www.dailypioneer.com

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

Modi's guarantee for Delhi: PM Kumbh readies for Amrit Snan today

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday launched a sharp attack on the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) highlighting how the party is falling apart ahead of the upcoming Assembly polls in Delhi. "We are seeing that even before the voting, 'jhaadu ke tinke bikhar rahe hain' (the straws of the broom are falling apart). Leaders of 'AAP-da' are leaving it, they (people) hate this party," Modi said, referring to several AAP leaders quitting the party. Taking on the AAP's claims, the prime minister told people that no jhuggi will be demolished in Delhi and no welfare scheme shut in case of

Narendra Modi said on Sunday that this is the most middle class Budget in India's history and only the BJP respects the middle class of the country. He further claimed the Union Budget presented on that "Modi's guarantees" were fulfilled.

Addressing a "Sankalp" rally at RK Puram ahead of the upcoming Assembly polls in Delhi, the prime minister spoke about various beneficial provisions of the Budget for the middle class to claim that since India's Independence those earning up to Rs 12 Lakh have received such a relief. The middle class is saying that this is the most friendly Budget for them in

the BJP coming to power.
Asserting that the Union
Budget has filled every family with happiness,
Prime Minister

Prime Minister Narendra Modi addresses a public meeting ahead of the Delhi Assembly elections, at RK Puram in New Delhi Photo: Ranjan Dimri/The Pioneer

Modi spotted a portrait of himself among the crowd. He asked the Special Protection Group personnel, deployed for his security to bring the portrait to him. He also asked the artist to write their address on the portrait and said he would write a letter to the artist.

The PM also took a swipe at the Congress, invoking former prime ministers Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi to claim that their governments India's history, he added. imposed heavy taxes on Rs 10 Lakh would go into Before beginning his speech, people's earnings, while his taxes. That was the scenario

government has eased the tax burden and provided greater relief to the middle class. PM Modi said, "Let me present a picture before you. It will help you understand better and make it easier to explain to others. If we look at this Budget-back in Nehru Ji's time, if you earned Rs 12 Lakh, the government would take away one-fourth of your salary as tax. If this were Indira Ji's era, vou would be shocked to hear that out of Rs 12 Lakh, nearly Rs 10 Lakh would go into

back then, which is why I am explaining this today." He added that while a Rs 12 Lakh income meant paying Rs 2.6 Lakh in tax under Congress rule, the latest budget presented by his government ensures zero tax on the same

"Even 10-12 years ago, under a Congress government, if you earned Rs 12 Lakh, you had to pay Rs 2,60,000 in taxes. Now, yesterday's government budget, a person earning Rs 12 Lakh in a year will not have to pay even a single rupee in tax," PM Modi said. The PM said many residents of RK Puram have government jobs. "You have got not just tax relief but 8th Pay Commission is also being introduced, pension schemes were consolidated, and budget benefits extended to senior citizens and the retired government officials too," he said, adding that young couples, too, will save a lot on PM Modi then underlined the

Budget offerings to Bihar to reach out to the Purvanchali community in Delhi, which plays a key role in the election. Purvanchal spans eastern Uttar Pradesh and western Bihar and many migrants from the region have settled in the national Capital. "The Purvanchali community made me an MP and the PM. The Purvanchali community made me who I am and they have been taken care of in the Budget. They were neglected in Congress' time. People from Bihar were not respected. But we have respected them," the PM said, pointing to the Budget announcements for

Mahakumbh is preparing for another massive Amrit Snan on Basant Panchami day on Monday, following the tragic stampede that marred the Amrit Snan on Mauni Amavasya. Authorities estimate that over four crore pilgrims will take the holy dip, with roads leading to Sangam already swelling with crowds

by Saturday evening.
With an extended weekend and a public holiday, officials anticipate a fresh surge of visitors starting Sunday. In response, security has been intensified, crowd management measures reinforced, and medical services strengthened to prevent any untoward incidents and ensure a smooth pilgrimage experience. The Maha Kumbh, which commenced on January 13, will continue until February 26. The remaining significant snan dates include Basant Panchami on February 3, Maghi Purnima on February 12, and Maha Shivaratri on February 26. The city has been witnessing a continuous influx of pilgrims since January 26, with the Mauni Amavasya Snan setting new records as nearly eight crore devotees took a dip in the Ganga. While the footfall slightly declined in the following days, officials now expect another massive turnout for the

upcoming snan.
Many pilgrims began their bathing rituals on Sunday itself, as the Panchami tithi starts that day. Local vendors near the ghats have observed a sharp rise in footfall. Shyam Sundar Mishra, a vendor, remarked that the last few days were relatively quiet, but now the crowd is swelling again and they are prepared for a busy weekend.

In light of the tragic incidents during the Mauni Amavasya Snan, the government has significantly ramped up security and crowd management efforts. Senior officials, including former Prayagraj Divisional Commissioner Ashish Goyal and former PDA Vice-Chairman and DM Bhanu Chandra Goswami, have been deployed alongside five special secretaries. On Saturday, five additional



Devotees are seen near 'Nandi Dwar' as they proceed towards Sangam during the ongoing 'Maha Kumbh Mela' festival, in Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh

Maha Kumbh stampede: Police launches probe

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

The Uttar Pradesh Police has launched The Uttar Pradesh Police has launched an investigation into the stampede that claimed 30 lives during Mauni Amavasya at the Maha Kumbh, following suspicions of a possible conspiracy behind the incident. In addition to central intelligence agencies, the state's Antimeters of the Terrorism Squad (ATS) and Special Task Force (STF) are actively searching for a group of youths believed to have triggered the chaos. The state government has also constituted a three-member judicial commission to probe the matter.

Several eyewitnesses and survivors Several eyewitnesses and survivors reported that a group of young men was deliberately pushing the crowd, causing panic among pilgrims. As people tried to escape, they began pushing those ahead of them, leading to many falling and getting trampled underfoot. The stampede resulted in 30 fatalities and left 37 others injured. A similar stampede was also reported in similar stampede was also reported in the Jhunsi area, raising concerns about deliberate attempts to create unrest.

Continued on page 8

PCS-level officers were assigned to enhance supervision and coordination. Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Manoj Kumar Singh assured that past crowd movements have been analysed and improvements made to ensure better flow and safety so that no devotee faces difficulties.

To prevent overcrowding, authorities have identified 28 high-risk zones at Sangam, where police, RAF, and paramilitary personnel will be stationed. A senior official overseeing crowd management explained that these 28 locations were the most congested during Mauni Amavasya and Makar Sankranti, and teams will be stationed here to prevent stampedes and maintain

Special measures have also been introduced at the ghats. Devotees will be guided to leave the bathing areas immediately after their dip to prevent congestion. Security forces will ensure pilgrims follow designated entry and exit routes. Amit Tiwari, a devotee from Kanpur, shared his experience from Mauni Amavasya, saying that last time it was difficult to move because of the crowd, and he is glad to hear that authorities are making arrangements for better management.

Continued on page 8

Congress fly EAGLE over ECI Retired judge files PIL Badrinath temple to open on May 4

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA NEW DELHI

A fter leveling charges of alleged manipulations' in elections, Congress has formed a committee to monitor the conduct of free and fair elections by the Election Commission of India. The committee named as Empo Action Group of Leaders and Experts (EAGLE) will first take up the alleged manipulation of voters' list in Maharashtra followed by Haryana and submit a detailed report to the party high command. Congress president Mallikariun Kharge constituted EAGLE with immediate effect to monitor the conduct of free and fair elections by the poll watchdog. The panel includes Congress treasurer Ajay Maken and senior leaders Digvijaya Singh, Abhishek Singhvi, Praveen Chakravarty and Pawan Khera. Besides, Gurdeep Singh Sappal, Nitin Raut and Challa Vamshi Chand Reddy are also part

of the panel. Besides Maharashtra, 'EAGLE' will also analyse past elections in other States, and proactively monitor upcoming elections and all other issues related to the conduct of free and fair elections in the country. Congress led INDIA bloc members had anticipated a massive win in both the States but only to be routed completely.

Members of Opposition parties under the INDIA bloc has claim that about 63 election petitions have been filed across various benches of the Bombay High Court



national Capital on Sunday. Delhi goes to polls on Wednesday Pioneer photo

against discrepancies in the country's election system and that recently held Assembly election.
About 25 Congress leaders have filed petitions, before the Nagpur and Aurangabad benches of the High Court. Five Congress leaders from Marathwada have also filed poll petitions.

Some other petitions have been filed by NCP (SP) and Shiv Sena candidates through advocate Aseem Sarode at the Principal Bench. The petitioners have alleged misconduct in the polls, including duplicate voting, concealed criminal cases, asset concealment, EVM malfunctions, bribery, and lack of election transparency.

Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi had last month alleged that there is a "serious problem" with the the Nirvachan Sadan must ensure transparency in polls which the first faith of the people of India.
Rahul rued the fact as why the Election Commission has

refused to provide Congress and other opposition voter lists of Maharashtra and lists of Maharashtra and Haryana elections despite of several reminders and morandum.

workers at the inauguration of the new party headquarters last month, Rahul had alleged there has been an increase of nearly one crore voters between Maharashtra Lok Sabha and assembly elections but the Election Commission is neither answering the queries raised by the opposition nor giving the lists of

against poll freebies

STAFF REPORTER | NEW DELHI

Retired Justice SN Dhingra has moved the Delhi High Court against the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP), Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) and Indian National Congress (INC) over their political promises to distribute cash to the voters in the upcoming Assembly polls, alleging that it falls within the meaning of "corrupt practices." The PIL refers to AAP's "Mukhyamantri Mahila Samman Yojana", BJP's "Mahila Samridhi Yojna" and Congress' Pyari Didi Yojna" wherein the parties have promised cash benefits to the voters if they are elected to power. A direction is also sought on BJP, AAP and Congress to desist from collecting personal and electoral data of voters and not to share or use the same to any third

The petitioner argues that such schemes violate provisions of the Representation of the People Act, 1951, particularly Section 123(1), which pertains to corrupt practices, and Section 127A, which pertains to corrupt practices, and Section

127A, which deals with unauthorized election materials. Additionally, these actions allegedly breach Sections 170 and 171 of the Bhartiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023, which relate to bribery and undue influence in elections. Furthermore, these actions disregard advisory guidelines issued by the Election Commission of India (ECI)," the

petitioner argues. The petition has been filed by Justice Dhingra who is also the President of organisation Samay Yaan (Sashakt Samaj). The petitioner is seeking directions to cease and desist from collecting personal and electoral data of voters under false pretences and direct not to share & use the data collected during

election to any third party. Continued on page 8

PNS ■ NEW TEHRI The sacred portals of the Badrinath temple in

Uttarakhand's Ĉhamoli district will open for devotees at 6 am on May 4. On the occasion of Basant Panchami,

the auspicious time for opening the temple officer Vijay Thapliyal and several religious was decided after special prayers were offered at the former Tehri royal court in Narendra

After Ganesh Panchang and Chowki pujan, royal priest Acharya Krishna Prasad Uniyal

decided the date for opening the doors of the Badrinath temple. On this occasion, besides former Maharaja of

wife, daughter Shreejaand, Tehri Lok Sabha member Mala Rajya Laxmi Shah, Badrinath's chief priest Rawal Amarnath Namboodri, Badrinath Kedarnath Temple Committee's chief executive

Tehri Manvendra Shah, his

officials were present Every year after Diwali, the doors of the Char Dhams - Badrinath, Kedarnath, Gangotri and Yamunotri — are closed for the devotees. The portals reopen in April-May the following

year. During the six-month-long pilgrimage, Lakhs of devotees from across the country and abroad visit the Char Dhams.

DRIVE FOR VOTER AWARENESS



Vintage cars taking part in voter awareness drive organised by the Delhi Election Office at Major Dhyan Chand National

India's youngsters dominate U-19 Women's T20 world cup

PTI ■ KUALA LUMPUR

An utterly dominant India flaunted their embarrassment of riches to win a second successive U-19 Women's T20 World Cup title with a nine-wicket shellacking of South Africa here on Sunday, the triumph giving a peek into the game's most perfectly calibrated youth structure.

Having outclassed every team during their march to the final, India asserted themselves yet again, getting the job done with as many as 52 balls to spare while also becoming the first team to win the tournament without dropping a single game.

The biggest star of the day was allrounder Gongadi Trisha, who complemented her excellent 3/15 with an unbeaten 33-ball 44 while

batting. South Africa, led by Kayla Reyneke, decision backfired quickly as India's three-pronged spin attack bowled them out for 82.

Left-arm spinner Aayushi Shukla was the star of the show with figures of 4-2-9-2, while leg-spinner Trisha, who has also been a revelation with the bat, further underlined her allround capabilities with her triple strikes with the ball.

Trisha once again anchored India's chase with an unbeaten knock that was studded with eight fours.

Vice-captain Sanika Chalke (26 not out; 22 balls, 4x4) sealed the victory with a powerful heave to the squareleg boundary, forcing the young Indian players, draped in the Tricolour, to break into wild celebrations.

"I've dreamt of this moment for the past two years, and I can't believe I hit the winning runs — it's truly surreal. My teammates' support made all the difference, and this opted to bowl first, but their moment is one I'll cherish forever,"



said Sanika after the match. Left-arm spinner Parunika (4-0-6-2) provided India with an breakthrough, immediate dismissing opener Simone Lourens for a duck as South Africa struggled

from the outset. Right-arm seamer Shabnam Shakil (2-0-7-1) then removed the dangerous Jemma Botha, reducing South Africa to 20/2 by the end of the fourth over.

The pressure intensified when Aayushi bowled Diara Ramlakan, further denting South Africa's innings. At the halfway mark, South Africa were struggling at 33/3, unable to gain any momentum. Captain Kayla Reyneke (7) tried to

stabilise the innings but fell to Trisha, who later stumped Mieke van Voorst (23) to break a promising 30-run partnership for the seventh

Their skipper attempted to break free but perished while trying to go big, holing out to Trisha at long-off. Despite Fay Cowling (15; 20 balls) and Mieke van Voorst putting up a small resistance, South Africa's struggles continued.

The duo tried to rebuild but with just four overs remaining, South Africa were precariously placed at

Trisha's breakthrough then triggered a collapse and they were eventually bowled out in the final delivery of their innings.
India got off to a strong start in their

chase, scoring briskly with a steady flow of singles and boundaries. Trisha was once again the aggressor with her exquisite strokes, while

Kamalini G also chipped in. The opening partnership was moving smoothly until Kamalini

was dismissed for 8, caught by Simone Lourens off Kayla Reyneke's bowling, leaving India at 36/1 in 4.3

overs. Sanika faced a few dot balls halfway mark of their innings. before settling in as South Africa's wayward bowling and fielding also helped India's cause.

Trisha, on the other hand, continued to exude confidence, accumulating runs with a mix of singles and boundaries.

Indian opener Trisha, who struck the only century of this edition of the tournament — 110 against Scotland — finished as the top-scorer with 309 runs from seven innings at a fantastic average of 77.25 and a strike rate of over 147.

She also returned with seven wickets at an economy rate of 6.42 across the seven outings.

Vaishnavi emerged as the tournament's top wicket-taker, claiming 17 scalps at an outstanding economy rate of 4.35 from six matches, while Aayushi Shukla supported her brilliantly with 14 wickets from seven matches. In the final, India were 71/1 at the

flawless campaign, winning all their group-stage matches against the West Indies, Malaysia, and Sri Lanka. Their winning momentum continued in the Super Six stage

The defending champions enjoyed a

with victories over Bangladesh and Scotland.

In the semi-final, India delivered a commanding performance against England to extend their unbeaten run to six matches.

"Immensely proud of our Nari Shakti! Congratulations to the Indian team for emerging victorious in the ICC U19 Women's T20 World Cup 2025. This victory is the result of our excellent teamwork as well as determination and grit. It will inspire several upcoming athletes. My best wishes to the team for their future endeavours," PM Modi said

in his tweet.

Continued on page 8

rod pierces through body

PNS LUCKNOW

A³⁵-year-old man met a tragic end after an iron rod pierced through his body when the truck he was riding in went out of control on the intervening night of Saturday and Sunday in Banthra area here. The victim, identified as Yusuf Khan from Unnao, had been working as a truck driver and conductor for the past 15 years. He lived with his family in Piparsand, Sarojininagar.

He was seated in the passenger's seat while the truck was driven by Zeeshan. The accident occurred around 1:30 am when an unidentified DCM truck attempted a turn, causing the driver of Yusuf's truck to lose control.

The truck climbed the divider and got trapped between the divider and a sewage trench. The impact was so severe that the iron rods loaded in the truck pierced through the cabin, and one of them through Yusuf's body.

Banthra police, upon receiving information, rushed to the scene but were initially unable to free the victim. The fire brigade and SDRF teams were quickly called in to assist.

The fire brigade and SDRF teams used specialized equipment to cut the truck cabin and extricate the critically injured



NOTICE

I have changed my name from Bhavya Panjwani to Bhavyya panjwani to be known as Bhavyya panjwani in all future references. Bhavyya panjwani, Add.- 1/49 w-1, Saket Nagar, Kanpur

NOTICE

I have changed my name from Garima Pandey TO Garima Bajpai W/o Amit Pandey R/o 104A/23, Ram Bagh Kanpur for future

NOTICE

I am Anjani Kumar Singh S/O Fate Bahadur Singh resident of Khanwar Nawada Khanwar Ballia, in my service record no. 14835681k my mother's name is KAMLA DEVI and date of birth is 1,1,1948 which due to some mistake has been written as KAMALA DEVI and date of birth is 1,7,1946 which is correct KAMLA DEVI and date of birth is 1,1,1948 correct and true

NOTICE

I am Anjani Kumar Singh s/o Fate Bahadur Singh resident of Khanwar Nawada Khanwar District Ballia, in my service record no. 14835681k my father's name is PHATE BAHADUR SIHGH and date of birth is 1,1,1954 which due to some mistake has become FATEH BAHADUR SIHGH and date of birth is 1,7,1943 which is correct name is PHATE BAHADUR SIHGH and date of birth is 1,1,1954 which is correct and true

आवश्यकता है

SKY LAW COLLEGE Natkur, Chandrawal,

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

(अ) लखनऊ विश्वविद्यालय के मानकानुसार। (ब) बार काउन्शिल ऑफ इण्डिया के मानकानुसा

— नोट -.पदों की संख्या घट-बढ़ सकती है। २.६४ वर्ष तक अभ्यर्थी आवेदन कर सकते है।

. नियुक्ति तथा वेतन संविदा पर तथा राज्य सरक लखनऊ विश्वविद्यालय की परिनियमावली व उल्लेखित नियमानुसार होगी। इच्छुक अभ्यर्थी इर् वैज्ञापन की प्रथम तिथि से इक्कीस (२१) दिनों व भीतर प्रबन्धक स्कार्ड लॉ कालेज. को नवीनत गसपोर्ट फोटो एवं समस्त शैक्षित प्रपत्रो के साथ मबन्धक स्काई लॉ कालेज, को सादे कागज प आवेदन करें।

स्काई लॉ कालेज, मो०- ८१७४८१६१९१, ९१९८००३८८८ Emai ID- lawcollegesky@gmail.com पता- स्काई लॉ कालेज, नियर स्काई पब्लिक स्कूल नटकु

man," said the Sarojininagar fire

safety officer. Zeeshan, the truck driver, explained, "As we reached Banthra at around 1:30 am, an unidentified DCM truck made a sudden turn, causing me to lose control. The truck climbed onto the divider and got stuck in the nullah. The iron rods loaded in the truck tore through the cabin, killing Yusuf, while I narrowly escaped."

The police took the body into custody and sent it for postmortem. Yusuf Khan is survived by wife, Shabana, and three children—Asad (12), Ilma (10), and Maira (5).

În a separate incident, a 40year-old man, identified as Sonu Joshi, was found hanging at his house in Dubagga area here on Sunday.

According to reports, Mithun, a resident of Chausar Araul village in Hardoi district, currently residing in Amrapali Yojana under Dubagga police area, informed the police that his brother, Sonu Joshi, had died by suicide. Joshi was found hanging from a ceiling fan in his room. Sub-Inspector Kuldeep reached the scene and conducted a preliminary investigation. "A legal process is underway, and an inquest has been conducted as per procedure," a

police spokesperson said. Initial inquiries with Joshi's wife and other family members revealed that she had been sleeping in the same room as her husband. When she woke up at around 7 am, she found him hanging from the ceiling fan. She raised an alarm, prompting family members and neighbours to rush to the scene. They subsequently informed the police.



NOTICE

I am Anjani Kumar Singh s/o Fate Bahadur Singh resident of Khanwar Nawada Ballia, in my service record no. 14835681k my wife's name is NIRAJ and date of birth is 1,1,1986 which due to some mistake date of birth has been mentioned as 15,5,1988 which is correct NIRAJ and date of birth 1,1,1986 is correct and

NOTICE

I have changed my name from Afsar to Afsar Khan S/o-Bhikkhu R/o Korahee Bisanda Banda, for future

NOTICE

I have changed my name SUKHRAJ SUKHRAJ RAWAT S/o DEVI CHARAN R/o -MAKHI GANGA KHERA ATWA UNNAO for future purpose

NOTICE

I, Uma Shankar S/o Shyam Bihari, permanent address Village- Baidoliya, Post-Shivpur, P.S.- Gaur, District -Basti (U.P.) 272163, current address is 4th, BN, S.S.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, (UP) which is wrong. The correct name is Anushka Yadav, which is the same in the Aadhar card, birth certificate and mark sheet.



CHANGE OF NAME

Surendra Singh S/o Kshatrapal Singh R/o Panbhipur, Fatehpur, Uttar Pradesh- 212655, have changed the name of my minor son Chhavi Yadav aged 04 years and he shall hereafter be known as Anmol Yadav.

PD(1381)C

Man dies as iron **Youth falls to death from** Home chefs rule the roost 13th floor of apartment

Ayouth died after he fell from the 13th floor of an apartment building under mysterious circumstances, police said hereon Sunday. The incident occurred at Smriti Apartment in the Gudamba area. Police, along with a forensic team, reached the spot, and the matter is under investigation, while the body has been sent for a postmortem.

fied as Gaurav Nagar (25). Neighbours rushed to the scene after hearing the noise. According to reports, Gaurav was a resident of Ajay Nagar in Kamta, Chinhat. His father stated that Gaurav had left home on January 31, telling the family he was going to a friend's wedding, but had not returned

Constable

hangs self

Lucknow (PNS): A 27-year-old police constable, Ajay Saini, allegedly hanged himself at his

government quarters in the Banthra police station area on

Sunday. Initial reports suggest

he took the extreme step fol-lowing an argument with his

Saini, a 2019-batch constable

from Nahtaur, Bijnor, had been

posted at Sarojininagar police

station for the past 10 months

and was currently assigned to the Krishna Nagar ACP office.

He lived in the government quarters with his wife, Kajal,

and their two-and-a-half-

Police sources said that around

2 pm, Saini had a heated argu-

ment with his wife. In anger, he

locked her inside a room,

latched the door from outside,

and hanged himself from a ceil-

ing fan hook in the veranda.

Kajal, peering through a win-

dow, saw him hanging and broke the glass, raising an

A female constable living near-

by heard the commotion,

noose had loosened due to

Saini's weight, and he had col-

lapsed onto the floor, uncon-

scious. The female constable

freed Kajal and alerted Banthra

police. Upon receiving the informa-

tion, Banthra inspector and his team rushed to the scene and

took Saini to Lok Bandhu

Hospital, from where he wa

referred to Apollo Hospital. Despite medical efforts, he was

declared dead soon after

Police stated that Saini's fami-

ly had been informed, and the

post-mortem would be con-

ducted upon their arrival.

"Preliminary investigation suggests family discord as the

cause, but a thorough inquiry will be conducted," police

admission.

alarm.

month-old daughter.

The deceased has been identi-

Gaurav had been staying at the home of his friend Monty, who lives in Smriti Apartment in Gudamba.

Monty called the family at 2 am on Sunday to inform them that Gaurav had fallen from the 13th floor. Those present at the scene alerted the police. The police arrived, took Gaurav

declared him dead. ACP Anidya Vikram Singh confirmed that Gaurav's father, Raj Kumar, is a watchman, and Gaurav had completed 10th

to the hospital, but the doctors

grade education.
"He was not currently employed. He was the middle child among three siblings. At present, the father has not made any allegations against anyone," the officer said, quoting the deceased's father.

ongoing.

In a separate incident, a 24year-old man allegedly died by suicide in the Rahimabad police area on Sunday.

According to reports, Neerai Kumar, a resident of Purva village under Aliganj Police Station, informed the police that his nephew, Rinku, a resident of Lalta Kheda Mazra Gadi Indore village in Rahimabad, had hanged himself from a tree near a farmland owned by one Mohanlal. Meanwhile, Rinku's mother

held two individuals responsible for his death.

"Based on a complaint filed by the deceased's mother, a case has been registered against the named suspects, and further legal action is being taken," a police spokesperson said.

Winding road, darkness blamed for fatal mishap

Lucknow (PNS): A winding road, darkness, and the high speed of the car caused the mishap in which the car carrying two advocates plunged into a pond and duo drowned, local residents said here on Sunday. Villagers claimed that the incident was caused largely due to the negligence of the munici-pal corporation and local administration.

Ram Manohar, a local resident, said that the winding road serves as a shortcut to Takrohi, and vehicles pass through there round the clock.

"We were asleep when the accident occurred. A loud noise was heard during the night. Due to the darkness, we couldn't see anything. Most vehicles pass by here until late at night, so we didn't think much of it. It was on Saturday morning that we learned about the accident," the residents explained. A municipal corporation employee was the first to spot the car in the pond. Ram, an employee, was passing by the pond at 5:30 am when he forced open the main gate, and rushed inside. By then, the noticed the car was upside

down in the water. He immediately informed the locals. The police were called, and a fire brigade team arrived at the scene. Upon inspection, they found both bodies inside the car. The team managed to open the door and retrieve the bodies. Identification from the car revealed that the deceased were Kuldeep Awasthi (40), a standing counsel and a resident of Kharagpur, and Shashank Singh (37), a resident of Sector-

14, Indiranagar. There are no railings along the edge of the pond, nor are there any speed bumps. A local grocery shop owner near the pond said that vehicles frequently pass through the area.
"Because it's a shortcut route,

people tend to drive at high

approach the spot where the incident occurred, the drivers often lose control due to the speed. In their haste, they are unable to react in time, which leads to accidents. It's dark, and there are sharp bends here. The road is serpentine. The pond water borders the road on one side. The negligence is such that no railings have been installed on that side of the road. If signboards were placed here, at least people would be more alert, no matter how fast they are driving," he said.

He added that two accidents had already occurred in this area. "Once, a truck overturned. Fortunately, because it was a large vehicle, the driver

DEATH OF TWO ADVOCATES

managed to regain control. The truck was later pulled out with the help of a tractor," he recalled.

Another local expressed frustration that administrative officials had been asked repeatedly to install lights and railings, but to no avail. "From the former pradhan to

the current councillor, everyone knows this is a dangerous spot where accidents happen frequently, but the authorities have ignored the issue. We ne everything we can to prevent further loss of life here," he said.

On Saturday morning, when residents saw the car submerged in the pond, it was lying upside down, with all four wheels on top. The police were immediately informed.

The incident occurred in Naubasta Kala village, under the jurisdiction of Chinhat police station late on Friday

The Sunday Home Cooked Food Festival attracted crowds at the Sanatkada Fest on day three. Organised by Madhavi Kuckreja, the event is an annual attraction held at Salempur Estate, where home chefs from Lucknow showcase traditional dishes passed down through generations. "This festival is hugely popular, drawing visitors from across India, including cities like Bengaluru and Mumbai, all eager to sample the famous Lucknowi delicacies," said Kukreja. The offerings include both vegetarian and non-vegetarian delights.

Vegetarian options included Awadhi thali by Sarika Chaudhary, Bundelkhandi thali & Lucknowi thali by Rupali Gupta, Marwari thali by Rashmi Vaid, and Punjabi thali by Madhu Wadhwa. Ńon-vegetarian dishes featured 'laal mirch ka qeema' by Noor Khan, 'qeeme ki biryani' by Sheeba Iqbal, 'raan musallam' by Iram Rizvi, 'Kayasthana gosht' by Chetna Srivastava, and 'murgh kofte ka saalan' by Anjum Hasan.

The highlight of the festival was 'laal mirch ka qeema', which was devoured within 30 minutes of being served. Made with 7 kg of red chillies and 12 kg of minced meat, it proved to be a crowd favourite.

Tribhuwan Sah, a visitor from Nainital, shared his experience: "I've recently moved to Lucknow and have heard a lot about the festival. The food here is truly unique, unlike anything you'd find at a restaurant. I'm enjoying vegetarian food, SANATKADA FESTIVAL



and it feels special to have meals prepared by home chefs of Lucknow. I'm here with my wife and sister."

Indu Mishra, another attendee, expressed her joy: "I'm thrilled to be here. This festival is an experience I'll make sure to attend every year."
Pooja Kaushal, who attended

for the second time, remarked, The Awadhi thali is delicious. We've waited a whole year for this event.

Sonya Singh Verma, a first-time visitor, said, "I heard about the festival through a friend, and I'm excited to taste the amazing dishes prepared by Lucknow's home chefs." Parveen Khan, an educationist

and long-time attendee, added, "We're big fans of this festival and have been coming since it began. This year, I'm enjoying 'murg zafrani' by home chef Sameena Khan."

Tahira Rizvi, one of the home chefs, shared, "I've been a part

of the festival for many years. I started with desserts, but this year, I'm serving 'gosht ka stew."

Chetna Srivastava, who was participating for the first time, introduced 'Kayasthana gosht', explaining, "Kayasth cooking is all about slow-cooked mutton dishes, which our community is known for."

Meanwhile, the 'Seher: Concert at Dawn' attracted a diverse crowd of all ages. Omkar Dadarkar, trained under Pt Ulhas Kashalkar, performed a morning rendition. The concert also included a 'Mukbandi taan' and a devotional bhajan by Vidushi Girija Devi, culminating in a soulful Bhairavi

The Qaiserbagh Heritage Walk, which began at the UP Press Club, attracted a large number of participants. This walk led attendees through the majestic Qaiserbagh Palace and its surrounding structures.

Father, son injured in firing incident

Lucknow: A minor dispute in a village under Kadipur police station limits in Sultanpur led to a firing incident on Sunday pute. injuring a young man, police said. While the bullet touched his face and whizzed past him, his father was assaulted with a firearm butt, the police said. Both the victims belonging to Katsari village were taken to the community health centre where they are undergoing treatment. According to officials, Satyendra Mishra (48) had an argument with his neighbour Deepak Mishra over an underground pipeline. The alterca-tion escalated and Deepak allegedly attacked Satyendra with a firearm butt. Seeing this, Satyendra's son Ritik Mishra (24) rushed to intervene, following which Deepak allegedly opened fire. The bul-let touched Ritik's face due to which he collapsed. Hearing the gunshot, locals rushed to the scene but the accused fled. Upon receiving information, Inspector AK Singh reached the spot and took the injured father and son to the hospital. A pistol shell was recovered

from the spot. Kadipur Circle Officer Vinay

Gautam confirmed the incident, stating that the attack stemmed from a personal dis-

Meanwhile, an accused in a double murder case was arrested following an encounter with police in Captainganj area of Basti district, police said on Sunday. The encounter took place Thursday night near the Garha Gautam village when a joint team of Captainganj and Dubouliya police along with the Special Operations Group (SOG) attempted to apprehend the accused.

CO Satyendra Bhushan Tiwari said that when the police cornered Balveer, he attempted to flee and opened fire at the police team. The police retaliated, and during the exchange of fire, Balveer sustained a bullet injury in his right leg. He was then taken into custody and admitted to a hospital. Balveer alias Munnar was wanted in connection with the double murder of his aunt and her daughter in Setha village in December. He had been absconding since the crime, and a reward of Rs 50,000 had

been announced on his arrest.

Rape-murder accused held after encounter with police

Muzaffarnagar (PTI): A man accused in the gang-rape and murder of a 21-year-old woman was arrested on Sunday after a gunfight with police in which he sustained injuries to his leg, officials said.

The accused, who was arrested after a brief encounter on Bandhla road under the Budhana police station area in Muzaffarnagar district, has been shifted to a hospital, circle officer Gajendra Pal Singh told reporters.

The victim woman was allegedly raped by three per sons, including a relative of hers, before being strangulated to death last month. The accused also burnt her

body in an attempt to destroy evidence, Singh said, adding that police registered a case in this matter on January 31. While one of the accused was

arrested earlier, one accused is still at large after the arrest made on Šunday, the officer said.

CITYBRIEFS

METRO TRAIN SERVICES DISRUPTED

Metro train operations on the upline towards CCSI Airport at Charbagh ramp were briefly disrupted around 4 pm due to metallic wire from kite flying. An official from UPMRC explained that the increased kite flying activity on Basant Panchami led to metallic wire coming into contact with the metro line's overhead wire, causing a tripping. For about 40 minutes, train services were managed with a single line, but operations did not stop. UPMRC urged the public to refrain from using metallic wires for kites near metro lines, as previous incidents have resulted in power trippings and injuries to pedestrians.

FOUNDATION DAY The general surgery department at Dr Ram Manohar Lohia Institute of Medical Sciences celebrated its Foundation Day with a CME on 'Benign Breast Diseases'. Head of the department, Dr Priyanka Rai, presented the annual report, while Dr. Amarjot Singh delivered the welcome address. Speakers shared insights on various topics, including 'granulomatous mastitis' by Dr Gaurav Agarwal (SGPGI), 'phyllodes tumour' by Dr Amit Agarwal (Medanta), and 'triple assessment of breast lesions' by Dr Roma Pradhan (Medanta). Dr Anurag and Dr Neha Singh from RMLIMS discussed the pathological and imaging aspects of breast diseases. The department also runs a weekly breast clinic.



LUCKNOW CITY RUN

Lucknow celebrated fitness and unity on Sunday with the 'Lucknow City Run 2025', organised by Manfest-Varchasva, IIM-Lucknow, and supported by UPPCB. The run began at Lohia Park, winding along the Gomti Riverfront and Janeshwar Mishra Park, before returning to Lohia Park. The event aimed to promote health, inclusivity, and healthy living among residents. With three categories—5 km Run for Fun, 5 km Women's Exclusive Run, and 10 km Open Category—participants raced for a prize pool of Rs 1 lakh. The top 100 finishers received medals, and all participants received certificates. The organising team described it as a movement for a healthier

Budget a milestone Top mangement senior advisor. Bharat Industries and Investors Guild, Dr Pradeep Singh, said the Union Budget presented on Saturday was a foundational milestone and would ensure direct growth to Rs 140 crore citizens of our country, benefitting all sections of society, common man, farmers, middle class, khudra, MSME, infra, medical, technology & AI, and Make In India, boosting faster all-round growth towards achieving \$10 trillion economy.

DISTRIBUTION

hosted a certificate distribution programme on January 30 to celebrate the completion of the 'General Duty Assistant' course under Mahindra's

scheme. The course, in collaboration with Centum Foundation, saw 120 students participate in a 40-day programme. The course, focused on caregiver training for female students, covered essential skills like patient care, first aid, and hygiene. Principal Prof Manjula Upadhyay praised the efforts of the teams involved.

Navyug Girls' Degree College

Malviya's statue unveiled at LU

police said.

ucknow University Vice-Chancellor Prof Alok Kumar Rai on Sunday unveiled a statue of Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya at Malaviya Garden. The ceremony paid tribute to the Malviya, a freedom fighter, educationist, and founder of Banaras Hindu University.

The occasion coincided with Basant Panchami, a festival celebrating the arrival of spring and the goddess of wisdom and learning. Prof Rai also inaugurated a newly constructed temple of Goddess Saraswati at LBS Hostel. The event saw participation from faculty members, administrative officials, and

students. In another celebration, the Yoga department organised the 'Maha Kumbh 2025' programme on Sunday. The event began with 'kalash' pujan and

Saraswati pujan. Faculty coordinator Amarjeet Yadav explained that Maha Kumbh is the largest spiritual event globally. "It is not just a religious gathering but a signif-icant cultural and social event, symbolising faith, unity, and trust. A holy dip in the Kumbh strengthens the body, mind,

and soul," he stated. Dean Prof Ashok Kumar Sonkar spoke about the Kumbh's role in inspiring spiritual growth and moral devel-



Yogacharya Rajesh Kumar Dwivedi added, "Participating in the Kumbh helps control the restlessness of the mind, fostering mental growth." The programme featured per-

formances by students, including a Shiv Stuti, a Maha Kumbh dance, and a dance drama on Adiyogi. All participants were honoured with certificates. Teachers and students from the Yoga department attended the event.

Meanwhile, Basant Panchami and Saraswati Puja were celebrated at NBFGR, with staff members and research scholars participating in the festivities. Director Dr UK Sarkar extended congratulations and best wishes to everyone on the occasion. He emphasised the significance of Basant Panchami, marking the worship of Goddess Saraswati, the deity of knowledge and wisdom.

he pioneer LUCKNOW | MONDAY | FEBRUARY 3, 2025

Special crowd management plan for Basant Panchami snan

To ensure a smooth and safe amrit snan during the Basant Panchami festival, a comprehensive six-phase security plan has been devised to regulate movement and prevent over-crowding in the Maha Kumbh Meal area. Acting on the directives of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, this plan includes appointing new officers and fresh deployment of police

As part of the strategy, existing CAPF and PAC companies will be reallocated, and additional senior police officers will be stationed at key locations. Security measures have been further strengthened with enhanced barricading, strategically placed signages for better visibility and an increased frequency of alert messages from the ICCC.

Special attention has been given to deploying additional forces at high-sensitivity zones. Under the revised deployment

plan, seven CAPF companies will be relocated from akhara to high-priority zones. As part of the security plan, three companies will be deployed in South Jhusi, two in North Jhusi, and two platoons at Shastri Bridge. Additionally, one platoon each will be stationed from Kali Ramp to Upper Sangam Marg and from Kali Upper Sangam Marg to Sangam area.

As the event's focal point, the

Sangam bathing ghat will have reinforced security with one company and two platoons of women CRPF redeployed with-in the circulating area. This new duty includes one platoon on Ganga Murti Tiraha, one platoon on GT Jawahar and one company on Akhara Marg. Additional CAPF has been deployed in the Sangam area. Furthermore, six additional CAPF companies have been allocated to Sangam Ghat, with three companies deployed in each shift, ensuring continuous

security monitoring. This strategic security overhaul designated routes in South aims to facilitate a seamless and



A police official manages a crowd of devotees taking a holy dip at Sangam on 'Basant Panchami', during the ongoing Maha Kumbh in Prayagraj on Sunday

secure amrit snan for devotees while maintaining strict crowd control measures.

Experienced senior gazetted police officers will also be deployed during the Basant Panchami bathing festival. This includes four officers at the superintendent of police level and three at the additional superintendent of police level. By doing so, the expertise of seasoned officers will be effectively combined with the energy of recruits to ensure seam-less law enforcement.

To enhance security, 12 key barriers and barricades in the Maha Kumbh Mela area have been reinforced. These include all barriers and barricades all barriers and barricades along Kali Marg, Triveni Marg and Nagvasuki Ramp, Ganga Murti Tiraha, GT Road at Jawahar Chowk, and Fort Chowk, entry and return routes of akharas, all pontoon bridges, old GT Marg, Lower Sangam Marg, and Mukti Marg, and all Jhusi, North Jhusi, and the

akhara area.

The administration has identified 11 sensitive locations requiring additional police requiring additional police deployment. These include Tikarmafi, Ganga Murti Chauraha, Nagvasuki Ramp, Kali Ramp, Upper Sangam Marg, GT Road at Jawahar Chauraha, pontoon bridges connecting Jhusi to Parade, Jagdish Marg, Mahavir Marg, Akshayvat Marg, Triveni Marg, Kali Marg, Chhatnag Marg, and the Ganga Prasar area along the akhara return route. The entire Old GT Road area The entire Old GT Road area from Old GT Ghat is also under heightened security. To reinforce safety, 37 QRT and one company of the PAC have been placed on standby. For better crowd management, the number and height of sig-

nage on all return routes have been increased to ensure clear visibility for devotees leaving Sangam.

Additionally, digital displays on VMDs will provide real-time directions. Continuous updates

will also inform visitors which pontoon bridges are open for entry and exit. Given the evolving situation, the frequency of alert messages from the ICCC has been increased to ensure timely communication.

MEDICAL PERSONNEL ON HIGH ALERT

All medical teams in the Prayagraj division have been put on high alert. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath

has issued clear instructions to ensure the safety and well-being of the crores of devotees expected to attend the bathing festival. More than 1,200 medical personnel are fully prepared and on standby in Mahakumbh Nagar to provide immediate assistance.
Additionally, the entire medical force will remain stationed at the fair until February 6, with a backup plan in place for any emergencies.

Swarooprani Nehru Hospital and Tej Bahadur Sapru Hospital are also on high alert.

A special four-member medical team, including key officials like Úmakant Sanyal, Dr Manoj Kaushik, Dr Ram Singh, and Dr Gaurav Dubey, inspected every hospital in the fair area, every hospital in the fair area, ensuring that all medical supplies and equipment are in place and operational. The stock of medicines and equipment at the sector hospitals set up within the fair area has been

thoroughly checked. Swarooprani Nehru Hospital has 500 medical staff on standby, with 150 beds reserved for emergencies. Most previous patients have been discharged, and 60 resident doctors will remain on 24-hour alert. The hospital is fully equipped with 30 CT scan machines, and MRI and ultrasound facilities to meet any medical needs. Additionally, a 200-unit blood bank has been set up and integrated into the hospital's alarm system for quick response. Maha Kumbh Mela Nodal Medical Officer Dr Gaurav Dubey emphasised the impor-

tance of emergency services, particularly ambulance sup-port. If necessary, patients will be transferred to Swarooprani Nehru Hospital or Tej Bahadur Sapru Hospital.

A special inspection team, including medical system nodal officials, regularly monitors and checks medicines and equipment in sector hospitals located within the fairgrounds. The comprehensive health arrangements prepared by the state government include a state-of-the-art 100-bed central hospital, two 25-bed sub-central hospitals, eight 20-bed sector hospitals, and two 20-bed infectious disease hospitals. Additionally, 10 first aid posts are operational, ensuring the readiness to address any medical emergency swiftly.

UPSRTC DEPLOYS 2,500 BUSES

The Uttar Pradesh State Road Transport Corporation (UPSRTC) has arranged a dedicated shuttle and reserved bus fleet to ensure the safe and orderly return of devotees coming to Prayagraj Maha Kumbh for the Basant Panchami bathing festival scheduled for Monday.

By Sunday evening, approximately 35 crore people have taken a holy dip in Triveni. The UPSRTC has reserved 2,500 buses for the Basant Panchami bathing festival, and they are operating from four temporary bus stations. The largest allocation is 1,500 buses at Jhunsi, followed by 600 at Bela Kachhar for Lucknowbound passengers, 300 at Nehru Park for Kanpur-bound travelers, and 100 at the Leprosy bus station for those heading to Mirzapur and Banda.

Additionally, 550 shuttle buses will operate every two minutes to facilitate the movement of devotees between the temporary bus stations and key locations near Maha Kumbh. Special measures have been taken to prevent overcrowding, ensuring a hassle-free experience for all visitors.

Equality, simplicity and service core principles of Nirmal Akhara

PNS MAHAKUMBH NAGAR

The Akhara Sector at the ■ Prayagraj Maha Kumbh continues to be a vibrant hub of devotion, tradition and spiritual learning. One of the attractions of the akharas is Shri Panchayati Akhara Nirmal, which represents an extraordinary confluence of Vedic wisdom and Guru Vani. Rooted in the Nirmal Panth, this akhara has long been dedicated to the study and teachings of scriptures, Vedas and Vedangas. However, with the establishment of the Khalsa Panth in 1682, it also embraced the martial tradition of defending the helpless and standing

against oppression.

Making the above claims here on Sunday evening, an official spokesman of the government claimed that this unique fusion of spiritual knowledge (shastra) and martial discipline (shastra) is deeply embedded in the akhara's structure, organisation, traditions and way of life. As the Maha Kumbh unfolds, this akhara stands as a testament to the rich heritage of Sanatan Dharma, where faith, wisdom and strength come together in perfect harmony. The spokesman said that among the 13 akharas of Sanatan Dharma, each showcasing grandeur and tradition, Shri Panchayati Akhara Nirmal stands out for its simplicity, equality and spirit of service. This akhara follows the teachings of ten revered gurus, who emphasised devotion and selfless service.

Their wisdom is compiled in the Guru Granth Sahib, which is regarded with the same reverence as the Vedas. The sacred text includes teachings from saints and devotees of all castes, reflecting the akhara's belief in inclusivity.

There is no caste discrimination here - Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras all sit together for langar (community meal), sharing food as equals. The akhara constantly echoes with Guru Vani and kirtans (devotional songs), embodying the principles of humility and ser-

Formed in the final phase of the Sanatan Dharma Akharas, Shri Panchayati Akhara Nirmal represents a unique blend of Hindu traditions and shared heritage. It was established in 1682 in Patiala, Punjab, with the support of Raja Patiala. The akhara was founded by Baba Shri Mahant Mehtab Singh Vedantacharya. While its original headquarters was in Patiala, it has now shifted to Kankhal, Haridwar.

According to Mahant Devendra Singh Shastri, the current president of the akhara is Gyan Dev Singh, while Sakshi Maharaj serves as the acharya mahamandaleshwar. The akhara also has five mahamandaleshwars and a governing body of 25-26 saints, which includes the president, secretary, treasurer (kothari), and mukami mahants. The smallest unit of the akhara is a vidyarathi (student), who undergoes spiritual training. With 32 branches across India this akhara follows the 'Panj Kakaar' tradition, where all members wear kada, kangha, kirpan, kesh and kachha. The akĥara is known for its distinct dress codes - Nihangs wear blue attire, saints wear saf-

fron, and students wear

Yogi flays SP for opposing development of key areas

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, on Sunday, slammed Samajwadi Party that in the last two months, all his posts on social media platforms were against the Maha

Kumbh in Prayagraj. He also criticised the SP for opposing the development of key areas, particularly in Ayodhya, and its stance on Sanatan Dharma. Addressing an election meeting

in bypoll-bound Milkipur assembly constituency in support of Bharatiya Janata Party candidate Chandrabhan Paswan, Yogi accused the SP of being "hurt" by any progress that strengthens Sanatan Dharma and national pride. The chief minister charged that for the past two months, the SP president has been voicing opposition to the Prayagraj Maha Kumbh on social media platform 'X', despite the event drawing 34 crore devotees from across the world. Continuing

his blistering attack on the SP,

Yogi Adityanath said that the

party's "profession" was crime and hooliganism. He emphasised that the Maha Kumbh, which witnessed dignitaries such as the Vice President of India and ambassadors from various countries. received global praise, but the SP appeared to be pained by such displays of national pride. The chief minister also highlighted the development strides made in Ayodhya under the BJP leadership. He mentioned how the efforts of the doubleengine government had transformed the city's infrastructure. including four-lane roads, expanded railway stations and

visit Ayodhya every day. Chief Minister Yogi also revealed that during road widening projects, compensation worth over Rs 1,700 crore was given, yet the SP opposed these advancements.

the international airport. He

claimed that without these

developments, millions of

devotees would not be able to

The chief minister remarked, "Whenever we initiated development projects in Ayodhya, such as naming the airport after Maharishi Valmiki and naming night shelters after Nishadraj Guhya, the SP opposed them." He staid the government had



formed three women's battalions of the Provincial Armed Constabulary (PAC) in Uttar Pradesh - Virangana Uda Devi, Jhalkari Bai, and Avanti Bai Lodhi. He pointed out that the SP had opposed this initiative at the time. He also criticised the SP for opposing the Vijay Smarak of Maharaja Suheldev in Bahraich, advocating instead for a memorial to Ghazi.

Yogi accused the SP of endorsing individuals with criminal backgrounds. He referred to Milkipur's Moeed Khan and Kannaui's Nawab Singh Yadav as individuals favoured by the SP, despite their alleged involvement in immoral and unlawful activities.

Chief Minister Yogi further accused the SP of siding with anti-India elements and criminals, mentioning incidents like the brutal killing of a Dalit daughter in Mainpuri during the assembly by-election. He claimed that similar incidents. like a recent crime in Avodhva. were likely connected to SP members.

He said that the city had seen a tremendous increase in tourist visits, with 16.11 crore devotees visiting Ayodhya in 2024, compared to just 2.35 lakh under the SP government in 2016. He emphasised that this transformation was a direct result of the BJP government's efforts to improve the infrastructure and provide opportunities for businesses and religious tourism.

We want to extend this model of development to Milkipur as well, just like we have done in Ayodhya," he added.

Chief Minister Yogi stated that the election had become a battle between nationalism and nepotism. He contrasted the BJP's candidacv of Chandrabhan Paswan, who stands for nationalism, with

'Wetlands vital for livelihood and economic growth'

hief

Minister Yogi CAdityanath, on Sunday, highlighted the vital role of wetlands in groundwater conservation, ensuring irrigation and drinking water availability, flood control, carbon storage and preserving vegetation, wildlife, and migratory as well as local bird species dependent on aquatic ecosystems, pointing out that they are vital for livelihood and economic growth. Inaugurating the Conservation of Wetlands for Our Shared Future programme on World Wetlands Day at Parvati Arga Bird Sanctuary in Gonda, he emphasised their impact on ecological balance. He also released books, toured an exhibition, and felicitated competition winners.

He added, "They remind us of nature's pristine form. The Parvati and Arga natural lakes exemplify India's rich heritage. Formed naturally hundreds of vears ago due to the Saryu river, these lakes have retained their original form, attracting local and migratory birds that travel thousands of kilometres to reach here. As temperatures rise, these birds return to their native habitats, offering valuable insights into global climatic conditions."

that of the SP's candidate, who is allegedly tied to land mafia and immoral activities. The chief minister asserted that the SP's focus on family interests and caste-based politics hindered the region's develop-

Chief Minister Yogi emphasised Ayodhya's development, pointing to the introduction of steamers for river tours on the Saryu river as a prime example. He noted that this progress is evident to all who visit the city, despite disapproval from the SP. Referring to the SP's earlier warning that Ayodhya's resolution would lead to "rivers of Highlighting the economic significance of tourism, the chief minister noted that ecotourism, heritage tourism, and spiritual tourism serve as major drivers of employment. He cited Ayodhyas transformation, where tourist footfall surged from 2.35 lakh in 2016 to 16.11 crore in 2024 due to improved connectivity and enhanced facilities.

He said, "This remarkable growth has generated widespread employment opportunities, benefiting sectors such as guiding services, restaurants, taxis, hotels, homestays, tent cities and businesses related to flowers, leaves and local crafts." The chief minister remarked further: "Earth is our mother and we must protect and preserve her as her children." He expressed concern over the

encroachment of wetlands, where unplanned construction disrupts ecosystems and threatens biodiversity.

He stated, "Many wetlands suffer from these adverse effects, leading to the loss of various animal species. Recognising this challenge, the Ramsar International Wetland Convention was established in 1971 in Iran, underscoring the importance of wetland conservation for the future of our planet?

blood", Chief Minister Yogi responded by saying those who sought to incite such turmoil are now gone and have no place in the present.

The Milkipur by-election is scheduled for February 5, with votes to be counted on February 8. The Congress, an ally of the SP in the INDIA bloc, has decided not to field any candidate from Milkipur and has instead pledged support for the SP candidate. For the bypolls, the SP has fielded Ajit Prasad, the son of Awadhesh Prasad. The BJP has fielded Chandrabhan Paswan as its candidate.

All eyes on Milkipur by-election

The bypoll to Milkipur assembly seat in Ayodhya district has drawn nationwide attention as Bharatiya Janata Party and Samajwadi Party are locked in a direct contest. For Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister tige while the SP is struggling hard to retain the seat. The polling is scheduled to be held on February 5.
The Milkipur assembly seat

held by the SP fell vacant after its MLA Awadhesh Prasad was elected to the Lok Sabha from Faizabad Lok Sabha constituency. Milkipur seat is one of the assembly segments of Faizabad Lok Sabha con-

stituency. While the SP is trying its best to retain the seat as it will set the tone for the 2027 UP assembly elections, the BJP is leaving no stone unturned to win this seat to send out a message that the Scheduled Caste

the SP's PDA (Picchda, Dalit, Alpsankhyak) plank has failed. Yogi Adityanath, who is leading the election campaign for the BJP, reached out to the voters several time before the announcement of the bypoll and twice after the announce-Yogi Adityanath, the Milkipur ment. He campaigned in in the bypolls and has even by-election is a battle of pres-Milkipur once again on Sunday. petitioned the Election Milkipur once again on Sunday. Besides, his several ministerial colleagues and BJP leaders, with National along Democratic Alliance partners, are camping in Milkipur.
On the other hand, Akhilesh

Yadav is likely to campaign in Milkipur on Monday, the last day of campaigning, while other SP leaders, including Mainpuri MP Dimple Yadav campaigned there on Thursday. Both the SP and the BJP have fielded candidates from the Pasi community, which is the dominant caste in Milkipur. The majority of voters of the constituency hail from a combination of Dalit, Yadav, Brahmin and Muslim com-

The SP has fielded Ajit Prasad, son of SP MP Awadhesh Prasad, while the BJP has given its ticket to local party worker Chandrabhan Paswan. The SP leadership is already levelling charges against the ruling BJP of misusing official machinery Commission of India for webcasting in all polling booths during the polling and removing certain block level officers and presiding officers working for the BJP candidate.

However, denying the charges, the BJP claimed that the SP has already conceded its defeat. Voters in rural areas, who generally keep mum on their preferences, have become vocal about their support to the candidate from their caste when probed inquisitively. A total of 10 candidates are in

the fray for this bypoll in the constituency in which 1.40 lakh of the 3.58 lakh voters is Dalits. About 50,000 of the

Dalit voters belong to the Pasi community while others are from the Kori and Jatav communities. There are about 50,000 Other Backward Classes, 60,000 Brahmins, 50,000 Yadavs, 30,000 Muslims and 25,000 Rajput voters in the constituency. As the Dalit votes will be decisive, both the BJP and the SP are vying with each other to win the community's support in the absence of the Bahujan Samaj Party.

Meanwhile, SP president Akhilesh Yadav on Sunday alleged that the ruling BJP has drawn plans for rigging the by-election by misusing the state machinery.
"The BJP is using all possible

tricks to influence the election as the village pradhans and fair price shop owners are being pressured to support the ruling party candidate. The people of Milkipur are with the SP, but the district administration is working for the victory of the BJP candidate," the SP chief alleged.

Common welfare not possible with politically motivated budget: Maya

Making a fresh attack on the Union Budget here on Sunday evening, Bahujan Samaj Party national president Mayawati said that if the Union Budget was based on electoral and political interests, then how could the welfare of common man and country be possible from it?

'The Budget of the Central government should be purely a well-wisher of the Bahujans, that is, it should be for the progress of the country, i.e., it should be for the welfare and well-being of crores of poor, labourers, farmers and other hardworking people, especially Dalits, tribals, other backward classes and religious minorities. Only then will the dream and goal of a developed India be achieved, if not today, then tomorrow," the former chief minister of Uttar Pradesh asserted. Mayawati said stated that although the government and the ruling party Bharatiya Janata Party were trying to make a lot of political noise about the exemption of income tax up to Rs. 12 lakh, but if only a small group of salaried middle class

will be able to benefit from it,

then how will the welfare of all be possible from it?

"In fact, there is a need for a comprehensive reform in the entire tax system of the country and the Goods and Services Tax system so that the middle class who earn monthly salary as well as the population of more than 125 crore people who bear the heavy burden of GST on everyday items can get some relief in this era of inflation," she said. The BSP chief said that the massive inflation, poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, insecurity prevailing in the country due to the wrong intentions and policies of the BJP and its Central government are such serious real issues of public and national interest for which true patriotic thinking and honest work style is very necessary, only then the goal of 'sarvajan hitaya. sarvajan sukhaya' will be achieved.

Apart from this, people not getting the ground benefits due to the improper utilisation of the budget in any item has been a big problem since the time of Congress. Not only this, but it is also very important to ensure the correct assessment, correct determination and proper ground use of the budget without diversion, otherwise the promises and claims of development and GDP rate etc. will remain just empty words as it has been happening since the time of Congress till now. The BSP chief added.

When everyone will have a right to the progress and development of the country, only then the country will be proudly happy and prosperous, free from inequality and disparities," she said, adding that people's stomachs will not be filled with only government promises and claims, nor will people sing government bhajans for long on an empty stomach.

Mayawati said that the BSP government. which was office four times in UP, was an example of stopping the migration of the poor, unemployment, helplessness due to lack of livelihood and removing backwardness of the entire society on the basis of sarvajan hitaya, sarvajan

sukhava. 'That is why it is very important for the Central government to rise above political and electoral interests and allocate the budget in the interest of the people and the country and implement it on the ground reality without any corruption," she said.

Fresh arrest in Sambhal violence case

Sambhal (PTI): A man has been arrested in connection with the violence during survey of a mosque here last year, officials said on Sunday. Additional Superintendent of Police Shreesh Chandra told PTI that the arrested individual has been identified as Arshad, a resident of Khaggu Sarai locality. "The accused was identified based on video footage of the incident and was arrested on Saturday," he said.

According to police, a total of 74 people have been arrested so far in connection with the Sambhal violence, and more arrests are expected soon. Authorities are investigating

the matter and tracking down others involved in the incident. On November 19 last year, a local court had passed an exparte order for a survey of the Shahi Jama Masjid here by an advocate commissioner after taking note of a plea of the Hindu side claiming the mosque was built by Mughal emperor Babur in 1526 after demolishing a temple at the

Budget to bring revolutionary changes in agri sector: Minister

Uttar Pradesh Minister of State (Independent Charge) for AYUSH, Food Drug and Administration Dayashankar Mishra 'Dayalu' described the Union Budget 2025-26, presented by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman as balanced, inclusive and development oriented. He said this budget presented under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi is a roadmap for a self-reliant India, focusing on welfare of poor and farmers, respect for the deprived, uplift of women and betterment of middle class. Dayalu said the Central government has given a big gift to the middle class and working people by giving them income tax exemption up to ₹12 lakh which will strengthen their financial condition. He said this Budget is going to bring revolutionary changes in the agriculture sector, which will increase the income of farmers and strengthen the agriculture sector. "The Budget will promote people's participation in development and increase both savings and investment, which will accelerate economic development", he said, adding that this Budget of the Modi government is going to empower women and strengthen their social and

economic participation.
UP Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Stamp and Court Registration Fees Ravindra Jaiswal described the Budget as mul-

Leather & footwear industry expresses gratitude for Focus Product Scheme

and Corporate Affairs Nirmala

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE KANPUR

The Focus Product Scheme for footwear and leather sector announced in Union Budget 2025-26 will facilitate significant employment generation and will promote domestic turnover and exports. Removal of 20 per cent export duty on crust leather and 10 per cent import duty on wet blue leather will strengthen the tanning sector and will pro-mote export of value-added products.

The leather and footwear industry wholeheartedly thanks Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Minister for Commerce and Industry Piyush Goyal and the Union Minister for Finance

tidimensional for the country

and said it is going to fulfil the mission of developed India.

This budget will increase

investment and consumption.

The total Budget is ₹50.65

lakh crore and through it, the

government has benefited the

middle class by making income up to ₹12.75 lakh tax

free for the employed", Jaiswal said, adding that attention

has been given to every area

which is related to the com-

mon citizen. "With the

Budget, treatment of serious

diseases like cancer will

become easier as cancer care

only enhanced connectivity

within the region but also set

urban transit solutions. With

a focus on sustainability and

Sitharaman for announcing the Focus Product Scheme for footwear and leather sector in the Union Budget 2025-26 to enhance the productivity, quality and competitiveness of India's footwear and leather sector", said Rajendra Kumar Jalan, Chairman, Council for Leather Exports. The scheme will support thrust areas namely design capacity, component manufacturing, and machinery required for production of footwear and products. The scheme is expected to facilitate employment for 22 lakh persons, generate turnover of Rs.4 lakh crore and exports of over Rs.1.1 lakh crore.
Jalan added, "This scheme will significantly enhance pro-

centres will be opened in 200 district hospitals of the country and 36 cancer medicines will also become cheaper

now", he said. Reacting to the Budget regional president of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Dilip Patel said this is the Budget of 140 crore Indians. "It is a Budget for building a prosperous, self-reliant and developed India and welfare of every section of the society has been taken care of in it. There will be no income tax on annual income up to ₹12 lakh, which is a historic relief for the midduction and productivity by attracting investments and will strengthen the component & machinery eco system in the country".

Executive Director, CLE, R Selvam, said "In the Union Budget 2025-26, the 20 per cent export duty on crust leather has been removed. Besides, the 10 per cent import duty on wet blue leather has also been removed. This will strengthen the tanning industry and will significantly pro-mote exports of value-added products from the country." On the whole, the Union Budget 2025-26 has announced significant support measures for the sustainable growth of leather and footwear sector.

dle class", Patel said, adding that this unprecedented decision will not only increase the purchasing power of the mid-dle class, but will also give a new impetus to the country's economy but will also provide an opportunity to taxpayers to save and further strengthen their financial position.

District BJP president and MLC Hansraj Vishwakarma said the Union Budget presented under the visionary leadership of PM Modi is a symbol of empowerment of the common man. "This Budget reveals the deep sentowards the uplift of middle class families", he said. City BJP chief Vidyasagar Rai said that this Budget is the Budget of the people, which is a revolutionary step towards realising the concept of 'Golden India. "It is a symbol of strong efforts of the government towards a self-reliant and prosperous India, in which the middle class has been given special priority", he said. Regional party spokesman Navratan Rathi said this Budget will give a boost to all sectors of employment. Comedia incharge Santosh Solapurkar said the Budget is a road map of PM Modi's selfreliant India which will increase people's participation in development. Meanwhile, on the occasion of

presentation of Union Budget a live discussion was organised in the Commerce Lab under the joint aegis of the departments of Economics and Commerce of DAV PG College. It was attended by college secretary and manager Ajit Kumar Singh Yadav, acting principal Prof Mishrilal along with professors of Economics and Commerce departments, researchers and students in which mixed reactions were seen. The speakers said the government has taken a good step by reducing the tax on EV vehicles, the decision to make income up to Rs 12 lakh tax-free is going to give a lot of relief to the mid-dle class and the target set by the government to reduce the fiscal deficit is also welcome.

'Govt's focus on farmers, youths, poor & women praiseworthy'

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR Agarwal said, "This is the far-

Reacting to the Union Budget, Managing Director of Goldiee Group Som Goenka said, "The Budget has given great relief for the middle class people. By increasing the tax slab, the government, has made the middle class which had been waiting for this for a long time, happy. However, the corporate sector is disappointed as it had high expectations from the Union Budget. However, the government's focus on farmers, youths, poor and women is praiseworthy". Director, Mohani Tea, Dinesh

the schemes and hoped for

promoting only women entre-

ly attended by vice-principal Prof Rahul, Prof Vijaynath

Dubey, Prof Anoop Kumar Mishra, Prof Sanjay Sah, Dr

Parul Jain, Dr Aahuti Singh, Dr

Siddharth Singh, Dr Shruti

Agarwal, Dr Shantanu Saurabh,

Dr Shalini Singh and a large

number of professors and stu-

Reacting to the Budget, Geographical Indications (GI)

reaching budget providing relief to people of every section. The government has done a commendable work by giving big relief in tje tax slab to the middle class people". CEO, Kapila Krishi Udyog Ltd. Saurabh Shivhare said, 'The Union Budget has been prepared keeping India's flourishing economic capacity in mind. Along with corporate sector, this budget will also provide relief to general masses. The creation of job opportunities will strengthen country's economic condition. The budget is very good for the mid-dle class people." expert Padma Shri Dr Rajni

However, some speakers expressed disappointment over lack of clear mention of Kant said the announcement of making toy industry a hub in India and the importance of equal encouragement to both men and women instead of Indian handloom textiles in it has created a wave of happiness among the craftsmen preneurship in the Budget. The discussion was also mainand weavers of GI registered toy industry of Purvanchal (eastern UP), including Banaras. Padma Shri awardee for wooden toys Godavari Singh, National Merit Awardee Rameshwar Singh, State Awardee Dharmarai Kharadi, Amrita Devi, Bihari Agarwal along with Anil Kasera, Manoj Singh, Kaisar Jahan, Jamaludin Ansari, Bache Lal Maurya, Awadhesh Kumar

their gratitude to the finance minister. National secretary of Indian Industries Association and vice-president of Uttar Pradesh Roller Flour Millers Association Deepak Kumar Bajaj said the Budget is progressive which will be a big step in realising the dream of a modern and developed India by the year 2047. He said the special arrangement to promote tourism will make better development of Varanasi and Sarnath region possible. Senior tax consultant CA Deepak Mittal said in this budget the middle class has been given more relief than expected.

DISAPPOINTING BUDGET, FULL OF RHETORIC: SP

State president of Samajwadi Party (Vyapar Sabha) Pradeep Jaiswal has described the Union Budget as 'disappointing' and 'deceptive' for the general public and middle class. He said the government has deceived the public by playing with their emotions with figures.

He said unemployment, inflation, health, education, women and youth have not been taken care of and infrastructure and transport have been ignored. Besides, petrol and diesel have been kept out of the purview of tax exemption as before, he said. Overall, it is disappointing Budget, full of 'rhetoric', he claimed. Former city president of SP Vishnu Sharma said the Budget is unbalanced. Reacting sharply he said there is nothing in it for the benefit of villages, poor, farmers, youth and women.

PMRC gets award

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

The Uttar Pradesh Metro Corporation Corporation new benchmarks for rapid (UPMRC) was recognised for its "Rapid Development of Metro Projects" at the 6th Rail

passenger-centric services, UPMRC is redefining the Analysis Innovation and

Excellence Summit 2025 in New Delhi. Director/Works and Infrastructure at UPMRC, CP Singh, accepted the award on behalf of the UPMRC team. The Rail Analysis Innovation and Excellence Summit is a prominent annual summit that celebrates milestones and advancements within the railway sector. During the event, the organisers commended UPMRC for its exceptional achievements, stating, "We extend our heartfelt congratulations to UPMRC for their outstanding achievement in rapid development of Metro projects. The swift and seam-less execution of Kanpur Metro in Uttar Pradesh stands as a shining example of effi-cient planning, innovation and dedication to urban mobility. UPMRC's ability to bring transformative metro projects

future of metro systems in India. We commend their relentless pursuit of excellence in revolutionising urban transportation."

The UPMRC is renowned for its innovations, modern approach and world-class facilities in metro rail infrastructure. Following the success of Lucknow, UPMRC has made public transport more accessible and enjoyable for millions by launching metro services in Kanpur and Agra in record time. Managing Director of UPMRC, Sushil Kumar, said, "UPMRC is rapidly advancing civil con-struction work on the balance sections of the Kanpur and Agra Metro Projects. Passenger services will soon be extended from Motijheel to Kanpur Central in Kanpur. Additionally, services from Kanpur Central

to life in record time has not to Naubasta are also set to begin by the end of this year. UPMRC successfully launched passenger services on the ninekm -long Priority Corridor (IIT Kanpur to Motijheel) in just two years and 1.5 months—a remarkable achievement. In December last year, we conducted the first Test run of the metro train in the underground section from Motijheel station to Kanpur Central station. The construction of Corridor-2 (CSA to Barra-8) is also progressing swiftly. We completed the tunnel work for the priority section of the Agra Metro in a record 11 months. By finishing these projects ahead of schedule, we're not only setting new records but also providing cit-izens with world-class public transport through our metro

INAUGURATED: City Police Commissioner Akhil 'Kumar officially launched the pickleball game in the city by inaugurating its court here at The Sports Hub (TSH) ground on Sunday. Founder of All India Pickleball Association Sunil Valavalkar and Senior Vice-President Shubhranshu Charan Sarangi were also present. CP Akhil Kumar said, "the start of pickleball game in Kanpur was a golden opportunity for young players. The game not only ensures fitness of players but promotes discipline and competitiveness in them. They will surely shine on national and international levels in the coming years. Pickleball tournaments will soon be organised in Kanpur." TSH MD Piyush Agarwal, Directors Pranit Agarwal and Pranav Agarwal, Sports Director RP Singh and Director (Operation) PK Srivastava were present.

BLW's contribution appreciated



Union Minister of State for Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution Nimuben Jayantibhai Bambhania at BLW Pavilion in Raikot on Sunday

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE VARANASI

The Banaras Locomotive Works (BLW) leading locomotive manufacturing unit of Indian Railways, is showcasing its locomotives and technological innovations at the 9th India Industrial Fair 2025, being held in Rajkot, Gujarat, from February 2 to 5. The BLW Pavilion was inaugurated by Union Minister of State (MoS) for Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution Nimuben Jayantibhai Bambhania on Sunday, by cutting the ceremonial ribbon. On the occasion she appreciated the advanced technological developments in the locomotive sector and praised BLW's contribution to manufacturing electric and export diesel locomotives.

At this industrial fair, BLW is showcasing its locomotive models and indigenous manufacturing capabilities under the "Aatmanirbhar Bharat" initiative. This exhibition provides an excellent platform for industry experts, business leaders and visitors to gain insights into BLW's technological achievements and future plans. BLW, a premier production unit of Indian Railways, plays a pivotal role in manufacturing electric locomotives. The BLW is displaying the models of high-power locomotives, which are enhancing the efficiency

and speed of Indian Railways' freight and passenger services. It is also showcasing comptives exported to Sri Lank Bangladesh, Mozambique and 11 other countries, highlighting India's global railway manufacturing prower. A key attraction of this pavilion is high-powered 6000 HP freight locomotives which significantly boost cargo transportation efficiency. The BLW Pavilion is prominently showcasing electric and export diesel locomotive manufacturing and technological innovations during this four-day exhibition.

On the occasion Chief Quality Assurance Manager Ramjanm Chaubey, Public Relations Officer (PRO) Rajesh Kumar, Assistant Works Manager Rajeev Mishra and their team provided detailed insights about BLW's products and innovations to visitors and industry experts. Delegates attending the exhibition were introduced to energy efficiency, technological advance-ments and environmentally friendly mea-

sures adopted by Indian Railways.
The primary objective of BLW's participation in this event is to showcase its exceptional achievements, foster innovation in the industry, and position India as a global leader in railway manufacturing. BLW remains committed to taking India's railway technology to new heights, said the PRO.

Minister provides lunch packets to devotees

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Uttar Pradesh Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Stamp and Court Registration Fees Ravindra Jaiswal, on Saturday visited shelter houses built for Maha Kumbh bathers at Government Queens College, Mahatma Gandhi Kashi Vidyapeeth (MGKV) and Sanskrit Sampurnanand University (SSU), enquired about

directed the Varanasi Municipal Corporation (VMC) and other related departmental officials present on the spot that no devotee should be allowed to stay on the road in the cold. "Arrangements should be made

the arrangements. While inspect-

ing the shelter houses, Jaiswal

for all such people to stay in the shelter houses. Along with arrangements for drinking water, toilets, bedding and blankets etc



UP Minister Ravindra Jaiswal distributing food packet to a Kumbh pilgrim at a shelter home in Varanasi

their well-being and provided lunch packets to the devotees who had come to Kashi. He emphasised that this is the city of Baba Vishwanath and Mata Annapurna as well as the parliamentary constituency of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. He said that the Sanatan devotee coming here will not face any shortage of shelter or food. He assured the devotees who had come from every corner of the country that no one will be allowed to face any problem regarding accommodation and food. Many pilgrims praised this effort of the government and also gave their blessings. He took information from the people present about arrangements being made in shelter houses who expressed satisfaction over

arrangements for bonfire should also be ensured", he directed the officials, asking them to keep a close eye on the arrangements. Earlier, the minister met the devotees living in the shelter houses built at Cutting Memorial and Queens College, asked about their well-being and enquired about the arrangements who expressed their satisfaction. The minister also provided food packets to the people. SDM Savita Yadav, Additional Municipal Commissioner Vinod Gupta, corporators Siddhnath Sharma and Sushil Gupta, Dinesh Kalra, Jitendra Singh BJP's mandal president Manoj Sonkar and others were present.

inside the shelter houses, proper

Alumni relive memories, renew old friendships

 $\begin{array}{cccc} T^{\text{he}} & \text{Sir} & \text{Padampat} \\ \text{Singhania} & \text{Education} \\ \text{Centre} & (\text{SPSEC}) \text{ hosted} & \text{the} \end{array}$ 25th Year Reunion of 2000 Batch in its premises. The event saw a gathering of many alumni to rekindle memories, renew friendships and relive their school years. The alumni entered the school gates and were accorded a traditional welcome by teachers who applied 'tilak' on their foreheads. They offered flowers to Goddess Saraswati and the statue of Sir Padampat Singhania. The alumni then proceeded for a tour of their childhood's second home. They visited the Robotics Lab, ARVŔ Lab, Mathematics Lab, Psychology Lab, Sculpture Lab, and Music Lab of Shri Govind Hari Singhania Centre for Advanced Learning (COAL) and praised the efforts of the management for the school's progress. They revisited their familiar places like classrooms, chemistry, biology and physics labs and the



The Sir Padampat Singhania Education Centre hosted the 25th year reunion of the 2000 batch

library rekindling the memories of yesteryears. They were captivated to see the Foundation Block. The Sports Academy and various other developments at school made them wish to be a scholar at SPSEC once again. For reviving their golden days, school assembly was organised where they sought blessings of Goddess Saraswati through 'Hey Sharde Maa' on the occasion of Basant Panchami. The 2000 batch mates also sang the School Song, 'Saahas Dheeraj

Ke Hum Saathi' with enthusiasm which was followed by a mesmerising dance presentation by the students. The alumni also shared that they will like to stay connected to their roots through a bigger platform in which the stupendous success stories of the school and the alumni will be shared from time to time. To maintain the school tradition as a 'Green School', the alumni planted saplings and contrbuted to environmental conservation. Principal Bhawna Gupta

extended a warm welcome to the former students for being present despite their busy schedule, especially the ones who are working abroad but managed to come to India for this special day. She also spoke about other ex-students, all placed in well-known national, international and multinational companies while others have flourishing businesses. The principal also presented the school report. She reiterated that the school strives for excellence in all the fields of

their cooperation in this mission. Teachers were elated to interact with these students whom they had groomed. The alumni felicitated the principal, teachers and other staff members to express their gratitude towards them. They also expressed their emotions and thoughts on the wall of expression 'Dil ki Gehraiyon Se' as well as in the visitors' book. The vote of thanks was proposed by Siddhartha Gourisaria through which she expressed gratitude towards Chairperson, Manorama Govind Hari Singhania, Vice-Chaiman, Abhishek Singhania, Vice-Chairperson, Varsha Singhania Vice-Chairman and Director, Partho P Kar and Principal Bhawna Gupta for providing them such a wonderful opportunity of meeting each other and rekindling their fond memories. The programme concluded with a sumptuous lunch that was enjoyed by all at their alltime favourite place - the school canteen

Nutritional significance of leguminous vegetables emphasised provided an extensive overview

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE VARANASI

The Agri-Business Incubator (ABI) and Zonal Technical Management Unit (ZTMU) at the ICAR-Indian Institute of Vegetable Research (IIVR) sucreckatelly organised a Technology Field Day on legu-minous vegetables – 'Legume Day' here. During it latest varieties and technologies related to vegetable pea, French bean, Indian bean, winged bean, velvet bean etc were demonstrated. More than 80 representatives from 15 seed companies and farmer producer organisations (FPOs) participated in the event and gained detailed insights into the advanced varieties developed by the institute. The chief guest and Director of the institute, Dr Nagendra Rai, emphasised the nutritional significance of leguminous vegetables and held detailed discussions on the standards and marketing of high-quality seeds. Over the years, the institute has developed several improved varieties of leguminous vegetables, including vegetable pea; Kashi Purvi, Kashi

Tripti, Kashi Nandini, Kashi Uday, Kashi Ageti, Kashi Mukti and Kashi Sambridhi, Cowpea; Kashi Vishan, Kashi Nidhi, Kashi Kanchan, Kashi Unnati, Kashi Shyaml and Kashi Gauri, French bean; Kashi Rajhans, Kashi Sampann, Kashi Agrim, and Kashi Bagini, Indian bean; Kashi Khusal, Kashi Sheetal,

and Kashi Gauri. Last year, the institute developed Kashi Annapurna, the first high-quality winged bean variety in Uttar Pradesh, which is gaining popularity among farmers. Recently, Prime Minister Narendra Modi dedicated Kashi Bouni Sem-207, a climate-resilient Indian bean variety developed by the institute, to the nation. Project coordinator Dr Rajesh Kumar stressed the importance of strengthening Public-Private Partnership (PPP) with private companies. He highlighted that the PPP model is being promoted to ensure that advanced varieties developed by the institute reach farmers effectively. The event was conducted by Principal Scientist Dr Rakesh Kumar Dubey, who

of the improved leguminous vegetable varieties and technologies developed by the institute. Principal scientists and chairpersons of ABI-ZTMU Dr Neeraj Singh and Dr Sudarshan Maurya discussed the evaluation, licensing and registration process of these varieties with representatives of seed companies during a field visit. The participants engaged in discussions on the export potential, commercial viability and pest and disease resistance of the advanced varieties developed by the institute and assured their recommendations for licensing and registration. During the event the licensing of the tomato variety 'Kashi Aman' was granted to Harlal Seeds, Hyderabad. The event was attended by Dr Anant Bahadur, Dr Arvind Nath Singh, Dr PM Singh, Dr DR Bhardwaj, Dr SK Singh, Dr DP Singh, Dr Indiver Prasad, Dr Jyoti Devi, Dr Jaydeep Halder, along with other scientists and technical staff. The programme was convened by Dr RK Dubey.

LUCKNOW | MONDAY | FEBRUARY 3, 2025

RSS-affiliate SJM says Budget of this year 'prudent', addresses key concerns

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■

Hailing the Union Budget as "prudent budget amidst challenges", the Swadeshi Jagran Manch (SJM) on Sunday said it has tried to address all the key concerns to take the country's economy forward and also make it selfreliant. The SJM is an affiliate of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). Presenting the Union Budget for 2025-26 in Lok Sabha on Saturday, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman made a slew of announcements and also exempted annual income of up to ₹12 Lakh from income tax, rejigging tax slabs. In her budget speech, she laid out a blueprint for next-generation reforms, including raising the FDI limit in the insurance sector, simplification of tax laws and cutting duties on intermediaries while providing enhanced fiscal support for welfare measures.

It's a "prudent budget amidst various challenges" the country was facing, the SJM co-convenor Ashwani Mahajan said in a statement.

"Concerns were being expressed about health of the economy due to deceleration in GDP growth in last two quarters, depreciating rupee, continuing inflation, decline in consumption, rising trade deficit, declining forex reserves," he said. It was a "real challenge" for the government to spur manufacturing



growth, push for self-reliance in agriculture, support farmers and address imbalance in agriculture production, reduce dependence on foreign countries regarding pulses and edible oils, and also give tax relief to middle-income taxpayers, address the inflationary concerns at the same time, Mahajan

Budget 2025-26 has tried to balance all these concerns and take the economy forward," he added.

Mahajan said the Budget has given a push to the manufacturing sector in country. The manufacturing mission, enhanced credit guarantee for the MSME,

electric vehicles and other clean-tech manufacturing.

"It's important to note that due to our excessive dependence on imported batteries, motors for electric vehicles and also solar cells, our import bill has been rising and in future, the nation could be even exploited due to our dependence on imported components," he said.

"Therefore, it is giving a push to Aatmanirbhar Bharat and saving the nation from exploitation by foreigners," he added.

The SJM co-convenor said the Budget has also tried to give a push to the health and agriculture sector and bridge the rural-urban gaps as

"Budget 2025-26 does much more to push rural incomes. Apart from raising the Kisan Credit Card limit, agriculture push, food processing push and many more efforts to raise rural incomes can go a long way to reduce rural-urban disparities," he

Allocation of ₹98,311 Crore for the healthcare sector in the Budget indicates a "significant push" for growth, Mahajan said.

Key measures like customs duty exemptions on life-saving drugs and the establishment of daycare cancer centres are some of the essential steps the Budget has made, he said.

"The SJM welcomes the budget announcement for recognising gig workers," Mahajan added

Mysterious deaths in J-K's Rajouri: AIIMS Delhi team meets patients

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

A five-member team of experts from AIIMS Delhi, including specialists in toxicology, has spoken to 11 patients who are undergoing treatment for a mysterious illness that has claimed 17 lives in Jammu and Kashmir's Rajouri district, and recorded their clinical history.

The team would visit Badhaal village on Sunday where three families suffered casualties due to the illness, and collect samples from their sealed homes and surrounding areas.

"The samples would tested to know the cause of toxicity. The experts will also interact with the other villagers," a source said.

The AIIMS team headed by its director Dr M Srinivas comprises Dr A Shariff, professor in clinical toxicology, Dr Shailendra Kumar, additional professor, anesthesia and critical care, Jamahed Nayer,

additional professor, emergency medicine, Dr Jagdish Prasad Meena, additional professor, pediatrics, and Dr Javed Qadri, assistant professor, clinical toxicology.

According to sources, the team arrived in Rajouri on



Friday night, interacted with the patients and their relatives at the Government Medical College (GMC), and made several queries about the entire episode.

They also examined some of the patients who are under observation. The doctors at GMC Rajouri

are treating the 11 patients using Atropine, an antipoison drug, the sources said. Besides the AIIMS Delhi team, a team of experts from PGI Chandigarh is also investigating the cause of

Meanwhile, no new case has been reported in the past nine days from Badhaal village, which was shaken by the unexplained deaths of 17 people belonging to three families between December 7 and January 19, officials said. To mitigate the situation and prevent further casualties, 87

families comprising 364 individuals were shifted from the village to three isolated centres in Rajouri -Government College, Government Boys

Higher Secondary School, and Government Medical College where they are under observation. To ensure the safety of the

remaining 808 households, comprising 3,700 individuals, in Badhaal, the village has been divided into 14 clusters monitored by multi-department teams of 182 officials, sources said.

All shops and establishments in the village have been sealed, and ration is being provided under strict supervision, an official said. The remote village has been declared a containment zone and prohibitory orders have been imposed on all public and private gatherings.

Philippines, handed over to Delhi Police

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

Wanted by police and fac-ing Interpol Red Notice, gangster Joginder Gyong Was deported from Philippines to Delhi on Sunday, the CBI said.

Joginder Gyong was wanted by Haryana Police in a case of criminal conspiracy and murder registered against him in Panipat. He was handed over to Delhi Police upon landing at the Indira Gandhi International Airport as he was also wanted by the force here, officials said.

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) got a Red Notice issued Joginder Gyong from the Interpol on October 25, 2024, which was circulated to all globally for tracking the wanted criminal, an agency spokesperson said in a statement.

"On the strength of the Red Notice, subject Joginder Gyong was deported from the robbery, murder, attempt to Philippines via Bangkok to Delhi," he said.



in the murder of a victim whom the subject suspected of disclosing the real identity and location of his gangster brother Surender Gyong to the police. Surender Gyong got a Red was killed in an exchange of against fire with the police," the statement said.

Joginder Gyong allegedly planned and murdered the brother, the CBI said.

"The subject was also allegedly involved in criminal cases in various states of India, including Delhi and murder, putting person in fear of death or of grievous "The subject is a gangster wanted by the Haryana Police hurt in order to commit extortion and kidnapping for

ransom," the spokesperson

Meanwhile, Delhi Police said Gyong was apprehended by the Philippines Bureau of Immigration (PBI) from Bacolod City, acting on India's request for his extradition.

According to PBI officials, Gyong was identified as an and a key figure in a separatist terror network, Delhi Police said.

Gyong was convicted to life imprisonment in Haryana for illegal firearms possession. While on parole, he committed the murder in Panipat in December 2017 and later fled abroad, police

Gangster Joginder Gyong deported from | SC to hear on February 3 plea seeking safety measures for devotees at Maha Kumbh

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

well-defined

credit card for micro-enterprises, the

extension of the PLI beyond an

earlier list and several other

measures proposed in the Budget to

improve manufacturing will insulate

'The Swadeshi Jagaran Manch was

manufacturing policy in the country

for a long time. The present endeavour of the government will go

a long way towards this goal," he

Mahajan said the Union Budget has

also tried to remove obstacles in the

clean tech path, by way of push given

to lithium batteries, motors for

the country from

dominance", he said.

demanding

¬he Supreme Court is sched-The supreme court and uled to hear on Monday a plea seeking implementation of specific guidelines and regulations to ensure safety of devotees attending the Maha Kumbh where at least 30 people were killed and 60 injured in a stampede on January 29.

According to the cause list on February 3 uploaded on the apex court website, a bench comprising Chief Justice Sanjiv Khanna and Justice Sanjay Kumar is slated to hear the PIL filed by advocate Vishal Tiwari.

The petition seeks to prevent stampede incidents and protect the fundamental rights of equality and life under Article 21 of the

The plea, which made the Centre and all the states as parties, has sought a direction to the Centre and the state governments to work collectively in ensuring a safe and secure environment for devotees at the Maha Kumbh. It said all states should establish facilitation centres at Prayagraj to provide safety



information and assist their respective residents emergencies.

It also sought installation of

proper manner their and said public safety should facilitation centres at the be given priority over VIP Maha Kumbh These centres shall provide and display the basic information regarding the safety measures and guidelines to the persons coming from their states. In emergency these centres shall be ready for any assistance," it

and other states to ensure the

availability of doctors and

The plea also sought

nurses at the venue, it said.

congestion and

smooth crowd movement.

The petitioner has urged the

top court to direct the Uttar

Pradesh government to

submit a status report on the

stampede incident and initiate

legal action against those

The stampede took place on

January 29 on the occasion of

responsible for negligence.

protocols to attendees. There is a need in coordination between the Uttar Pradesh government

signage and announcements in multiple languages to help pilgrims navigate the event with ease.

"All states shall establish in regulation of VIP movement

The plea said SMSes and WhatsApp messages be used disseminate

most auspicious days of the Hindu calendar. The plea cited several past

Mauni Amavasya, one of the

incidents of stampedes at religious gatherings, emphasising the need for proactive safety measures, and said in 1954, over 800 deaths place due to overcrowding on a narrow bridge at the Kumbh Mela in Prayagraj.

Around 200 people were killed in a stampede triggered by restricted access at Kumbh at Haridwar in 1986, it said, adding 39 deaths and over 140 injuries took place in 2003 at

The Kumbh Mela is one of the largest religious gatherings in the world, taking place in rotation among four major locations: (Uttar Pradesh) (Uttarakhand), Haridwar Ujjain (Madhya Pradesh), and Nashik (Maharashtra).

Given the massive influx of pilgrims from all states, the petition stresses the need for collective responsibility in ensuring proper crowd management, medical facilities, transportation, and

Maha Kumbh stampede: Congress slams BJP

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ **NEW DELHI**

The Congress on Sunday asked why the BJP government is not revealing the actual number of those who died in the Maha Kumbh stampede and claimed that the whole matter shows that it is trying to escape blame. In the January 29 stampede at

Sangam, at least 30 pilgrims died and 60 were injured with the police blaming overcrowding for the incident. blaming Congress general secretary incharge communications

Iairam Ramesh cited a media report which said the state administration has not given an update on the number of deaths even after four days of the incident. "The BJP government, which

gives the number of crores of devotees visiting the Maha Kumbh every day, is not revealing the actual number of dead even after five days. It is clear from the whole matter that this government is the culprit and wants to escape blame," Ramesh said.

PIL in Delhi HC seeks CBI enquiry into forgery by **Drone Federation India**

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

Drone Federation India (DFI) formerly known as Drone Federation of India is under intense scrutiny following proof of forging official documents to manipulate regulatory approvals had sur-

As per sources, a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) has thereby been filed on January 29, 2025 before the Delhi High Court seeking a Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) investigation against the forgery of government documents by DFI. The PIL, submitted by Right to Information (RTI) activist Tej Pratap Singh, claims that DFÍ forged the NOC to bypass legal obstacles and change its company name.

The fraudulent document, submitted to the Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MĆA), aimed to rebrand the organization as Federation of "Drone India," potentially misleading the public into believing it was government-affiliated. The relevant documents are in



thereby suppressing competition in the UAV industry. Further scrutiny has arisen over DFI's occupancy of office space at the former Air India Building, allegedly secured through questionable recommendations. Sources said MCA has

initiated an inspection and the PIL calls for urgent action seeking a CBI investigation to ensure transparency and Drone accountability. Federation India now face serious legal consequences under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) for criminal forgery under Section 61, 316, 336, 337, 338 and 340 of BNS, 2023 which are cognizable and non-bailable

in nature. When contacted to the relevant documents are in possession of The Pioneer.
In addition to the forgery, DFI is accused of using renowned think tank, not a

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE **NEW DELHI** Tndia's apex auditor is build-

ling the necessary infrastructure and processes to harness artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning for auditing processes and to audit AI appli-cations themselves as the country aims to become a USD 30trillion economy by 2047, CAG K Sanjay Murthy said.

Speaking at the World Forum of Accountants hosted by ICAI on Saturday, Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) Murthy said a USD 30-trillion economy will be necessarily digital, as organisations expand into emerging areas, and global

champions are born.
Accounting and auditing professionals will have to provide the required support. "Adopting new technologies would help bring required efficiencies in the accounting and auditing processes.

Taking a leadership role in developing and adapting innovative technological practices would also help Indian firms to become global champions." he said, while champions," he said, while addressing the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) programme here on Saturday.

Underlining the key role of lobbying tactics to unfairly drone company, and the influence tenders to certain select member companies, commented the DFI official. digital technology as a major enabler as well as disrupter, the CAG said the range of



CAG building infra and processes to

harness AI and ML: Sanjay Murthy

technological solutions that are now available have transformed the scale and potential organisations can achieve performance outcomes.

"For us, it's an exciting challenge as the India of 2025 moves towards becoming a Viksit Bharat of 2047 which aspires to have an economy of USD 30 trillion. More companies and larger government budgets cannot be handled by physically replicating existing structures and processes. Technology will have to be leveraged to keep up and deliver," he said. The CAG's address covered the gamut of technology and innovation in auditing and accounting, pointing out how AI, machine learning, robotic automation and blockchain technology

revolutionised the field. "The evolution of technology and adaptation will require a transformation in intellectual infrastructural capacities," he said.

Referring to the recent 'The Future of Jobs Report 2025' by the World Economic Forum, Murthy noted how it has highlighted the drivers of transformation and skillsets

needed in coming years.
"We have embarked upon a comprehensive digitisation journey. We are committed to further integrating advanced technologies to bolster audit technologies to bolster audit capabilities. Recognising the transformative potential of AI and ML, we have already taken the leap of faith and started building necessary infrastructure and processes to harness these technologies to use them in auditing processes and to audit AI applications themselves," he

Talking about the CAG's digitisation journey, he said a major development is the implementation of the One IAAD One System (OIOS), an end-to-end ' Audit

Information Management System (AIMS) and a webenabled IT application that supports multiple languages, offers offline functionality, and includes a mobile application for audits in a fully digital environment.

Digital initiatives in areas of administration, including eHRMS and eOffice, have also been mainstreamed.

He said the CAG has also implemented state-of-the-art data analytic capabilities through its dedicated centre to enable analysis-driven

Remote sensing techniques and image analytics have also been widely used. It will be our endeavour to access other applications for smoothening the process of auditing for greater transparency, Murthy added.

The World Forum of Accountants is an annual conference, and it was ICAI's turn as host this year.
The World Forum of
Accountants brings together

some of the brightest minds from among accountants, auditors, and finance professionals, business leaders and regulators of the accounting and auditing

SC conference deliberates issues faced by State judiciary

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

▼ dentification of bottlenecks In case disposal and strategies to reduce backlog of cases at different levels came up for discussion at a national conference organised by the Supreme Court here on issues faced by the State judi-

The conference held on Saturday witnessed participation of judges of the top court, the High Courts as well as the Saturday District judiciary.

"The idea behind this conference was to engage in a meaningful dialogue with different stakeholders and functionaries in the state judiciary, especially the district courts, to first understand the challenges being faced by them and thereafter, chalk out a plan to address the same," the apex court administration

said in a release. The conference had four technical sessions which covered diverse topics affecting the performance of state judiciary. The technical sessions were chaired by the judges of the apex court, including Chief Justice of India Sanjiv Khanna. It said the first session witnessed session witnessed discussions on ways to narrow the gulf between

cases, identification of case types flooding judicial dockets, identification of bottlenecks in case disposal and strategies to reduce backlog of cases at different The statement said in one of

the sessions, the feasibility of having a uniform case categorisation in different courts was explored. "In this session, ways to leverage technology and better to optimise the judicial processes were also deliberated upon," the release said. It said discussions were also

held on timely recruitment of judicial officers and court staffs, continual recruitment or empanelment of public prosecutors or legal aid counsels, creation of a permanent IT and data cadre in all high courts and district courts and measures to enhance objectivity in the process of recommending suitable candidates from district judiciary for elevation to the high courts. Discussions on career progression and continuous performance evaluation of judicial officers, need for establishing a common curriculum for training and capacity building of judicial officers and ways of ensuring accountability of judicial officers and court staff were also held during institution and disposal of the sessions.

www.dailypioneer.com

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

-PAPER WITH PASSION-

Boost for middle class

Tax reliefs, agricultural boosts and support for gig workers define Union Budget 2025, but concerns about economic growth persist

inance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman presented the Union Budget 2025-26 on February 1, 2025, focusing on stimulating economic growth, supporting the middle class and enhancing agricultural productivity. The Union Budget 2025-26 with a total expenditure of Rs 50,65,345 crore, focuses on economic growth, middle-class relief and agricultural development. On the infrastructure front, capital expenditure there is a modest increase to drive development, though specific figures were not detailed. Meanwhile, the fiscal deficit is projected to be 4.4 per cent of GDP for 2025-26. While the budget lays out ambitious plans to stimulate various sectors, its effectiveness will depend on implementation and overall economic conditions. What must come as big relief for the middle class is raising of the income tax limit. The budget introduced significant tax relief for the middle class by raising the income tax exemption threshold to Rs 12.75 lakh per annum, effectively exempting individuals

with an average monthly income of up to Rs1 lakh from paying income tax. This move aims to boost household savings and consumption.

A six-year programme has been announced to increase the production of pulses and extra-long staple cotton and help farmers. The government plans to support farmers by purchasing pulses at guaranteed prices and investing in research and development to enhance cotton yields, thereby reducing dependence on imports. The budget has also proposed registeration of one crore gig workers on the e-Shram portal. This initiative aims to formalise the gig economy workforce and improve their access

to healthcare and welfare schemes. An allocation of Rs 11.21 lakh crore was made for capital expenditure, reflecting a modest increase from the previous year. This investment is intended to stimulate infrastructure development and economic growth. Some analysts, including Moody's Ratings, have expressed concerns that the tax relief measures for the middle class may have a limited effect on overall economic growth. The effectiveness of these measures in significantly boosting consumption and investment remains uncertain. The budget's capital expenditure increase was modest, which may not be sufficient to drive the desired level of infrastructure development and economic expansion. While the budget outlines ambitious programmes, the success of these initiatives will depend on effective implementation at the ground level. Past challenges in executing government schemes could pose hurdles to achieving the desired outcomes. The Union Budget 2025-26 introduces notable measures to support the middle class and agriculture, but its potential impact on broader economic growth and the effectiveness of implementation remain areas to watch. While the budget's initiatives are promising, concerns linger about their impact on economic growth and the effectiveness of their implementation.



Rethinking the Places of Worship Act 1991



The Supreme Court's interim order barring civil courts from hearing suits related to places of worship has reignited debate over the Places of Worship Act, 1991

special bench of the Supreme Court led CJI Sanjiv December 12, 2024, had barred all the civil courts from entertaining any fresh or pending suits related to the places of worship, in effect, validating the Act for an interim period, even before hearing the constitutional challenge to it. The Places of Worship Act was enacted to serve as a legislative firewall against religious disputes over the places of worship. It seeks to bar conversion of places of worship and freezes their religious character as they existed on August 15, 1947, with an exception for the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid dis-

Judicial Review and the Rule of

The abatement of suits and other legal proceedings in relation to the places of worship, as sought to be done through Parliament by a legislative fiat in 1991, goes contrary to the basic feature of the rule of law and judicial review as held in Indira Gandhi vs Raj Narain, among others. In India, and other parliamentary democracies, the ew of the Parliament, served through its members, often portrayed as an eternal "will of the people," free from all fetters, is misplaced: it is not only anathema to democratic and constitutional thoughts of our republic but also problematic in its philosophical underpinnings from where it stems out.

The Parliament's act of granting immunity to certain legal disputes is based on a fallacious hypothesis that Parliament is a symbol of the continuous 'will of the people' and, consequently, not answerable to the courts. However, the Indian constitution establishes the principle of constitutional supremacy, as opposed to unchecked parliamentary sovereignty, which ensures that even parliamentary legislation, though reflecting the will of the people, is subject ness. In fact, equality and to judicial review. This is trace- arbitrariness are sworn eneable from Article 13(2), which reinforces that parliamentary laws cannot override the fundamental rights guaranteed by the Constitution and remain subject

to constitutional constraints and judicial scrutiny. Hence, an act passed by the Parliament—the Places of Worship Act, in this case cannot annihilate the fundamental right of freedom of worship enshrined under Articles 25 and 26, as well as the text of the Preamble.

Treating equals as unequal

The Places of Worship Act,

nevertheless, made its effect inapplicable to the hitherto Ram Janma Bhumi-Babri Masjid dispute, by way of Section 5, acknowledging its special significance emanating from being present at a particular site while excluding other similarly placed temples, viz Kashi Vishwanath and Krishna Janma Bhumi, also derive their significance from being located at specific sites/places. In this manner, the Act has created an unreasonable and arbitrary classification against Article 14 of the Constitution by treating Ram Janma Bhumi as a separate class in itself. The Supreme Court in Royappa has held that "equality is antithetic to arbitrarimies; one belongs to the rule of law in a republic while the other, to the whim and caprice of an absolute monarch.



THE PARLIAMENT'S ACT OF GRANTING **IMMUNITY TO** CERTAIN LEGAL **DISPUTES IS** BASED ON A

FALLACIOUS HYPOTHESIS THAT PARLIAMENT IS A SYMBOL CONTINUOUS PEOPLE'

AND CONSEQUENTLY, NOT ANSWERABLE TO THE COURTS

Where an act is arbitrary, it is implicit in it that it is unequal both according to political logic and constitutional law and therefore violative of Article 14." In addition, under the two-pronged Article 14 test, first settled by the Supreme Court in Anwar Ali Sarkar, any legislative classification that provides advantages and disadvantages on a differential ground will be declared as unconstitutional: (a) if there is no intelligible uation. differentia between the clas-

(b) if that differentia does not have a rational relation to the object sought to be achieved by the statute in question. The classification made under the Act is unconstitutional for

sification made, which distin-

guishes those that are

grouped from those that have

been excluded;

two primary reasons: First, the exemption accorded to Ram Janma Bhumi presumes the rights of the parties attached to the Ayodhya dispute to be more equal and holier than the rights of similarly placed parties about the other two religious sites (Kashi & Mathura); secondly, the classification is devoid of any factual basis and based on a premise that abatement of legal proceedings for reclamation of religious sites other

than Ram Janma Bhumi will ease communal tensions in the country.

Even assuming so, a routine law and order situation cannot be the basis for the suspension of a constitutional right. The unreasonable classification carved out by the Act and placing a bar on parties attached to disputes concerning places of worship from knocking on the court's door warrant serious re-eval-

The door of the courts, in a functioning democracy, based on a written constitution, must always be ajar to the victims of wrongdoings. Having said that, invalidating the entire Act, at this stage, may not be the most pragmatic course of action. In that case, following the terms of "ut res magis valeat quam pereat" (it is better for a thing to have an effect than to be void), a more measured approach would entail reading down the Act to extend the benefit of Section 5 [exemption from the Act, as done with Ram Janma Bhumil to two other similarly placed temples (Kashi & Mathura), rather than invalidating it entirely.

(The author is a practising advocate in Delhi, with inputs from Vaidushya Parth; views are personal)

Budget 2025-26: A leap toward 'Viksit Bharat' with fintech at the forefront



S SUNDARARAJAN

Finance Minister has unveiled a forward-looking Budget that reinforces India's commitment to financial inclusion, innovation and sustainable economic growth.

¬inance Nirmala Sitharaman has presented a forwardthinking and progressive Union Budget 2025-26 that reinforces India's steadfast journey toward Viksit Bharat. This year's budget is a reflection of the government's unwavering commitment to fostering financial inclusion, driving innovation and ensuring sustainable economic growth. By laying a robust foundation for a digital-first economy, it not only addresses the present needs of businesses and individuals but also sets a visionary course for the future of India's financial ecosystem.

The fintech sector has been a cornerstone of India's digital transformation, playing an instrumental role in expanding financial accessibility, empowering MSMEs, and accelerating the adoption of digital transactions. The government's continued emphasis on fostering a light-touch regulatory environment, strengthening digital public infrastructure, and enhancing credit availability for small businesses and startups is a significant step forward in unlocking new avenues for

fintech innovation. These strategic measures will help fintech companies drive greater financial inclusion and economic resilience across the country. Some of the most impactful

highlights of this budget for the fintech ecosystem include: Grameen Credit Score Framework – A groundbreaking initiative aimed at transforming rural financial empowerment by enabling better credit access for Self-Help Group (SHG) members and underserved rural communities. This will facilitate greater participation of rural enterprises in the formal

Revamped Central KYC **Registry** – A much-needed step toward simplifying compliance requirements for financial institutions, reducing redundancies, and more inclusive financial landenhancing the ease of doing business across banking and

fintech sectors. **Expansion of Digital Public** such as BharatTradeNet will play a pivotal role in streamlining trade financing and documentation processes, ensuring seamless digital transactions, and bolstering India's position as a global trade hub.

Higher Credit Availability for MSMEs and Startups -Enhanced credit card limits for micro-enterprises, alongside expanded guarantee cover programs, will provide vital financial support to budding entrepreneurs and small businesses, fueling economic growth and job creation.

As we look ahead, the fiscal year 2025-26 presents enormous opportunities for fintech players like us at i-exceed to drive groundbreaking innovations in banking and financial services. With strong regulatory support and government-led initiatives, we are well-positioned to: Scale digital banking and embedded finance solutions to cater to unbanked and underbanked segments, fostering a

scape. Leverage cutting-edge technologies such as AI, blockchain, and automation Infrastructure - Initiatives to enhance regulatory compliance, improve credit risk assessment, and strengthen fraud prevention mechanisms.

Accelerate the adoption of digital lending and payment solutions by seamlessly integrating with India's rapidly evolving financial ecosystem, thereby enhancing user experience and operational efficiencies. The budget's strong focus on inclusive growth, digital empowerment, and financial accessibility aligns perfectly with our vision of creating next-generation fintech solutions that bridge gaps, simplify processes, and unlock new growth opportunities for businesses and individuals alike. The year ahead promises to be a transformative one for India's fintech landscape. We must seize this momentum, foster collaboration, and continue to innovate relentlessly.

(The writer is co-founder and CEOCompany: i-exceed technology solutions; views are personal)

PEOPLE-CENTRIC BUDGET

Madam — The Union Budget 2025 may be hailed as the budget of the people, for the people. The FM has admirably identified the middle class's dedication towards nation building, so apart from targeting the indices, ratios and vital parameters to showcase the country's march towards the third largest economy, she has presented a grassroots budget swaying over every aspect of the middle class from largesse on tax benefits, MSMEs, farmers and entrepreneurs. The synergy of the middle class in service, industry and business will have a multiplier effect on the GDP in coming years. The new Income Tax Bill is expected next week and commensurate with the budget, comprehensive amendments and simplification are expected.

Our country has unlimited resources, but they need to be tapped through reasonable and promotional tax legislation and encouraged for wealth creation through ease and promotional legislation. The GDP has a fair ratio of revenue collection of more than sixty percent. So the revenue policymakers, particularly the GST administration, should tune their policy by lowering GST slabs and doing away with the irrelevant concepts of luxury goods. The media has missed the defence outlay increase of 9.53 per cent at Rs 681,210 crores, but looking at the huge investments in defence by neighbouring China, the resources have to be mobilised for the modernisation of infrastructure, sixth-generation missiles, aircraft, artillery, and Navy warships. It is now the turn of the state governments to present their budgets conforming with the union budget, targeting the rural industrialisation and infrastructure, modernising their existing industrial estates and promoting the industry. Vinod Johri | Delhi

END EXPLOITATIVE WORKWEEKS

Madam— The articles 'Beyond the 70hour workweek: Redefining productivity (January 30) and 'A 90-hour workweek: Path to success or recipe for burnout' (February 1), both in The Pioneer, are

Govt schools show improvement



ndoubtedly, the general public has a negative image of government schools. As soon as the economy improves slightly, people are eager to send their children to pricey private schools. However, the findings of the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER 2024) offer new optimism. The ASER report, which was conducted on pupils from

timely and well argued. The suggestions regarding 70 to 90 working hours per week by some leading industrialists and capitalists of India are highly reactionary and exploitative.

The suggestion shows their greed for more profits in the name of increased productivity and efficiency. Both the authors have given pertinent arguments against this proposal. All work and no play makes young people dull, unhealthy and unproductive. Extended working hours will make the young population of the country hypertensive, heart patients and mentally deranged. It will cast the young population of India into fire. Despite labour laws, many companies in India are taking 60 hours of work per week from their employees without paying them extra money. Due to fear of unemployment, young people are compelled to work for long hours. All righteous persons, employers and labour union leaders should oppose this proposal tooth and nail. A 5day, 35 to 36.5 hour workweek is consid-

ered ideal internationally.

Vinay Kr Malhotra | Ambala Cantt

rural areas, demonstrates that the reading abilities and mathematical skills of youngsters aged six to fourteen in the country improved following the Corona crisis. Students' basic mathematical skills have improved in schools at both the gov-

ernment and private levels. Children in class five can solve division problems. The good news is that learning standards have increased in schools across the country. This level remained steady until 2010, after which it began to decline. According to the ASER research, as enrolment rates have improved, so has digital literacy. It is encouraging that, following the Corona period, there has been a renewed emphasis on education in schools. Awareness has also been demonstrated among parents.

Abhijit Roy | Jamshedpur

INDIA T20 WIN: 17TH TIME IN A ROW

Madam —India clinched a record 17th consecutive T20 series on home soil with a thrilling 15-run win in the fourth match against England in Pune on Friday. This match will be remembered for a long time for the scintillating batting performance of Hardik Pandya and Shivam Dubey, whose half-centuries helped India bounce back from early jolts.

But it was bowler Harshit Rana who stole the show. He made his debut in the match as a concussion substitute for Shivam Dubey and claimed three scalps. However, his impressive performance did not go down well with some foreign players who questioned the entry of Harshit Rana, a bowler, as a concussion substitute for an all-rounder player. But their misplaced criticism does not belittle his feat. These are the same players who seal their lips over bad umpiring against India in their coun-

Manoj Parashar | Ghaziabad

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com www.dailypioneer.com

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

FIRST COLUMN

THE SCIENCE **OF MUDRAS**

Rooted in the five elements, the five pranas and the three doshas, mudras have therapeutic properties



RAVI VALLURI

ord Krishna in the Bhagayad Gita says. "There is nothing as sacred as knowledge." Knowledge can be acquired by the human mind through the 5 Ds-dedication, determination, dynamism, devotion and discipline and one H-Humility. The science of mudras, is intrinsically related to the esoteric knowledge of yoga and which can be further segregated into the five elements, the five life forces (or subtle forces of energy called the pranas) and the three doshas. The five elements are namely - Akash (ether or space), Vayu (air), Agni (fire), Jal (water) and Prithvi (earth); the five life forces or pranas are Prana, Udana, Samana, Apana and Vyana and the three doshas are Vata, Kapha and Pitta. Humans unconsciously practice mudras. For instance, the Namaste Mudra or a young child begins learning to walk with his thumbs raised which is called the Meru Dand Mudra. An infant even in a deep slumber, his index finger would involuntarily touch the thumb and the other three fingers are on the base of the palm (Chinmaya Mudra). The universe in its auto-mode conjures these processes to take place and we are oblivious to the occurrence. Some other mudras which need to be practised are:

(a) Jnana mudra: This is performed to increase brain power, improve memory and for the removal of negative thoughts. Thereby one attains

(b) Prithvi mudra: This helps in balancing the five sense organs, improves blood circulation and enhances our energy levels. Practice of this mudra assists in increasing our alertness.

(c) Apana mudra: This facilitates an improved elimination process, revitalising the digestive system, improving the gums and strengthening immu-

(d) Prana mudra: This mudra addresses the problem of fatigue; it also



provides essential vitamins to the body besides increasing stamina and vigour to the human body. It also helps in maintenance of the health of

(e) Dhyana mudra: Essentially, this mudra helps in making us mindful and wakeful and we are at peace with ourselves. Over a period, we attain

(f) Shunya Vayu mudra: Practice of this mudra helps in combating probiems of flatulence and gastric aliments. The gut nouses our solar piexus, which is also referred to as the second brain. We need to take adequate care of our abdomen as most human ailments arise from this part of the body. Therefore, there is enormous merit in the adage, "Health is in

Sudarshan Kriya: The unique breathing technique of Sudarshan Kriya is the fulcrum of the Happiness Programme of the Art of Living. Su means proper, Darshan implies vision and Kriya is a purifying action. Through the actions of our breath, we appreciate a proper vision of who we are. It is momentous to understand that nature runs on a rhythm. For instance, the sun rises and sets at a particular time, similarly, seasons arrive and exit at predetermined times. Humans feel hungry or sleepy at certain times. Our emotions, feelings and thoughts are all cast in the symphony of rhythm. We are unable to distinguish between cacophony and symphony in this frenetic pace of life which is cannonaded by innumerable thoughts, continuous action and noise. When sounds are harmonised by the syllable of Soham, we can term it as magical music. Enlightenment is not accruing anything providential but harmonising our whole being rhythmically. During the breathing process participants feel varied sensations, emotions, tingling sensations, laughter, weeping among others. This wonderful knowledge and wisdom have triggered humanness to blossom when every cell is energised.

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

Cornered in the wild: Trapped tigers spark conservation debate

As human encroachment, tourism and habitat fragmentation continue to blur the boundaries between nature and civilisation write BKP Sinha and Arvind Kumar Jha

viral video capturing a distressing scene of a tigress and her cubs blocked by a throng of safari vehicles in Maharashtra's Umred Pauni Karhandla Wildlife Sanctuary has recently stirred significant concern and legal action. The Bombay High Court has taken suo-motu cognizance of the incident. Soon after, the Supreme Court sought a uniform national policy for managing the country's tiger reserves. The harrowing sight of the tiger family, seemingly gripped by fear while navigating the available space, serves as a poignant metaphor for the troubling dynamics between humans and wildlife, whether inside a tiger reserve or not. Mankind's relentless drive to dominate and exploit nature has led to a disturbingly eroded sense of ecological sanity. Tigers, magnificent predators endowed with a formidable set of adaptations, have long been revered for their prowess. Their sharp teeth and claws, exceptional vision and hearing, flexible spines and explosive bursts of speed enable them to efficiently stalk and capture prey.

Their striped coats act as camouflage, making them elusive both as hunters and as well as prey. Tigers, being solitary creatures, are known to be fiercely territorial, marking their domains with scents, claw marks, and vocalisations. While frequent and close encounters with tigers may thrill tourists, these experiences come at a significant cost to the animals' well-being. Increased human presence not only exacerbates stress and vulnerability among these majestic creatures but also alters their natural behaviour. After several populist initiatives to regularise forest encroachments, the Forest Rights Act (FRA) was legislated in 2006. It marked an era of mass-scale recognition of habitation, self-cultivation, and community forest resource rights. However, it has also resulted in new encroachments and a notable influx of human populations into forest areas increasing the proximity and chances of conflict between wildlife and humans.

The data from the Ministry of Tribal Affairs shows that by November 2024, an over-whelming 4.35 million (85.7 per cent) out of 5.07 million claims under the FRA had IN 2024 HOLDING encroachment and habitat degradabeen disposed of. Titles on forest rights in 33 million acres of forest land having been FOREST OFFICIALS given, illegal occupation continues in the rejected cases which are 36.5 per cent in leftwing affected states and 60 per cent in oth-

The absence of a final deadline for claim submission, ease of securing recommendations from Gram Sabhas that many times are not held, the prevalent use of the FRA as a political tool, and the quality of scrutiny at the authorities' levels have created an environment encouraging encroachers confident of RESPONSIBILITIES regularisation. In Gujarat, 434 cases have been disposed of, and Maharashtra accept- AND CHALLENGES ed 4,322 new individual forest rights claims in November while distributing 498 titles. Triggered by legislation, such a trend of ingress into wildlife habitats is unprecedented. There has been a significant surge in recognition of community forest resource rights (CFRR) after the FRA Rules were amended in 2012. Management rights of forests have been granted to communities by violating the eligibility conditions stipulated in sections 3(1)(i) and 4(3) of the FRA. Not sparing even tiger reserves and National Parks and Sanctuaries, such rights are granted, for example, in huge areas in Chhattisgarh in Dhamtari (5,544 ha), Achankmar and Sitanadi Udanti tiger reserves (12,527 ha), 60 per cent of Billigiri Wildlife Sanctuary in Karnataka, and the



UNPRECEDENTED MOVE, THE ODISHA STATE **GOVERNMENT**

FOR TIGER CONVERSATIONS **ABOUT THE**

FACED BY FORESTERS IN BALANCING CONSERVATION **EFFORTS WITH** THE RIGHTS AND SAFETY OF

Tansa Sanctuary in Maharashtra. Such actions do trigger a surge of human presence within wildlife habitats. As regards human casualties resulting from tiger attacks, they were recorded at 110 in 2022 and 82 in 2023. Data from the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA), however, sheds light on troubling trends in tiger mortality. In 2021 and 2022, tiger deaths within reserves exceeded those outside. However, this pattern reversed in 2023 and 2024, with more tiger fatalities occurring outside protected areas. As of January 2025, 17 tiger deaths have been reported, 12 of which occurred outside reserves. The conversion of spared areas into shared spaces impacts the behaviour of wildlife. Tigers are no exception.

They naturally respect territorial boundaries but get forced to venture into human habitations due to tion. It does result in harm to locals, mostly accidental and out of ACCOUNTABLE hunger rather than retaliatory or revengeful. People, however, in contrast to their erstwhile prevalent spirit of tolerance and co-existence, DEATHS WHICH it of tolerance and co-cascines, mostly respond now through retal-HAS STIRRED iation or out of vengeance resulting in the escalation of human-wildlife

conflict. In an unprecedented move, the Odisha state government issued an order in 2024 holding forest officials accountable for tiger deaths which has stirred conversations about the responsibilities and challenges faced by foresters in balancing conservation efforts with the rights and safety of people. The interaction between humans and wildlife species that are naturally active during the day (diurnal) or at dawn and dusk (crepuscular) face substantial behavioural changes when their activity patterns overlap with human activities. In the case of recreational activities in parks also, animals PEOPLE that typically forage or hunt during these times may alter their routines due to the presence of people, leading to stress and changes in feeding, mating, and territorial behaviours. Inside and near forests, light pollu-

streetlights, homes and recreational areas disrupts wildlife in numer-

It can interfere with their natural movement patterns, making it difficult for animals to navigate their habitats, find food, or avoid predators. Light pollution can also impact predation, as predators might find it easier to spot prey, or conversely, prey might become disoriented and more vulnerable. Additionally, artificial lighting can affect reproductive behaviours, as many species rely on natural light cues for mating rit-uals and timing. The current approach of providing electricity etc. to interior forest habitations, seemingly beneficial for human populations, does pose a significant threat to long-term wildlife conservation. Along with this, large-scale proposals such as those recently announced in Telangana and Nagarhole (Coorg district) of Karnataka must consider their potential impact on humanwildlife conflict too.

Mitigating adverse impacts on merely avoiding times when human activities overlap with wildlife activities. Even if human disturbances occur outside of wildlife activity periods, the large-scale nature of such disturbances can still have a profound effect on wildlife. These disturbances often displace animals from their natural habitats, causing significant behavioural changes that can threaten even their survival. Instances from the area near Pench National Park in Maharashtra highlight the negative consequences of the changed behaviour of tigers. In one such case, a tiger in Parshiwni village attacked only tethered cattle, easy prey. During the necropsy of this tiger, excessive fat was found due to changes in its behaviour and diet. In the Ramtek area tigers have exhibited a concerning loss of territorial instincts indicating a breakdown in their natural order and social structure. Another tiger from the Kanhan region displayed unusual behaviour by regularly avoiding consuming its kill. Such avoidance

tion, such as artificial lighting from suggests, prima facie, a high level of stress and disturbance. Such instances are alarming as they simply indicate that the natural predator-prey dynamics and status of the health of the tiger population are compromised. Minimising distur-bance to wildlife is paramount inside tiger reserves. However, with the current onslaught by humans and the pace of blurring of ecosystem boundaries, a more nuanced approach is necessary which requires a deeper understanding of the spatial and temporal dynamics of wildlife movement, recognition of the varying levels of sensitivity among different species, and consideration of a broader ecological context that includes fragmented landscapes, human settlements, and the impacts of climate change.

While the whole country is eagerly waiting for an early decision in the matter of Wildlife first and Ors Vs Union of India & Ors (109/2008) from the Supreme Court, the need for a national policy framework for not just tiger reserves but for all wildlife necessitates more than habitats cannot be overstated. It should be implemented by State Governments while duly considering the local contexts and the unique challenges faced by each region.

> Evicting illegal encroachments on forest and wildlife habitats and relocating the genuine right-holders onto non-forest areas with adequate infrastructure should be the first step towards restoration of the ecological integrity of our natural systems. The impacts of climate change and natural disasters are no longer theoretical threats but stark realities. Recognizing the broader public interest in wildlife conservation and ecosystem sustainability, the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change, the National Tiger Conservation Authority, and the Ministry of Tribal Affairs must collaborate closely to develop and implement effective conservation strategies that

> address these challenges. (The writer are former PCCFs, UP and Maharashtra; views expressed

Budget 2025 puts sustainability at the forefront, but execution holds the key

With substantial investments in renewable energy, climate-resilient agriculture and afforestation, the budget lays a strong foundation for a greener future

he Union Budget 2025 signals a decisive shift . towards environmental sustainability, reinforcing India's commitment to a cleaner, greener future. With a strong focus on renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, afforestation, waste management and climate resilience, the government has intended to balance economic growth with ecologresponsibility. Expanding solar, wind, and hydro energy, along with incentives for green hydrogen, is a welcome step toward reducing India's carbon footprint.

The emphasis on electric vehicles (EVs) and battery storage solutions will further bolster the transition to clean energy, reducing



SRIVASTAVA

dependence on fossil fuels. However, the chal lenge remains in efficient implementation and ensuring accessibility to these technologies, especially in rural and semi-urban areas. Agriculture, often at the crossroads of economic and environmental policies, has received a much-needed sustainability boost. The PM Dhan-Dhaanya Krishi Yojana and Mission for Aatmanirbharta in Pulses are moving in the right direction, ensuring climateresilient farming and reducing excessive reliance on chemical fertilisers. However, agroforestry, regenerative farming and watershed management need further integration into mainstream agricultural policy to create a truly sustainable food system.

The budget's allocation for afforestation and biodiversity conservation reflects an increased understanding of the role that forests and ecosystems play in mitigating climate change. With Compensatory Afforestation Fund

Management Authority (CAMPA) enhanced support, there is hope that India's forests will be managed with greater transparency and scientific precision. However, urban greening and nature-based solutions in city planning deserve stronger commitments, given the growing challenges of urban heat islands and pollution. The circular economy model

gets a notable push with incentives for waste-to-energy projects, stricter plastic waste management, and extended producer responsibility (EPR) regulations. These are positive steps, but enforcement remains a crucial hurdle. Ensuring that industries comply with waste management norms and



moving towards a zerowaste economy will require robust monitoring and public participation.

The budget's recognition of climate resilience, particu-

larly through disaster management investments and early warning systems, is a commendable effort. Coastal and flood-prone regions will benefit from increased fund-

ing for disaster-resistant infrastructure, but a longterm climate adaptation roadmap needs further

detailing.
One of the most promising aspects of Budget 2025 is the expansion of India's Green Finance ecosystem. With tax incentives for Green Bonds and carbon trading markets, the government is encouraging private sector participation in sustainability efforts. However, ensuring that green investments translate into real environmental benefits will require stringent regulatory oversight and transparency. While Budget 2025 takes

significant strides in promoting environmental sustainability, its true success will be measured by execu-

tion, enforcement, and longterm commitment.

India has demonstrated political will in tackling climate change, but the challenge remains in aligning policy promises with onthe-ground realities. Sustainability is not just a budgetary allocation; it is a mindset shift. To truly achieve a green future, India needs a whole-of-society approach, where the government, private sector, and citizens work together to ensure that economic growth does not come at the cost of ecological wellbeing. With this budget, India has set the direction-what remains is the resolve to act decisively.

(The writer is a retired IFS officer; views are personal)

PM hails India-Indonesia cultural ties | Congress hits out at | MGNREGS cuts | Congress hits out at | MGNREGS cuts | Congress hits out at | Congress hits out at

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said the relations between India and Indonesia are not just geopolitical but are rooted in thousands of years of shared culture and history with both countries have a tradition of unity in diversity.

Modi made the remarks while addressing the Maha Kumbabhishegam of Shri Sanathana Dharma Aalayam in Jakarta, Indonesia, via

video conferencing.
"It is my pleasure that I have become a part of the Maha Kumbabishekam of the Murugan Temple in Jakarta. I am far from Jakarta but my mind is close to it just like India and Indonesia are close to each other...I extend my wishes to all the people there on the occasion of Maha Kumbabhishegam," Modi

Just a few days ago, President Prabowo Subianto had taken the love of 140 crore Indians

experiencing the good wishes of every Indian.

"I congratulate all of you and crores of devotees of Lord Murugan in India-Indonesia and across the world on the occasion of Maha Kumbabhishegam of Jakarta Temple. I wish that the praise of Lord Murugan continues through the hymns of Tiruppugal. May the mantras of Skanda Shashthi Kavacham protect all people," Modi said.
"For the people of India and Indonesia, our relations are not just geopolitical. We are connected by thousands of years old culture. We are connected by thousands of years old history. Our relationship is of heritage, of science, of faith. Our relationship is of shared faith, of spirituality. We are also related to Lord Murugan and

Lord Shri Ram. And, we are

also related to Lord Buddha,"

from India, Modi said and When a person going from travel, they get a glimpse of The added that through their India to Indonesia folds his our shared culture," Modi high president, the people of hands in Prambanan temple, must be that person gets the same spiritual experience as Kashi and Kedar, he said.

When people of India hear about Kakawin and Serat Ramayana, they get the same feeling as Valmiki Ramayana, Kamba Ramayana and Ramcharit Manas, Modi said. "Now in India, Indonesia's Ramlila is also staged in Ayodhya. Similarly, when we hear 'Om Swasti-Astu' in Bali, we remember the Swasti recitation by the Vedic scholars of India," he said.

"In your Borobudur Stupa, we see the same teachings of Lord Buddha, which we experience in Sarnath and Bodh Gaya in India. Bali Jatra is celebrated even today in our state of Odisha. This festival is connected to those ancient sea voyages that once connected India and Indonesia with trade and culture. Even today, when people from India board 'Garuda Indonesia' for air

Prime Minister Modi said that the relationship between India and Indonesia is woven with many strong threads. He said that during President Prabowo's recent visit to India, they cherished many aspects of this shared

He highlighted that the new grand Murugan Temple in Jakarta adds a new golden chapter to the centuries-old heritage.

Modi expressed confidence that this temple will become a new centre for both faith and cultural values. Noting that the Murugan

Temple in Jakarta houses not only Lord Murugan but also various other deities, Modi emphasized that this diversity and plurality form the foundation of our culture. "In Indonesia, this tradition of

diversity is called 'Bhinneka Tunggal Ika', while in India, it is known as 'Unity in Diversity'," he said. highlighted acceptance of diversity is the reason why people of different faiths live with such harmony in both Indonesia and India.

He stated that this auspicious day inspires us to embrace Unity in Diversity.

"The cultural values, heritage, and legacy are enhancing people-to-people connections between India and between India Indonesia," Modi said. He highlighted the joint

decision to preserve the Prambanan Temple and the shared commitment to the Borobudur Buddhist Temple. He also talked about the Indonesian Ramlila in Ayodhya and emphasized the need to promote more such programmes.

The prime minister expressed confidence that, with President Prabowo, they will advance rapidly in this direction.

He stated that the past will form the foundation of a golden future.

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI

The Congress on Sunday lashed out at the government over keeping MGNREGS budget stagnant and said the "neglect" of this crucial safety net exposes its indifference to rural livelihoods. The allocation for flagship rural employment scheme Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Development Scheme (MGNREGS) was Rs 86,000 crore, the same as last

In 2023-24, the allocation for MGNREGS was Rs 60,000 crore, but additional funds were provided and the actual expenditure stood at Rs 89,153.71 crore, the Budget document showed. No additional allocations for MGNREGS were made in 2024-25. In a post on X, Congress general secretary

The Border Security Force (BSF) has nabbed 14 Bangladeshis in Tripura

since January 26 for illegally entering India, a senior official of the force said on

Two Indian touts enabling

infiltration were also during

corresponding period.

Besides, a significant quantity of narcotics, sugar,

cattle, and other smuggled

items valued at a total of Rs

The BSF Tripura Frontier

has enhanced vigilance and

intensified its domination

2.5 crore was seized.

PTI ■ AGARTALA

Sunday.

nabbed

in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh said that despite rising rural distress, the government has kept MGNREGA's budget budget stagnant at Rs 86,000 crore for 2024-26. This effectively represents a decline in the real (adjusted for price rise) allocations made

"To add insult to injury, estimates suggest that about 20 per cent of the budget is paid towards clearing dues from previous years," Ramesh said. This effectively reduces MGNREGA's reach, leaving drought-hit and poor rural workers stranded, he added. It also precludes any increase in the wages paid to workers, Ramesh said.

MGNREGA, he said.

"Even in this ongoing Financial Year, the minimum average notified wage rate was

successfully

Price Index (CPI) inflation is estimated to be 5%. MGNREGA is therefore ground zero for the national crisis of wage stagnation," he said. The Government's neglect of this crucial safety net exposes its indifference to rural livelihoods, Ramesh

The MGNREGS provides guaranteed 100 days of wage employment in a financial year to at least one member of every household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work. It keeps at least one-third of jobs for women. In the Covid pandemic year of 2020-21, when MGNREGS proved a lifeline in providing employment in rural areas amid huge reverse migration in the lockdown period, Rs 1,11,169 crore was spent on

the scheme, according per previous budget documents. increased by only 7%. This is at a time when Consumer BSF nabs 14 Bangladeshis in Tripura

AAP alleges BJP attack on campaign vehicle

PTI NEW DELHI

 $T^{\text{he Aam Aadmi Party on}}_{\text{Sunday alleged one of its}}$ campaign vehicles was vandalised by BJP "goons" in the presence of police personnel in the New Delhi constituency, from where AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal is contesting the February 5 assembly polls.

The BJP rejected the charge, saying the AAP was indulging in "drama as it is losing" the polls.

Delhi Deputy New Commissioner of Police Devesh Mahla said no complaint has been received in the matter so far, and urged the party to file a formal complaint and we assure strict legal

At a press conference, AAP leader Jasmine Shah alleged the it is unable to see or hear publicity van was vandalised near the Lady Hardinge Medical College by BJP "goons" in the presence of police personnel.
Playing a video of the

purported incident, Shah said,

Chief Minister

Nayab Singh Saini on

Sunday took a jibe at AAP

over his "Yamuna poisoning"

remark and accused him of

Addressing a public meeting

in support of the BJP's

Mundka candidate Gajendra Daral, the Haryana chief

lying for his own benefit.

"Two of the attackers, who were also involved in stone-pelting at Keiriwal's vehicle recently, are identified in this video. Their photos with Parvesh Verma (BIP candidate) and other leaders are available," he

claimed.

AAP leaders also attacked the Election Commission over the issue, with party chief Kejriwal posting on X in Hindi, "The Ramayana says Kumbhakaran slept for six months and then woke up for the next six. The Election Commission perhaps seems never awake."

Sharing a video on X that shows some people tearing down the wrappings around the publicity van and trying to break its windshield, AAP Raiya Sabha MP Sanjay Singh said the Election Commission has its office in New Delhi, but anything.

If the BJP wins it will "ruin" Delhi, he said. Delhi BJP spokesperson Praveen Shankar Kapoor rejected the AAP's claim that his party was involved in any such attack.

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI the upcoming days and "I went upstream from that emphasised that there was point to fill the water, and

much work to be done in a

supremo Arvind Kejriwal lies, I went to the Yamuna On January 27, the AAP

ghat in Palla village and drank

the water myself so that

people's fears could be

alleviated. I took water from

the point where Haryana

supplies water to Delhi, as

well as from the area where

"To expose his (Kejriwal's) added.

short period.

minister urged people to Kejriwal claims to provide recognise the importance of water to the city," he said.

BJP targets Bharti in land scam allegations

Pradeep Bhandari and State

Spokesperson Dr. Anil Gupta

were also present at the press

conference. No immediate

reaction was available from

Patra revealed that on November 10, 2023, a piece of

land was illegally occupied in Jaitpur, and the person responsible for this act is

reportedly a close associate of

AAP MLA Somnath Bharti.

Being a lawyer, Bharti made

every possible effort to

protect his associate. He said a

A video of Bharti meeting the

investigating officer is also

got mixed with drinking

water, a mass genocide would

have happened," Kejriwal had

He had claimed the BIP

wanted to mix "poison" in the water supplied to Delhi to

trigger chaos so that AAP

could be blamed for people

Kejriwal was issued two notices by the Election Commission over the matter

on a complaint from the BJP. "The AAP government has

chargesheet was also filed.

Bharti on the allegations.



STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

 $B^{\text{JP's national spokesperson}}_{\text{Sambit Patra on Sunday}}$ accused AAP MLA Somnath Bharti of influencing the probe in a case of land grabbing in south Delhi.

Addressing a press conference at the BJP headquarters, Patra played a purported audio clip of Bharti, claiming that the AAP MLA from Malviya Nagar pressurised an investigating officer to give a slip to an accused and destroy evidence against him in return of bribe.

Haryana CM Saini Slams Kejriwal Over "Yamuna Poisoning" Claim

point to fill the water, and

there was a stark difference

between the two sources," he

supremo alleged that the BIP

government in Harvana had

mixed poison in the water

supplied to Delhi through the

"Thanks to DJB (Delhi Jal

Board) engineers, who caught

it and stopped the water, it did not enter Delhi. If that water

Spokesperson

available, which the BJP will post on its social media platforms, Patra claimed. The party is also mulling to take legal recourse in the matter, he added.

The BJP leader said this entire conversation was captured in a sting operation, in which Somnath Bharti can be clearly heard saying:"Take the money and forget the logic, just tear up that memo."The victim of the land grabbing case had filed an FIR, and the details of the case were recorded in a seizure memo. In this case, Somnath Bharti is threatening the investigating officer to destroy the memo.The sting operation recording also captures the investigating officer responding:"If I tear up the memo, I will be guilty, so I cannot do that."

Patra further stated the biggest asset of AAP is corruption, whether it is the Delhi Jal Board scam, the DTC bus scam, or any other scam. One of the major cases among these is land grabbing. It seems that land scams have become a business for AAP

been a disaster for Delhi.

Kejriwal has harassed every

section of Delhi's population

over the past decade. He has

done nothing but deceive the

public with false promises,"

He pointed out that the

former Delhi chief minister

had promised clean water for

Delhi and claimed that he

"Now, in 2025, the condition

of the Yamuna has worsened

even further," Saini added.

would clean the Yamuna.

Saini said.

GURUGRAM

Fetal medicine improves prenatal health

STAFF REPORTER ■

 $F^{etal\ medicine\ is\ a\ vital}_{subspecialty\ focused\ on}$ ensuring the health and safety of both mother and fetus during pregnancy.
With recent technological and

Dr. Molshree Gupta, a Senior Fetal Medicine Expert at Vatsalya Centre for Fetal Medicine and C.K. Birla

technology and specialized expertise are revolutionizing the way we approach maternal and fetal health.

branch of maternal-fetal care focused on diagnosing and managing conditions affecting the developing baby.

"Through advanced imaging techniques such as h resolution ultrasound, fetal MRI, and genetic testing, doctors can detect anomalies as early as the first trimester. Early detection allows for timely interventions, which can either correct fetal conditions or prepare for specialized care at birth," she

Dr. Gupta emphasizes, "The goal of fetal medicine is not just to diagnose but to provide solutions that can improve the quality of life for both the baby and the family.

Meanwhile, strict security

measures have been put in

ADG (Law & Order) and STF

chief Amitabh Yash is camping

in Prayagraj to oversee the

investigation. DGP Prashant

Kumar stated that the police

are thoroughly examining all

aspects of the tragedy, reviewing footage from CCTV

place across the fairgrounds.

Maha Kumbh stampede: Police launches probe

2025 BSF troops have multiple successfully thwarted coordinate

the official said. "In various operations, 14 Bangladeshi nationals and two Indian touts have been apprehended by the BSF.

several attempts of infiltration, exfiltration, and

trans-border smuggling,"

Additionally, a significant quantity of narcotics, sugar, cattle, and other smuggled items worth Rs 2.5 crore has been seized," he said.

Asserting that the BSF has been maintaining strong coordination with the Border Guards Bangladesh (BGB), he said around 80 along the international simultaneous coordinated border. Since January 26, patrols and organised

coordination meetings were conducted at various levels during the period. The BSF battalions deployed

in various bordering areas have conducted over 40 village coordination meetings to address the concerns of the local population. In various joint operations

with sister agencies, BSF troops carried out an extensive ganja destruction drive in remote areas,

destroying over
1 lakh matured crops
cultivated illegally on
approximately 60 acres of
land during the c o r r e s p o n d i n g period," he added.

advancements. prenatal care has seen improvements. leading to better health outcomes for mothers and babies.

This field is reshaping prenatal care by diagnosing and treating medical conditions birth, offering before unprecedented opportunities to improve outcomes for both mother and baby.

Hospital Gurgaon, sheds light on how cutting-edge

To identify the culprits, authorities are closely

analyzing CCTV footage from

the Maha Kumbh site. The

ATS and STF teams are also

questioning street vendors,

including those selling

offerings and

Fetal medicine is a specialized

India's youngsters dominate U-19...

From page 1

Mandaviya, who heads the sports ministry, tweeted, "WORLD CHAMPIONS! Heartiest congratulations to our U19 Women's Cricket team for winning the U19WorldCup. Your hard work and dedication have made the nation immensely proud. Wishing each and every member of the team the very best."

Tendulkar, one of the game's greatest players, said, "From the first game to the final, our team played like true champions. Winning is special, but defending a title takes something extraordinary.

"Huge congratulations to #TeamIndia for lifting the U19 T20 World Cup once again! This team has inspired many and set new benchmarks for the future. Very happy for the girls & for women's cricket!"

priority is to ensure the safe

completion of the remaining

Amrit Snan rituals. Once that

is secured, we will expedite the

The Maha Kumbh, one of the

largest religious gatherings in

the world, has now come

under heightened security

surveillance as authorities

work to ensure the safety of

investigation," he added.

Kumbh readies for Amrit Snan today

Yamuna.

arvana

Additionally, the Akhara Marg will be closed to general foot traffic to ensure the smooth movement of devotees. A police officer stationed at Sangam stated that the priority is to prevent bottlenecks, and pilgrims will be directed in a way that avoids crowding at any one spot.

With another massive gathering expected on Monday, health services in Mahakumbh Nagar have been further strengthened since Thursday. A total of 23 hospitals, equipped with seamless healthcare services.

360 beds, have been set up to provide medical care to pilgrims ahead of the Central Hospital and other medical excitement, saying that they could not Basant Panchami Amrit Snan. A special team of senior medical officials, including Medical Nodal Officer Umakant Sanyal, Chief Medical Superintendent of Central Hospital Dr. Manoj Kaushik, Co-Nodal Medical Officer Dr. Ram Singh, and Mahakumbh Mela Nodal Medical Officer Dr. Gaurav Dubey, conducted an inspection to review ambulance deployment and facilities, ensuring

units are functioning efficiently, providing immediate medical attention to pilgrims, from minor injuries to critical cases. He added challenging conditions.

remain eager to participate in the holy

said.

dying.

injuries to critical cases. He added that medical teams are responding to feel safe. emergency calls within minutes, and all ambulance and health services remain fully operational, even in Despite the concerns over security and crowd management, pilgrims

make it for Mauni Amayasya but they are here now for Basant Panchami. She noted that the arrangements seem better, and they

With enhanced security, improved crowd management, and unwavering devotion, authorities are hopeful that the Basant Panchami Snan will proceed smoothly, allowing millions of devotees to fulfill their spiritual aspirations in a safe and organised ritual. Sunita Devi, who arrived from manner.

bangles, in hopes of uncovering crucial leads. and drone cameras. "Our millions of devotees. Retired judge files PIL against poll freebies

From page 1

religious

"Declare such cash-oriented schemes as unconstitutional & against the spirit of free and fair elections and classify as election manipulation," reads the petition. The judge has contended that

such activities not only violate electoral laws but also infringe upon the fundamental rights of the infringe voters, including their right to privacy under Article 21 of the Constitution of India and severely hampers the free and fair conduct of the polls. Justice (Retd) Dhingra, in his

PIL, is seeking directions from the Delhi High Court to the three national parties to "cease and desist from collecting personal and electoral data of voters under false pretences" and that they are directed to not share and use the data collected during elections to any third party.

The PIL is also seeking cashoriented schemes to be unconstitutional declared and classified as election manipulation. It is also seeking directions to the Election Commission of India to frame rules for political parties in respect of promises against cash distribution to voters. One of the primary concerns

raised in the petition pertains to the "Mukhyamantri Mahila Samman Yojana", announced by AAP, which is allegedly being misrepresented as a Delhi government initiative. The petitioner claims that AAP is

promising Rs 2,100 per month to female voters post-elections in exchange for their votes, which constitutes bribery disguised as an electoral promise. Similarly, BJP and Congress have reportedly launched their schemes-"Mahila

Samridhi Yojana" and "Pyari Didi Yojana"-offering direct cash benefits of Rs 2,500 per month to female voters if elected. The petition also prays for

monitoring mechanisms to ensure a free and fair election in Delhi. It is also pointed out that Political parties have been allotted offices for in Parliament and State Legislative Assemblies and land for the party office in National Capital at a very nominal price by the Central Government, along with the role they play in the democratic setup and the nature of duties performed by them, indicate their public character. Political parties are effective intermediaries that link social forces and ideologies to governmental institutions, acting as a connecting link between the government and public

Modi's guarantee for Delhi: PM including salaried employees,

The PM also assured the people of Delhi that no slum will be demolished if the BIP comes to power in the national capital. He was responding to recent claims by AAP national convener Arvind Kejriwal, who alleged that the BJP would target slum areas if elected to power. "Not a single slum will be demolished in Delhi. We don't make announcements just for show. We make provisions in the Budget to back our promises," PM Modi said in the rally. He criticised the AAP for spreading rumours to mislead the

Panchami on Sunday, he said the festival marks the change in the season, adding that people of Delhi have made up their mind to elect a BIP government. Slamming the AAP government in the Capital for its alleged false promises and corruption, he said its policies have led to closing of factories, adding that those who have looted people will have to account

The PM said the "AAP" has destroyed 11 years of the national Capital, and a double engine government dedicated to its development and growth will now be elected. His government at the Centre,

Greeting people on Basant he asserted, has stood for strengthening four pillars of poor, farmers, youth and women, and the Budget is the guarantee of fulfilling Modi's guarantees. The Budget's focus on employment generating sectors like tourism and manufacturing will benefit the youth, he said. He spoke of welfare promises made in the BJP manifesto, including for senior citizens and women, to highlight the benefits a BJP government in the national capital will bring to them.

When Modi gives a guarantee, he puts his heart, mind and soul into fulfilling it, the prime minister said. With the middle class,

making up for a significant section of voters, the prime minister said his government takes decisions which meet their dreams and aspirations. Expressing confidence about the BJP's win, Modi said, "You can note it down the BJP government will be formed in Delhi on February 8, and by March 8, International Women's Day, women will start receiving Rs 2,500." Women, he said, have worked as his protective shield and have made a big contribution in ensuring the third term of

his government at the Centre.

Delhi, he said, has paid a

heavy price due to the AAP

government and has decided

to get rid of it, he said. Those who live in 'sheesh mahal' cannot related to a poor family's jhuggi or a middle class family's 2BHK flat, he said, in a swipe at former chief minister and AAP leader Arvind Kejriwal. The AAP has committed scam and corruption in every field, including in health measures for people, he claimed.
With several AAP leaders, including sitting MLAs who

were not given ticket by the party in the polls, quitting it, Modi said they have realised the massive anger people have for the party. Feeling jittery, the AAP is making false announcements everyday, he

TRUMP PUTS TARIFFS ON CANADA, MEXICO AND CHINA

Spurs trade war as North American allies respond

AP PALM BEACH (US)

President Donald Trump on Saturday signed an order to impose stiff tariffs on imports from Mexico, Canada and China, drawing swift retaliation from the country's North American neighbours in an

emerging trade war.
The Republican president posted on social media that the tariffs were necessary "to protect Americans," pressing the three nations to do more to curb the manufacture and export of illicit fentanyl and for Canada and Mexico to reduce illegal immigration into the US. The action fulfilled one of Trump's commitments to voters but threw the global economy and Trump's own political mandate to lower prices into turmoil. The tariffs, if sustained, could cause inflation to significantly worsen, possibly eroding voters' trust that Trump could as promised lower the prices of groceries, gasoline, housing, autos and other goods.

Trump declared an economic emergency in order to place duties of 10% on all imports from China and 25% on imports from Mexico and Canada. But energy imported from Canada, including oil, natural gas and electricity, would be taxed at a 10% rate. The action provoked an economic standoff with America's two largest trading partners in Mexico and Canada, upending a decades-old trade relationship with the possibility of harsh reprisals by those two nations. Mexico's president immediately ordered retaliatory tariffs and Ćanada's prime minister said the country would put matching 25% tariffs on up to \$155 billion in US imports. China did not immediately respond to Trump's action.

Trump's order includes a mechanism to escalate the rates charged by the US against retaliation by the other countries, raising the specter of an even more severe economic

\$30 billion in trade in American alcohol and fruit will take effect Tuesday, when the US tariffs go into effect. He opened his address to Canadians with a message

aimed at American consumers. "It will have real consequences for you, the American people," he said, saying it would result in higher prices on groceries

and other goods.
Trudeau channelled the views of many Canadians who were feeling betrayed by their neigh-bour and longtime ally, reminding Americans that Canadian troops fought along-side them in Afghanistan and helped them respond to myriad crises from wildfires in California to Hurricane Katrina.

The actions taken today by the White House split us apart instead of bringing us together," Trudeau said, warning in French that it could bring about "dark times" for many people. He encouraged Canadians to "choose Canadian products and services rather than American ones.

Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum said she had instructed her economy secretary to implement a response that includes retaliatory tariffs and other measures in defense of Mexico's interests.

"We categorically reject the White House's slander that the Mexican government has alliances with criminal organizations, as well as any intention of meddling in our territory," Sheinbaum wrote in a post on

"If the United States government and its agencies wanted to address the serious fentanyl consumption in their country, they could fight the sale of drugs on the streets of their major cities, which they don't do and the laundering of money that this illegal activity generates that has done so disruption. much harm to its population."

Canadian Prime Minister Meanwhile, the Premier of

Justin Trudeau on Saturday Canadian province of British said that Canadian duties on Columbia, David Eby, called on residents to stop buying liquor from U.S. "red" states and said it was removing American alcohol brands from government store shelves as a response to the tariffs.

In a televised message, Eby deemed the Trump's adminis-tration decision as "a declaration of economic war against a trusted ally and friend" and that he will stand up for his citizens and all Canadians in general.

Effective today, I have directed BC liquor sales to immediately stop buying American liquor from red states," he said. "Liquor store employees will be removing the most popular of these brands from government store shelves."

The tariffs will go into effect on Tuesday, setting a showdown in North America that could potentially sabotage economic growth. A new analysis by the Budget Lab at Yale laid out the possible damage to the US economy, saying the average US household would lose the equivalent of \$1,170 in income from the taxes. Economic growth would slow and inflation would worsen — and the situation could be even worse if the countries retaliate.

senior US administration official, insisting on anonymity to brief reporters, said the lower rate on energy reflected a desire to minimise any disruptive increases on the price of gasoline or utilities.

That's a sign White House officials understand the gamble they're taking on inflation. Price spikes under former President Joe Biden led to voter frustration that helped to return Trump to the White House last year.

The order signed by Trump contained no mechanism for granting exceptions, the official said, a possible blow to homebuilders who rely on Canadian lumber as well as farmers. automakers and other indus-

The Trump administration put

the tariffs in place to force the three countries to stop the spread and manufacturing of fentanyl, in addition to pressuring Canada and Mexico to limit any illegal immigration into the United States. The official did not provide

specific benchmarks that could be met to lift the new tariffs, saying only that the best measure would be fewer Americans dying from fentanyl addiction. The order would also allow for tariffs on Canadian imports of less than \$800. Imports below that sum are currently able to cross into the United States without customs and duties.

"It doesn't make much economic sense,' said William Reinsch, senior adviser at the Center for Strategic and International Studies and a former U.S. trade official. "Historically, most of our tar-

iffs on raw materials have been low because we want to get cheaper materials so our manufacturers will be competitive ... Now, what's he talking about? He's talking about tariffs on raw materials. I don't get the eco-nomics of it.'

The Republican president is making a major political bet that his actions will not significantly worsen inflation, cause financial aftershocks that could destabilize the worldwide economy or provoke a voter backlash. AP VoteCast, an extensive survey of the electorate in last year's election, found that the U.S. was split on support for

With the tariffs, Trump is honouring promises that are at the core of his economic and national security philosophy. But the announcement showed his seriousness around the issue as some Trump allies had played down the threat of higher import taxes as mere negotiating tactics.
The president is preparing

more import taxes in a sign that tariffs will be an ongoing part of his second term. On Friday, he mentioned imported computer chips, steel, oil and natural gas, as well as against copper, pharmaceutical drugs and imports from the European Union — moves that could essentially pit the US against much of the global economy. It is unclear how the tariffs could affect the business investments that Trump said would happen because of his plans to cut corporate tax rates and remove regulations. Tariffs tend to raise prices for consumers and businesses by making it more expensive to bring in foreign goods.

Many voters turned to Trump in the November election on the belief that he could better handle the inflation that spiked under Biden. But inflation expectations are creeping upward in the University of Michigan's index of consumer sentiment as respondents expect prices to rise by 3.3%. That would be higher than the actual 2.9% annual inflation rate in December's consumer price index.

Trudeau said Canada is addressing Trump's calls on border security by implementing a CDN\$1.3 billion (US\$900 million) border plan that includes helicopters, new canine teams and imaging

Trump still has to get a budget, tax cuts and an increase to the government's legal borrowing authority through Congress. The outcome of his tariff plans could strengthen his hand or weaken it.

Democrats were quick to say that any inflation going forward was the result of Trump, who is about to start his third week back as president.

'You're worried about grocery prices. Don's raising prices with his tariffs," Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer of New York posted on X. "You're worried about tomato prices. Wait till Trump's Mexico tariffs raise your tomato prices. ... You're worried about car prices. Wait till Trump's Canada tariffs raise your car prices," he wrote in a series of posts.



Canada's Prime Minister Justin Trudeau addresses media following the imposition of a raft of tariffs by US President Donald Trump against Canada, Mexico and China, in Ottawa on Saturday

US businesses brace for rising costs

 $F^{\text{rom an ice cream parlour in}}_{\text{California to a medical sup-}}$ ply business in North Carolina to a T-shirt vendor outside Detroit, U.S. businesses are bracing to take a hit from the taxes President Donald Trump imposed Saturday on imports from Canada, Mexico and China - America's three

biggest trading partners.
The levies — 25 per cent on
Canadian and Mexican and 10 per cent on Chinese goods – will take effect Tuesday. Canadian energy, including oil, natural gas and electricity, will be taxed at a lower 10 per cent rate.

Mexico's president immediately ordered retaliatory tariffs and Canada's prime minister said the country would put matching 25% tariffs on up to USD 155 billion in US imports. China did not immediately respond to Trump's action.
The Budget Lab at Yale University estimates that Trump's tariffs would cost the average American household USD 1,000 to USD 1,200 in

annual purchasing power. Gregory Daco, chief economist at the tax and consulting firm EY, calculates that the tariffs would increase inflation, which was running at a 2.9 per cent annual rate in December, by 0.4 percentage points this year. Daco also projects that the US economy, which grew 2.8 per cent last year, would fall by 1.5 per cent this year and 2.1 per cent in 2026 "as higher import costs dampen consumer spending and business investment." The Penny Ice Creamery in Santa Cruz, California, has had to hike prices of its ice cream — including popular flavours "strawberry pink peppercorn" and "chocolate caramel sea salt" — repeatedly in recent years as an inflationary surge increased the cost of its supplies.

"I feel bad about always having to raise prices," said co-owner Zach Davis. "We were looking forward to inflation coming down, the economy stabilizing in 2025 ... Now with the tariffs, we may be back at it again." Trump tariffs, Davis said, threaten to drive up the cost of the mostly made-in-China refrigerators, freezers and blenders he'll need if Penny Ice

Creamery goes ahead with plans to add to its six shops. He still has painful memories of the extra equipment costs the company had to absorb when Trump slapped massive tariffs on China during his first term.
The new tariffs will also raise
the price of a customer favourite — sprinkles — which Penny Ice Creamery imports from a company in Whitby, Ontario. Tacking a 25 per cent import tax on even something as small as that can damage a small business like his.

"The margins are so slim," he said. "Being able to offer that add-on can maybe generate an additional 10 cents in profit per scoop. If a tariff wipes that out, that can really be the difference between being profitable and being break-even and even being underwater by the end of the year."
In Asheville, North Carolina,

Casey Hite, CEO of Aeroflow Health, expects to take a hit because his company gets more than half its supplies — including breast pumps — from Chinese manufacturers, providing them to American patients through insurance plans. Aeroflow Health gets paid by insurers at pre-negotiated rates, put in place before Trump decided on his tariffs. Hite said the tax on Chinese imports would hit the company's finances, forcing it either to purchase cheaper and lowerquality products or pass high-er costs along via higher health insurance premiums. Those might take two years to materialise, Hite said, but eventually they would hit consumers' budgets.

"It will impact the patients," Hite said. "In time, patients pay more for the products." Even the made-in-USA absorbent incontinence pads Aeroflow Health buys aren't safe from Trump's import taxes. They may include pulp from tariff target Canada and plastics and packaging from China, according to the Aeroflow Health, which warns of "turbulences" from the tar-

"Is this going to affect our business? You bet it is," said Linda Schlesinger-Wagner, who owns skinnytees, a women's apparel company in Birmingham, Michigan, north of Detroit, that imports clothing from China. She said the 10 per cent tax would increase her costs, though she plans to absorb the extra expense instead of passing it along to customers.

"I don't like what's going on," she said, referring to the broader impact of the tariffs. "And I think people are going to be truly shocked at the pricing they're going to see on the cars, on the lumber, on the clothes, on the food. This is going to be a mess." William Reinsch, a former US

trade official now with the Centre for Strategic and International Studies, said that many companies that stocked up on imported goods ahead of time to avoid the tariffs. They will be able to draw on their piled-up inventories for weeks or a couple of months, delaying their customers' pain. George Carrillo, CEO of the Hispanic Construction Council, an industry advocacy group, said construction companies have been hoarding materials in anticipation of Trump's actions, but he worries about the possibility of inflation spiking in three to six months.

"Once that inventory starts to get low, we're going to start feeling the effects," Carillo said in a phone interview Saturday. ahead of the announcement. "Developers and general con tractors need to keep up with the pace and they're going to start buying more products and it's going to be at a higher price point.

All that will be exacerbated by an emerging immigration crackdown that is already spooking the construction industry's labour pool, he said. "You put tariffs and you put workforce instability, it's going to create major delays in projects. It's going to create an increase in prices because of the lack of availability," Carrillo said. Then there are the industries that don't have the luxury of stockpiling, including supermarkets whose farm products will spoil. So the impact will show up on grocery shelves within days.

"You don't stockpile avocados," Reinsch said, "You don't stockpile cut flowers. You don't

Israel's Netanyahu heads to US to discuss 'victory over Hamas' with Trump

AP TEL AVIV

Sunday he will discuss "victorv over Hamas," countering Iran and expanding diplomatic relations with Arab countries in his meeting with US President Donald Trump.

Tuesday's meeting at the White House will be Trump's first with a foreign leader since returning to office. It comes as US and Arab mediators begin the daunting work of brokering the next phase of an agreement to wind down the war in the Gaza Strip and release dozens of mil-

itant-held hostages. Hamas, which has quickly reasserted its control over Gaza since the ceasefire took hold last month, has said it will not release the hostages slated to go free in the second phase without an end to the war and the full withdrawal of Israeli forces. Netanyahu, who is under mounting pressure from far- dealing with the Iranian terror

victory over Hamas and the return of all the hostages captured in the militants' Oct. 7. 2023 attack that triggered the

It's unclear where Trump stands in all this.

He has been a staunch supporter of Israel, but has also pledged to end wars in the Middle East and took credit for helping to broker the ceasefire agreement. The deal has halted the fighting and led to the release of 18 hostages who had been held for over 15 months, as well as hundreds of Palestinians imprisoned by Israel.

Netanyahu embraces Trump's call for peace through strength: In a statement released ahead of his departure on Sunday, Netanyahu said they would discuss "victory over Hamas, achieving the release of all our hostages and right governing partners to axis in all its components,"

resume the war after the first referring to Iran's alliance of Under the first phase of the the second phase in phase ends in early March, has militant groups across the ceasefire agreement, Hamas is Washington on Monday. rsraeli Prime Minister said Israel is still committed to region, including Hamas.

He said that by working toge er, they could "strengthen security, broaden the circle of peace and achieve a remarkable era of peace through strength."

The war began when thousands of Hamas-led militants stormed into southern Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, killing some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and taking around 250 hostage. Over 100 hostages were freed during a weeklong ceasefire in November 2023, eight have been rescued alive and dozens of bodies have been recovered

by Israeli forces. Israel's air and ground war has killed over 47,000 Palestinians, more than half of them women and children, according to local health authorities who do not say how many of the dead were fighters. The war has left large parts of several cities in ruins and displaced around 90% of Gaza's population of 2.3 million to release a total of 33 hostages, Trump, who brokered normaleight of whom Hamas says are dead, in exchange for nearly 2,000 Palestinian prisoners. Israeli forces have pulled back from most areas and allowed hundreds of thousands of Palestinians to return to devas-

tated northern Gaza. Negotiations on the second phase, in which the war would end and the remaining 60 or so hostages would be returned, are set to begin Monday. If the United States, Qatar and Egypt are unable to broker an agreement between Israel and Hamas, the war could resume in early March.

Aspirations for a bigger deal: Trump's Mideast envoy, Steve Witkoff, joined the yearlong ceasefire negotiations in their final weeks last month and helped push the agreement over the finish line. He met with Netanyahu in Israel last week and the two were expected to formally begin talks on ization agreements between Israel and four Arab countries in his first term, is believed to be seeking a wider and potentially historic agreement in which Israel would forge ties

with Saudi Arabia.

But the kingdom, which resisted similar entreaties from the Biden administration, has said it would only agree to such a deal if the war ends and there is a credible pathway to a Palestinian state in Gaza, the West Bank and east Jerusalem, territories Israel captured in the 1967 Mideast war.

Netanyahu's government is opposed to Palestinian statehood, and a key partner, far-right Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich, has threatened to leave the governing coalition if the war is not resumed next month. That would raise the likelihood of early elections in which Netanyahu could be

ering two billion doses to India

during the COVID-19 pan-

demic (I have heard it being

referred to as the "digital back-

bone" of the vaccination pro-

India experienced remarkable transformation in last decade: UNGA President Yang

PTI UNITED NATIONS

India has experienced "remarkable transformation" in the last decade, UN General Assembly President Philemon Yang has said, underlining that his upcoming visit to the country will give him an opportunity to see how digital and technological innovation has "fuelled this change".

Yang will visit India from February 4 to 8, his first official visit to the country as President of the 79th session of the UN General Assembly.

"As the world's largest democracy, the fifth-largest economy and home to one-fifth of humanity, India is an important member of the United Nations," Yang told PTI in an exclusive interview ahead of his

Responding to a question on the visit's focus, Yang said he looks forward to "understanding, more deeply, India's priorities and vision for the future of multilateralism."

During the visit, he will engage with Indian leadership, includ-

ing President Droupadi Murmu and External Affairs Minister Dr S Jaishankar.

Recalling that he had visited India in 2013 as Prime Minister of Cameroon, Yang said that since then, India has experienced a "remarkable transformation" and he expects the visit to give him the "opportunity to see how digital and technological innovation has fuelled this change, all the way to the grassroots level.

The visit will also serve to highlight the importance of information sharing and capacity building in advancing sustainable development in the Global South. India has in many respects led the way through its South-South cooperation," Yang said in the written interview.

Yang said his message "to the people of India, and particularly to the young people of India, is one of confidence and ambition. Confidence in the extraordinary work achieved and ambition in that there is always more work to do, collectively, to make our world a better

For that reason, I would like to encourage them to continue spearheading efforts in har-

nessing innovation while also celebrating their rich culture and heritage.
"As the world's largest population, the people of India have a huge stake in the work of the United Nations, in the achievement of the Sustainable

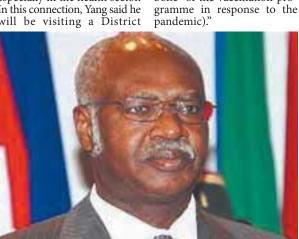
Development Goals and in ensuring that -indeed- no one is left behind. I therefore look forward to seeing India's continued engagement and leadership within the United Nations," Yang said.

Yang began his year-long tenure as President of the 193member General Assembly in September last year at the commencement of the 79th UNGA

As PGA, his priorities include peace and security in Africa, combatting illicit use of small arms and light weapons, eliminating child labour, and turbocharging the SDGs, through digitalisation.

Given his focus on digitalisa-

SDGs, Yang said he is particularly keen to see how India is using digital technology to improve the lives of its people, especially in the health sector. In this connection, Yang said he will be visiting a District



Vaccine Store in Gautam Buddha Nagar in Uttar Pradesh and meet with health workers to understand the role of some of these digital public infrastructure (DPI) tools. "I am told the Co-WIN plat-

Yang also plans to visit the Infosys Campus and the Indian Institute of Science in Bengaluru and other sites in Delhi and Bengaluru.

When asked to highlight three areas where India's contribu-

stand out, Yang listed Índia's contribution to peacekeeping, efforts as a first responder in numerous humanitarian emergencies and being a strong voice of the Global South. Yang said that India's most

significant contribution to the UN has been to its peacekeeping operations, both in terms of financial and human resources. With more than 290,000 Indians having served in 49 of the 71 UN peacekeeping missions established around the world since 1948, India's contribution to multilateral efforts towards peace and security is remarkable.

He further said that India has acted as a first responder in numerous humanitarian emergencies within its region and has contributed humanitarian aid, whether in the form of food grains or medical supplies, to countries and regions devastated by war and natural dis-

"Finally, India's consistent efforts to defend and advance the voice of the Global South,

al forums, particularly on urgent issues like mobilising financing for sustainable development and advocating for additional climate finance for developing countries, have stood out for their timeliness and sincerity," Yang said.

"It is my hope that India will continue to advance the interests of the Global South," he

India has rapidly emerged as a critical enabler of South-South Cooperation through initiatives like the India-UN Development Partnership Fund which supports sustainable development projects in Least Developed Countries (LDCs), Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs) and Small Island Developing

States (SIDS). "For all of these reasons, I convey my deep appreciation for the longstanding and steadfast commitment that India has displayed towards multilateralism, and I am confident that this will continue in the future,"

Yang, as UNGA President, presided over the adoption of the Pact of Future in September last year.

Given his focus on the Pact and its roadmap, Yang said that as General Assembly President, his role is to support the implementation efforts of the Pact. "I intend to do this by facilitating inclusive dialogue, creating opportunities for Member States to engage substantively in the implementation of the Pact, and galvanising collective efforts to advance its objectives." When asked what role he envisages for India in this, Yang said India is a strong voice of the Global South, a country that has made great strides at the national level, including on artificial intelligence which is one of the topical areas of the Pact.

"It is for this reason that I think that India, like other countries from the Global South, must not just take an active role in these discussions, but should also lead on national implementation of the Pact's commitments," he said.

Budget is by the people, for the people, says Finance Minister

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Paraphrasing Abraham Lincoln, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Sunday described the Union Budget as "by the people, for the people, of the people," and said Prime Minister Narendra Modi was fully behind the idea to cut taxes for the middle class but it took time to convince the bureaucrats.

"We have heard the voice of the middle class" who had been complaining about their aspirations not being met despite being honest taxpayers, she told PTI in an interview.

With the honest and proud taxpayers wanting the government to do more to limit the impact of factors like inflation, the prime minister was quick to task Sitharaman to look at ways to give

While Modi was quick to agree to tax relief, it took a bit of convincing to get on board the officials in the finance ministry and the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) - who are tasked to ensure revenue collection to meet welfare and other schemes, she

Presenting her eighth straight budget, Sitharaman on Saturday announced an increase in the personal income tax threshold below which taxpayers owe no tax to ₹12 Lakh, up from ₹7 Lakh, as well as a rejig in tax brackets that would help those earning higher than that save up to ₹1.1 Lakh. The ₹5 lakh hike in exemption

limit is the biggest ever and equals all the reliefs that were given between 2005 and 2023. "I think the prime minister put it succinctly, he said it's the people's

Budget, it is the Budget which the people wanted." Asked to describe the ethos of the

budget in her own words, she said, "As they say in democracy in Abraham Lincoln's words, it is Budget by the people, of the people for the people." Sitharaman said the new rates

would "substantially reduce the taxes of the middle class and leave more money in their hands, boosting household consumption, savings and investment".

Explaining the thought that went behind the big announcement, Sitharaman said the tax cuts were in the works for some time. One of the ideas was to make the



direct tax simpler and easier to comply with. Work on this started in the July 2024 Budget and now a new law is on the anvil, which will simplify the language, reduce the compliance burden and be a bit more user-friendly.

"It wasn't talking about rate restructuring, although for several years now, we have been looking at wavs in which the rates can be a lot more reasonably taxpayer friendly. And therefore that work was also

going on," she said. "Equally, after the July budget, there was this voice of the middle class, which felt that they were paying tax... But also felt they don't seem to have much in the way of redressing their problems.

There was also this feeling that the government was very inclusive in taking care of the very poor and the vulnerable sections.

"So the voice, which came wherever I travelled, was we are

proud taxpayers. We are honest taxpayers. We want to continue to serve the country by being good taxpayers. But what do you think about what kind of things you can do for us?" she said. "And so I had this discussion also with the prime minister who put me on the specific assignment to see what is it that you can come up with." Numbers were worked, and

presented to the prime minister who gave guidance for what was presented in the FY26 Budget on Saturday, she said.

Asked how much persuasion did it take to get the prime minister on board, Sitharaman said, "No, I think your question should be. how much did it take for me to convince the ministry (and) the board (CBDT)." "So, it is not so much the PM, the

PM was very clear that he wants to do something. It is for the ministry to have had the comfort level and then go with the proposal," she said. "So, the more work that was needed, was needed for convincing the Board that efficiency in collection and honest taxpayers' voice" needs to be

The ministry and CBDT needed

convincing because they have to reached that level of income, or be sure of revenue generation. "So, they were not wrong in reminding me periodically, saying what would it mean? But ultimately, everybody came around," she

The finance minister said the prime minister meets and listens to the voices of people from different sectors and industry leaders and responds to their

"I'm very happy to be a part of this government, which literally hears the voice and responds," she said. Stating that an attempt has always been to widen the tax net, Sitharaman said efforts are to get more Indians, who are in a position to pay and come on board.

That attempt of widening the tax net is a continuous, ongoing exercise," she said.

India currently has about 8.65 crore income tax return filers. The number swells to over 10 crore after people with TDS liability but

not filing returns are included.
"I think many people who are just outside of the fringe should be nudged to come in who have never been taxpayers or who have now

even those who have avoided tax, will all have to be brought on," she said. "So, that is certainly a task before us. We have to make sure that people are understanding the role of paying tax and bring them on board.

Sitharaman defended the modest increase in capital spending at ₹11.21 Lakh Crore in the next financial year starting April compared to a lowered ₹10.18 lakh crore in the current fiscal, saying the quality of spending has also to be seen.

"If we are looking at the numbers, because we have got used to 16 per cent, 17 per cent increase (in capital spending) every year from 2020, and saying you have not increased it by that number (in the Budget for 2025-26), I would equally want to ask you to please look at the way in which the quality of spending has happened, particularly capital expenditure," she said.

She was also appreciative of the states which received the 50-year interest-free share of the money which went from the central government's side as capital

Industry experts hail steps for boosting clean energy



Tndustry experts hailed steps for boosting clean energy nuclear mission, incentives for critical minerals and renewable equipment in the Budget presented on Saturday by Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharman. Sitharaman announced a ₹20,000-crore nuclear mission investment in private-sector R and duty exemptions for and D for emerging crucial minerals and capital goods for electric vehicles to transformative shift in step up energy transition.

CÉO, LOHUM said, "The said. budget marks watershed moment in India's journey toward clean energy sovereignty and circular economy leadership. The government's strategic vision for domestic manufacturing and critical minerals recycling demonstrates remarkable foresight in securing our sustainable future."

The elimination of import duties on lithium-ion battery scrap, cobalt powder, and an array of critical mineral wastes

unlocks unprecedented

opportunities. Coupled with the duty exemption expansion to 63 additional capital goods for EV and mobile battery production, this creates a robust foundation for India's manufacturing renaissance,

he opined. The landmark ₹20,000 Crore building a sustainable critical Rajat Verma, Founder and minerals ecosystem, Verma

> Devan Director, INOXGFL Group, "The emphasis on wind energy, the National Green Hydrogen Mission, and EV infrastructure, along with dedicated support for Clean Tech manufacturing, marks a transformative step toward sustainability."
> By fostering domestic value

addition in solar PV cells, EV batteries, motors, controllers, electrolysers, wind turbines, high-voltage transmission

equipment, and grid-scale batteries, the budget batteries, the budget strengthens India's clean energy ecosystem, he stated. Investments in offshore wind capacity, green hydrogen production, and hybrid renewable projects will drive innovation, job creation, and economic growth, he opined. Sunil Mathur, Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer, Siemens Ltd said that Budget announcements are a shot in the arm for consumption, which will in turn drive and demand manufacturing in the private sector.

The National Manufacturing Mission, the focus on clean technology and measures to support Start Ups and MSMEs are welcome steps, he said.
With a 10 per cent increase in

Capex spending in infrastructure over the revised estimates, the Government stays on course in its commitment of building a world class infrastructure in the country, he added.

Bikesh Ogra, MD and CEO, Jakson Green said, "Crucially the budget emphasises power sector reforms, incentivising modernise to distribution and transmission infrastructure that is essential for seamlessly integrating Resources into the grid and ensuring a stable power supply. The proposed PPP model for infrastructure development, coupled with substantial interest-free loans, will catalyse investments in RE projects."

Frequent extreme weather events driving food inflation in India: Economic Survey

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

 $T^{
m he\ food\ inflation\ rate\ in}_{
m India\ has\ remained\ firm}$ over the past two years defying the global trend, and frequent extreme weather events are one of the reasons, the government said in its latest Economic

Tabled in Parliament on Friday, the report said that the decline in onion and tomato production over the past two years can be partly attributed to frequent extreme weather events in major producing states compared to other regions. Extreme weather events in

2023-24 damaged crops in horticulturemaior producing states, leading to inflationary pressure on horticultural commodities,

"Over the past two years, India's food inflation rate remained firm, diverging from global trends of stable or declining food inflation. This can be attributed to factors such as supply chain disruptions exacerbated by extreme weather events and reduced harvest of some food items," the report read. Citing data from the Centre

Science Environment (CSE), the report said that the total crop area damaged in 2024 was higher than in the previous two years due to extreme weather conditions. The government also



referred Meteorological Department (IMD) data, which shows a significant rise in the frequency of extreme weather events, especially heatwaves.

Between 2022 and 2024, heatwaves were recorded on 18 per cent of days, compared to 5 per cent in 2020 and 2021, the report said.

Economic Survey The acknowledged that recent shocks like geopolitical conflicts and extreme weather have caused price fluctuations, but their impact has now subsided, leading to more variation in commodity prices.

For long-term price stability, report developing climate-resilient crops, strengthening data systems to monitor prices, reducing crop damage, and minimising post-harvest

Saturday, government announced a six-year mission to increase pulse production, aiming to achieve self-sufficiency in three widely consumed varieties – tur, urad, and

Customs duty cuts in certain areas to benefit American exports: GTRI

The customs duty reduction announced in the Budget on products such as motorcycles and synthetic flavouring essences would benefit American exports, economic think tank GTRI said on Sunday. The Global Trade Research

Initiative (GTRI) said that despite the repeated criticism of India as the biggest tariff abuser and tariff king by the Trump-administration, the country's Budget has introduced significant tariff reductions on multiple products, many of which benefit the US exports.

"With key tariff cuts on technology, automobiles, industrial inputs, and waste imports, India appears to be taking steps toward facilitating trade even as the global trade environment remains tense. Whether these will reductions Washington's view of India's trade practices or become a point of contention in the US election cycle remains to be seen," it added.

Among the key tariff fiscal, reductions. India lowered the duty on fish hydrolysate for the manufacturing of aquatic feed from 15 per cent to 5 per cent, a move that directly impacts US exports, which amounted to \$ 35 Million in 2023-24. For the automobile sector, India has reduced tariffs on motorcycles based on engine capacity.
For motorcycles with an

engine capacity below 1,600cc, the tariff has been cut from 50 per cent to 40 per

cent, while for motorcycles above 1,600cc, the tariff has been slashed from 50 per cent to 30 per cent.

The US motorcycle exports to India stood at \$ 3 Million in FY24, and this tariff cut could help expand market access for American manufacturers," the GTRI said. Similarly, it said, tariff cut on

ethernet switches (carriergrade) under the others category from 20 per cent to 10 per cent would help American exporters. The US exported \$ 653.4 Million worth of these

products to India in the last "making this a signific ant trad benefit Founder GTRI Srivastava said.

India has also lowered the duties on synthetic flavouring essences from 100 per cent to 20 per cent, a category in which Washington exports stood at \$ 21 Million in FY24. "In the space sector, tariffs on ground installation for satellites, including spares and consumables, have been reduced to zero, benefiting American exporters who

supplied \$ 92 Million worth of these products in FY23," Srivastava said. However, in the last financial

year, these imports dropped significantly to \$ 0.07 Million, suggesting a sharp decline in trade activity in this category. Additionally, the Budget has proposed elimination of tariffs on specific waste and scrap items, reducing duties from 5 per cent to zero.

America exported a total of \$ 2.5 Billion worth of waste and scrap of all types to India in 2023-24.

"While Trump has long criticised India's tariff structure, these latest reductions policy that could boost US exports across multiple sectors," Srivastava said.

April-November During April-November 2024-25, the US was the second largest trading partner of India with \$ 82.52 Billion bilateral trade in goods (\$ 52.89 Billion worth of exports, \$ 29.63 Billion of imports and \$ 23.26 Billion trade surplus). During 2021-24, America was the largest trading partner of

Focus on infrastructure, manufacturing, sustainability to push steel sector growth

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The stainless steel industry has hailed the Union Budget 2025-26, saying the focus on infrastructure, manufacturing, and sustainability will push the sector's growth. Union Finance Minister

Nirmala Sitharaman presented the record eighth straight Union Budget in the Lok Sabha on Saturday. "The industry lauds the Union

Budget 2025-26 for its robust focus on infrastructure, manufacturing, and sustainability, crucial for the stainless steel industry's growth," apex industry body Stainless Steel Indian Stainless Steel
Development Association (ISSDA) said in a statement.

The Budget offers a balanced roadmap for long-term growth in the stainless steel industry. The focus on infrastructure,

manufacturing, and sustainability will elevate the sector's economic contribution and reinforce India's position as a global leader in stainless steel production and innovation, the association said.

Jindal Stainless Managing Director Abhyuday Jindal said, "Infrastructure remains central to India's growth, and the sustains this momentum with a 10.08 per



cent hike in capex to ₹ 11.21 Lakh Crore and ₹1.5 Lakh Crore earmarked for state capital expenditure. The ₹10 Lakh Crore Asset Monetisation Plan (2025-30) will unlock funds for new projects, while increased public-private partnerships will drive private investment in transport, urban increased development, and energy".

The digital skilling initiative aimed at equipping youth with Industry 4.0 technologies has the potential to revolutionise both manufacturing and services.

In the stainless steel industry, automation and where advanced manufacturing are on the rise, these efforts will ensure a workforce capable of navigating rapid change and expansion, Jindal said.

The newly introduced credit cards for micro-enterprises and the growth of Funds of Funds for startups will encourage entrepreneurship innovation across sectors.



 $R_{\text{decision,}}^{\text{BI's}}$ in interest Rdecision, quarterly earnings and global cues would be the major driving factors for equity markets this week, analysts said adding that the impact of the Union Budget could linger on this week.

Trading activity of foreign investors will also be a key driver for the markets, experts noted.

India's and manufacturing PMI for January to be released on Monday, will be the key macro data to watch out for. manufacturing Investors will closely study the fine prints of the Budget policies and market focus will shift back to the corporate earnings/outlook and RBI's interest rate decision to be announced on Friday," Siddhartha Khemka, Head - Research, Wealth Management, Motilal Oswal Financial Services Ltd, said. Financial Services Ltd, said.
From the earnings calendar,
Asian Paints, PC Jeweller,
Tata Power, Titan, Apollo
Tyres, Bharti Airtel, ITC,F,
SBI, LIC, MandM and NHPC would announce their earnings this week. Prashanth Tapse, Senior VP (Research), Mehta Equities Ltd, said, "Will the RBI soften its stance and

announce any rate cut in this

week's credit policy that

would be interesting to



investors need to watch out for global developments, as any uptick in US bond yields and FII selling dampen sentiment. data for

manufacturing and services would also be tracked by investors.

there are several important events on the horizon, including the MPC outcome, the Delhi state election, and developments regarding US tariffs. These events present an opportunity for market participants to remain engaged and informed, as they are likely to introduce some volatility," Osho Krishnan, Sr Analyst, Technical and Derivatives of

"As we look to this week,

Sitharaman on Saturday announced significant income tax cuts for the middle class and unveiled a blueprint for next-generation reforms for Viksit Bharat as she treaded a fine line between fiscal prudence and providing a thrust to growth. The Budget for April 2025 to March 2026 fiscal (FY26)

- Angel One, said. Krishnan further said, "Now, the major Union Budget is behind us, and it appeared as watch out for? However, a non-event but practically

speaking, FIIs participation was very minimal. Hence, the actual reaction is likely to be witnessed on Monday and hence, we need to wait for a day or two to understand whether the market has really discounted the Budget factor or not."
Finance Minister Nirmala

proposed to raise foreign investment limit in insurance sector to 100 per cent from current 74 per cent and continued spending spree on infrastructure while raising allocations for social sectors as well as providing for measures for poor, youth, farmers and women.

"The Union Budget largely played to our expectations, particularly with the muchneeded income tax relief for the middle class, which will drive consumption and economic growth. No changes were made to Securities Transaction Tax or capital gains tax, as anticipated," Pranav Haridasan, MD and CEO, Axis Securities, said.

Equity markets were open on Saturday due to the presentation of the Union Budget.

week, the BSE Last benchmark jumped 1,315.5 points or 1.72 per cent, and the NSE Nifty went up by 389.95 points or 1.68 per cent.

Ajit Mishra - SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd, said, "The impact of the Union Budget could linger in the next session, particularly in the consumption sectors."

Additionally, with the earnings season set to take center stage again, traders should focus on stock selection, Mishra added.

On Saturday, the 30-share BSE benchmark Sensex eked out a marginal gain of 5.39 points or 0.01 per cent to settle at 77,505.96. The Nifty dipped 26.25 points or 0.11 per cent to settle at 23,482.15.

Exporters demand extension of interest equalisation scheme

Indian exporting Community on Sunday urged Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman to extend the interest equalisation scheme (IES) for getting affordable rates of credit, as their demand was mentioned in the Budget. The scheme ended

December 31 last year. The scheme, according to exporters, has helped them avail of rupee export credit at competitive rates at a time when the global economy is facing headwinds. Exporters used to get subsidies under the scheme for pre and postshipment rupee export credit. Sanjay Budhia, Chairman of CII National Committee on EXIM, said though the Budget announcements would help boost outbound shipments, 'We sincerely request the Finance Minister to kindly reinstate the scheme for all exporters to make them

globally competitive." similar Sharing Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO) President Ashwani Kumar said the commerce ministry has allocated funds of ₹2,250 Crore under export promotion scheme of covering IES and (Market



Initiative). The IES may be extended immediately with effect from January 1 with a cap of ₹10 Crore and international events for 2025-26 may be approved immediately.
Budhia also said that measures

announced in the Budget such as cutting customs duties on certain inputs, and rolling out of national manufacturing mission would help boost exports and job creation.

He added that the proposed export mission to improve export credit, and support to MSMEs to tackle non-tariff measures in overseas markets would surely help in getting greater market access for domestic goods.

"The reduction of basic customs duty on several inputs production rationalisation of customs tariff structure for industrial goods will boost the export potential of the country significantly," Budhia, who is also MD of Patton Group, said.

the pioneer

vivacity eness 11



Get your skin analysis at the KorinMi's skincare to Delhi, writes ABHI SINGHAL





ver wanted to have glass skin looking at all those viral Instagram reels and products? Ever wanted to get a 3D analysis of your skin like it happens in Korea? Then the quest for the radiant, flawless "glass skin" just got easier. KorinMi, India's Korean skin clinic has expanded its footprint with a new location in Defence Colony

Korean glass skin is a skincare trend that emphasises achieving skin that looks incredibly smooth, radiant, and intensely hydrated, almost like a pane of glass. The term originated from Korean beauty (K-beauty) and has gained global popularity for its focus on achieving a naturally luminous complexion.

To get your skin have qualities for the glass skin, there is KorinMi, at the the prestigious Centre for Skin & Hair Pvt Ltd, under the guidance of dermatologist Dr. Deepali Bhardwaj. The new space promises a transformative skincare experience. Known for its unique fusion of timehonoured Korean beauty rituals and cuttingedge dermatological techniques, KorinMi offers bespoke treatments tailored to a diverse range of skin concerns.

The Defence Colony clinic offers a range of exclusive treatments, including a comprehensive 3D Skin Analysis & Consultation to personalise treatment plans. Clients can also indulge in various K Glow Treatments targeting specific results we've seen at our Gurgaon clinic inspired



concerns like brightening and anti-aging, sensitive skin, and acne and pore control. For those seeking a quick and effective radiance boost, the KorinMi Glass Skin Resurfacing Treatment promises visible results in just three days. And for special occasions, the KorinMi Diamond Glass Skin Treatment delivers an instant glow and brightness.

"The overwhelming response and remarkable







us to bring KorinMi to Defence Colony," says Reshbha Munjal, Co-founder of KorinMi. "This new location makes authentic Korean skincare more accessible to Delhi, providing a luxurious and personalised experience designed to address every skin need. We're thrilled to continue our mission of helping clients achieve radiant, glass skin through the elegance and expertise of Korean beauty traditions."

This exciting collaboration with Dr. Deepali beauty, right here in Delhi.

Bhardwaj adds another layer of expertise to KorinMi's offerings. As an internationally trained Skin Allergy Specialist, Dr. Bhardwaj brings a wealth of knowledge to the table, particularly relevant in today's environment of increasing pollution and skin allergies. "I've incorporated an Indian scientific perspective into these Korean treatments," Dr. Bhardwaj explains, "which has significantly enhanced the results, helping Indians achieve their desired clear and glass-like skin. It's a fantastic treatment approach, especially with its holistic focus."

KorinMi's philosophy centres on enhancing natural beauty through safe and effective skincare solutions that embody the elegance and precision of Korean beauty. Every detail, from the personalised care to the luxurious ambiance, is designed to create a pampering and transformative experience. The clinic uses products, treatments, and technologies imported directly from South Korea, ensuring authenticity and quality.

This expansion isn't just about opening another clinic; it's about making the transformative power of Korean skincare accessible to a wider audience. For those seeking the coveted "glass skin" look and a truly personalised skincare journey, KorinMi's new Defence Colony location offers a unique and exciting opportunity. It's an invitation to experience the best of Korean







By ANURAAG BHARDWAJ

s we spend increasingly more time indoors, it's essential to consider how our built environments impact our physical health. A welldesigned residential building can significantly boost occupants' mood, sleep quality, productivity, and overall well-being.

NATURAL LIGHT AND VENTILATION:

Exposure to natural light and fresh air is crucial for our physical and mental health. Natural light regulates our circadian rhythms, influencing our sleep-wake cycles, hormone secretion, and mood. Adequate ventilation, on the other hand, removes stale air, reducing the concentration of pollutants and allergens.

To incorporate natural light and ventilation into your residential building design:

Orient windows to maximize natural light exposure.

Incorporate skylights, clerestory windows, or solar tubes.

Use light-coloured interior finishes to reflect natural light.



■ Install ventilation systems that provide a consistent supply of fresh air.

ERGONOMICS AND ACCESSIBILITY: A space

Well-designed should accommodate occupants of all ages and abilities. Ergonomic design principles prioritize comfort, reducing the risk of

injury and strain.

To design ergonomic and accessible spaces: Incorporate adaptable fixtures and

furniture

Ensure sufficient clearance for

wheelchair navigation ■ Install grab bars, non-slip flooring,

and tactile signage Design spaces with flexibility in mind,

accommodating different user needs **INDOOR AIR QUALITY:** The air we breathe indoors can be up to five times more

polluted than outdoor air. Indoor air quality is influenced by various factors, including building materials, ventilation systems, and occupant activities.

To improve indoor air quality: Specify low-VOC (volatile organic

compound) materials Install effective ventilation systems,

including air filtration Incorporate plants, which naturally

Implement regular maintenance schedules for HVAC systems

THERMAL COMFORT: Thermal comfort significantly impacts our mood, productivity, and overall well-being. A well-designed thermal environment should maintain a consistent, comfortable temperature range.

To achieve thermal comfort: Install efficient HVAC systems with

precise temperature control Incorporate passive design strategies,

such as insulation and shading Specify materials with high thermal mass, which absorb and release heat

Design spaces with flexible thermal zoning, accommodating different occupant needs

By incorporating these design principles into your residential building, you can create a healthier, more comfortable indoor environment that supports the well-being of occupants.

— The author is an architect and is the founder of Anjaney Vastu & AB Architects



Holistic Wellness in the Digital Age



the world is changing rapidly, and with it, the way we think about wellness. Gone are the days when wellness was simply about hitting the gym or following the latest diet trend. Today, wellness is a multi-faceted, deeply personal journey, one that goes beyond physical fitness to encompass mental, emotional, social, and even environmental wellbeing. It's no longer just about feeling good; it's about being whole, in mind, body, and spirit. And in this digital age, brands are stepping up, weaving holistic wellness into their DNA to foster deeper connections with consumers.

A SHIFT IN CONSUMER EXPECTATIONS:

The wellness movement began quietly at first a small ripple in the wellness community, but over time, it turned into a tidal wave that reshaped industries. We saw yoga studios spring up, organic food brands gaining prominence, and mindfulness apps becoming household names. But as technology began to play an even larger role in our lives, the scope of wellness began to widen.

Today's consumer is informed, engaged, and expects brands to be more than just a product or service. They want companies that reflect their values, understand their needs, and contribute to their holistic well-being. The conversation around wellness has evolved into something much larger than simply improving physical health. It's a fusion of mind, body, soul, and environment, all wrapped into one.

As a result, brands have a unique opportunity. The challenge, however, is in how to craft campaigns that not only resonate with consumers' needs but also inspire them to live healthier, more sustainable lives. It's not enough to sell a product; brands now have to sell a





lifestyle like the one that nurtures wellbeing on every level.

THE DIGITAL REVOLUTION: In a world where social media dictates trends and influencers have the power to shape movements, the digital age has been both a blessing and a challenge for brands trying to tap into the wellness space. The power of digital platforms cannot be overstated.

The most successful brands are those that recognise this and align their core values with the principles of holistic wellness. Take Patagonia, for example. The outdoor apparel brand's commitment to sustainability and environmental well-being extends far beyond their product offerings. They have built a narrative that connects consumers with the idea of wellness as a

global movement—one that includes not well-being of the planet. By promoting responsible consumption environmental conservation, they are not just selling jackets; they are selling a lifestyle that speaks to the core values of their audience.

PERSONALISED APPROACH TO WELLNESS: But it's not only about big, global brands. Small, direct-to-consumer companies are equally making their mark. Take the wellness app, Headspace, for example. Its digital-first approach has made mindfulness and meditation more accessible than ever before. What sets it apart is not just the meditation guides or breathing exercises but it's the way Headspace taps into the emotional

wellness of its users. In the wellness space, there is no onesize-fits-all solution, and brands that can offer personalised, tailored experiences will always be one step ahead. Whether it's a beauty brand offering skincare solutions based on specific skin concerns or a fitness brand offering virtual personal training sessions tailored to your fitness level, the more personalised the experience, the deeper the connection.

WELLNESS THAT LASTS: Ultimately, the goal of holistic wellness is not just to make consumers feel good in the moment but to empower them to make choices that lead to long-term health, happiness, and sustainability. Brands are now tasked with being more than just vendors. They must be allies in their customers' wellness journeys.

In a crowded market, it's the brands that prioritise education, emotional connection, and authenticity that will truly resonate. Take for example, Lulu lemon - what began as a yoga apparel company has grown into a lifestyle brand that is rooted in the idea of holistic wellness. Lulu lemon has built a community of consumers who don't just wear their clothes; they live by the principles of mindfulness, self-care, and personal growth that the brand promotes. By creating a community around wellness, they are inspiring healthier lifestyles, not just through the products they offer, but through the values they embody.

- Excerpts from Ishani Ghosh, Business Head, Brand Street Integrated

Two-tier Test format likely before India's tour of England: Report

PTI ■ LONDON

hen Australia face South Africa in the World Test Championship final, it will mark the end of the current format, which is set to be relaunched as a two-tier system ahead of India's tour of England later this summer. competitive. It is going to In a bid to create a "fairer competition", England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) chairman Richard chairman

Thompson, who is the head of the ICC's strategic growth committee, recently held talks with the apex body's chairman Jay Shah and the two will lead the plan.

With just five months left for the next cycle to start with England hosting India at Headingly from June 20, Thompson acknowledged the urgency of the matter.

"It is fully understood that the current structure does not work in the way it should and we need to find a fairer, better competition, but at India and Pakistan do not

this stage no recommendations have been put forward," Thompson told Telegraph Sport.
"We have five months to

work on this, step back and look at what the structure should be going forward. The World Test Championship should be fairer and more change to ensure it always encourages the best teams to reach the final and encourages other nations that want to play Test cricket, to play Test cricket.

"We will protect, grow and ensure the integrity of Test cricket because the format is crucial to the DNA of the

game."
The current model has drawn criticism for its inconsistencies.

Teams do not play every other nation within the twoyear cycle, and an excess of two-Test series has skewed standings. Political constraints mean



integrity competition.

Similarly, South Africa reached the final without playing Australia, though they will meet in the title clash at Lord's in June. Discussions will also explore

the possibility of four-day Tests, as this could help boards schedule three-Test series around franchise leagues, the report has said. Notably, no three-Test series involving teams outside the "big three" of England, India, and Australia has taken place since 2019.

However, the four-day Tests won't be there for marquee series such as the Ashes or matches between tier-one nations.

The push for a two-tier system gained traction following Australia's blockbuster series against India, which set attendance records.

The proposed model would see the top-tier nations play

face each other, impacting each other more frequently, potentially sidelining other teams and series which has evoked negative responses from the legends of the game. West Indies great Clive Lloyd has been a strong critic of the system, saying it would be "disastrous for smaller

teams". "All these countries have worked very hard to get there. We have been in ICC for nearly 100 years. We've a great history and now you're going to tell us, because of a monetary situation, this is how it's going to be," Llyod had said.

Sri Lanka's World Cup winning skipper Arjuna Ranatunga has also criticised the move, saying it would only benefit the three boards. "Sport isn't just about Pounds, Dollars and Rupees. Administrators must nurture and protect the game."

Bangladesh batter Mominul Haque and England's former pacer Steven Finn have also criticised the move.

Haryana play

 $R^{\rm avichandran\;Smaran\;gave}_{\rm another\;reminder\;of\;his}$

immense talent with an

Karnataka ended the Ranji

Trophy season with a draw against Haryana in their Elite

Group C match here on

However, Haryana have

already qualified for the knockouts from the group,

starting from February 8,

Haryana are also the group-

toppers with 29 points from seven games and Kerala

finished second with 28

Karnataka were fourth (20)

behind Bengal (21) on the

Starting from overnight 108

along with Kerala.

hundred as

out a draw

PTI ■ BENGALURU

unbeaten

Sunday.

points.

table.

Karnatak,

Hard to go past India, Australia in CT: Ponting

PTI ■ DUBAI

The legendary Ricky Ponting feels the quality of players and recent history make India and Australia the favourites to compete in the summit clash of the upcoming ICC Champions

The 50-over tournament will take place from February 19 to March 9 across three venues in Pakistan and one in Dubai.

"It's hard to go past India and Australia again," Ponting told the ICC

"Just think about the quality of players in both countries right now, and you look back in recent history when these big finals and big ICC events have come around, and inevitably Australia and India are there somewhere," said the former Australia captain.

India and Australia are the



India secured the crown in 2013 and shared the trophy with Sri Lanka in 2002 after the final was washed out, while Australia clinched back-to-back titles in 2006 and 2009.

Pakistan, the defending champions after winning the 2017 edition, will also pose a strong challenge, according to Ponting. The other team that is

playing some really good cricket at the moment is only teams to have won the Champions Trophy twice. Pakistan," said Ponting, who won two ODI World Cups

and as many Champions Trophy titles as captain.

"Their one-day cricket over the last little bit has been absolutely outstanding. We know they're not always the most predictable team in those big tournaments, but they seem like they've sorted things out a little bit."

Pakistan won all the three ODI series they played last year, including a 2-1 comeback win in Australia and Zimbabwe, followed by a 3-0 whitewash of South

Pure cricketing miscalculation, says Ashwin on concussion substitution row

Former India spinner R Ashwin has questioned the use of concussion substitution during the fourth T20I against England, in which medium-pacer Harshit Rana replaced batting all-rounder Shivam Dube, calling it a case of "pure miscalculation." cricketing

Dube, who had scored a halfcentury, was struck on the head by Jamie Overton off the penultimate delivery of India's innings. Head coach Gautam Gambhir then effectively used the concussion protocol to field Rana in place of Dube, who bowls at speeds in the early 120 km/h range. Rana, on debut, took 3 for 33,

and India won the match by 15 runs, clinching the T20 series with a match to spare. "The game is done. India capture yet another series at home. T20I has been a real juggernaut of a win. But my first question is, did we forgot it was an international game and played an IPL match?,"



Ashwin said on his hindi YouTube channel 'Ash ki baat'. "Because today all the discussion was on how Harshit Rana became Shivam Dube's concussion sub? I can understand it has happened in the past too. In Canberra, Yuzvendra Chahal replaced

Ravindra Jadeja.
"You can call poetic justice, or in fact poetic injustice. I don't understand it. Át least earlier, Chahal replaced Jadeja. Here, Rana Harshit replaced Shivam Dube."

The concussion protocol

Balaji-Bollipalli pair wins, Karan impresses

allows like-for-like replacement, and Rana, a tearaway quick, replaced medium pacer Dube, who is

England's captain Jos Buttler, unhappy with the decision, stated that his team was not consulted and would seek clarity from match referee Javagal Srinath on what exactly constituted a like-forlike replacement concussion cases.

believes

used as an 'impact player' for Chennai Super Kings in the

have been a more appropriate like-for-like replacement for There is no role of the Indian

Ramandeep Singh would

or England team. If there is no one in the squad, then you can say that Harshit Rana can bat a bit and Shivam Dube can bowl a bit, that's why we brought him in. Like-for-like replacement Ramandeep Singh was sitting outside. I don't understand," said Ashwin.

"This is a case of pure cricketing miscalculation, either on the part of the umpires or the part of the match referee or whoever be it. Ramandeep Singh was there, a batter who can ball a bit, like-for-like for Shivam Dube. But not him.

"Harshit Rana was chosen as the concussion substitute. I think people in charge should look into this. Today it happened against England and hurt, some day India might be hurt too." India will face England in the final ODI on Sunday.

for 3 and 38 runs behind, Karnataka had some work to do to ensure that they would not end up with a defeat in their final league match. However, they lost Devdutt Padikkal (43), KL Shrijith (2)

and Yashovardhan Parantap (12) in the space of 12 overs to slip to 164 for six. The home side was just 16 runs ahead at that time, but

Smaran (133 not out, 217 balls, 14x4, 2x5) and Hardik Raj (40, 78 balls, 4x4) shared an alliance of 98 runs for the seventh wicket to shore their side up.

More importantly, they consumed nearly 25 overs and a couple of hours during the stand that carried Karnataka to 262 before Hardik fell to Jayant Yadav. But by that time, Karnataka had a lead of 114 runs.

Smaran extended that lead to 148 as Karnataka reached 294 for 8 in their second innings, and at that point Haryana agreed for a draw, knowing that there was not enough time to mount a chase.

Smaran was also Karnataka's highest run-getter this Ranji Trophy season with 516 runs in seven matches at an average of 64.50 with two

BCB independent committee to probe BPL corruption allegations

PTI ■ DHAKA

The Bangladesh Cricket Board has established an independent inquiry body to assist its Anti-Corruption Unit in probing a slew of corruption allegations over the last couple of weeks in the Bangladesh Premier League. This marks the first official

corruption investigation in the BPL since 2013 as the league faces challenge with delayed player payments and ticketing controversies.

"As part of its ongoing efforts, the BCB is in the process of establishing an Independent Inquiry Body to further support the ACU in its investigations," a BCB press release said.

"The BCB remains dedicated to ensuring a fair and

transparent environment, and will continue to take all necessary actions to safeguard the integrity of the sport in Bangladesh." Recent media reports have alleged instances of corruption, naming specific players and matches, although these claims have not yet been substantiated by the BĆB's ACU.

"The BCB has also come across media coverage regarding potential anti-corruption concerns about the BPL. The Board reiterates its firm commitment to upholding the integrity and spirit of the game," added the release.

"The BCB strictly adheres to the ICC Anti-Corruption Code for Participants and maintains a zero-tolerance policy towards corruption in

 $N^{\text{Sriram Balaji}}$ and Rithvik Choudary Bollipalli were clinical in their effort before Karan Singh dished out an impressive show on debut as India thrashed Togo 4-0 in the play-off tie to keep their place in the Davis Cup World Group I, here Sunday.

Starting the day with a 2-0 lead in pocket, India needed to win just one of the three matches of the day. The pair of Balaji and debutant Bollipalli did the job in the very first contest against M'lapa Tingou Akomolo and Hod'abalo Isak Padio.

The Indians needed only 57 minutes to dispatch the Togo team 6-2 6-1 at DLTA Complex.

Togo replaced their best player Thomas Setodji with M'lapa Tingou Akomolo due

to an arm injury. It hurt them as Akomolo could not hold serve even once in the contest The tie already sealed, India expectedly handed debut to youngster Karan Singh in the first reverse singles. Watched by his coach Aditya Sachdeva, the 21-year-old raced to a 6-2 6-3 victory. Both teams decided not to

play the dead fifth rubber. Surprisingly, it was Sasikumar Mukund who sat in the captain's chair instead of Rohit Rajpal when Karan played. Karan served extremely well,

was aggressive in his returns and also wisely used the drop shots. Padio, who plays in the US Collegiate circuit, hit the ball well but Karan had better control and that made a huge difference in the outcome of the match. Karan, who also trained at the

now-shut National Tennis



Centre (NTC) at DLTA, showed a lot of composure and did not let the occasion

get to him. The only blemish for Karan was dropping his serve in the fifth game of the second set. Balaji was sensational with his serving. Playing percentage tennis, he lost just one point on his serve during the match. It was a pretty straightforward

Balaji and from show Bollipalli, who had won a Challenger together last year. Bollipalli was a bit under pressure when he could not pick up a half-volley, making it 30-all in his first ever service game on debut but managed to hold. After that it one-way traffic

The Indians got their first

throughout.

break when Akomolo served in the third game. At 15-15, Bollipalli hit an uppish forehand return that sailed over the two players but landed inside the lines. Balaii then hit a service return winner to earn two break points.

A riveting volley rally ensued on first break points with all four players showing some great reflexes, but eventually one Akomolo return flew over the baseline. It gave India a 3-1 lead and Balaji made it 4-1 with another strong service game.

His nerves settled, Bollipalli came out serving even better and soon Akomolo was serving to stay in the set. However, he did not help Togo's cause by serving consecutive two double faults from 15-15, giving the Indians two set points.

Praaggnandhaa and Gukesh in joint lead at Tata Steel Masters

PTI WIJK AAN ZEE

World Champion D Gukesh played out a draw with Jorden van Foreest Holland, while Grandmaster

Praggnanandhaa beat Alexev Sarana of Serbia as the two Indians shared the lead after a thrilling day at the Tata Steel Masters here.

Praggnanandhaa notched up his third consecutive win to take his tally to a It was quite a contrast from commendable 8.5 points, his previous round game same as his compatriot Gukesh after the 12th and

penultimate round. The two Indians are now poised for an exciting finish the prestigious tournament, with the remarkable prospect of one of

them potentially clinching the title—a first in Tata Steel Masters history.

was outdone by Arjun Erigaisi and is all but out of title contention on 7.5 points. Praggnanandhaa

involved in another Queen's gambit declined opening. Only this time he was playing with white pieces.

against Caruana as Sarana went for an early advance of king side pawns and then castled on the queen side. It was time to launch an attack against the black king and Praggnanandhaa did not disappoint.

In tactical complications, Praggnanandhaa was at his best as he sacrificed a piece to Eying the top spot after the 11th round, Nodirbek Abdusattorov of Uzbekistan rip-apart the black's king position and what followed thereafter was a pleasure to "At that point I realized it

could be a long game, but then I saw this piece sacrifice," said Pragg after the game. The game ended through a queen sacrifice resulting in force checkmate. Gukesh played a game of fluctuating fortunes against

Foreest, who has the ability to play the spoiler on any given Foreest declared his peaceful intentions early in the Queen pawn game as white when he

appeared ready for a



declined the offer and the game was still equal with many pieces on board. Foreest sacrificed a Rook for a knight but on the 39th move repetition. However, Gukesh Gukesh returned the favour faltered

with his clock ticking away. It was a won position for Gukesh Gukesh but precise calculation was needed and it but was right here that the Indian allowing his

opponent a huge comeback. Foreest had suddenly turned the tables down but did not quite realise it and decided to go for perpetual checks in the heavy piece endgame. Arjun Erigaisi finally proved his mettle against Nodirbek

Abdusattorov, whose ambitions of claiming the top spot came to an end. The game featured a Nimzo-Indian Defense, wherein the Indian had white pieces and his choice of Capablanca variation gave little chances for Abdusattorov to disturb the balance.

In the early middle game, Abdusattorov went for unwarranted complications and ended up blundering on the king side. Arjun won a pawn first and later won two

bishops for a rook. With precise calculations wrapped up the issue.

In other games, Leon Luke Mendonca shared the point with top seed Fabiano Caruana of United States, while P Harikrishna drew with Vincent Keymer of

Germany. The finale could be exciting as Gukesh is up against a resurgent Arjun, while Praggnanandhaa has to tackle Keymer. In case of a drawn result on both boards, the play-off of shorter duration game will decide the winner. In the challengers' section, R Vasihali lost to Ediz Gurel of Turkey to remain on five points and Divya Deshmukh was on the receiving end against Benjamin Bok of

Holland. It's a three-way lead in this section with Aydin Suleymanli of Azerbaijan and Nguyen Thai Dai Vam of Czech republic joining overnight leader Erwin L'ami in pole position on 8.5 points. Results round 12 Masters: Erigaisi Arjun (Ind, 4.5) beat Nodirbek Abdusattorov (Uzb, 7.5); Jorden van Foreest (Ned. 5) drew with D Gukesh (Ind, 8.5); Wei Yi (Chn, 6.5) drew with Anish Giri (Ned, 6.5); Leon Luke Mendonca (Ind, 4.5) drew with Fabiano Caruana (Usa, Praggnanandhaa (Ind, 8.5) beat Alexey Sarana (Srb, 5.5); P Harikrishna (Ind, 6) drew with Vincent Keymer (Ger, 5); Max Warmerdam (Ned. 3.5) lost to Vladimir Fedoseev (Slo, 7).

Although every possible care and caution has been taken to avoid errors or omissions, this publication is being sold on the condition and understanding that information given in this publication is merely for reference and must not be taken as having authority of or binding in any way on the writers, editors, publishers, and printers and sellers who do not owe any responsibility for any damage or loss to any person, a purchaser of this publication or not for the result of any action taken on the basis of this work. All disputes are subject to the exclusive jurisdiction of competent court and forums in Lucknow only. Readers are advised and requested to verify and seek appropriate advice to satisfy themselves about the veracity of any kind of advertisement before responding to any contents published in this newspaper. The printer, publisher, editor and any employee of the Pioneer Group's will not be held responsible for any kind of loss, consequences and further product-related damages on such advertisements.

Printed and Published by Shobori Ganguli for and on behalf of CMYK Printech Ltd., 4th Floor, Sahara Shopping Centre, Faizabad Road, Lucknow-226016 and Printed at The Indian Express Pvt Ltd., C-26 Amausi Industrial Area, Nadarganj, Lucknow. Editor-in-Chief Shobori Ganguli, Resident Editor Vijay Prakash Singh. RNI No. 2016/57. Lucknow Telephones: EPABX: 4036600 Fax: 2345582. Allahabad Office: (0532) 2420818, 2421018, 3290460. Kanpur Office: (0512) 2304006, 2304416. Varanasi Office: (0542) 2414294, 2414295. Delhi Office: 100K, Milap Bhawan, 8/A, Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg, New Delhi-110 002, Phone: 011-40110455. Corporate Office:- 201-205, 2nd Floor, Pratap Bhawan 5, B.S.Z. Marg, New Delhi-110002 Phone: 011-46035729, 011-69342500.