally a constitutional administrative

government body, but in practice is controlled by the military.\ Under the army-drafted 2008 Constitution, the military was able to rule the country under a state of emergency for one year, followed by two possible six-month extensions before holding elections. However, the extension on

Friday is the seventh.
Tom Andrews, a special rapporteur with the UN Human Rights Office, said in a statement on Thursday that four years of military oppression, violence and incompetence have cast Myanmar into an abyss. The United Nations has estimated that more than 3.5 million people have been displaced by the conflict. Junta forces have slaughtered

thousands of civilians, bombed and burned villages, and displaced millions of people. More

GDP to grow at 6.3 per cent to Need to scale up infra investment 6.8 per cent: Economic Survey

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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m grow}^{
m ndia's}$ economy is likely to $I_{
m grow}^{
m ndia's}$ economy is likely to 2025-26 on the back of strong macroeconomic fundamentals, though strategic and prudent policy management will be required to navigate global headwinds, said the Economic Survey on Friday.

The GDP growth rate is estimated to slip to 4-year low of 6.4 per cent in the current financial year ending March 2025, close to its decadal average.

key The key pre-Budget document also emphasised that the country needs to grow at 8 per cent for up to two decades to become a developed nation or Viksit

Bharat by 2047. Also, to achieve this growth, the investment rate must rise to 35 per cent of GDP, up from the current 31 per cent, and develop the manufacturing sector further and invest in emerging technologies such as AI, robotics, and biotechnology.
"The fundamentals of the

domestic economy remain robust, with a strong external



outlook for 2024, though

The near-term global growth

is expected to be a shade

lower than the trend level.

The services sector continues

to drive global expansion, with notable resilience in

Meanwhile, manufacturing is

struggling in Europe, where

structural weaknesses persist.

Trade outlook also remains

clouded in the next year, the

It further said inflationary

pressures have been easing globally, though risks of

synchronised price pressures

regional patterns vary.

India.

survey added.

account, calibrated fiscal consolidation and stable private consumption. On balance these considerations, we expect that the growth in FY26 would be between 6.3 and 6.8 per cent," said the survey authored by a team lead by Chief Economic Advisor Anantha Nageswaran.

Navigating global headwinds will require strategic and prudent policy management and reinforcing the domestic fundamentals, it added.

The survey noted that a steady growth trajectory shapes the global economic linger due to potential geopolitical disruptions, such as tensions in the Middle East and the ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict.

"In brief, there are many domestic to investment, output growth and disinflation in FY26. There are equally strong, prominently extraidownsides too," it said. extraneous,

To realise the aspirations of Viksit Bharat by 2047, the survey stressed that it is important that the mediumterm growth outlook of India be assessed in the context of emerging global realities of G e o - E c o n o m i c Fragmentation (GEF). manufacturing Chinese

prowess, and global dependency on China for energy transition efforts.

It also puts forth a way forward to reinvigorate the internal engines and domestic levers of growth by focusing on one central element of systemic deregulation, which will enable a paradigm of economic freedom businesses of individuals and organisations to pursue legitimate economic activity

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Investment in the infrastructure sector needs to be continuously scaled up over the next two decades to sustain a high growth rate while the government needs to come up with ways to increase private sector financing and tap new avenues to mobilise resources, the Economic Survey said on

"India needs a continued step-up of infrastructure investment over the next two decades to sustain a high rate of growth," said the Economic Survey 2024-25 tabled in Parliament.

In the first quarter of FY25, the constraints on new approvals and spending during the general elections, coupled with heavy monsoon in many regions, affected the progress of the infrastructure spending, said the latest survey.

However, the speed of capex picked up between July and November last year.

The capex in infrastructure sectors is likely to gain further momentum in the remaining months of the current fiscal. On an average, ministries related to infrastructure sectors utilised 60 per cent of the budgeted capex during April to November 2024. The capacity addition in

physical connectivity sectors stayed on course during

The capital expenditure of the Centre for the current fiscal has been budgeted at about 3.3 times the capex for FY20, the document said. It further said that disaster-

resilient urbanisation, public transport, preservation and upkeep of heritage sites, monuments and tourist destinations, as well as rural public infrastructure. including connectivity, call for greater attention.

"Our net zero commitments entail added stress on creating renewable energy capacities," it added.

Stating that there are binding budget constraints to the different tiers of government, it said private participation should speed up in many critical infrastructure sectors in many ways like programme and project planning, financing, construction, maintenance, monetisation and impact assessment.

infrastructure

programme supports a variety of PPP models like buildoperate-transfer (toll and design-buildannuity), finance-operate-transfer, hybrid annuity model and toll-operate-transfer," it said. The government has instituted many

debottlenecking and facilitatory mechanisms like the National Infrastructure Pipeline, National Monetisation Pipeline and PM-Gati Sakti that have made progress.

Financial market regulators have introduced reforms to encourage

New strategic trade roadmap

needed to enhance export

participation, it said, adding that still the uptake of private enterprise is limited in many core sectors.

The strategy to step up private participation coordinated action of all stakeholders involved like governments at different tiers, financial market players, project management experts and planners, and the private

"Capacities to conceptualise projects, develop sector-specific innovative strategies for execution, and, develop high-expertise areas such as risk and revenue sharing, management, contract conflict resolution and project closure need to improve substantially," it said. The efforts of the Centre need to be supplemented with wholehearted acceptance of the need for public-private partnerships in infrastructure across the country.

The survey further said that during the current fiscal so far, the progress in the expansion of the railway network stayed at levels comparable to the previous year, while the addition of rolling stock increased considerably. Between April and October last year, 17 new pairs of Vande Bharat trains were introduced to the network, and 228 coaches were produced.

Lack of climate finance may prompt developing countries to rework their climate targets

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The lack of financial support from developed countries to mitigate climate change in the Global South may prompt developing countries to "rework" their climate targets, India's Chief Economic Advisor Anantha Nageswaran has said.

In the Economic Survey 2024-25 tabled in Parliament on Friday, Nageswaran said the new financial package agreed at the 2024 UN climate conference (COP29) in Azerbaijan to support climate action in the developing world "presents little optimism".

Countries are now required to Nationally submit their Determined Contributions or climate plans for the period between 2031 and 2035 by February 10 and Nageswaran said the "funding shortfall may lead to a reworking of the

According to the United Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), adopted in 1992, high-income industrialised nations, which have historically been responsible for most of the greenhouse gas emissions driving climate change, are required to provide finance, technology and capacity building support to developing and low-income economies to help them cope with a

warming world. These countries include the United States, the UK, Canada, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, and European Union member impacts



France. The chief economic advisor said that domestic resources will be the key to climate action amid the lack of support from developed countries.

Therefore, resources for development meeting challenges may be affected, undermining progress toward sustainable development objectives and "compromising the integrity of international climate partnerships", he said. Nageswaran said mobilisation target of USD 300 billion annually by 2035 is just a "fraction" of the estimated requirement of USD 5.1-6.8 trillion by 2030.

The new climate finance package is "out of sync" with the needs of the critical decade when action is required to keep the temperature goals of the Paris Agreement within reach, Nageswaran said. underscores

unwillingness of affluent developed nations to assume their equitable share of the responsibility to address emission reduction and climate change mitigate vulnerable on states such as Germany and populations in developing

regions, he said.

With the developed countries also falling short of their NDCs by about 38 per cent, Nageswaran said their actions do not reflect the historical responsibility or the leadership in meeting their obligations. In 2015, countries came together to limit global warming to "well below 2 degrees Celsius", aiming for 1.5

degrees Celsius. Fast forward, the world has already heated up by 1.3 degrees Celsius since the preindustrial era, largely due to burning fossil fuels.

To limit warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius, the UN's climate science body, IPCC, says emissions must peak by 2025 and drop 43 per cent by 2030 and 57 per cent by 2035. But current policies point to a hotter future -- around 3 degrees Celsius warming by 2100. Even if every country fulfils its climate promises or NDCs, emissions would only shrink by a weak 5.9 per cent by 2030. Developed nations, the biggest historical polluters, are pushing developing countries to do more to meet the Paris Agreement goals.

Market correction in 2025: Economic Survey

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Counding a note of caution Son the elevated stock market valuation, the Economic Survey on Friday said any correction in the US markets could have a cascading effect in India, which has witnessed increased participation from young investors post-Covid. Over the past few years, retail participation, especially from investors,

significantly increased in the equity markets. Investor participation has grown from 4.9 crore in FY20 to 13.2 crore as of December 31, 2024. "Elevated valuations and optimistic market sentiments

in the US raise the likelihood of a meaningful market correction in 2025. Should such a correction occur, it could have a cascading effect on India, especially given the increased participation of voung, rel tively new retail investors.

"Many of these investors that have entered the market postpandemic have witnessed a significant and prolonged market correction. Hence, if one were to occur, its impact on sentiment and spending may be non-trivial," the Survey noted.

According to the survey, the rise in retail participation aligns with a steady decline in the five-year rolling beta between the Nifty 50 and the S&P 500 in the last four years, suggesting a reduced sensitivity of Indian markets to US market movements.

This decoupling is further evidenced by the increasing



resilience of Indian markets during periods of FPI (Foreign Portfolio Investors) outflows. For instance, in October 2024, despite FPI outflows of USD 11 billion, the Nifty 50 index was corrected by only 6.2 per cent, thanks to strong downside support provided by domestic institutional and individual investors.

In contrast, during the March 2020 pandemic-driven market sell-off, FPI outflows of USD 8 billion triggered a steep 23 per cent market decline. "Even as the resilience demonstrated by the Indian

market, supported by growing participati promising, the risks associated with a potential US market correction cannot be overlooked, given historical trends," the Economic Survey

2024-25 said. Historical data suggests that the Indian equity market has been notably sensitive to movements in the US market. The Nifty 50 has historically shown a strong correlation with the S&P 500, with analysis of daily index returns between 2000 and 2024, revealing that in 22 instances when the S&P

500 corrected by more than 10

per cent, the Nifty 50 posted a

case, averaging a 10.7 per cent

negative return in all but one

PTI ■ NEW DELHI The Economic Survey on

Friday called for a new strategic trade roadmap for India, along with measures to cut trade costs and enhance export competitiveness amid growing protectionism globally.

It said that much remains to be done to enhance trade competitiveness.

"Global trade dynamics have changed significantly in recent years, shifting from globalisation to rising trade protectionism, accompanied by increased uncertainty. This calls for a new strategic trade roadmap for India," the survey said. It added that to remain

competitive and enhance its participation in global supply chains, India must continue reducing trade costs and mproving facilitation to boost export competitiveness. "The good news is that doing so is entirely in our hands. On its part, the industry must continue to invest in quality," it said adding the country's external sector continued to display resilience amidst global headwinds economic and trade policy

uncertainties. It emphasised the need to assess the global situation and develop a forward-looking strategic trade roadmap to deal with the evolving global trade dynamics, marked by gradual shifts towards greater protectionism.

strengthen competitiveness and further



on reducing trade-related costs and enhancing export facilitation to create a more vibrant export sector. This proactive approach will help India continue to thrive in an ever-changing global market," the survey said.

As per estimates, India's share of global trade was over 2 per cent in 2023.

During the Apr period of this fiscal year, exports recorded a growth of 1.6 per cent to USD 321.71 billion and imports by 5.15 per cent to USD 532.48 Trade deficit -- the difference

between imports and exports -- during April-December widened to USD 210.77 billion from USD 189.74 billion during the same period of the previous fiscal

It noted that disruptions in global trade due to the Red Sea crisis, the Russia-Ukraine war and the recent drought in the Panama Canal, allied with increased protectionist tendencies shown by many The number of non-tariff

measures in sectors such as agriculture, manufacturing, and natural resources, that restrict international trade have also increased over the last few years. The Economic Survey 2024-

25 was tabled in the Parliament Finance Minister Nirmala

On the steps being taken to increase exports, it said, India is in the process of negotiating a number of free trade agreements (FTAs) with countries and trading blocks. India is actively working towards negotiating trade deals with top importers such as the EU and the UK.

Services exports from India too have shown a multisectoral presence in global exports, with notable contributions across several sectors.

The country's share in global services exports has more than doubled, reaching around 4.3 per cent in 2023 from 1.9 per cent in 2005.

Kerala has replicable model for localisation of SDG

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Localisation of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) ensures that rural development is in harmony with international goals, the Economic Survey released on Friday said, lauding Kerala for having a robust, communitybased model that leverages its strong local governance institutions, and called it a "replicable model".

"The localisation of SDGs ensures that rural development is in harmony rural with international goals, focusing on essential services like housing, sanitation, water supply, and electrification. This strategy promotes inclusive growth and enhances the quality of life at the grassroots level," the Economic Survey said.

Kerala uses a "robust, community-based model that leverages its strong local governance institutions", the survey said.

"Awareness and community engagement efforts focus on educating local officials on the relevance of poverty alleviation and environmental resilience, which are led by

state and national leaders," it said, adding that it is a replicable model for SDG

The report said Local Self Government Department, with technical support from the Kerala Institute for Local Administration (KILA), have developed comprehensive guidelines and processes to incorporate SDGs into local planning. They also train stakeholders in SDG-aligned development and data collection.

The state has a real-time SDG dashboard to monitor the panchayats and is able to use such localised data for decision-making and to provide insights on development indicators, the

Survey highlighted.
SDG Coordination Centres (SDGCCs), which drive localisation efforts in states and UTs by governments in partnership implementing agencies, are currently operational in 10 states/UTs -- Andhra Pradesh, Haryana, Himachal

Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir,

Karnataka, Nagaland, Punjab,

Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh,

and Uttarakhand.

PTI ■ NEW DELHI localisation.

 $T^{
m he}$ pre-budget document for the 2024-25 fiscal has suggested policy reforms to discourage overproduction of cereals while boosting output of pulses and edible oils, which the country currently imports to meet domestic shortages. The Economic Survey 2024-25, tabled in Parliament on Friday, stressed that India's

agriculture sector has "significant untapped growth potential" despite various growth initiatives. Farmers must be allowed to receive unimpeded price signals from the market, with separate mechanisms to protect vulnerable households, it added. protect

The document outlined three key policy shifts needed establishing market mechanisms for price risk hedging, preventing excessive fertiliser use, discouraging production of water and power-intensive crops that are already in surplus.

"These policy shifts will help lift agricultural productivity



Eco Survey pitches for policy shift to cut

cereal output, boost pulses, edible oils

in the economy by boosting land and labour productivity in the sector," the survey said. Stating that India faces a persistent deficit in the production of pulses and oilseeds, the document said the slower growth rate of oilseeds at 1.9 per cent raises

concerns, especially considering India's heavy reliance on imports to satisfy domestic edible oil demands. To address this, the document suggested focused research to develop climate-resilient crop varieties, enhancing yield and reducing crop damage. Efforts to expand the area under pulses in rice-fallow regions

are likely to help. It also called for the promotion of extension

activities and training for farmers on the best practices, the use of high-yield and disease-resistant varieties, and targeted interventions to improve agricultural practices in the major growing regions for pulses and oilseeds.

It stressed the judicious use of fertilisers considering soil degradation, particularly the decline in organic carbon content, poses a significant challenge Indian to agriculture.
The agriculture sector growth

averaged 5 per cent annually during FY17-FY23, showing resilience despite challenges. In Q2 FY25, the sector grew 3.5 per cent, recovering from growth rates of 0.4-2.0 per cent in the previous four

quarters.

The sector contributes approximately 16 per cent to GDP and supports about 46.1 per cent of the population, as per FY24 provisional estimates at current prices. The document stated that a

crucial factor influencing agricultural performance is the impact of weather conditions. "Climate variability can present significant challenges;

however, farmers with diverse income streams are better positioned to navigate these uncertainties," it said. Allied activities like animal

husbandry, fisheries or agroforestry, can enable the farmers to mitigate the risks effectively. The document emphasised

the growing importance of allied sectors like animal husbandry, dairying and fisheries for income

INBRIEF

ICICI OFFERED JOBS TO 13 GNDU MBA STUDENTS

AMRITSAR: Under the able leadership of Vice Chancellor Dr Karamjeet Singh, Directorate of Placement & Career Enhancement of Guru Nanak Dev University organised Campus Placement drive by ICICI Prudential Life Insurance company for MBA - Batch 2025 students of GNDU Amritsar. A team of 2 senior members visited Guru Nanak Dev University to conduct the interviews of MBA students. The company selected 13 students at a pay package of Rs. 4.50 Lakhs per annum. These students will join their jobs after passing out their respective courses in June 2025.

WORKSHOP ON INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS HELD IN GURU NANAK DEV UNIVERSITY

AMRITSAR: A workshop on Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) and Technology Transfer was organised by Intellectual Property Rights Cell and office of Dean Students Welfare in which Dr Amaresh Panda, a seasoned Intellectual Property and Technology Transfer Professional from the Government of India participated as speaker.



SPECIAL LECTURE ON DIGITAL ARREST AND CYBER CRIMES

AMRITSAR: Senior Advocate Sh.Sandeep Gorsi, (Supreme Court of India, Punjab and Haryana High Court) delivered a special lecture on "DIGITAL ARREST AND CYBER CRIMES" organised by the Department of Laws, Guru Nanak Dev University on the current and relevant topic of immense value.



the pioneer

[ART & CULTURE] vivacity 11



hen art and cinema Art Fair showcase, features a captivating meet, they don't just coexist, they create a vibrant and immersive experience connects with audiences on a deep emotional level. The Bond to Bachchan exhibition, presented by Masha Art and curated by Georgina Maddox, is an exemplary showcase of this powerful union. Featuring 21 works by 15 artists, the exhibition explores the profound cultural impact of two cinematic legends,

The exhibition is a tribute to the enduring influence of these cinematic icons. It celebrates how Bond and Bachchan not only shaped the landscape of global pop culture but also continue to inspire artists, going beyond generations and inspiring fresh perspectives in modern-day art.

James Bond and Amitabh Bachchan.

The exhibition, which serves as a preview to Masha Art's upcoming India



collection of paintings, sculptures and digital installations. Each artwork Probes into the personas and cinematic journeys of Bond and Bachchan, offering viewers a fresh and creative lens through which they can reimagine these iconic figures.

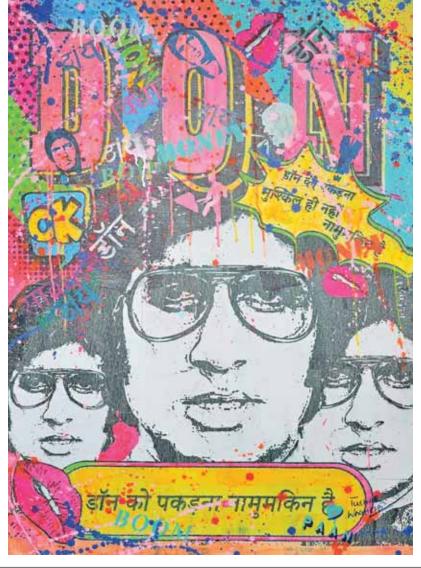
Samarth Mathur, Founder and Managing Director of Masha Art, explains that the exhibition is a monumental celebration of cinema's enduring influence on contemporary art. Each piece is a unique interpretation of the legacy of these figures, reflecting not just their roles on screen but also their emotional depth and the larger-than-life personas they have cultivated over decades.

One of the standout pieces of the exhibition is Golden Era in Cinema by Shri Kumar Adhikari. This stunning work merges Mughal miniature painting with the golden age of Indian cinema, particularly the 1960s and 1970s. Featuring iconic scenes from films like Sholay and Mera Naam Joker, the piece is a nostalgic tribute to Indian film history. Adhikari's signature technique, which incorporates intricate Mughal detailing, is brought to life with contemporary touches using acrylics, giving the piece a fresh, modern twist.

Ankur Rana's Smoke Up Bolly is another compelling painting featured in the exhibition. This piece is a tribute to the iconic Bollywood actress Zeenat Aman, widely regarded as one of the most powerful and enigmatic figures in the Indian film industry. Rana's artwork captures Zeenat Aman in all her glory, combining softness with boldness. The rising smoke in the painting symbolises the duality of her persona, embodying her magnetic presence and mysterious allure. Rana's depiction of Aman is a fitting homage to her legacy, highlighting her unique contribution to the world of



Art and cinema connect deeply as Bond to Bachchan by Masha Art celebrates Bollywood's enduring legacy, SAKSHI PRIYA





cinema and fashion during the 1970s and 1980s. The fluidity of the smoke creates a visual link between the stark contrasts in her on-screen roles, from the femme fatale to the heartthrob.

Another thought-provoking piece in the exhibition is *Bridging Realms* by *Shovin Bhattacharjee*. This mixed media sculpture incorporates stainless steel, fibre, light, acrylic and aluminium that represents the confluence of art, cinema and spirituality. *Bhattacharjee* explores the power of cinema to outdoes cultural boundaries and act as a unifying force. The spherical shape of the sculpture symbolises the intersection of multiple worlds, representing the smooth connection between the entertainment industry and the transformative power of storytelling. The piece also honours the resilience of individual voices and celebrates the roles of women in cinema, particularly within the context of the Bond and Bachchan legacies. Bhattacharjee's work adds a layer of depth to the exhibition, drawing attention to how art, cinema and meditation all serve as vehicles for personal and societal change.

This exhibition truly remarkable is how deeply it engages viewers. People aren't just walking past the art, they are stopping, reflecting and appreciating each piece with immense care and attention. Some viewers stand in front of particular works for several minutes, lost in the intricate details and rich symbolism. The works are so powerful that they almost seem to leap off the canvas, evoking emotions that mirror the feelings one experiences while watching a film. The connection between art and cinema becomes almost tangible, as each piece encapsulates a moment from cinematic history, inviting viewers to reflect on how these moments have influenced their own lives.



The collection of artworks immerses the viewer in a conversation between art and cinema, offering fresh perspectives on iconic figures from Indian cinema. The artists' creative interpretations challenge traditional boundaries, making the exhibition a dynamic exploration of how cinema continues to inspire the visual

In addition to the paintings and sculptures, Bond to Bachchan includes digital installations that merge visual storytelling with cutting-edge technology. These installations add another dimension to the exhibition, encouraging visitors to think critically about the role of technology in both cinema and contemporary art. The combination of traditional and digital mediums creates a layered experience, one that deepens our understanding of both art forms.

Bond to Bachchan a tribute to two cinematic icons and a celebration of the power of storytelling.Bond to Bachchan is an exhibition that should not be missed. It is a fascinating exploration of cinema's cultural impact and its enduring influence on contemporary art, offering fresh and thought-provoking perspective on two of the world's most iconic cinematic figures.

PHOTOS: PANKAJ KUMAR

Moulding Ideas into

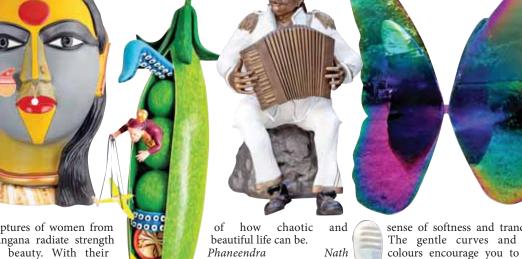
rt has a way of saying things touches something deep inside, speaking directly to our emotions and thoughts. Each piece tells a story and those stories invite us to connect, whether it's a feeling, a memory or a thought that stays with us long after we've walked away.

Saffronart presents Alchemies of Form, a showcase of monumental sculptures by Krishen Khanna, Himmat Shah, Thota Vaikuntam, Dhananjay Singh, Phaneendra Nath Chaturvedi and Yashika Sugandh, curated by Uma Nair. The exhibit transforms Bikaner House into a space where the sculptures don't just sit still, they engage with you, making you pause and reflect.

Krishen Khanna's Retired Captain is an invitation to look closer. Crafted with resinated fibreglass and automotive paint, this piece gives life to a retired accordion player, frozen in a moment that feels both personal and intimate. It's not just a sculpture, it's a story, one you want to hear.

Himmat Shah's work offers a different kind of invitation. The calm, serene forms of Rajnagar white marble and Bheslana black marble are an exploration in stillness. They invite quiet reflection, drawing the viewer in with their delicate simplicity, revealing the power of subtlety in art. Thota Vaikuntam's pieces bring bold energy and colour into the space. The

sculptures of women from Telangana radiate strength and beauty. With their vibrant colours and powerful postures, they pull you into their world, urging you to appreciate the richness of identity and culture that they represent. Dhananjay Singh's Jungle takes on the wild, untamed beauty of nature. The stainless steel wire feels fragile, yet complex and full of life. It draws a direct connection human-made between form and the unpredictable forces of nature. It's a visual reminder



Chaturvedi's Chaturayatan-3 captures the essence of change. Made of high-gloss stainless steel, it reflects everything around it, shifting as the viewer moves. It's a commentary on transformation and perception, nothing stays the same and the constantly

world

reshapes itself. Sugandh's Yashika calm amidst the dynamic energy of the other pieces. Crafted from acrylic on fibre

resin and nylon, it evokes a

sense of softness and tranquillity. The gentle curves and subtle colours encourage you to pause, breathe and reflect, showing how even the quietest moments can leave a lasting impression. These monumental sculptures do more than just fill space. They tell stories, provoke thoughts and challenge how we see the world around us. Each piece carries its own rhythm and message, pulling us into a conversation between the artist and the viewer. Alchemies of Form is Matar offers a moment of a chance to engage with art in a way

that feels immediate, visceral and real.

PHOTOS: PANKAJ KUMAR

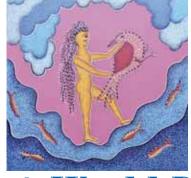
Rupak tala, added a lively

pulse to the performance.

With Pandit Durjay Bhaumik

on tabla, the exchange

between melody and rhythm







By TEAM VIVA hat is it about the colour blue that captivates the imagination? From serene skies to vast oceans, blue has long been associated with peace, hope and endless possibilities. This evocative colour takes centre stage at Harvest 2024, presented by Payal Kapoor of Arushi Arts, under the

The exhibition offers visitors a chance to explore art inspired by the symbolism of blue across cultures and history. Blue has held a significant place in human civilisation, cherished in Indian art and far-eastern traditions and revered in Western masterpieces. Artists like Monet, Van Gogh and Picasso have embraced its depth to convey emotions and ideas and this exhibition continues that legacy.

theme Blue Horizons.

The artworks on display evoke tranquillity while stirring deep emotions. K.G. Subramanyan's pieces, with their playful narratives, draw viewers into a world of vivid storytelling. Shobha Broota's minimalist approach creates a meditative experience, while Satish Gupta's works are admired for their intricate details and spiritual undertones. Lado Bai's vibrant depictions of tribal life and traditions stand out, bridging the gap between cultural heritage and contemporary



expression.

Each artist interprets blue in a way that feels both personal and universally relatable. The layers of textures, interplay of light and shadow and central use of blue create a visual narrative that inspires introspection and connection. The exhibition showcases a variety of perspectives, celebrating art's ability

to unite history, emotion and creativity.
This thoughtfully curated showcase of talent is a must-visit for art lovers and anyone looking to experience the magic of blue. Held at W-23, GK-ÎI, New Delhi, the exhibition is open daily from 11:00 AM to 6:00 PM. This showcase of creativity and talent remains open until 10th February 2024.

By TEAM VIVA usic lovers gathered

for a special evening ▲as the Raga Fellowship Foundation brought together two maestros. An evening with sitarist Abhik Mukherjee and sarod player Arnab Chakrabarty proved just that. Their performance celebrated tradition, devotion, and the timeless beauty of Indian classical music.

Mukherjee began with a mesmerising 50-minute rendition of *Raga Puriya*, 50-minute playing through the pain of an injured finger. His alaap was rich with emotion, each note carefully placed, making the raga feel fresh and deeply personal. His jod and jhala



sections carried a quiet intensity, and his adaptation of khayal compositions from the Agra gharana into sitar gats brought a new dimension to the music. Ustad Rafiuddin

Sabri's tabla accompaniment provided a steady yet dynamic rhythm, adding depth to Mukherjee's melodies. Chakrabarty followed with Raga Hameer, playing with a

grace that felt both effortless and profound. His alaap unfolded gently, drawing listeners into the raga's mood. The rhythmic flow of his Dhamar composition, set to

was deeply engaging. The evening ended with Raga Gara, a tribute Chakrabarty's musical roots, bringing a sense of warmth and nostalgia.

As the final notes faded, there was a moment of silence before the applause began, reflecting the depth of the experience. For those in attendance, it was a night of pure musical joy, a reminder of the enduring power of to move hearts and bring people together.







Manchester United, Tottenham reach Europa League round of 16

PTI ■ LONDON

anchester United and Tottenham put their inconsistent domestic campaigns aside and advanced to the Europa

and Mainoo netted eight minutes later for a 2-0 victory over Romanian champion FCSB in Bucharest

adding two more through substitute Damola Ajayi and 17-year-old Mikey Moore.

Of the 36 teams in the revamped competition, the top eight go directly to the round of 16 in March. Teams

playoffs on Feb. 13 and Feb. 20 with the winners making the last 16.

The draw is scheduled for Friday.

United, which is 12th in the domestic campaigns aside and advanced to the Europa League round of 16.

Diogo Dalot tapped in a precise cross by Kobbie Mainoo on the hour mark and Mainoo netted eight minutes later for a 2-0 trialing the top by one point.

"Kobbie (Mainoo) played victory over Romanian champion FCSB in Bucharest on Thursday.
Tottenham got goals from academy graduates to beat Swedish club Elfsborg 3-0 in London. Spurs waited until the 70th minute for substitute Dane Scarlett to break the deadlock before adding two more through

signs of improvement since he said the team was "the worst, maybe, in the history of Manchester United."

Thursday's victory was the third straight in one week after beating Rangers in the ranked ninth to 24th go into the two-legged knockout and Fulham in the Premier



League three days later.
Tottenham is languishing in
15th place in the Premier
League. Its seven-match
winless run in the league is
its worst since 2008. But it won five, drew two and lost one for the fourth place in

the Europa League. Lazio, the only team that qualified to the round of 16 with a game to spare, was handed its first defeat, 1-0, away at Braga. Still, the Portuguese team was eliminated.

Lazio still topped the standings with 19th points, the same as the second Athletic Bilbao. Bilbao secured the second

place after a 3-1 home win over 10-man Viktoria Plzen, which has a playoff spot.

Frankfurt completed the league phase in fifth despite a 2-0 loss at Roma. Angeliño team to advance. The and Eldor Shomurodov lifted Roma with the goals at Stadio Olimpico.

Lyon was sixth despite being held 1-1 at home by

Ludogorets.

Olympiacos in seventh after routing Qarabag 3-0. Rangers squeezed in to complete the top eight by beating Union Saint-Gilloise

José Mourinho's Fenerbahce avoided an embarrassing early exit with a 2-2 away draw at Denmark's Midtjylland. The result sent both into the playoffs. The hosts were 20th while Midtjylland took 24th, giving Mourinho a chance to add to his European

trophies. Ajax ended a three-game losing streak by handing Galatasaray its first defeat, 2-1 with both teams making the playoffs.

team to advance. The Belgian club finished 10th. Real Sociedad, FCSB, Porto, AZ Alkmaar, Twente and PAOK are among other teams that advanced.



Lyon confirms Paulo Fonseca as its new coach

Lyon has confirmed the hiring of Paulo Fonseca as its new coach.

Fonseca is replacing Pierre Sage, who was fired despite leading the French league club out of a crisis last season and having the team within reach of a Champions League place in this campaign.

Sage's dismissal on Tuesday followed a 1-1 draw with Nantes in Ligue 1 last weekend and left many observers perplexed. Sage had rapidly become a fans' favorite after guiding Lyon from the bottom of the standings to a sixth-place finish last season. The Associated Press reported earlier this week that Lyon had sealed a deal with Fonseca. Fonseca's first match in charge

will be against Marseille in the French league on Sunday, Lyon said.

Fonseca won the Portuguese Supercup with Porto in 2013 and the Portuguese Cup with Braga in 2016. He also coached Shakhtar Donetsk, where he won three leaguecup doubles (2017, 2018, 2019) and the Ukrainian Supercup in 2017.

Paulo Fonseca then coached AS Roma between 2019 and 2021 before joining Lille in June 2022, where he built one of the best attacking and efficient sides in France despite operating on a limited budget. More recently, he was less successful at AC Milan, League," Lyon said.

producing only 12 wins in 24 matches across all competitions.

Fonseca had been out of a job since he was fired by AC Milan on Dec. 30. After 19 matches this season, After 19 matches trus season,
Lyon is sixth in the league —
just four points off a
Champions League spot —
and has qualified for the
knockout stage of the Europa League. Lyon, however, said

the decision to part ways with Sage was a "sporting choice" after the Frenchman averaged fewer points per game this season and struggled against big rivals.

Lyon is owned by American businessman John Textor, who visited the club in person this week. He had been in regular contact with Fonseca in recent years and previously tried to hire him. Fonseca joins on a deal until the end of June 2027.

Lyon believes that Fonseca will be able to add defensive stability to the team and make it more competitive against the top four Ligue 1 teams. The club's ambition is to qualify for the Champions League on a regular basis and to challenge Paris Saint-Germain's supremacy. "Paulo Fonseca and his staff

will be tasked with starting a new cycle and taking the club to the highest level in the second half of the season, with the ultimate goal of qualifying for next season's Champions

Only Santos can give me the love I need: Neymar

PTI ■ SAO PAULO

Neymar has confirmed he will sign what is expected to be a short-term contract with his boyhood club, Santos, as the Brazil striker aims to recharge his career ahead of the 2026 World Cup. ahead of the 2026 World Cup. The 32-year-old Neymar said on Thursday that he's returning to the Sao Paulo club, and local media reported that the deal will extend only to June 30.

"Only Santos can give me the love that I need to prepare for the challenges I have in the next few years. All of you, no matter who you support, know well what I am talking about," Neymar said on his social media channels.

"I hope you all follow me in this new phase of my life." Santos used its social media channels to respond Neymar's video: "Your home awaits. Your people awaits."

Neymar left Santos nearly 12 years ago to join Barcelona. The striker's return follows the termination of his contract with Saudi Arabian club Al-Hilal. Neymar had returned in October from an



ACL injury sustained while playing for Brazil only months after he joined Al-Hilal. He played only seven matches and scored once for the Saudi team.

Neymar also left Paris Saint-Germain under criticism from fans, who accused him of not caring enough about his fitness. In 2017, his exit at Barcelona was also frustrating for club supporters, who hoped he could help Lionel Messi and Luis Suárez win more trophies.

A Santos official told The Associated Press that Neymar is expected to arrive at Sao Paulo's international airport at 9 am on Friday. He will then board a helicopter to go to the club's Vila Belmiro Stadium. After he signs his contract, he will be reintroduced to fans during

the evening.
The official spoke on condition of anonymity due to lack of authorisation to discuss the matter publicly.

Neymar has already played 225 matches with Santos. He scored 138 goals for the club, many of which key for the six titles he won at the Brazilian giant, which was relegated in 2023 and returned to the country's top division last

Neymar became the most expensive player in soccer

history when he transferred from Barcelona to PSG for 222 million euros (then USD 262 million) in 2017.

Neymar's most recent match was played in November. Al-

was played in November. Al-Hilal coach Jorge Jesus had repeatedly cast doubts about the striker's form to play. Neymar left the Saudi Arabian league after playing just seven games in 17 months following his big-money move to the oil-rich kingdom. The Brazilian's contract was due to expire contract was due to expire after this year's FIFA Club World Cup, which will be played between June 15 and July 13 in the United States. The striker joined the Saudi club from PSG in August 2023 for 90 million euros (USD 94 million). His salary was reportedly one of the biggest in world soccer as

Neymar, Brazil's all-time top goalscorer with 79 goals in 125 matches, also said he is focused on getting more playing time so he can prepare for the World Cup in North America next year in what could be his last shot at winning the tournament.



PTI WIJK AAN ZEE 11th round.

On top of the table with a slender lead, world champion D Gukesh will take on Wei Yi of China in the 11th round of Tata Steel Chess Tournament, aiming to continue his unbeaten streak and claim the season's first title.

With five victories and five draws, Gukesh has remained unbeaten in the first major tournament of the year and if he adds another 1.5 points in the last three rounds, it should

be enough to lift the title.
With 7.5 points, Gukesh is in pole position, half a point ahead of Nodirbek and a full point more than compatriot R Praggnanadhaa. Yet to play two white games out of last three, Gukesh has to meet Jorden van Foreest of Holland in the penultimate round and then finally an out

of sorts Arjun Erigaisi. Both Abdusattorov and Praggnanandhaa have two black games left which makes Gukesh a huge favourite to win his maiden title here. It may be recalled that the Indian had lost in tiebreaker to Wei Yi last year after tying for the top spot. Not only a victory here, what is also at stake for Gukesh is the 2800 rating barrier and he will be the third Indian to achieve it after Viswanathan Anand and Arjun if he can. He is at 2794 points in live ratings.

Praggnanandhaa will meet pre-event rating favourite Fabiano Caruana of United States while Abdusattorov has to tackle the solid defenses of Vincent Keymer of Germany in the other key clashes of the Arthur Pijpers (Ned, 4.5).

It has been tough for the remaining three Indians in the Masters section as Harikrishna has scored 4.5 points while Arjun and Leon Luke Mendonca are at the bottom of the table with three points each. These three will have to work hard in the remaining rounds to finish better in the final standings.
In the challengers section, R

Vaishali is on five points out of a possible 10 and has shown brilliance in patches.

Divya Deshmukh is on two points and needs a pullback. This section is led by Czech Grandmaster Nguyen Thai Dai ahead of Nodirbek Van on 7.5 points with Erwin Abdusattorov of Uzbekistan L'Ami of Holland in close

pursuit a half point behind. Pairings round 11 Masters: Jorden van Foreest

(Ned, 4) vs Arjun Erigaisi (Ind, 3); D Gukesh (Ind, 7.5) vs Wei Yi (Chn, 5.5); Fabiano Caruana 5.5) (Usa, Praggnanandhaa (Ind, 6.5); Vincent Keymer (Ger, 4) vs

Mitchell Marsh out of Champions Trophy

PTI SYDNEY

Australia all-rounder Mitchell Marsh has been ruled of next month's Champions Trophy and is also in doubt for the Indian Premier League after that owing to lower back pain that has "not responded sufficiently to rehabilitation". Cricket Australia informed about Marsh's injury in a statement ruling him out of the Champions Trophy, which will be held in Pakistan and Dubai from February 19 to March 9. A few other reports suggest Marsh is also doubtful for the

"Mitchell Marsh has been ruled out of the upcoming ICC men's Champion's Trophy with ongoing lower back pain and dysfunction," CA said in a release.
"The National Selection Panel and Australian men's

medical team ruled Marsh out of the tournament with the injury which has not responded sufficiently to rehabilitation."

"His lower back pain flared in recent weeks leading the NSP to make the longer term decision for Marsh to complete a more extended period of rehabilitation," it rehabilitation as part of his

added. CA said the national selection panel will be meeting soon to name a replacement of Marsh, who was picked in the 15-member side for the competition alongside other all-rounders Aaron Hardie, Glenn Maxwell and Marcus Stoinis. "Marsh will now undergo a

period of further rest and

replacement for Marsh in due course. "The deadline for the final squads for the ICC men's Champion's Trophy is prior to Wednesday 12 February,"

return to play plan. The NSP will meet to decide on a

CA said. The 33-year-old Marsh has been roped in by Lucknow Super Giants ahead of the 2025 edition of the IPL, which will start on March 23.

Marsh was dropped in favour of Beau Webster for the final Test of the five-match Border-Gavaskar Trophy which concluded earlier this month. He had an ordinary run in

the four Tests. The right-arm medium pacer did not share much workload with the front-line bowlers and managed to score in double digits only once in seven innings.

Nodirbek Abdusattorov (Uzb, 7); Anish Giri (Ned, 5)) vs Max Warmerdam (Ned, 3.5); Alexey Sarana (Srb, 5) vs P Harikrishna (Ind, 4.5); Vladimir Fedoseev (Slo. 6) vs Leon Luke Mendonca (Ind. 3). Challengers: Oro Faustino (Arg, 2.5) vs Nodirbek Yakubboev (Uzb, 5); Lu Miaoyi (Chn, 5.5) vs Erwin L'Ami (Ned, 7); Nogerbek Kazybek (Kaz, 5.5) vs Ediz Gurel (Tur, 5.5); R Vaishali (Ind, 5) vs Avdin Suleymanli (Aze, 6.5); Svane Fredrik (Ger, 6) vs Nguyen Thai Dai Vam (Cze, 7.5); Irina Bulmaga (Rom, 1) vs Divya Deshmukh (Ind, 2); Benjamin Bok (Ned, 6.5) vs

BCCI Award: Bumrah chosen for Best International Cricketer

PTI MUMBAI

 $T^{alismanic\ pacer\ Jasprit}_{Bumrah\ was\ chosen\ for\ the\ BCCI's\ Polly\ Umrigar}$ Award for Best International Cricketer 2023-24 in men's category while elegant batter Smriti Mandhana was picked for the corresponding the 2024 calendar year. women's trophy in the Board's annual honours that centuries, a record in the will be presented here on Saturday.

Bumrah, who was selected as the ICC Test and overall hitting 95 fours and six Cricketer of the Year for maximums. delivering a "a master-class in skill, precision, and relentless ODI runs came at an average consistency", was India's standout bowler last year, strike rate of 95.15. playing a pivotal role in Spin great Ravichandran India's home wins over Ashwin, who retired from

England and Bangladesh. The 31-year-old was also the Player of the Series against Australia in the Border-Gavaskar Trophy, bagging 32 wickets across five Tests. Mandhana, who was the ICC Women's ODI Cricketer of

the Year, made 743 runs in

women's game, and found the boundary more than a hundred times in the year,

The 28-year-old cricketer's

international cricket in December 2024 as India's second highest wicket-taker in Tests with 537 dismissals and overall eighth highest, has been bestowed with a special award at the end of his career.

The 37-year-old Ashwin, who made his Test debut in November 2011, played a defining role in India's 12-year domination in the longest format at home wherein they won 18 series on the trot. Among newcomers, Mumbai

batter Sarfaraz Khan was

International Debut among

men for his quick-fire fifty

against England in the Rajkot

Test in February 2024.

the Best

picked for



The middle-order mainstay also hit a counter-attacking 150 against New Zealand in Bengaluru Test to continue his ascent.

Among women, Sobhana has been chosen for the award for Best International Debut as she picked up 4/21 against South

Bengaluru in June 2024. Mandhana will also be honoured with the Highest Run Getter in ODIs medal after she finished as the highest run-scorer in 2024, smacking 747 runs at 57.46 in 13 matches with four tons

Africa to help India win by 143 runs in their first ODI at

Similarly, Deepti Sharma was awarded with the Highest Wickets in ODIs medal for taking 24 wickets in 13 matches.

and one fifty.

Tanush Kotian continued to make waves with his rise through the ranks in Mumbai in the 2023-24 season, which culminated with his maiden call-ups for the India A side for their tour of Australia and subsequently for the Indian team for the last two Tests of the Border-Gavaskar Trophy. Kotian will be awarded with the Best Performance in BCCI Domestic Tournaments trophy.

The 26-year-old, who rose to limelight with all-round performances in Mumbai's 42nd Ranji Trophy win in 2023-24, scored 502 runs in 10 matches at 41.83 with one century and five fifties and also grabbed 29 wickets. Having won the Ranji Trophy

for a record-extending 42nd time in the season, Mumbai also claimed the Irani Cup after a gap of 27 years. Mumbai The Association would be given

the Best Performance in

Tournaments Trophy for winning various titles such as Ranji Trophy, U-16 Vijay Merchant Trophy, U-14 West Zone Championship, senior women's T20 Trophy, women's U-19 One Day Trophy, Bapuna Cup T20 Tournament and men's U-19 All India Tournament. Mumbai teams also finished as runner-up in Cooch Behar

U-19 Trophy and Vinoo Mankad U-19 Trophy. Akshay Totre from Indore was adjudged the Best Umpire in Domestic Cricket for the season.

Legendary batter Sachin Tendulkar has been chosen for Col CK Navudu Lifetime Achievement Award.

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