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# 31 Naxalites, 2 cops killed in encounter

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

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

Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai said the end of Naxalism in the country and the state is certain. Under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah, the state will get rid of Naxalism by March 2026, he added. With this incident, 81 Naxalites have been gunned down by security forces in separate encounters in Chhattisgarh so far this

Responding to the operation, Union Home Minister Amit Shah said that Naxals will be eradicated by March 31, 2026 and no citizen of the country has to lose his life due to it. "I also reiterate my resolve that before 31 March, 2026, we will completely eradicate Naxalism from the country so that no citizen of the country has to lose his life due to it," he wrote on 'X' in Hindi. The home minister said in the direction of making India Naxal-free, the security forces have achieved a big success in Bijapur, Chhattisgarh.



Security forces during an anti-Naxal operation in Chhattisgarh

at a forest in Indravati National Park area in the morning when a joint team of personnel from different security forces was out on an anti-Naxalite operation, Inspector General of Police, Bastar Range, Sundarraj P said. Personnel belonging to the District Reserve Guard (DRG), Special Task Force (STF) and Bastar Fighters, all units of the state police, were involved in the operation, he said.

'So far, bodies of 31 Naxalites clad in 'uniform' have been recovered from the encounter site. Besides, a huge cache of weapons, including AK-47, INSAS, SLR and .303 rifles and Barrel Grenade Launchers (BGL), and explosives have also been seized from the site," The latest gunfight took place the official said. Two security

personnel, one belonging to the state DRG and the other from the STF, were killed in the gunfight and two others suffered injuries, he said.

The two injured jawans, reported to be out of danger, were being airlifted to a better medical facility for treatment, he said. Reinforcement has been rushed to the spot and search operation is still underway in the area, he added. Security forces have been continuously getting success in this direction and moving rapidly towards achieving the goal. The end of Naxalism, which is like "cancer", from the country and the state is certain, he said in a statement.

"The sacrifice of our soldiers will not go in vain. I pray to God for the departed souls to rest in peace and provide strength to the bereaved families, and for the speedy recovery of the injured jawans," Sai said. Hailing the security forces,

Deputy CM Vijay Sharma said the national park area in Bijapur was considered as a safe haven for Naxalites, where more than 650 security personnel entered from different sides and eliminated 31 Naxalites in their den. All the deceased Naxalites were clad in uniform and automated weapons were recovered from them, he told reporters.

"The IEDs (Improvised Explosive Devices) laid (by Naxalites) on the path of development of Bastar will be

cleared and we are working with full commitment to ensure basic amenities like schools, hospitals, water, road, anganwadis (government-run women and child care centres) and mobile towers reach the entire region," he said.

Out of the 81 Naxalites gunned down in the state so far this year, 65 were killed in the Bastar division comprising seven districts, including Bijapur. Last year, 219 Naxalites were neutralised by security forces in separate encounters in Chhattisgarh, according to police. On October 4 last year, 38 Naxalites were killed following an encounter in Abhuimaad area along the Narayanpur-Dantewada inter-district border in the Bastar region.



Delhi BJP President Virendra Sachdeva, BJP Delhi in-charge Baijayant Panda, BJP National General Secretary BL Santosh BJP MPs from Delhi and newly-elected MLAs before a meeting after the victory in Delhi Assembly elections, at the Delhi

## **BJP** huddles for new Delhi CN

victories since 2013.

After the party's historic victory in the Delhi Assembly elections, senior BJP leaders began crucial meetings to find its leader to head the next government in the national capital as party president JP Nadda met Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday where key decisions regarding the future of Delhi's governance were discussed.

BJP's strong performance across all regions and communities in the polls has left the party with a wide pool of potential chief ministerial candidates. With larger political messaging often guiding the party's choices in choosing its chief ministers in different states, insiders believe that Delhi would be no exception. The BJP won 48 seats in the 70member Assembly defeating the AAP which secured 22 seats. This was the BJP's first win in Assembly polls in 27 years and the AAP's first Earlier today, AAP leader defeat after three successive and Chief Minister Atishi

The BJP is also planning a grand swearing-in ceremony after Prime Minister Narendra Modi returns from his visit to the US after February 13. PM Modi will be on a two-day visit to meet US President Donald Trump

on February 12 and 13. The swearing-in ceremony will be

a grand event that will mark

the BJP's return to power in

Delhi after 27 years and BJP is planning to invite all the major leaders and chief ministers of the NDA alliance, celebrities and renowned personalitties.

Delhi BJP chief Virendra Sachdeva wrote to Lieutenant-Governor V K Saxena, seeking time from him for a meeting with the 48 newly-elected party MLAs. "I along with the BJP MPs from Delhi and our newly elected 48 MLAs wish to meet you at an early date. Please, allow an

tendered her resignation to the Delhi L-G, who has asked her to continue till the ruling party stakes claim to form the government. Sachdeva also held

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

Continued on page 8

### Manipur ready for change of guard



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

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE IMPHAL/NEW DELHI

 $I_{months}^{n\ a\ swift\ turn\ of\ events\ in} \\ strife-torn$ Manipur, Chief Minister N Biren Singh on Sunday tendered his resignation to Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla at the Raj Bhavan in Imphal. Singh's resignation came hours after he returned from Delhi after his meeting with Home Minister Amit Shah.

Through his resignation the CM urged the central government "to continue the stringent and fool-proof revised mechanism of Free Movement Regime (FMR) with the biometric being stringently applied time bound and faster border which is underway." He also requested the Centre to continue the "crackdown on

border infiltration and to formulate policy for the deportation of the illegal immigrants and the fight against drugs and narco terrorism." "It has been an honour to

serve the people of Manipur thus far. I am extremely grateful to the central government for time actions, interventions, developmental work and implementation of projects for various safeguarding the interests of every single Manipuri," Biren said in his letter.

"My sincere request to the central government through your good office is to continue with the same. I take the opportunity to enumerate the most important ones of them ... To maintain the territorial integrity of Manipur which

has a rich and diverse civilizational history over thousands of years," the letter

added. On Saturday, Singh convened a meeting with BJP-led ruling alliance MLAs at the CM Secretariat. The meeting was held in the wake of the opposition Congress seeking to move a no-confidence motion against

government led by Singh. More than 250 people have been killed and thousands rendered homeless since ethnic violence broke out in the state in May 2023.

Meanwhile, state president Sharda confirmed that chief minister N Biren Singh tendered his resignation to governor in the interest of the people of the state. "We are yet to receive further instructions from the

party," he told reporters. Sharda asserted that Singh worked tirelessly for the development and integrity of the state. "He has been trying to bring peace in the state since the ethnic violence broke out on May 3, 2023. The BJP will continue to work hard for the integrity of the state," she added.

Congress termed N Biren Singh's resignation as "belated" and said people of the state were now awaiting a visit by "our frequent-flier Prime 'Minister" Narendra Modi.

Continued on page 8

### **BUDDH SUTRA**



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

## Atishi quits, Delhi Assembly dissolved

appointment at an early date

according to your convenience," the letter said.

STAFF REPORTER ■

Aday after Capital's Verdict, Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader and Chief Minister Atishi tendered her resignation to Lieutenant-Governoi √inai Kumar Saxena who has asked her to continue till the winning side BJP stakes claim to form government.

Atishi, who retained her Kalkaji seat, handed over her resignation to Saxena at Raj Niwas. Later, the Lt Governor also dissolved the Legislative Seventh Assembly of the national Capital. The notification, dated February 7, stated, "In exercise of the power conferred upon me by subsection (2)(b) of section 6 of the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi Act, 1991, I, Vinai Kumar Saxena, Lieutenant Governor of Delhi, hereby dissolve the Seventh Legislative Assembly of the National Capital Territory of Delhi with effect from 8th February, 2025."

Besides, the Commission of India (ECI) officially concluded the process of Delhi Legislative Assembly Election 2025, with the submission of the Constitution Notification" containing the



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

list of newly elected candidates to the Lieutenant Governor. The same was submitted to LG by Ajoy Kumar, Principal Secretary of the ECI and R Alice Vaz, Chief Electoral Officer of Delhi. Also present on the occasion were B C Patra, Secretary, ECI, and Rajesh Kumar, Special Chief Electoral Officer of Delhi. Atishi served as Delhi's Chief Minister for nearly five months. She took oath as chief minister in September last year after AAP convenor and her predecessor Arvind Kejriwal resigned from the post amid corruption allegations against him.

Five women candidates,

including outgoing chief minister Atishi won in the Delhi Assembly poll 2025, down from eight in the 2020 elections. Atishi is the only woman candidate of AAP who won this time. The BJP is expected to stake claim to power next week after Prime Minister Narendra Modi returns from a foreign visit, party leaders said.

În a related development, newly-elected MLAs of AAP met party supremo Arvind Kejriwal at his Ferozshah Road residence a day after the party faced drubbing in the Delhi assembly election, winning only 22 out of the total 70 seats it contested.

Continued on page 8

## Dry spell to cast on Shimla apple variety

A prolonged dry spell has got Shimla farmers worrying about the apple crop, which is now threatened by a hampered production.

Desired cooling hours (1,200 to 1,600 below 7 degrees Celsius) for traditional varieties and 600 hours for early varieties have not come by this season.

Farmers were also restricted from new plantations due to unfavourable weather conditions, Fruit Vegetable Flower Growers Association President Harish

Chauhan told PTI on Sunday. About 90 per cent of apple orchardists in the state are still on traditional varieties, while the remaining have adopted high

density plantations. "Snow during winter months also kills insects and diseases but we are

witnessing a one-month shift in weather for the past three years which has affected apple production," Chauhan said. The state saw a rain deficit of 97 per

cent in October last year, 99 per cent in November, and 84 per cent this January, the ninth lowest since 1901, Meteorological expert Sandeep Sharma said.

In all, the rain deficit was 41 per cent in the post-monsoon season (October to December), with December the only exception with 21 per cent of excess rain.

Rain deficit from February 1 to 9 was 38 per cent, with the state receiving 16.2 mm of precipitation against a normal of 26.3 mm, the Met said.

Sufficient chilling hours and moisture during winters is essential for a good apple crop, while hailstorms at flowering stage prove

The temperature has to remain below 7 degrees for appropriate chilling, which varies with latitude as the apple growing area falls mainly in the temperate zone, according to scientists.

An increase in temperature tends to harm the apple production, while early spouting in stone fruit in low hills could affect the yield and the crop, said Sujaat Chauhan, an apple orchardist from Sandhu village. Farmers had dug pots in several

areas for new plantation but a dry spell that led to less moisture in the land halted the process, says Sushil Dhalta, another apple grower.

The cost of plantation is high as one plant costs between Rs 150-200, he said. "We were unable to sow the peas crop due to dry spell and are hoping to see rain and snow in another farmer, February," Rajhubeer said.

Continued on page 8

### T K ROY NEW DELHI

¬lobal climate change has Gimpacted the arrival of migratory birds to National Zoological Park (NZP) wetlands here this month besides several such habitats all over the country. However, NZP still managed to welcome few species of migratory water birds including Common Teal, Common Sandpiper and Great Cormorant.

Sharing this information, eminent ecologist T K Roy said on Wednesday National Zoological Park (NZP) has cluster of four smaller wetlands which support the habitat for water birds both resident and migratory and especially breeding bird Painted Stork's large breeding colony since past many decades.

Asian Waterbird Census (AWC), part of International Waterbird



Climate change affects arrival of winged guests

Census recorded this year partially lesser water bird species diversity, he said.

Giving details, Roy said 19 species of total population 609 includes 16 resident species and three migratory species in comparison to AWC 2024 i.e. 17 species of total population 1,249 includes 15 resident species and 02 migratory species.

In 2025, among three migratory species includes only one Common Sandpiper, one Great

Cormorant, three Common Teals and among 16 resident species largely 382 Painted Storks, 58 Indian Cormorants, 37 Little Egrets, 41 Great White Pelicans,19 Indian Spot-billed Ducks and 19 Moorhen Common comparison to last year (2024) among 15 migratory species largely Painted Storks 985, Indian Cormorants 127Great White Pelicans 46, Common Moorhen 17, Black-headed Ibis 12, Indian

spot-billed Duck 10.

Roy said Wetlands International's annual Asian Waterbird Census (AWC) part of the global International Waterbird Census is carried out in the month of January in 27 countries together in Asia and Australasia including India.

This exercise includes active volunteers under coordination of the AWC State Coordinators as per the confirmed annual dates by National Coordinator. AWĆ supports the conservation and management of wetland and waterbirds globally.
The AWC here was conducted on

January at the smaller wetlands of NZP with active support of NZP Director. Participants included serious birders, professor as from volunteer University, International Ramanujan College, NZP Curator.

Continued on page 8

## Uproar over suspicion of Classmates since 1st grade, 2 girls tie knot religious conversion

### Police say no evidence to substantiate charges

PNS LUCKNOW

 $T^{\text{he Gomti Nagar Extension}}_{\text{police conducted a search}}$  of a house on Sunday following a complaint regarding religious conversion activities during a Sunday prayer gathering. DCP, East, Shashank Singh, in a video statement, said that the police arrived at the house in response to a complaint from people of another community.
"We received a complaint that
some people had assembled at
the house in question under the guise of a Sunday prayer and were involved in religious conversion. Prima facie, no objectionable material or evidence to support the allegations of religious conversion was found during the search. Both parties were counselled, and the situation is now under control," the DCP said.

Earlier, there was a significant uproar over the issue. People gathered outside the house. where a church is located, and created a ruckus.

When the police arrived at the scene, the event organiser explained that a meeting is held there from 10 am to 3 pm every Sunday, attended by 150 to 200 people. It was alleged that several houses in the area had been purchased, and those who were not willing to sell were being enticed with large sums of money to do so.

A resident, Ritesh Mishra, claimed that an unregistered church was being run inside the house.

"Meetings have been held here every Sunday for many years. People are brought in from various parts of the country and

converted," he alleged.
The residents said that the people found inside the house were taken by the police in a car and later released.

"No action was taken against anyone, even though illegal activities are being carried out here. Many people are still present inside the house. We have filed a complaint with the commissioner. If no action is taken, we will demolish this house ourselves," they said. The residents also reported

that outside the church house, woman named Rama was found. "At first, she misled us by giving different names. However, when the locals opened her bag, they found a religious book inside. In anger, released after questioning.

the people took the holy book from her and threw it in the drain. However, the woman claimed that she had not converted," the protesters said. Another local resident, Dhananjay Kumar Pandey, stated that the house was registered in the name of one Rajiv Lal and was being used as a church. 'The most concerning thing is that most of the people who come here are women. Many illegal activities also take place. If anyone from the locality protests, they are beaten. They also pressure people to vacate their houses by offering them more money than the market price. The government should take action against this activity and demolish the house," he

Another neighbour, Manoj Sharma, said he spoke to a person outside the house.

alleged.

'Upon enquiry, he told me that he had come from Deoria. He also mentioned that people are being converted here by offering plots and money, along with many other tempting incentives. Once someone joins, they are tasked with bringing in more people," he claimed.

ADCP, East, Pankaj Kumar Singh, said that 30 to 40 people were present at the scene and all of them had been

> Keiriwal. His remarks come in the wake

> > "I have a big question for the opposition. Till when will you keep blaming different institutions and systems for your defeat? And it is most unfortunate that the Congress party

about her running away, the matter of the same-sex marriage came to light.

On Friday, both of them reached the police station and told the officers that they had got married in 2021. They even showed proof of their marriage.

They explained that an affi-davit for a court marriage had been submitted through a lawyer. Both girls, who had been hiding from their families, demanded protection from the police. They requested that their address and mobile numbers not be shared with anyone. They claimed that they were facing threats to their lives from the sothem complained to the police called guardians of society, as

well as from their families, who could tarnish their relationship. Even after their families tried

to convince them, both girls remained firm in their decision. Following this, the family members formally severed ties in writing in front of the police. The police also stated that both girls are adults and instructed the family members not to interfere.

According to the in-charge of Nigoha police station, Anuj Tiwari, the girls are longtime friends, and they had provided proof of being adults.

"I accepted my friend as my wife, but society looks at love between same-sex partners

with a negative point of view. That is why we kept our marriage a secret for four years. Only five friends of ours knew about it. Two friends have also testified in the affidavit. From age 10 onwards, we realised

The girls explained that they used to stay together during their studies. When they got low marks in their GCSEs, their families became suspicious. They were banned from meeting. To avoid any further disputes, they had an affidavit prepared by a lawyer. They submitted the application for a court marriage at the regis-trar's office through the

girls said.

"Now no amount of force can separate us," the girls told the police during their question-

Meanwhile, a teenage girl reportedly ran away from home after being scolded by that it was not possible to live without each other," one of the

her mother in Nigoha. The police acted swiftly and recovered the girl safely. ACP Rajneesh Verma formed a police team, including Nigoha police station in-charge Anuj Kumar Tiwari.

According to reports, the girl left the house without telling anyone after being scolded by her mother. When the family members could not find her at home or nearby, they filed a complaint with the police.

## Rahul 'urban Naxal', bigger 'anarchist' than Kejriwal: Thakur

Anurag Thakur on Sunday called Congress former president Rahul Gandhi "urban Naxal", and accused him of

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Two girls, said to be daughters of farmers and resi-

dents of the same village

under Nigoha police area,

reportedly married one anoth-

er in the first case of same-sex

Both of them had studied

Initial investigation revealed

that their friendship deep-ened when they were 5. By the

time they turned 10, they

realised their love. When their

families found their activities

suspicious, surveillance began.

Facing restrictions, both of

them ran away from home.

When the father of one of

marriage in Lucknow.

together since Class I.

disrespecting the Constitutional bodies. The Lok Sabha MP from Hamirpur in Himachal Pradesh also accused Gandhi of trying to become a "bigger anarchist" than Arvind

of a resounding victory of BJP in the Delhi Assembly polls and Gandhi alleging a massive electorate expansion Maharashtra the run-up to the polls in that

which was in power for 60 years in the country, is raising

Constitutional institutions and is becoming a laughing stock," Thakur told reporters

He said the opposition could never provide any proof of EVM tampering and there was no reason to level the allegations.

"When you repeatedly try to humiliate the public, the pub-

lic repeatedly tries to give you a message," he said. "And, Rahul ji, the message is very clear that in the path of politics of anarchy, you want to become a bigger anarchist than Kejriwal. The public will never accept an urban Naxal. If you speak against 'Bharat' people will never accept you. If you raise questions on Constitutional bodies, the people will always reject you. If you stay in India, and toe the anti-India line, then people will not accept you,"

## Akhileh: INDIA bloc strong, will become even stronger

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Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav has asserted that the INDIA bloc is strong and will become even stronger in the future. "Every defeat is a lesson, and

learning from it paves the way for the future," Yadav said in Agra on Sunday. He was reacting to INDIA bloc's defeat in

the Delhi assembly polls. Commenting on the SP's loss in the Milkipur assembly bypoll, Yaday remarked, "Those who are celebrating by manipulating votes should understand that the false victory in Milkipur cannot compensate for the Bharatiya Janata Party's historic defeat in Ayodhya during the Lok Sabha elections. The BJP's loss in Ayodhya is recorded in history and cannot be erased by Milkipur."

Yadav alleged that the BJP had resorted to unfair means to win the by-elections.

Criticising the BJP government over the recent stampede in Maha Kumbh, Yadav accused the administration of

concealing the actual death toll. "They are suppressing the number of casualties to avoid paying compensation. A large number of pilgrims lost their lives during this Kumbh, including those who perished in accidents while traveling for the Maha Kumbh. The government must extend support to all the affected families,"

he demanded.

Yadav called for waiving toll tax on highways for devotees traveling to Maha Kumbh, citing heavy congestion at toll plazas. "If the BJP government can waive entertainment taxes for films, why is it not exempting toll tax on expressways and highways for devotees attending the Kumbh," he questioned.

## 42-year-old man's 10-day-old body recovered from house

Lucknow (PNS): A 10-dayold body of a man was found in his house in Ashutosh Nagar, within the jurisdiction of Krishna Nagar police station, on Sunday. The deceased was identified as 42-year-old Sudhir Ranjan.

Neighbours informed the police due to the strong smell emanating from the house. Upon

**NOTICE** 

I have changed my name from

Mohammad Shamim Ahmad

To Mohammad Shameem

Ahmad Ansari S/o Abbas Ali

Ansari R/o -126 Shekhwada

**NOTICE** 

I have changed my name from

Mohammad Yusuf To Mohd

Yusuf S/o Mohammad Arif

Siddiqui R/o -194/3 J.K. Colony,

Jajmau Kanpur for future

**NOTICE** 

I Rani Devi mother of No

15727830Y, Rank NK Name

Sher Bahadur Singh R/o Vill

Pure Baghelan Po- Pahuri Teh-

Lalganj District Raebareli (U P)

Pin 229201 have changed my

name from Rani Singh to Rani

Devi vide affidavit No IN UP

81183270567851X dated 04

Feb 25 before notary teh lalganj

**NOTICE** 

I have changed my name from

Ankit Kumar To Ankit Kumar Arora for all future purposes,

Ankit Kumar Arora S/o Gulshan

Kumar R/o 124/A/159, Govind

**NOTICE** 

This is to inform that the name

of Nabiya Ahmad Khan,

daughter of Najeeb Ahmad

Khan, residing in Kewalhaar,

Malihabad, Lucknow, has been

incorrectly recorded in the

school records of St. Clare's

Convent School, Lucknow. The

correct name is Nabiya Ramzi

Khan, daughter of Najeeb

**NOTICE** 

I, PRATIMA DEVI W/O Devi

Shankar R/O Village Naubadpur

PO. Shekhpur Teh-Bhognipur

Distt Kanpur Dehat, Uttar

Dist raebareli

Nagar Kanpur

Ramzi Khan.

purpose

arrival, the police found the gate of the house bolted from inside. Police station in-charge PK Singh said that Sudhir was a liquor addict and lived alone. His wife, Urmila, had gone to her maternal home with their son about seven years ago. The deceased's mother lives with her second son. The police

called a forensic team to the

of ₹27 lakh

ing director Radha Krishna

Singh, director Dhirendra

scene and collected evidence. According to the police, the body appeared to be about a week old. The exact cause of death will be determined once the post-mortem report comes in, and further legal action will be taken accordingly. According to local residents. Sudhir had not been seen leaving his house for several days.

### **Youth duped** Exploring Dalit literature, marginalised voices and Dr Ambedkar's legacy Lucknow (PNS): A young man was allegedly defrauded of Rs 27 lakh under the pretext of securing a flat in Lucknow. The victim is living on rent in the

PNS LUCKNOW

Telibagh area here to educate his children. According to the police, Raj Kumar Singh, a resident of Ballia, was deceived with the promise of a flat. A case has been registered against three people from Sainik Infrastructure in connection with the matter. The accused Kanak Rekha Chauhan. The festival brought together include the company's managscholars, writers, and intellec-

Kumar Singh, and builder Rudra Prakash Singh. The victim said that in 2022, he paid Rs 7 lakh by cheque, Rs 9 lakh via RTGS-IMPS, and Rs 1 lakh in cash to the company for a flat in Anand Sagar Enclave. "While issuing the NOC, another cheque of Rs 10 lakh was given, which has not been

cleared yet," he said. The accused had promised to deliver the flat within six months. However, when the victim visited the site later, he found that the construction work had been halted. The accused then requested another six months. Even after approximately one and a half years, neither the flat was delivered nor the money refunded. Following the victim's complaint, the police have registered a case and launched an investigation.

The second day of the Bhagidari Sahitya Utsav continued with stimulating discussions and literary insights. The keynote address was delivered by founder of the Metaphor Lucknow Litfest,

tuals to explore social progress, inclusivity, and the role of literature in shaping society. Deputy Chief Minister Brajesh

Pathak praised Dr BR Ambedkar for his tireless fight for the rights of marginalised communities and the importance of literature in shaping individuals and society.

He encouraged people to consider entrepreneurship and assured that the government would support such initiatives. The second session focused on Dalit literature, discussing its impact globally through trans-lations. Renowned writer Sheoraj Singh Bechain shared an excerpt from his book 'Mera Bachpan Mere Kandhon Pe', discussing his struggles with child labour. He noted that while literature may not directly change society, it can inspire awareness and transformation. Authors Preety Choudhary and Challapalli Swarupa Rani



**BHAGIDARI SAHITYA UTSAV** 

explored how Dalit literature is inherently political, challenging historical injustices and advocating for social change.

A thought-provoking session on 'Marginalized Voices in Cinema and Media' discussed the underrepresentation of marginalised communities in the media and film industries. Patricia Mukhim spoke about the challenges in the North East, including violence in Meghalaya and deep-rooted patriarchy. Atul Tiwari highlighted the

lack of Dalit representation in

media, while Ashutosh Shukla discussed Dalit socio-economic aspirations and the importance of increasing representation in media.

The session 'Babasaheb – The Untold Chapters' provided insights into Dr Ambedkar's personal and intellectual life, shedding light on his personal letters to his wife.

Speakers, including Asim Arun, Nadeem Khan, and Sathya Saran, emphasised the emotional and personal challenges Ambedkar faced while shaping India's Constitution.

### Man found guilty under NDPS Act sentenced to imprisonment

Lucknow (PNS): An accused under Section 8/21 of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985, was found guilty in the case against him at Gudamba police station and was sentenced to one year and ten months of rigorous imprisonment. Providing details, Special Prosecutor Prakash Srivastava said the accused, Bantu Rawat, was punished with imprisonment and a fine of Rs 25,000. "In case of non-payment of the fine, the accused will have to undergo an additional imprisonment of one month," he stated. Citing the order from the court of Additional District and Sessions Judge / Special Judge (NDPS Act), Arun Kumar Rai, Srivastava mentioned that the period already spent by the accused in jail in relation to this case will be adjusted in the sentence. Srivastava explained that, according to the NDPS Act, a small quantity of heroin is 5 grams, and the commercial quantity is 250 grams. In this case, 15 grams of heroin was recovered from the possession of the accused, which fell under the intermediate category. "Therefore, considering the facts and circumstances of the case, the accused was held guilty," he concluded.

### Rare, complex gynaecology surgery at Balrampur Hosp PNS LUCKNOW

A team of specialist doctors at Balrampur Hospital successfully performed a rare and complex gynaecological surgery. A 45-year-old resident of Dhasua Khal, Mankapur, Gonda, was admitted to the OPD on January 2 with complaints of abdominal pain and swelling. A senior doctor from

Balrampur Hospital stated that a detailed investigation revealed that the patient was suffering from bicornuate uterus (duplication of the uterus) and multiple fibroid tumours.

'Apart from this, the patient also had serious conditions such as hypertension, hypothyroidism, and hypokalemia. Earlier, the patient's surgery was proposed to be done at Gonda Medical College, and SGPGI here, but it was not possible due to complications," he said. He further explained that the patient had undergone surgery on her pituitary gland seven years ago, which made administering anaesthesia a challenging task.

"In this case, after a thorough discussion with the anaesthetist and neurosurgeon, it was

decided to proceed with the operation at Balrampur Hospital on February 5," he said. The operation lasted for about two hours, during which the bicornuate uterus and tumour were successfully removed. The size of the tumour was 30x22 cm and it weighed 3 kg.

Two units of blood had to be transfused during the surgery. The operating team included Dr SR Samaddar (surgeon), Dr Shubham Goyal (resident surgeon), Dr Piyush Kumar (anaesthetist), Dr Anjum (senior resident, anaesthesia), and Dr Shifa Javed (junior resident, anaesthesia).

Mahendra Kumar and Sumaiya played an important role in the supporting staff. The specimen taken from the patient was safely stored in the pathology

department. and Director Superintendent Dr Sushil Prakash said, "The successful execution of this rare and complex surgery at Balrampur Hospital reflects the skill and dedication of our doctors. This operation was challenging due to the patient's complex medical condition, but our team successfully carried it out."

### LDA razes unfinished 10-storey building

In response, Vice Chairman Prathmesh Kumar ordered a departmental probe, which was initiated two weeks ago to assess the status of the land and investigate the construction plans. The probe revealed that local musclemen had seized the land at gunpoint, and the ongoing civil work was unauthorised. The antiencroachment operation was swiftly executed.

Led by Zone 1 in-charge Devanshu Trivedi, the team arrived at the site at 9:30 am. Although locals attempted to resist, they were quickly subdued due to the presence of armed police. The operation

land near the Mohanlalgani market, where locals had submitted fake documents seven years ago and were planning an illegal shopping complex. The squad removed fencing, dismantled temporary offices, for storing building materials.

## Manfest-Varchasva draws to a close

Lucknow (PNS): The final day of IIM-Lucknow's 'Manfest-Varchasva 2025' wrapped up a celebration of intellect, creativity, and lead-ership. The day featured impactful leadership talks, exciting competitions, and a thrilling concert.

Founder of Pranyas

Development Foundation, Rahul Sharma, delivered an address on the role of social workers in addressing societal issues. He emphasised the importance of standing up against societal problems and finding lasting solutions, encouraging attendees to focus on the basics and build trust through sincerity.

Pradesh - 209112 have changed He stressed that a clear goal my name from Pratima Devi to and emotional connection are Pratima vide Affidavit dated key to success. 05/02/2025 before Civil Court, Bhognipur, Kanpur Dehat, U.P.

CÉO of FOBET, Riya Upreti, shared her journey as an cert by Salim-Sulaiman.

entrepreneur. She discussed how to turn passion into obsession and create a thriving brand, highlighting the importance of luck, timing, and a strong idea. Upreti emphasised the need for preparedness and strategic team building to create opportuni-

The day also featured exciting competitions, including the Case Competition, where participants tackled real-world business challenges, and the Rohan-Spoken Poetry Competition, allowing individuals to express their cre-

ativity.
The Model United Nations (MUN) gave delegates the chance to engage in meaningful debates, simulating global diplomacy. The event culminated in an electrifying con-

## **'Beef biryani' on Sunday lunch** menu triggers row in AMU Administration says 'typing error'

**PTI** ■ ALIGARH

notice to serve 'beef biryani' A for lunch on Sunday at the Sir Shah Sulaiman Hall in Aligarh Muslim University has triggered a row after it went viral on social media.

The notice, purportedly issued by two "authorised" individuals, read, "Sunday's lunch menu has been changed, and beef biryani will be served instead of chicken biryani as per demand." Following an uproar in the university over the notice, the AMU administration clarified that it contained a "typing error" and assured that those responsible had been issued a showcause notice.

The controversy erupted after

students at the Sir Shah Sulaiman Hall found the notice, which was shared widely on social media. Initially, the AMU administration refrained from making a statement. However, as the matter escalated, it distanced itself from it, calling it an "unintentional mistake".

"The matter was brought to our attention. We found that the notice was regarding food menu. However, it contained a clear typing error. The notice was immediately withdrawn as it had no official signatures, raising doubts about its authentic-

"Óur provost has issued a showcause notice to the two senior students responsible (for issuing the notice). We are taking this

issue seriously to ensure strict adherence to university regulations," she said.

Reacting to the incident, BJP leader and AMU alumnus Nishit Sharma criticised the university's handling of the matter.

The administration's role in this is shameful. A notice was circulated at the Sir Shah Sulaiman Hall stating that beef biryani would be served instead of chicken biryani. The notice was displayed publicly, and it was the responsibility of the senior food committee members. Such actions indicate that the administration is encouraging radical elements and covering up student misconduct," Sharma alleged.

The Lucknow Development Authority's anti-encroachment squad once again swung into action, demolishing an unfinished multi-storey apartment and clearing a 20-bigha plot of land from unauthorised occupants. The operation also included dismantling offices and two stores belonging to a developer who, in league with

developer who, in league with locals, was planning to build a shopping complex in the Mohanlalganj area.

A complaint was lodged with the LDA vice-chairman last month regarding a plot of land that had been illegally occupied by locals about a occupied by locals about a decade ago, with plans to develop an apartment complex. The complaint highlighted two key issues: the land was unlawfully seized, and con-struction was underway without seeking the necessary permissions or submitting a layout plan to the mapping department.

lasted for three hours. Additionally, the LDA cleared

and destroyed two stores used

## **UP** to invest ₹50K crore on seven new expressways

The Uttar Pradesh government intends to invest nearly Rs 50,000 crore in seven new expressway projects in the next 2-3 years, connecting about 30 districts to the vast expressway network in the state. According to official sources, the combined length of these expressways is 866 kilometres. The state cabinet has approved the new expressway projects. At present, UP accounts for the largest network of expressways in India, either operational or under construction. These projects, to be undertaken by the UP Expressway Industrial Development Authority (UPEIDA), will feed the onetrillion-dollar economy targets

ment in the state.

The seven new expressways would interlink about 56 districts or 75 per cent of the total 75 districts in UP with a world-class expressways network. "The expressway network will

connect these areas with the Lucknow-State Capital Region and the Delhi-National Capital Region to provide seamless connectivity for passengers and cargo," an official said. The seven proposed express-ways are Chitrakoot Link Expressway (120 km), Jhansi Link Expressway (100 km),

Expressway (296 km) and Gorakhpur Link Expressway (91 km). Another project, the 594-km Ganga Expressway, which was estimated to be ready before the Maha Kumbh Jewar Link Expressway (76 km), Vindhya Expressway 2025, is expected to be commissioned by March-April. Together with the five operational expressways (1,194 km) (320 km), Vindhya Purvanchal Link Expressway (100 km), Agra Lucknow Expresswayand under-construction

Ganga Expressway (594 km), the total length of expressways in UP is 1,788 km. Once the proposed seven expressways are operational, the total length of expressways would add up to 2,654 km. "The rapid development of

infrastructure in Uttar Pradesh

is propelling an array of industries such as realty, housing, furniture, construction material etc," said Gaurav Sinha, head of paints major Berger's Sandila (UP) unit. Meanwhile, Úttar Pradesh has also proposed to develop two development enclaves -Prayagraj-Chitrakoot Development Region and Varanasi-Vindhya

Development Region – for religious, cultural and heritage

UP budget session from February 18 Pradesh assembly secretariat

on Sunday issued notification for the budget session from February 18. The budget session, being the first session of 2025, will commence with the joint address to both the houses of the state legislature by Governor Anandiben Patel. The UP cabinet, on February 7, had adopted the resolution for convening the budget session from February 18.

During the session, the Yogi Adityanath government will present the annual budget for 2025-26. The size of the 2025-26 budget is expected to be Rs 8 lakh crore. This will be the ninth budget to be presented by the Yogi Adityanath govern-ment. The budget session is likely to have 7-8 sittings. The detailed agenda of the budget session is yet to be finalised.

The agenda of the budget session is likely to be finalised by the business advisory committee of the assembly which is likely to meet next Sunday. The ruling Bharatiya Janata Party, upbeat after the landslide victory in the bypoll to Milkipur assembly seat coupled with historic win of the party in Delhi assembly election, is likely to showcase its achievement. The opposition Samajwadi Party, after two successive setbacks in by-elections to 10 UP assembly seats, is all set to corner the government over the alleged malpractices and misuse of official machinery in the bypolls. The opposition is expected to raise concerns over key issues, including farmers' welfare, women's safety, law and order, and the death of pilgrims in the stampede in Maha Kumbh Mela.



Devotee pray after taking holy dip at Sangam during ongoing Maha Kumbh Mela in

## Prez to take holy dip today

PNS MAHAKUMBH NAGAR

President Droupadi Murmu, the First Citizen of India, is set to visit the sacred land of Prayagraj to take a holy dip in Sangam on Monday.
During her visit, which will last

over eight hours, President Murmu will experience the Maha Kumbh's grandeur and spiritual significance. She will also offer prayers at the revered Akshayavat and Bade

Hanuman temple. Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath will also be present on this occasion.

President Murmu will begin her day at the Sangam Nose, where she will take a ceremonial dip at the Triveni Sangam, Adityanath to integrate relireinforcing the deep-rooted

faith in Sanatan dharma. It may be mentioned here that the country's first President Dr Rajendra Prasad, had also taken a holy dip during the Maha Kumbh in the past.

President Murmu will then visit the sacred Akshayavat tree, which is considered a symbol of immortality in Sanatan culture, and offer her prayers. The site holds great significance in Hinduism and is mentioned in ancient scriptures. She will also visit the Bade Hanuman temple, where she will pray for the well-being and prosperity of the nation. Supporting the initiative of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister Yogi gious events with modern tech-

nology, President Murmu will visit the Digital Mahakumbh

Expressway (60 km), and Agra

Lucknow Expressway-Ganga

Expressway Link Expressway (90 km). Currently, five

expressway projects are operational in UP, crisscrossing

more than two dozen districts. These include Yamuna

Expressway (165 km), Agra-Lucknow Expressway (302

km), Purvanchal Expressway

(340 km), Bundelkhand

Experience Centre. This centre provides detailed information about the Maha Kumbh Mela through advanced digital tools, allowing devotees from India and abroad to experience the grandeur of the event more closely. President Murmu is scheduled to leave Prayagraj for New Delhi in the evening. In light of the president's visit, strict security arrangements have been put in place across the city. Her visit will be a historic and inspiring moment, not just for Prayagraj but for devotees across the country. It will enhance the religious, cultural and spiritual significance

### CM Tamang, Jaya Prada take dip Sikkim

PNS MAHAKUMBH NAGAR

Sikkim Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang took a holy dip at the Triveni Sangam, becoming the first chief minister from Northeast India to participate in this historic event.

Describing the sacred bath as a transformative experience, Tamang said that the moment brought him profound peace and spiritual elevation.

He added that it was his great fortune to be part of this divine gathering, where the unwavering faith and devotion of lakhs of devotees has created an incredibly inspiring atmosphere.

to Prime Minister Narendra

the Mahakumbh Mela in Prayagraj. (@DKShivakumar via PTI Photo)

Karnataka Dy CM DK Shivakumar at

Modi and Uttar Pradesh Tamang expressed gratitude Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath for the opportunity to join Maha Kumbh 2025 and take a dip in Triveni

Sangam.

He was joined by a 135-member delegation from Sikkim, who also performed the sacred ritual at Sangam. Tamang commended the exceptional arrangements made by the Prayagraj administration and extended his special thanks to Uttar Pradesh Governor Anandiben Patel and other officials.

He offered prayers with the holy waters of Triveni Sangam, wishing for religion, peace, and harmony to pre-

vail across the nation. Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar and

his family also took a holy dip

in the Triveni Sangam on Sunday during the Prayagraj Maha Kumbh.

He expressed his joy at being part of this grand spiritual gathering, organised on a historic scale after 144 years. Meanwhile actress and former parliamentarian Jaya Prada, took a holy dip at Triveni Sangam with her son on Sunday.

She praised the grandeur and spiritual ambience, and the arrangements made for the mega event, and expressed her joy at attending the Maha Kumbh 2025. Jaya Prada said, "I am thrilled. The devotion and reverence with which lakhs of devotees are coming to take a dip of faith in Triveni Sangam is worth seeing." She praised Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, calling the government's arrangements for devotees "commendable". This time, special attention has been given to security, cleanliness, transportation and other facilities in Maha Kumbh 2025. The state government has set up camps, health services, security deployments, and traffic management to ensure a smooth experience for devotees. Many devotees from the country and abroad are coming to Prayagraj to take part in the Maha Kumbh. This includes a large number of film stars as well as people associated with politics.

## Crack down on 14 X accounts spreading misinformation

PNS MAHAKUMBH NAGAR

As part of its effort to curb misinformation and rumours about Maha Kumbh 2025 on social media, the Yogi Adityanath government has identified and cracked down on 14 X accounts.

Pradesh Director General of Police Prashant Kumar, social media platforms are being closely monitored to curb mis-information, and legal action is being taken against offenders. During surveillance, it was discovered that certain X accounts circulated an old video from Dhanbad, Iharkhand, falsely linking it to the Prayagraj Maha Kumbh. The misleading posts claimed that the Yogi government's police were brutally beating devotees searching for their missing relatives in Maha Kumbh.

Upon fact-checking, the video was confirmed to be from Dhanbad, Jharkhand, where the local police made a lathicharge on January 1, 2025. The Kumbh Mela police also refuted these claims through its offi-

cial account. The administration has deemed this an intentional

attempt to malign the state government and police while inciting public discord. As a result, 14 X accounts have been identified, an FIR has been registered at Kotwali Kumbh Mela, and legal proceedings have commenced.

The 14 X accounts spreading On the directives of Uttar misleading posts are: @sanjaykalyan\_, @kiran\_patniak, @ M a h f o o z H a s a n 1 6, @RNSONUANSARI1, @BoltaBahujan\_

@ Zuber Kh 1 4 4 8 2 1 0 1, @ D 9 c qy C j 2 R d 8 z P 3 d, @ J a n A w a z 3, @NaveenM96466923, @gkb-hartiya 1992, @india 14 1951, @ d h a r m e s h k u m a r 37, @zubairakhtar\_ and Anand Kamble (@AKamble72444). The administration has warned that strict action will be taken against anyone spreading misleading information about Maha Kumbh 2025. Efforts to identify and prosecute those responsible for circulating rumours on social media will continue. Uttar Pradesh Police remains committed to ensuring a safe and well-organised Maha Kumbh and urges the public to rely only on official sources for accurate information, avoiding

misinformation.

### Subsidised ration for devotees

PNS MAHAKUMBH NAGAR

In a joint initiative by the union home ministry and the Uttar Pradesh government, special ration provisions have been made for devotees, saints and kalpvasis at Maha Kumbh 2025.

Through the National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India (NAFED), essential commodities like flour, pulses, rice and other necessities are being provided to pilgrims at subsidised rates.

So far, over 1,000 metric tons of ration has been distributed exclusively through NAFED to saints and spiritual leaders. Additionally, 20 mobile vans are actively operating across the Maha Kumbh Mela area to facilitate smooth and uninterrupted supply, ensuring that pilgrims face no

NAFED state head Rohit Jaiman stated that this special ration distribution initiative is being jointly operated by the union home ministry and the Uttar Pradesh government. Managing Director Deepak Agarwal is personally overseeing the exe-

cution of the plan.

Devotees and kalpvasis can place their orders via call or WhatsApp at 7275781810, availing essential commodities at subsidised rates. The ration packs include 10 kg of flour, 10 kg of rice, and 1 kg packets of pulses (moong, masoor, and chana dal). Implemented under the guidance of Union Home Minister Amit Shah and the leadership of UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, the initiative has already distributed 700 metric tons of flour, 350 metric tons of pulses, and 10 metric tons of rice. NAFED's products and the 'Bharat' brand have gained immense popularity among devotees and kalpvasis.

## VHP for uniform law on religious donations

**PTI** MAHAKUMBH NAGAR

A lok Kumar, the international president of the VHP, on Sunday urged the Centre to enact a uniform law governing religious donations for

Speaking after a three-day meeting of the Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP) here, Kumar questioned the existence of separate laws for religious donations. When Muslims donate land to Allah, it becomes Waqf property. But what happens when Hindus donate to temples, Christians to churches, or Sikhs to gurdwaras? Why are there different laws for different religions," he asked. Referring to the Waqf Act of 1954, he claimed two Congress Raiva Sabha members questioned the then-law minister about having a separate law for Muslims.

'The minister had said he was considering a common law for all. Now the time has come for the government to implement such a law," Kumar said. On the issue of "reclaiming" temples in Kashi and Mathura, the VHP functionary said, "We have assured the Hindu community that we will take all

Mahakumbh Nagar (PNS):

Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar

Singh Dhami visited Prayagraj on Sunday for Maha Kumbh 2025, calling

it a grand confluence of faith and

expressing gratitude for witnessing the

Dhami lauded Prime Minister Narendra

Modi and Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister

Yogi Adityanath for orchestrating a mag-

constitutional steps to regain these temples."

The meeting also discussed the issue of "freeing" Hindu temples from government control.

Kumar said temples across various states have been under government control for 208 years, with laws man-dating that 12 per cent of temple revenue be deposited in government coffers as administrative expenses.

He cited a gathering at Vijayawada in Andhra Pradesh attended by "2.5 lakh people" to demand temple freedom, and announced plans for similar largescale meetings in north and south India in the coming months.

"We will meet the chief ministers and legislators of different states to submit memorandums on this issue," he said. Kumar emphasised that temple governance should remain in the hands of devotees, with representation from all sections of society, including Scheduled Castes and women.

He also claimed that if temples were freed from government control, they could generate an additional ₹1 lakh crore in revenue for welfare initiatives for Hindus, such as healthcare, reli-

nificent and well-organised Maha

He inspected the Uttarakhand

Mandapam, where he interacted with

devotees, enquired about their well-

being and assessed the arrangements.

The Mandapam, designed to cater to pil-

grims from Uttarakhand, offers special

facilities to ensure a seamless spiritual

journey. With crores of devotees from

gious education, and temple maintenance.

On Waqf properties, Kumar expressed satisfaction with the government's recent actions and mentioned the VHP's recommendation to a joint parliamentary committee (JPC) on the Waqf Amendment Bill that Waqf claims should not apply to the scheduled tribal areas.

The JPC has considered our suggestion and recommended it," he said. On the demand from certain quarters to declare India a 'Hindu Rashtra', Kumar said, "There is no need for such a declaration as India is already a Hindu Rashtra. We do not seek a state with an explicitly religious constitution." The meeting was attended by representatives from across India and abroad, including from the UK, the US, Canada, Germany, Hong Kong, Mauritius, South Africa, France, Thailand, Nepal, Bangladesh and Guyana. Senior RSS leaders Dattatreya Hosabale and Bhaiyaji Joshi, along with religious figures like Swami Paramanand and Buddhist scholar

Lama Chosphel Zotpa, were also pre-Maha Kumbh a grand confluence of faith: Dhami

India and abroad arriving at the Sangam

for the holy dip, such centres enhance

their experience and make the pilgrim-

Chief Minister Dhami also participat-

ed in the 'Gyan Mahakumbh' held at

Sector 8, Prayagwal Marg. Addressing the gathering, he highlighted the impor-

tance of education and knowledge in

age more memorable.

shaping future generations.

### tent due to gas cylinder leak **PTI** MAHAKUMBH NAGAR

Fire in *kalpvasi* 

A fire broke out in a 'kalpvasi' tent in Sector 19 of here at the Maha Kumbh on Sunday due to a leak in a gas cylinder, officials said.

Firefighters managed to extinguish the blaze within 10 minutes and no casualties were reported.

Chief Fire Officer (Kumbh) Pramod Sharma told PTI that the fire was reported in a tent set up by Om Prakash Pander Seva Sansthan and belonged to Rajendra Jaiswal, resident of

Karma, Prayagraj. Upon receiving the alert, three fire tenders were immediately dispatched to the scene. The fire was contained within

10 minutes, but the tent was completely gutted, he said. There have been three majo fires at the Maha Kumbh besides multiple minor incidents. Earlier on February 7, a fire broke out in the ISKCON camp in Sector 18 of Mahakumbh Nagar and spread over to a dozen nearby camps. While no one was injured in the fire, around 20 tents were destroyed. On January 19, a massive fire broke out in the Maha Kumbh Mela area's Sector 19 due to a cylinder

blast. While no casualties were

reported, the blaze had left over

a dozen camps gutted.

# Maha Kumbh not a hub of glamour: Das

**PTI** MAHAKUMBH NAGAR

section of the sadhus are A section of the sadnus are unhappy with the chatter around viral sensations at the Maha Kumbh, saying they divert attention from what the festival is really about — spirituality and faith of devotees. "Maha Kumbh is not a hub of glamour and five-star culture, it is the centre of sadhus, devotees and the Sanatan faith," said Mahant Dharmendra Das, head of Udasin Akhara Bandhua Kala Cantonment and chairman of All India Udasin Communal Sangat.

Since the beginning of the Maha Kumbh last month, many influencers, models and actors have had their brief moment in the sun of virality: model-turned-sadhvi Harsha Richaria, garland seller Mona Lisa, 'IIT baba' Abhay Singh and actor Mamata Kulkarni to name a few.

"If the media promotes such people instead of serving so many sadhus, then the fault lies with the media. Why are media houses doing this? You people should think about it yourself,"



Mahant Dharmendra Das, head of Udasin Akhara Bandhua Kala Cantonment and chairman of All India Udasin Communal Sangat. PTI

Das told PTI in an interview at Sector 20 of Triveni Road Mela Sthal in Prayagraj Mahakumbh. Das said many devotees come to the Sangam to spend the night under the open sky and bathe in the Ganga. They are unbothered by arrangements made for them and uninterested in "glitz and glamour" or

'big tents". He said this referring to the stampede on Mauni Amavasya, considered to be the most aus-

picious day of the festival, in which many people were killed. Das said the devotees who came to the Kumbh for their faith get "true salvation". "They have come for the Sangam. We should learn a big lesson from them." When asked about Mamata Kulkarni being con-ferred with the title of 'mahamandaleshwar' by an akhara, he said, "The post of Mahamandaleshwar and Mandaleshwar are given after consultation with the seers of the akharas. If someone is a great scholar and his service is commendable, then he is made Mandalesh." "The title of Mandaleshwar is temporary and if someone does something wrong, the akhara has the right to take it back," he said. The Kinnar Akhara later removed

According to official figures, 30 people died in the incident and 60 more were injured. Das said, "UP Chief Minister

ested in giving special facilities to their relatives and friends and they spoiled the efforts of Amavasya.

Kulkarni from the post. Asked about the stampede at the Kumbh, Das said he was yet to recover from the pain of that

Yogi Adityanath worked hard

and frequently visited the Maha Kumbh to monitor the arrangements, but the officials seemed more busy with VIP movement and did not have time to look after the common devotees." "The officials were more inter-

sacred event.

Yogi Adityanath," he said. Many who were caught in the stampede were devotees who were waiting for the snan or holy dip to begin on Mauni

When asked if the tragedy could have been averted had there been better facilities for the devotees, Das said "Some devotees have such faith that they come here and sleep on the sand. You can build as big a tent city as you can, make all the arrangements but there is some faith and love for Ganga in some people — they stay on the sand and spend the night under the open sky and go home after bathing in the morning."

If 50 crore people are expected at the Maha Kumbh, 15-20 crore are of this type, he said. According to the UP government, nearly 39 crore pilgrims have visited the Maha Kumbh till February 6.
On the stampede, he called for

an investigation into who ordered the closure of pontoon bridges "due to which a huge crowd gathered at the Sangam Nose" where the stampede occurred.

UP government has formed a judicial commission and now it is their responsibility to find who is at fault, he said. Police blamed abrupt overcrowding for the incident.

When asked about Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav's allegations of "mismanagement" at the Kumbh, he said, This is a mela, not a five-star hotel. Those who spend time on the banks of Ganga, sing bhajans in the morning and return after their snan are not troubled. Those who want fivestar service are troubled."

Opposition parties have decried the stampede as Adityanath's mismanagement of the mega gathering. The Maha Kumbh in Prayagraj began on January 13 and will continue till February 26.

## Emotional moments touching hearts

**PTI** MAHAKUMBH NAGAR

The grandeur and spiritual Lessence of Maha Kumbh 2025 are beyond words. Devotees from across the world are gathering at Prayagraj's sacred Sangam, immersing themselves in the eternal traditions of Sanatan culture. While the event is a spectacle of faith, it is also witnessing deeply emotional moments that are leaving everyone moved.

One such heartfelt story emerged on social media X when two sisters traveled all the way from California to fulfill their 85-year-old father's wish of taking a holy dip at the

Sangam. On his birthday, when asked about his wish, he simply said, "I have everything, but if you ask, I wish to bathe in the

Ganga during Kumbh."
Determined to make his dream come true, his daughters undertook the long journey to India, bringing him to Prayagraj. Despite the exhaustion, their happiness knew no bounds upon seeing their father's joy after the sacred dip. This act of devotion has res-



Devotees cross a pontoon bridge near Sangam during the ongoing Maha Kumbh Mela in Prayagraj on Sunday

onated with many, earning widespread admiration on social media. A user commented, "Your father is truly fortunate to have such wonderful daughters. You traveled half the world to fulfill his wish - stay safe and embrace the divinity of Maha Kumbh." Another shared a personal experience, saying, "Fulfilling

our parents' wishes is the greatest blessing. I felt the same

when I took mine to Kashi and Avodhva." A foreigner added, "Indian

families are incredible. The world calls the West 'developed' and India 'developing', but I believe it's the other way around." Maha Kumbh 2025 continues to be a melting pot of faith and emotions, where devotion knows no boundaries and stories of love and sacrifice inspire millions.

# SP's support base falling: Minister Naga sadhus, saints reach Kashi

Uttar Pradesh Minister of State (Independent Charge) for AYUSH, Food Safety and Administration Drug and

Dayashankar Mishra 'Dayalu' while referring to the massive victory of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in Milkipur assembly by-election and Delhi assembly elections, said this win is a proof of the efficient policies and good governance of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath.

In a statement on Sunday, he said the public has expressed confidence in the BJP's 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas' policy and has completely rejected the politics of corruption and lies.

Dayalu said in the Milkipur assembly by-election, the BJP candidate defeated the Samajwadi Party (SP) candidate by a huge margin of about 60,000 votes, which shows that the BJP's hold in Uttar Pradesh is continuously getting stronger. He said that since the Lok Sabha elections, the support

falling and the people of the state have given it a crushing defeat in many by-elections. expressed confidence in the party. He said this historic victory has proved that the peo-He said in the Delhi Assembly elections, the BJP registered a historic victory on 48 out of 70 seats which made it clear that the public now wants development in Delhi and is fed up with false promises of Aam Aadmi Party (AAP). He said the double engine gov-

ernment of the BJP will now ensure all-round development of Delhi. He congratulated Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Home Minister Amit Shah, BJP national president JP Nadda, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and Delhi BJP leadership for this victory and said it is the result of the hard work of BJP workers.

He said the double engine government of BIP will bring historic development in Delhi. He expressed confidence that now the central and state governments will work together to do rapid development work in Delhi and provide basic facilities to the people. He said due to the public welfare schemes and transparent administration of the BJP government, the base of the SP is continuously people have once again

ple of the country and the state only want development and BJP is the right option for development. He expressed gratitude to all workers, voters and party leadership of BJP for this victory.

Earlier, Uttar Pradesh Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Stamp and Court Registration Fees Ravindra Jaiswal, while referring to the historic victory of BJP in Delhi and Milkipur said the politics of lies and deceit has been defeated.

Jaiswal said the public has cast their vote on the work of nationalism and development. He said in the elections the voters have expressed their faith and trust in the policies and good governance of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath.

Meanwhile, a Bharatiya Janat Party worker Gaurav Rathi, while distributing sweets among the people on the victory of BJP in Delhi, said this is the victory of the positive policies and good governance

took the country on the path of development along with the trust of the people. He said the displeasure shown by the people towards the AAP in Delhi or the way the Congress was defeated clearly shows that the Prime Minister-led BJP government is living up to the trust of the people. Rathi said people of Milkipur also expressed their faith in the BJP government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and

Minister

Chief

Adityanath.

**BOOK RELEASE:** A book titled 'Emergencies in the practice of Medicine' was released at prestigious platform of Annual Conference of Association of Physicians of India (APICON)-2025 in Kolkata. Prof Shyam Sundar (Distinguished Professor of Department of Medicine, IMS-BHU) and Prof Anup Singh (Founder Head and Nodal officer of National Centre of Ageing, Department of Geriatric Medicine IMS-BHU) are its editors. Many stalwarts from India and abroad contributed chapters in

A fter staying for several weeks in the Maha Kumbh area in Prayagraj, Naga sadhus and saints of different Akharas on Sunday started arriving in Kashi, a city of Lord Shiva. Elaborate security arrangements have been made on the arrival routes of these religious leaders apart from Prayagraj-Varanasi highway where heavy traffic jams are being witnessed these days. especially between Mohansarai and Varanasi Junction railway station. Besides, hundreds of supporters of Sant Ravidas from different parts of the country have also started arriving in Seer Govardhan area for Sant Ravidas Jayanti which is on the auspicious occasion of Maghi Purnima on February 12. Top administrative and police officers, including Commissioner of Police (CP) Mohit Agarwal, District Magistrate (DM) S Rajalingam, Additional Commissioner of Police S Channappa, Additional District Magistrate (City) Alok Verma, Additional Deputy Commissioner of Police (Traffic) Rajesh Pandey and others are keeping a close



DM S Rajalingam and ACP S Channappa at a local Akhara during the welcome of Naga sadhus in Varanasi on Sunday

Akhara

Shambhu

watch on the arrival of Naga Sadhus, Sant Ravidas followers and devotees of Lord Shiva (Shiv bhakts) to ensure proper security and smooth traffic arrangements during their arrival, stay and proposed pro-cessions. The Naga sadhus and Ravidas followers will take out their different traditional processions apart from Shiv Barats, especially on auspioccasion cious Mahashivratri.

When a group of Naga sadhus of Panchdashnam Akhara arrived here, they were given a grand welcome amidst the chanting of Vedic mantras at Kabirchaura Akhara. Apart from this, another group of Naga sadhus of the largest

Panchdashnam Juna Akhara has also come to this holy city and worshiped their deity at local Akhara. So far, more than 550 Naga sadhus of three maior Akharas (Panchdashnam Niranjani, Atal Akhara and Mahanirvani Akhara) came here throughout the day and their arrival continues. These Naga sadhus and others lit their 'dhuni' at Dashashwamedh, Shivala, Hanuman Ghat, Kedar Ghat, Chowki and other ghats. Meanwhile, more than 50 Naga sadhus of Awahan Akhara also came here and are staying at Shambhu Panchdashnam Awahan Akhara located at Aughadnath Takiya in Kabirchaura. After the completion of all the three Amrit Snans of Maha Kumbh in Sangam (Prayagraj), Naga sadhus and saints have started returning to their Akharas. The Naga sadhus associated with the Shaiv Akharas will now stay in Kashi, while Vaishnav sadhus will leave for their respective Akharas. However, all the sannvasis will return to their akharas only after the Maghi Purnima bath. In Varanasi, the congregation of sages and saints will continue till Mahashivratri (February 26) which is also the last day of Maha Kumbh in Prayagraj. Mahashivratri is the biggest festival of this Dwadasa

### National Divyang Cricket Competition from Feb 16

day T-10 National Divyang Cricket Competition will be organised by the All India Divyang Cricket Association at the Sports Complex in Varanasi from February 16 to 18. General secretary of All India Divyang Cricket Association (AIDCA)Dr Sanjay Chaurasia said this is the first such competition for Divyangjans (physically challenged) in the country which will be organised both during day and night. He said that it will also be the first occasion in the history of Sigra Stadium when any cricket competition will be played in floodlights. A total of six teams (North, East, West, South, Central and a local team from Uttar Pradesh) will participate in this competition. AIDCA CEO Dr Rajesh Pandey said the open-

Varanasi (PNS): The three-day T-10 National Divyang will be held on February 16. Dr Deepa Malik, the first Divyang player to receive the Padma Shri Major Dhyanchand Award, and Sports Minister of Uttar Pradesh Government Girish Yadav, Vice-Chancellor of Sampurnanand Sanskrit University Prof Bihari Lal Sharma will participate in the opening ceremony. Former captain of the Indian cricket team and international veteran cricketer Dilip Vengsarkar, Special Olympics India President Mállika Nadda and Uttar Pradesh Minister Ravindra Jaiswal will also participate in the closing ceremony. AIDCA president Dr Uttam Ojha said a prize of ₹1 lakh will be given to the winner while and the runner-up will get ₹50,000 in cash and the remaining teams will also be given consolation prizes.



Devotees on a pontoon bridge at the Sangam during the Mahakumbh Mela in Prayagraj on Sunday.

## Union minister offers prayers at Kashi Vishwanath Temple

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Union Minister of State for Home Affairs Nityanand Rai offered prayers at Kashi Vishwanath Temple (KVT) here on Sunday. During it he also saw Shri Kashi Vishwanath Dham (Corridor) and praised its divinity and grandeur. Prior to his visit to KVT, Rai met the officers and personnel of 95 Battalion Central Reserve

Police Force (CRPF) posted at KVT and Gyanvapi Masjid and enquired about their wellbeing. The union minister praised the CRPF personnel for their duty. During it Commandant of 95 CRPF Battalion Rajeshwar Balapurkar,



Union Minister Nityanand Rai at Shri Kashi Vishwanath Dham in Varanasi

Second Command Officers Ojha, Assistant Commandant Rajesh Singh and Alok Kumar, Deputy Commandant Umakant

Pankaj Kumar and PRO Praveen Singh were present.

## Home Loan Expo held



Former international cricketer Gopal Sharma inaugurating the Home Loan Expo of PNB at Nakshatra Lawn

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE** ■ KANPUR

The divisional office of Punjab National Bank organised Home Loan Expo at Mandakini Nakshatra Lawn. Former international cricketer. Gopal Sharma, who was the chief guest inaugurated the expo in the presence of divisional chief Prem Chandra Chaudhary. Chief General Manager (CGM) of HQs Suresh Kumar Rana was also present the occasion. Many big builders, including Ratan Housing Group, Gulmohar Greens, The Pick, Rudra Gardnings, Jyoti Greens and other organisations took part in it. Prominent solar companies the occasion.

of the country also set up their stalls. Local dignitaries and others visited the expo. The Home Loan Expo provides an excellent opportunity for aspiring houseowners to get important information. The Expo was beneficial for all from the first time buyers to the houseowners seeking refinance facility. Divisional chief Prem Chandra Chaudhary addressed the audience. Deputy divisional chief Vibhor Srivastava, Mall Road branch chief Rajesh Pandey, marketing chief Manoj Paswan, MCC chief Yogendra Singh Udawat and branch managers of different branches of Kanpur were present on

### Mishap claims trader's life

Prayagraj (PNS): A 45-yearold trader was killed in a road accident in Sarai Mamarez police station area here. Sanjay . Kumar Gupta who was returning home from a wedding cernony with his father. Nath alias Sukhran Gupta, was hit by a tractor near Belawari on Saturday night due to which he was seriously injured. His father also suffered injuries. The family immediately rushed him to a hospital where Sanjay died during treatment on

Sunday afternoon. Station House Officer (SHO) Sarai Mamarez Sanjay Kumar Rai said the deceased Sanjay Kumar was the eldest of four brothers and used to support his family by trading grains. The police have sent the body of the deceased for post-mortem examination and are investigating the case.

Meanwhile more than a dozen devotees were seriously injured in a road accident in Karchana police station area on Sunday. Reports said that a bus carrying devotees from Sangam went out of control and overturned on the roadside. More than 12 devotees were injured in the accident.

**LIC** reports PAT of ₹29,138 crore

The Board of Directors of Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) approved and adopted a growth of 5.51 pc. the standalone and consolidated financial results for the nine months ending December 31, 2024. The key highlights of month standalone results are: The Profit After Tax (PAT) for the nine months ended December 31, 2024, was ₹29,138 crore as compared to ₹26,913 crore for the nine months ended December 31, 2023, registering a growth of 8.27 per cent (pc). In terms of market share measured by First Year Premium Income (FYPI) (as per IRDAI), LIC continues to be the market

leader in Indian life insurance business with overall market share of 57.42 pc for nine months ended December 31, 2024, as compared to 58.90 pc for nine months ended December 31, 2023. For the nine months ended

December 31st, 2024, LIC had a market share of 37.21 pc in individual business and 71.70 pc in the group business. The total premium income for nine months period ended December 31, 2024, was

month period ended of 1,17,10,505 policies were December 31, 2023, registering sold in the individual segment

The individual new business December 31, 2024, as compremium income for nine- pared to 1.25.56.046 policies period ended December 31, 2024, was ₹42,441 crore as compared to ₹38,679 crore for the same period ended December 31, 2023, registering an increase of 9.73 pc. The individual renewal premium income for ninemonth period ended December 31, 2024, was ₹1,78,975 crore as compared to ₹1,71,040 crore for the same period ended December 31, 2023, registering an increase of

4.64 pc.
The total individual business premium for the nine months ended December 31, 2024, increased to ₹ 2,21,416 crore from ₹ 2,09,719 crore for the comparable period of previous year, registering an increase of

5.58 pc.
The group business total premium income for nine-month period ended December 31, 2024, was ₹1,19,147 crore as compared to ₹1,13,057 crore for the same period ended

₹3,40,563 crore as compared to ₹3,22,776 crore for the ninemonth period ended of 1,17,10,505 policies were during the nine months ended sold during the nine-month period ended December 31, 2023, registering a decrease of 6.73 pc. On an annualised premium equivalent (APE) basis, the total premium was ₹37,975 crore for the nine months ended December 31, 2024. Of this 64.81 pc (₹24,612 crore) was accounted for by the individual business and 35.19 pc (₹13,363 crore) by the group business. Within the individual business, the share of par products on APE basis was 72.32 pc (₹17,799 crore) and balance 27.68 pc (₹6,813 crore) was due

to non-par products.
The individual non-par APE has increased to ₹6,813 crore for the nine months period ended December 31, 2024, from ₹3,299 crore for the same period ended December 31, 2023, registering a growth of 106.52 pc. Therefore on APE basis, non-par share of individ-ual business has increased to 27.68 pc for the nine months

period ended December 31, 66.47 pc and 49.22 pc, respec-2024, as compared to 14.04 pc for the same period ended December 31, 2023. The value of new business (VNB) for the period ended December 31, nine-month period ended
December 31, 2024, was ₹6.477
December 31 crore as compared to ₹5,938 crore for the same period ended December 31, 2023, registering a growth of 9.08 pc. The net VNB margin for the nine months period ended December 31, 2024, increased by 50 bps to 17.1 pc as com-pared to 16.6 pc for the nine months ended December 31, 2023. The solvency ratio as on December 31, 2024, increased to 2.02 as against 1.93 on December 31, 2023. For the nine-month period ended December 31, 2024, the persistency ratios on premium basis for the 13th month and 61st month were 76.66 pc and 61.84 pc, respectively. The comparable persistency ratios for the corresponding period ended December 31, 2023, were 78 pc and 62.40 pc, respectively. For the nine-month period ended December 31, 2024, the persistency ratios on number of policies basis for the 13th month and 61st month were

tively.

The comparable persistency Under Management (AUM) increased to ₹54,77,651 crore as on December 31, 2024, as compared to ₹49,66,371 crore on December 31, 2023, registering an increase of 10.29 pc year on year. The overall expense ratio for the nine- month period ended December 31, 2024, decreased by 231 bps to 12.97 pc as compared to 15.28 pc for the nine months ended December 31, 2023.

The yield on investments on policyholders funds excluding unrealised gains was 8.82 pc for the nine months ended December 31, 2024, as against 9.14 pc for same period ended December 31, 2023.

Chief Executive Officer and Managing Director (CEO & MD), LIC, Siddhartha Mohanty, said, "Our focus and strategy remains consistent towards changing our product and channel mix to serve the needs of customers in a dynamic environment".

## Scholarship awarded to 20 FVA students

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE VARANASI

The Mandava Asha Priya Scholarship has been awarded to 20 meritorious students of Faculty of Visual Arts (FVA) under the joint effort of Mandava Foundation and NSL Group of Companies in collaboration with the Banaras Hindu University (BHU) administration. Each student was given financial assistance of ₹25,000 which will help in reducing their academic and financial challenges. This scholarship is for students from first to fourth year of graduation level, who have achieved academic excellence in their respective years. The applicants were selected on the basis of prescribed criteria keeping in mind their family income. The faces of the youth who received the scholarship were glowing with happiness during the ceremony held at FVA-BHU on Saturday. A student said,



support for my education, but also an opportunity to fulfil my dreams." Dean of the fac-ulty Prof Uttam Dixit said, "This scholarship is not only a recognition of your hard work, but also an inspiration for better performance in the future. We are confident that you will leave your mark in the field of art in the country and abroad." The students who received the scholar-"This amount is not only a ship are Prashansika Shri,

Satyajit Singh, Kirti Singh, Harsh Maurya, Seema Kumari (all from first year), Misbah Hoon Nisha, Vishal Pal, Aditya Chaurasia, Abhay Haldhar, Rohit Sharma (all second year), Aditya Kumar Gupta, Ankit Sinha, Anand Raghuvanshi, Ishita Sen, Kartikeya Paliwal (all third year) and Durgesh Prajapati, Nibha Kumari Singh, Anushka Anand, Suyash Maurya, Pankaj Maurya (all fourth year). This

initiative has not only provided financial assistance to the students, but has also instilled new energy and a fighting spirit in them. The Mandava Foundation and NSL Group are committed to continuing such socially responsible initiatives in the field of education. This scholarship programme is an important initiative towards empowering young talents, which indicates increasing awareness towards education and art in the society.

#### Importance of identifying, treating pneumonia in elderly highlighted Kanpur (PNS): Pneumonia is often overlooked, but its impact

a serious lung infection, and it remains a significant health threat for older people even today. Pneumonia often causes serious complications. The disease causes inflammation of the small air sacs in the lungs, leading to symptoms such as cough, fever and shortness of breath. Although pneumonia is common in younger individu-als, it also poses dangerous challenges for the elderly due to weakened immune systems and health problems such as diabetes, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) or heart disease. The elderly may experience confusion, sudden loss of mobility, or abnormal body temperature, making timely diagnosis and treatment of this disease very important. Consultant Physician and Diabetes Expert at Regency Hospital, Dr Akanksha Gupta, highlighted the importance of identifying and treating pneumonia in the elderly, saying, "Pneumonia in the elderly is

can be life-threatening. Early diagnosis through blood tests, X-rays or CT scans are impor-tant for proper treatment. By combining antibiotics or antivi-ral medications with proper hydration, rest and pulmonary rehabilitation, we can prevent complications like respiratory failure or sepsis and significantly improve recovery." She further stressed that closely following the doctors' advice ensures a better quality of life for patients. She said the increasing number of severe pneumonia cases in ICUs has increased the importance of preventive measures such as vaccination. Pneumonia requires NIV and mechanical ventilation in its treatment. Vaccines such as pneumococcal and influenza can significantly reduce the severity and complications of pneumonia, potentially preventing ICU admission. Timely prevention is equally important to reduce the risk associated with pneumonia in

### NTPC Auraiya organises volleyball tournament



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE KANPUR

NTPC Auraiya organised a one-day inter-village volley-ball tournament at the Kendriya Vidyalaya ground as part of its CSR initiative to promote sports among project-affected villages. Four teams from project affected villages — Baisundhara, Kainjari, Jamuha and Purwaha — participated in the tournament. Baisundhara and Kanjari advanced to the finals, where Baisundhara emerged victorious, securing the trophy. Kanjari was declared

the runner-up. Ealir all four gram pradhans were felicitated. The tournament was graced by the chief guest Sanjay Kumar Balyan, AGM(O&M) along with Ved Prakash Pandey, AGM(C&M), Tanmoy Dutta, AGM(HR), Ajay Kumar Agarwal, AGM(EM) and Dr Bijaya Naik, CMO. The winners were congratulated and all participants were encouraged to continue excelling in sports. This initiative highlights NTPC Auraiya's commitment to community engagement and youth development.

# Farmers' role crucial in India's development: VP Dhankhar

JAIPUR/NEW DELHI

Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar on Sunday said that no one can undermine the role of farmers in India's journey towards development.

Addressing the Akhil Mewar Region Jat Mahasabha in Chittorgarh, the vice-president said the farmers possess political strength and economic capability, adding they should not depend on anyone's help.

"When the economic situation of farmers improves, the country's situation improves. After all, farmers are the providers and they should not look to anyone or depend on anyone for help because farmers with their strong hands possess political strength and economic capability,' Dhankhar said. "No matter what



happens, no matter how many obstacles arise, no one can undermine the role of farmers in India's journey towards development. Today's governance system bows to the farmers," he added. Remembering the Jat reservation movement that took place 25 years ago, the vice-president urged that never forget the support and efforts of this society gave social justice. Today the results of that effort are visible in the administrative services of the country and the state, he added. Encouraging the farmers to take advantage of Agricultural Science Centers, Dhankhar said, "There are over 730 Agricultural Science Centers to help farmers. Don't leave them alone, go there and ask them. What services will you offer us?' Learn about new technologies and government poli-

sised the farmers' participation in trade and value addition of agricultural products. "Why isn't the farmer increasing the value of their products? Several businesses are running on the prod-ucts of farmers, like flour mills, oil mills and many more. We should collaborate and make sure the farmer focuses on livestock. I feel great joy when dairies expand. There should be more growth in this sector," he

Urging the youth to engage in agricultural business, Dhankhar said, "My appeal is to farmers and to the sons and daughters of farmers agriculture production is the world's largest and most precious trade. Why are farmers not involved in the trade of their products? Why aren't they participating in it? Our youth is tal-

# Parliamentary panel calls for security assessment of Indian missions abroad

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

A Parliamentary panel has recommended that the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) should conduct a "comprehensive security assessment" of all missions and posts of India taking into account the geopolitical situation, potential threats and vulnerabilities in host countries. In its report, the Committee on External Affairs has also noted that India currently lacks resident missions in 42 countries. While acknowledging the chal-

lenges involved in establishing new missions, the committee recommended "accelerating efforts to bridge these gaps, particularly in countries where India has significant economic or strategic interests or a large diaspora pres-

The fourth report of the committee on external affairs (2024-25) on demands for grants (2024-25) of the Ministry of External Affairs' was presented in Parliament last week. The panel is headed by Congress MP Shashi

The committee further said in its report that it has also "taken note of the criteria" for establishing new missions, focusing on economic partnerships, strategic cooperation, diaspora engagement and multilateral diploma-

'The committee have also been informed about ongoing efforts to operationalise missions in other strategic locations such as Fukuoka (Japan), Kazan (Russia) and Yekaterinburg (Russia) and future plans for opening five missions in Europe and Latin America and Caribbean regions," it said. The parliamentary panel has made a slew of other recommendations including on the security of Indian missions abroad in view of the geopolitical situation and other factors. "In view of recent developments, the committee feels that the security of Indian missions and posts abroad is paramount for the protection of sensitive information and the continuity of diplomatic functions," the report

The MEA has informed the panel that the safety and security of Indian missions and posts is "continuously reviewed". The committee has recommended that "the ministry should conduct a comprehensive security assessment of all missions/posts taking into account the geopolitical situation, potential threats and vulnerabilities in host countries", the report said.

Adequate resources should also be allocated for the protection of physical and digital infrastructure of the Indian missions, it added. The recommendations assume salience given the situation in countries like Bangladesh as also in parts of West Asia, and with New Delhi flagging in the last several months the issue of space being provided to anti-India activities in Canada that has affected the bilateral ties.

### AIIMS to acquire automated biomedical waste conversion rig

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) is all set to get an automated biomedical waste conversion rig that can disinfect pathogenic biomedical waste such as blood, urine, sputum and laboratory disposables, without the use of costly and energyintensive incinerators. Science and Technology

Minister Jitendra Singh will formally commission the waste conversion rig, 'Srjanam', developed by CSIR-National Institute for Interdisciplinary Science and Technology, Thiruvananthapuram, on

The prototype equipment, with a daily capacity of 400 kg, can handle 10 kg degradable medical waste per day in the initial phase and convert it into soil additives.

"With its potential to transform treated waste into valueadded soil additives with minimal human intervention, our technology provides a safer solution for healthcare facilities, avoids



the risk of spills and occupational exposure, and assists in preventing uncontrolled spread infectious said C Anandharamakrishnan, Director, CSIR (NIIST).

The technology, once validated, will be ready for fullscale implementation after securing approval from competent authorities.
Through this technology,

CSIR-NIIST aims to provide an innovative and alternative solution for the safe, inexpensive and environmentfriendly disposal of pathogenic biomedical waste, Anandharamakrishnan said. The technology has been validated by expert third parties for its antimicrobial action and non-toxic nature of the treated material.

gy-intensive strategy that forces the stakeholders to adopt simpler and cheaper, but sometimes illegal means, to dispose of biomedical waste. The CSIR-NIIST technology can also disinfect laboratory disposables for direct recycling. Soil studies have confirmed that the treated biomedical waste is superior to organic fertilizers like vermicompost.

cies."The vice-president empha-

India produces 743 tonnes of biomedical waste daily, which presents a significant challenge for proper management and disposal.

Improper segregation, open dumping, open burning and inadequate incineration lead to severe health hazards, such as the release of harmful human carcinogens, particulate matter and ash residues. Increased biomedical waste generation demands more transportation facilities, increasing the risk of accidents and spills. The WHO has also emphasised the importance of innovative and alternative protocols for pathogenic biomedical waste disposal, a statement from CSIR-NIIST said.

## Ham radio users detect suspicious signals along Indo-Bangladesh border

PTI ■ KOLKATA

mateur ham radio operators Amateur nami radio operandhave picked up suspicious late-night radio signals in coded Bengali, Urdu and Arabic along the Indo-Bangladesh border in South Bengal over the last two months, raising concerns about possible extremist activities, officials said.

The development comes amidst ongoing unrest in Bangladesh and growing anti-India rhetoric in the neighbouring country.

The incident first came to light in December last when Ham radio operators detected unauthorised communications in coded Bengali, Arabic, and Urdu from Basirhat and Bongaon in North 24 Parganas, as well as from the Sunderbans in South 24 Parganas.

Alarmed by these transmissions, the operators informed the Ministry of Communications. The matter was subsequently forwarded to the International Monitoring Station (Radio) in Kolkata for tracking.

Ham radio operators have also been asked to monitor and report if similar signals are detected again. "These suspicious radio

signals have been picked up between 1 AM and 3 AM. The transmissions are in coded Bengali (with a Bangladeshi accent), Urdu, and Arabic. Sometimes, there are signals in another language that we could-n't identify. Whenever we asked those communicating to identify themselves, they went silent," Ambarish Nag Biswas, secretary of the West Bengal Radio Club

According to Biswas, the first such signal was detected by a Ham radio operator in Sodepur in North 24 Parganas district in mid-December.

"Initially, we did not attach much importance to it. But then similar signals were detected from Basirhat, Bongaon, and later from South 24 Parganas district. Even during the Gangasagar Mela in mid-January, several Ham radio users reported hearing these suspicious signals," he said. Asked why these signals seemed suspicious, Biswas explained that their pattern and language usage were unusual. "The global norm among Ham radio users is that if a third party enters an ongoing communica-tion; they must identify them-



selves using a radio identification code or radio call sign. But in these cases, whenever we asked for identification, the signals went silent. The pattern remained the same in all instances," he said. Ham or amateur radio operators are licenced under the Union Ministry of Communications and are authorised to communicate using specific radio frequencies.

Åfter Biswas reported the latest findings to his superiors in the Ministry of Communications in January, security agencies visited him to gather more details about the coded signals. "I informed my superiors in New Delhi, who then forwarded the matter to the International Monitoring Station (Radio) Kolkata for investigation. We have also been asked to continue tracking these signals," he

A senior official from the Ministry of Communications confirmed that the matter had been forwarded to the International Monitoring Station (Radio) Kolkata for further examination.

A senior official from a security agency, who visited Biswas' place for details, declined to comment on the matter. When contacted, a senior BSF official acknowledged the seriousness of the situation, stating that unidentified radio chatter along the border is a matter of concern.

"If we receive details from Ham radio users, we will use our resources to track the source of these transmissions," the BSF official said.

He added that it is not uncommon for smugglers and extremist groups to use Ham radio frequencies, as this mode of communication is unconventional and harder to track compared to mobile networks or emails, which are more easily monitored. Biswas recalled previous instances where suspicious and unidentified radio transmissions were detected

## Defence Minister to participate in 15th Aero India air show

Incineration is a costly, ener-

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE BENGALURU/NEW DELHI

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Sunday said he will be attending the 15th edition of 'Aero India' in Bengaluru that will showcase cutting-edge defence technologies and global aviation excellence. 'Aero India' is billed as Asia's largest air show, and hosted at Air Force Station, Yelahanka in the southern city. Air Chief Marshal A P Singh and Chief of the Army Staff General Upendra Dwivedi set the tone for the grand Aero India-2025 by flying in the Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) Tejas here at Yelahanka based Air Force Station.

The performance by the top brasses was the prelude to the biannual event, which commences on Monday and will continue till February 14. All eyes were glued to the sky as the Air Chief Marshal flew the metal bird with the Army Chief. After the successful sortie,

General Dwivedi termed the experience as the best moment in



his life. For the Army Chief, the experience was such that he called the Air Chief Marshal his guru and even regretted why he did not opt for the Indian Air Force. LCA Tejas is an Indian combat aircraft designed by the Aeronautical Development Agency (ADA) and manufactured by Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) for the Indian Air Force (IAF) and Indian Navy. Leaving New Delhi for Bengaluru to attend the 15th edition of Biennial Aero-India. AeroIndia2025 will showcase

cutting-edge defence technologies and global aviation excellence. Looking forward to witness the future of aerospace sector," Singh shared on social media. The Department of Defence Production also shared an update on its X handle about the show that will take place from February 10-14. In a social media post, the department said that the defence minister will inaugurate the 'India Pavillion' at Aero India 2025 on February 10.

It is India's premier aerospace and defence exhibition where global

aero vendors and the Indian Air Force (IAF) thrill the spectators with back-to-back aerobatic flying displays. A flagship event 'Aero India' brings together global industry leaders, government officials, technology experts, and defence strategists under one roof, officials said.

The event not only showcases the nation's technological prowess and innovations but also provides a dynamic platform for international cooperation and strategic dialogue," the defence ministry said ahead of Aero India 2025.

The broad theme of this edition is -'The Runway to a Billion Opportunities'. "Aero India stands as a testament to India's unwavering commitment to innovation, strategic collaboration, and excellence in aerospace and defence," the ministry said. As the nation prepares to host Aero India 2025, the event promises to build on the rich legacy of previous editions, most notably, the transformative Aero India 2023, it said. "Through rigorous operational protocols, strategic partnerships, and a forward-thinking agenda, Aero India 2025 is poised to further elevate India's profile on the global aerospace stage," the ministry said. The United States of America is set to dazzle the audience during the Aero India show with its defence equipment and technology, including F-16, F-35, KC-135 stratotanker, and B-1 bomber, US consular officials

As the stage is set for the biannual event here in Bengaluru from February 10 to 14, the US on Sunday said it is proud to take part in it for the fifteenth time. The United States will showcase a range of advanced aircraft reinforcing the strong and growing defense and aerospace partnership between the United States and India, which share a commitment to promote regional security, stability, economic prosperity through diversified trade, and strategic investment ties," a statement issued by the US

Consulate said.

### Ex-CM Nishank's daughter accuses film producers of ₹4 Crore fraud

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

 $F^{\text{ormer Union minister and}}_{\text{ex-Uttarakhand chief min-}}$ ister Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank's daughter Aarushi Nishank has accused two Mumbai-based film producers of duping her of ₹4 Ĉrore after promising her a role in a movie. However, the two film producers have termed the allegations

On the basis of a complaint filed by Aarushi Nishank, an FIR has been lodged against the two under various sections of the BNS, including extortion, cheating and fraud, forgery, criminal intimidation and criminal conspiracy, investigating officer sub-inspector Manmohan Singh Negi said here. In the complaint, she has alleged that Mansi Varun Bagla and Varun Pramod Kumar Bagla offered her an important role in a Hindi film they were producing



and lured her to invest ₹5 Crore in it after promising big returns in the movie's earnings. Trusting them, she initially transferred ₹2 Crore to the accused through her firm Himshree Films. She also made additional payments to them subsequently bringing the total amount to ₹4 Crore, the complaint alleged.

However, the two later informed her that she had been replaced

by another actor in the movie and its shoot in India had been completed, she alleged. Aarushi Nishank asked the two to return her money but they refused to do so and also allegedly threatened her. Aankhon Ki Gustakhiyan" - the movie in which Aarushi was offered a role - starred Vikrant Massev and Shanaya Kapoor in lead

## IIT Madras to host third edition of IINvenTiv expo



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE **NEW DELHI** 

 $T^{\text{he third edition of IINvenTiv}}, \\ \text{a national research and devel-}$ opment expo, will feature projects not just from IITs but also NITs, IISc Bengaluru and IISERs this time, according to IIT Madras Director V Kamakoti. The expo scheduled from February 28 to March 1 is being hosted by IIT

It will be inaugurated by Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, with special emphasis on technologies in mature Technology Readiness Level (TRL) stages, which are ready for commercialisation and can be transferred to the industry during the event itself.

"This time IINvenTiv will feature research and development projects from all the IITs, NITs, IISc and IISERs besides top government and private engineering institutes that rank within the top 50 in NIRF.

The primary objective is to increase awareness among industry of these technological breakthroughs and achieve better industry-academia collaboration," Kamakoti said.

"Over 300 exhibits from participating institutions will be featured at the with a good representation from startups that have been initiated based on the R&D from these institutions. Special emphasis would be placed on technologies in mature TRL stages which are ready for commercialisation and can be transferred to the industry during the event itself," he added. IInvenTiv is a flagship event of the

Ministry of Education, which was

first held in 2022 at IIT Delhi feature exhibits only from Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs). The second edition of the event with participating institutions from top 50 of NIRF, apart from IITs, NÎTs, IISc and IISERs, was held at IIT Hyderabad last year. The highlights of the third edition include release of a coffee table book on leading technological innovations from Indian higher education institutions and a "chintan shivir". "A Chintan Shivir or brainstorming session will be organised for each thematic area, featuring leading experts from government, industry, academia and start-ups, with each session featuring a lead talk followed by a discussion on what is the current research and development, focus and industry need,

outcome paper that will be pre-sented at the closing of the event," Kamakoti said.

"The focus in these discussions would be on the specific needs of the industry and how academic institutions can gear their research efforts to meet these requirements. The role of government and start-ups will add to the discussion," he said.

The thematic areas that would be covered include artifical intelligence and machine learning technologies, aviation, defence and space, marine rechnology, medical and healthcare engineering, rural technology, smart cities and infrastructure, advanced manufacturing (industry 4. and 5.0) and circularity and

sustainability.
A coffee table book on leading technological innovations from Indian higher education institutions, which have led to great a rapporteur from each session impacts on the industry, will be will be responsible for drafting an released during the event.

## Sale, consumption of liquor, non-veg food banned in Katra

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

Authorities have extended two more months of the ban on the sale, possession and consumption of liquor and non-vegetarian food in Katra, the base camp for pilgrims visiting Mata Vaishno Devi shrine in Jammu and Kashmir's Reasi district, officials said on Sunday.

The prohibition will be enforced on the 12-km track from Katra to the holy cave on the Trikuta hill and adjoining areas, they said and added that the order would remain in force for two months from the date of its issuance, unless revoked earlier. Katra subdivisional magistrate Piyush Dhotra has prohibited the sale, possession and consumption of liquor and non-vegetarian food, under Section 163 of the



Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, the officials said. Besides the track, the prohibition would be applicable in villages within a distance of up to two Km on either sides of the track, including Arli, Hansali and Matyal villages, within 200 metres on either sides of Katra-Tikri road, including villages Chamba, Serli and Bhagta and within 200 metres on either side

of Katra-Jammu road including villages Kundrorian, Kotli Bajallian, Nomain and Maghal, the officials said. The ban also covers 200 metres on both sides of Katra-Reasi road from Katra to Nau Devian and Aghar Jitto and Nau Devian markets, within 200 metres on either side of railway station Katra-Sool Road and within 100 metre on either side of Panthal-Domail road.

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-PAPER WITH PASSION-

## **Delhi dislodges AAP**

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

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



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

Legal troubles and corruption allegations against key leaders, including Kejriwal and Sisodia, further diminished public trust in the party. Meanwhile, the BJP successfully leveraged AAP's shortcomings, presenting

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



Tourists take a ride on a hot air balloon in Manali

# The new geopolitical communication era



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

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

As the world steps into this new chapter of geopolitical shifts, communication strategies are becoming more sophisticated, dynamic and multidimensional. The need of the hour is to analyse the new alliances afoot in the shifting political landscape and the major geopolitical developments. The evolving political climate is challenging traditional paradigms, compelling communication specialists, diplomats, and policymakers to rethink how messages are crafted, delivered, and received on a global stage. The era demands a communication framework that not only transcends borders but also bridges divides with precision, creativity, and authenticity. In 2025, the phrase "a picture is worth a thousand words" takes on greater resonance. Visual communication has become the most impactful way to deliver messages. A single, well-composed image has the power to convey emotions, ideas, and narratives that words may struggle to encapsulate. Building on this, the explosion of short-form videos, and 30second reels, for instance, has transformed the landscape fur-

depth make them tools of unpar- munication to be effective in alleled influence in shaping public opinion, mobilising support, and even defusing tensions. This evolution places immense responsibility on communicators in the geopolitical arena. Diplomacy, once conducted primarily behind

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

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

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

has added another layer of



SOCIAL MEDIA

HAS UNDENIABLY

**GLOBALISED DEMOCRATISED** COMMUNICATION, GIVING INDIVIDUALS, **GOVERNMENTS ORGANISATIONS** A DIRECT THEIR **AUDIENCES** 

nication. AI-driven analytics enable unprecedented insights into audience behaviour, preferences, and sentiments, allowing for hyper-personalised messaging. These tools are invaluable for diplomats and foreign policy experts, who can now craft messages with immense precision and predict their impact with greater accuracy. However, with these advancements come ethical dilemmas. The line between strategic communication and manipulation can easily blur, necessitating robust frame-works to ensure accountability and fairness. As the communication landscape becomes more intricate, the demand for skilled specialists is growing. These professionals are not just channels for information, they are strategists, analysts, and creators who understand the nuances of messaging in a diverse and rapidly changing

complexity to global commu-

Traditional media must evolve to remain relevant, embracing digital innovations and audience-centric approaches. Meanwhile, social media must grapple with issues of misinforchambers, striving to become a platform that unites rather than divides.

In this era, communication is no longer just about delivering a message; it is about shaping perceptions, building relationships, and driving action. As the world becomes increasingly interconnected, the ability to communicate effectively will be one of the most powerful tools in navigating the complexities of a neo-geopolitical era. In an era marked by shifting alliances and evolving global priorities, multilateral institutions face both challenges and opportunities.

The reworking of commitments by key nations to international frameworks has drawn notice to the fragility of global consensus, raising questions about the role and relevance of these institutions in addressing shared challenges like public health, climate change, and economic inequality. This shifting landscape calls for a more nuanced approach to diplomacy within multilateral spaces, with a renewed focus on collective responsibility. For these institutions to thrive in a complex geopolitical climate, they must leverage communication technologies to foster transparency, engage diverse stakeholders, and amplify their ability to drive action. Whether through the lens of a camera, the reach of a tweet, or the depth of an mation, polarisation, and echo investigative report, the stories we tell and how we tell them will shape the world in ways we are only beginning to understand.

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

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



RAJNEESH **BHANDARI** 

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

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

When we think of supersonic commercial aviation, Concorde often springs to mind. Concorde was an iconic aircraft that flew passengers across the Atlantic in just three hours. It was the first commercial supersonic aircraft, and it flew twice the speed of sound for Air France and British Airways from 1976 to 2003. Concordes were retired in 2003 due to excessive costs, high fares and loud noise. Since then, aerospace giants like Airbus and Boeing have never delivered a commercial-scale replacement.

So, what makes Boom different? Boom's team didn't view past failures as insurmountable obstacles. Instead, they



lenges to be overcome with a fresh mindset. Unlike traditional companies that would try to upgrade a subsonic plane to go faster, Boom's team designed every component, from the aerodynamic shape and propulsion system to the fuel system, specifically for supersonic travel.

The company exemplifies how ignoring legacy assumptions and knowledge can unlock groundbreaking solu-

Boom's engineers embraced the concept of "unlearning," jettisoning assumptions that certain design elements were necessary or that certain hurdles were insurmountable. Unlearning allowed Boom to innovate with advanced composite materials, wing design and a new noisereduction strategy.

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

what Boeing or Airbus might

They rewrote the rules of the The prototype aircraft smoothly transitioned through Mach 1 (the speed of sound) and touched Mach1.1. This technology demonstration will help refine the design ahead of the company's next goal: launching a full-scale 60 to 75-seater supersonic jet called Overture. The founders' vision is that passengers can fly supersonically at tickets comparable to business class fares. Imagine cutting a 7-hour transatlantic flight to 3.5 hours. Suddenly, a business meeting in Delhi and a dinner date in London are feasible on the same day. Overture is being designed to fly 7800 km. It can fly nonstop on routes like Delhi to Frankfurt or New York to London. Faster travel time can be a game-changer for business travellers and highpriority cargo. While Airbus, Boeing, and other established players have the resources and legacy to make big moves, it often takes a nimble newcomer with a fresh perspective and first-principles thinking to challenge what's possible.

(The writer is an author, innovator and founder of NeuroEquilibrium; views are personal)

#### **WTO NEEDS REFORM** Madam — It is with reference to the edi-

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

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

P Victor Selvaraj | Tirunelveli

#### **ZERO SEATS FOR CONGRESS IN DELHI**

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

## **BJP** returns to power in Delhi



The BJP's long wait of 26 years to return to power in Delhi has ultimately come to an end after it registered an emphatic victory in Delhi Assembly polls. In fact, Delhi was the only erstwhile BJP-ruled state where victory remained elusive for the BJP even under the strong Modi wave since 2014. Hence, this victory has come as a big relief for the saffron party, which faced unceremo-

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

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

A P Thiruvadi | Chennai

#### **RBI CUTS INTEREST RATES**

Madam —It is a first-rate cut in nearly five years by RBI and it signifies a shift in monetary strategy. With this cut, RBI has clearnious defeat at the hands of the AAP in two consecutive elections. On the other hand, the way the almost top leadership of the AAP, including former CM and party face Arvind Kejriwal and former Dy CM Manish Sisodia, licked the dust in the election reflects the deep anguish of the

voters against the party. No doubt that the anti-incumbency of 11 years and the corruption charges have led to the defeat of the AAP. The arrest of Kejriwal and Sisodia in the liquor scam and the Sheesh Mahal controversy dented the party's image deeply. Interestingly, 'theatrics,' the biggest tool of the AAP, also failed to impress the voters this time. But the BJP needs to be cautious, as the AAP, which was born out of the agitations, will prove to be a strong opposition.

Manoj Parashar | Ghaziabad

ly sent a signal that it wants to boost lending, stimulate consumer demand and nurture investment. In the recent months, core inflation has shown easing out, providing much-needed headroom to the RBI to implement this rate cut. And a slowdown in the economic growth forced the RBI to take the plunge now.

By lowering the borrowing cost, RBI wants to encourage businesses to expand, boost consumption, and help economic growth. Now banks will be happy to extend credit more freely, but they need to be wary of what they have witnessed with their microfinance and unsecured loan portfolios in recent months. In the real estate sector, SMEs will take a sigh of relief, and individual borrowers will see a reduction in their EMIs and, in turn, more money in their pockets, coupled with recent income tax cuts, which will create a positive environment for the consumption boom to take place.

Bal Govind | Noida

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## **FIRST COLUMN**

### **LIFE IS A MOUNTAIN: CLIMB** YOUR PEAK, YOUR WAY

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



**OPSINGH** 

have come to believe life is a lot like climbing a mountain. It's not a race or a competition, and it's not about finding a shortcut. The absolute joy of life isn't standing at the summit—it's in the climb. It's in slipping on loose gravel, feeling the burn in your legs, and wondering halfway through if you should turn around. But when you catch your breath at a ridge or find your footing after a stumble, you realise something powerful: the climb isn't about the mountain-it's about who you become

Each of us has a mountain to climb. It doesn't need to be Everest or Kilimanjaro. It doesn't have to impress anyone else. What matters is that your mountain challenges you, excites you and pushes you to grow. And yes, the climb will be messy. The trail will disappear just when you think you're getting somewhere. The air will get thin. You might even feel like quitting. But that's the beauty of it—the mountain shapes you with every step. Every great climb starts with a dream—one so audacious it gives you butterflies. Don't let its enormity overwhelm you. Focus on taking the next step, then the one after that. Progress isn't about giant leaps but small, consistent efforts.

Moving forward, even a little each day, builds the path to big dreams. Mountains don't reward the fastest or most competent climber—they reward perseverance. Talent may get you started, but resilience carries you through fatigue, failure, and seemingly impossible moments. You don't need to be perfect; you need to keep climbing. Your journey is unique; not everyone will understand or agree with it. That's okay. When the trail disappears, create your path, even if it's



The best routes are discovered through improvisation and authenticity, not by meeting others' expectations. Slips and falls are inevitable, and they hurt. Yet, each stumble teaches something valuable about the terrain, limits, and strength. Mountains don't demand perfection—they demand persistence. Learn from every fall, and rise stronger. The mountain doesn't care who reaches the summit first. It isn't about trophies or comparisons. The climb is about pushing yourself, growing beyond your comfort zone, and becoming someone who belongs at the sum-

True success is transformation, not competition. The best climbers don't focus solely on themselves. They lend a hand, share tools, and cheer others on. Life's peaks are more meaningful when shared. Those you help will often support you, making the climb richer for everyone. When you reach your summit, pause and reflect. Did your climb inspire others? Did you leave the path better for those who follow? Success isn't standing alone at the top; it's in the legacy you leave-the encouragement, improvements, and hope for others to climb higher. Ultimately, the climb makes life beautiful.

The summit is fleeting, but the slips, breakthroughs, lessons, and growth endure. These moments shape you into someone worthy of the top.lf your mountain feels daunting, don't let the height scare you. Start small. Take one step at a time. You don't need to move fast or know the whole path. Just keep climbing. One day, standing at your summit, you'll look back and realise it wasn't about the peak. It was about the person you became along the way. That's the valuable reward of the climb—knowing every inch of it was unapologetically yours.

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

# Trump's vision for Gaza: Paradise or purgatory?



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



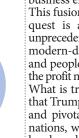
veryone saw it unfold. This is the harsh reality of life in the Devil's paradise, where desires are transformed into laws, ambitions become twisted ethics, and behaviour is coerced into the very fabric of the system. The truth? To survive here, one must bow to the powers that be, no matter the cost. Conscience and integrity are irrelevant—praise those in power or face annihilation.
President Donald Trump welcomed Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu—an alleged war criminal wanted by the International Criminal Court—as the first foreign leader in his second term, declaring his grand vision to take control of Gaza, turning it into a "brave new Levantine Riviera" by cleansing over 2 million Palestinians.

Nevertheless, the proposal has sparked strong opposition. Saudi Arabia, a key ally of Trump, swiftly condemned it, insisting

THE IDEA OF PAN-ARAB UNITY, HAS that no nation would recognise Israel without the creation of an independent Palestinian state. Jordan and Egypt also rejected the idea of accepting millions of displaced Palestinians. The mere announcement of this plan starkly illustrates the chaotic grandeur of Trump's vision. Yet, his proposal, howevof Trump's vision. Yet, his proposal, however audacious, was no accident of rhetoric. It was a calculated, methodical blueprint, crafted long before Trump's second term in office. With Netanyahu-a willing ally in these manoeuvres—Trump painted a picture of Gaza not as a refuge for the Palestinian people, but as a commercialised "paradise" defined not by its displaced residents, but by foreign investments and a transformation into a luxury resort.

Trump's proposition, laden with both visionary ambition and horrific repercussions, challenges the entrenched paradigm. This proposal, as reported, was not born of sudden whim, but the culmination of years of deliberation within Trump's inner circle—an enterprise in which his son-in-law, Jared Kushner, played a pivotal role in positioning the geopolitical and commercial components across Asia.

Kushner's claim, in a recent interview with the Financial Times, that his "ability to see trends before others" uniquely positions him to capitalise on opportunities others find unpalatable, resonates with the underlying logic of Trump's plan. It's a logic that blurs the line between statecraft and property development, where geopolitical ambitions are pursued not merely for strategic suprema-



THE ARAB WORLD, ONCE INTOXICATED BY

REPEATEDLY These rivalries, cultivated over SUCCUMBED TO decades of political expediency, have reduced Palestinians from ITS INTERNAL champions of an interpretation to mere pawns in a game that has ABLE TO

REALPOLITIK AND SELF-INTEREST

cy but also as a means to expand a business empire throughout Asia. This fusion of commerce and conquest is as disquieting as it is unprecedented, conjuring images of modern-day feudalism, where land and people are subjugated to serve the profit motives of a privileged few. What is truly striking, however, is that Trump's plan could offer a rare and pivotal opportunity for Arab nations, whose history of disunity has long hindered their collective potential.

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

champions of an independent cause

OVERCOME THE For far too long, the Arab states have abandoned Palestine's plight in CORROSIVE favour of personal ambition and strategic alliances, turning the Palestinian cause into a commodity—moulded and shaped according to the whims of foreign powers. This latest manoeuvre must be understood within the context of the convoluted history of Arab disunityan entangled web of colonial subterfuge, sectarian fragmentation, and a legacy of betrayal that has persistently eroded Palestinian sovereignty and reduced their cause to a tragic geopolitical instrument. The Arab world, once intoxicated by

the idea of pan-Arab unity, has repeatedly succumbed to its internal fissures, never able to overcome the corrosive forces of realpolitik and self-interest. Behind the veneer of solidarity and proclamations of support for Palestinian self-determination, there lies a catalogue of secretive agreements, covert operations, and Machiavellian plots that have long entangled the region.

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

Husayn - McMahon Correspondence, which promised Arab independence in exchange for rebellion against the Ottoman Empire, were later betrayed in favour of European imperial ambi-

Similarly, the post-World War II period saw Arab states engage in secret dealings with both Western and Soviet powers, each prioritising their strategic interests over Palestinian rights. Agreements such as the Baghdad Pact and the Eisenhower Doctrine—purportedly aimed at regional stability—left the Palestinian cause sidelined in favour of Cold War allegiances, perpetuating cycles of betrayal. And perhaps most insidious of all

were the secret negotiations between Arab leaders and Israel, at times tacit and other times more explicit, often involving quiet exchanges of territory, economic support, or even military cooperation, all under the guise of broader diplomatic manoeuvres. These acts of realpolitik—often driven by the selfish interests of a few at the expense of the many—have left Palestine isolated, its sovereignty forfeited in a game of geopolitical chess. The fractured nature of Arab leadership, perpetuated by sectarianism and divergent national ambitions, only serves to deepen the wound. While leaders such as Egypt's Nasser sought to rally the Arab world under a banner of unity, his efforts were consistently thwarted by rivalries and internal conflicts.

Today, these past betrayals reverberate in the region's collective psyche, leaving Palestinian aspirations still choked by the suffocating embrace of powers both external and internal, with the dream of a unified Arab world and a free Palestine rendered ever more elusive by the cynical. Yet, it is precisely this history that

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

For decades, Palestinian suffering has been wielded as a symbol of resistance, a poignant reminder of an exodus that began with the Nakba in 1948. However, the continued instrumentalisation of Palestinian tragedy by neighbouring Arab regimes—who have long used the plight of these people as a rhetorical tool without offering substantial solutions.

It is within this environment of ambivalence and simmering tension that Trump's proposal must be viewed as a paradigm-shifting moment. The convergence of statecraft and property development, epitomised by Trump and Kushner's ambitions, signals a departure from conventional geopolitical paradigms. We are stepping into an era where the shifting power of oligarchies is increasingly driven by the convergence of economic gain and political opportunism—a transformation with far-reaching consequences for the future of West

Whether this radical reimagining of Gaza could catalyse Arab unity remains uncertain, inherently tied to the unresolved contradictions within the region's historical legacy. Trump's Riviera dream for Gaza is as much a test of American resolve as it is a crucible for Arab unity—a proposition that, if realised, could compel the Arab states to transcend their long-standing acrimony and

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

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

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

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

ttarakhand has led the way in formalising laws for women of different faith as equal, upholding the spirit of the constitution. Babasaheb Ambedkar would have been a contented man knowing that Uttarakhand has become the first state in India to have put an end to the disparity in legal protection provided to women, as till now, they were governed by their respective personal laws based on religion and customary state practices.

By implementing the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) from January 26, 2025, with less than 2 per cent of total land area and less than 1 per cent of total population, Uttarakhand has taken the lead in reinstating the ethos of social equality, part of our syncretic cul-



ture/constitution.

The courageous step taken by this young state will pave the way as a paradigm for others to follow similar footsteps. For the first time post-independence, a legislative body has drafted rules for marriage, divorce, inheritance of property, and live-in relationships. UCC has been used as a political tool ever since it was tabled for discussion in the Constituent Assembly when Babasaheb, as Chairman of Drafting Committee, had expressed need for uniformity-in fundamental laws, both civil and criminal. UCC was placed under a sub-committee which proposed to list it as a non-justiciable right hence, making it non-disputable in the courts.

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

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

those in support and those in disagreement of the UCC. The changing social milieu has seen a trend in rigorous churning to shed away repressive, orthodox practices so as to evolve a social structure which believes in equal rights. This led to the codification of matrimonial, inheritance, succession and adoption laws for the



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

The landmark Supreme Court judgement in favour of Shah Bano was later overturned when the incumbent Rajiv Gandhi-led Congress government, under pressure, enacted the Muslim Women

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

This time the government of the day stood by the rights of Muslim women and vindicated the crusade undertaken by Shah Bano by legally prohibiting triple talaq and protecting the rights of married Muslim women by bringing The Muslim Women

(Protection of Rights on Marriage) Act in 2019. Though the present government has asserted equal rights and status to Muslim women

by bringing this act, there are miles to go as social customs of polygamy and Halala still looms large.

The judiciary has reminded the legislators to fulfil their obligation towards the Constitution and promote equal rights for women. A fivemember panel constituted in the chairmanship of retired justice Ranjana Prakash Desai diligently worked on the draft for two years besides holding public interactions, taking suggestions from people of the state and internal meetings of the panel to discuss the points to be taken under the draft. The bill in its four parts covers marriage and divorce, succession, live-in relationships. The section 4 of the bill outlines that "neither party has a spouse living at the time of the

marriage" with marriage age of 21 and 18 for man and women respectively, making polygamy and child marriage illegal.

The bill also requires compulsory registration of marriages within 60 days where the couple has equal right to dissolve the marriage through a decree of divorce only through court proceedings.

The Bill says that marriages can be dissolved only through the provisions of the law "notwithstanding any usage, custom, tradition, [or] personal law of any party to the marriage." This bill provides legal safeguards to protect women who cohabit in a live-in relationship.

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

# Namo Bharat trains: Revolutionising commute in Meerut

rial runs of Namo Bharat trains began on an additional 6-km section between Meerut South and Shatabdi Nagar in Meerut on Sunday, NCR Transport Corporation said. With this, Namo Bharat trains will bring the operational corridor closer to the heart of Meerut city, NCRTC said in a statement. Namo Bharat trains will be initially operated manually to check the compatibility of the civil structure in the trials, the statement said.

As testing progresses, the NCRTC will conduct comprehensive evaluations to assess the train's integrated performance and coordination with key subsystems, including tracks, signalling, platform screen doors (PSDs) and overhead



systems. power supply Extensive trial runs, including high-speed tests, will be planned as the trials advance, the statement said. "This six-km additional

stretch of the corridor will have one Namo Bharat station of Shatabdi Nagar in addition to two Meerut metro stations of Partapur and Rithani. Once operational,

Namo Bharat trains will provide commuters with a fast and efficient travel option between New Ashok Nagar and Shatabdi Nagar, reducing the 61 km journey time to under 45 minutes," it said. Shatabdi Nagar will be the second Namo Bharat station in Meerut to serve both Namo Bharat and the Meerut Metro, making it a key transit hub. The station will facilitate the movement of commuters in the area, offering seamless connectivity towards both, Delhi and Modipuram. Shatabdi Nagar station has two entry-exit gates on either side of the road for the convenience of passengers, it Meanwhile, Meerut Metro

trial runs are also underway on the Meerut South to Meerut Central stretch. For the first time in India, a local metro system will be operated on the same infrastructure being used for Namo Bharat trains, it said.

The 23 km-long Meerut Metro corridor consists of 18 km of elevated and 5 km of

underground featuring 13 stations, of which three are underground. Both Namo Bharat and Meerut Metro services will be available at Meerut South, Shatabdi Nagar, Begumpul, and Modipuram stations, it

Currently, Namo Bharat train services are operational on a 55-km stretch from New Ashok Nagar to Meerut South, covering eleven stations of New Ashok Nagar, Anand Vihar, Sahibabad, Ghaziabad, Guldhar, Duhai, Duhai Depot, Muradnagar, Modi Nagar South, Modi Nagar North, and Meerut South.

With the operationalisation of the Meerut South to Shatabdi Nagar section, the operational section extend to 61 encompassing 12 Namo

have total assets of Rs 1,542

crore. The average asset per candidate has risen to Rs 22.04

crore from Rs 14.29 crore in

BJP lawmakers dominate the

wealth chart, with an average

asset value of Rs 28.59 crore,

compared to AAP's Rs 7.74 crore. Three BJP candidates

with assets ranging from Rs 115 crore to Rs 259 crore

**STAFF REPORTER** ■ NEW DELHI

AAP's Amanatullah

Khan blames Congress

for Delhi polls defeat

AAP's Okhla MLA Amanatullah Khan on Sunday blamed the Congress for the party's defeat in the Delhi polls, a charge rubbished by the grand old

party.
AAP — which had won 62 assembly constituencies in 2020 and 67 in 2015 — saw its tally plunge to 22 as the BJP registered a landslide victory with 48 seats in the 70-

with 48 seats in the 70-member House. Khan accused the Congress of prioritising AAP's defeat over its own electoral success.

The Congress contested the election not to win but to ensure our defeat. Rahul Gandhi came to campaign in my constituency for the first time ever. It knew it had no chance of winning but was determined to make us lose," Khan said.

AAP and the Congress are constituents of the opposition INDIA bloc and had contested last year's Lok Sabha elections in an alliance in Delhi.

Alliance partners are supposed to support the strongest party in each state, Khan said.

"We were strong in Delhi, not the Congress. But its actions helped the BJP come to power. The Congress had nothing to lose but its strategy hurt secular voters the most,"

AAP secured 43.57 per cent of the votes polled while the BIP managed 45.56 per cent. The Congress' vote share stood at 6.34 per cent.

Highlighting the narrow difference, Khan claimed AAP was defeated using every possible means.

Responding to Khan's claims, senior Congress leader Narendra Nath asserted that his party contested the elections to win.

"Our vote share went up. We contested with the intent to win, not make anyone lose. It is a different matter that our vote count exceeded AAP's losing margin in 14 seats," the former Delhi minister said.

Another Congress leader attributed the party's improved performance to its proactive campaign under Delhi chief Devender Yadav. 'Our Delhi Nyay Yatra and the timely announcement of

strong candidates helped restore the public's faith in the Congress, leading to a better performance," he said. Khan also accused the All

India Majlis-e-Ittehad-ul-Muslimeen (AIMIM) of working to the BJP's advantage. "The AIMIM contested on two seats using the BJP's money. Even during vote counting, BJP workers were more interested in the AIMIM's numbers than their

## Fewer women, more graduates in eighth Delhi Assembly

**STAFF REPORTER** ■ NEW DELHI

 $T^{ ext{he eighth Delhi Assembly}}$  will have fewer women members but a higher number of lawmakers with graduate degrees, according to a report.
The report by PRS Legislative
Research found that five women had been elected to the assembly, the results of which were announced on Saturday, representing 7 per cent of the House. Four women MLAs are from the BJP while Atishi is AAP's only woman member in the House.

In 2020, eight women were elected.The BJP swept to power in Delhi after more than 26 years, winning 48 of the 70 assembly seats. AAP won 22 seats while the Congress drew a blank in the polls held on February 5.

The percentage of MLAs with graduate degrees has risen to 38 per cent in the eighth assembly from 34 per cent in the seventh. in the eighth. The average age of the members is 52, the report



MLAs with postgraduate degrees and above remain unchanged at 26 per cent. About 61 per cent of the newly-

elected MLAs listed politics or social work as their profession, compared to 67 per cent in the previous assembly.

The number of MLAs who listed their profession as business also registered an increase from 29 per cent in the seventh assembly to 49 per cent

found.

According to the report, 13 per cent of the new MLAs are aged between 25 and 40, down from 23 per cent in the previous assembly.

The number of MLAs aged between 41 and 55 is unchanged at 49 per cent while 34 per cent are aged between 56 and 70, and 4 per cent above 70 years old.In the previous assembly, 28 per cent of members were aged 56 and

### 31 Delhi MLAs face criminal cases, 17 serious ones, BJP lawmakers top wealth chart

STAFF REPORTER NEW DELHI

The Association Democratic Association Reforms (ADR) and Delhi Election Watch, which analysed the affidavits submitted by all 699 candidates who contested the assembly elections, said 31 of the 70 candidates elected to the eighth Delhi Assembly have declared criminal cases against their names. The figure is lower than the 43 MLAs in the seventh assembly who had declared criminal cases. According to the report, the number of winning candidates with serious criminal cases remained a concern.

The analysis found that 17 newly-elected candidates were facing serious criminal cases, According to the analysis, the

including those related to 70 newly-elected lawmakers attempted murder and crimes have total assets of Rs 1,542 against women.

In the 2020 election, 37 candidates who had emerged victorious declared serious criminal cases.One newly-elected MLA in 2025 has declared cases related to attempted murder while two others are facing charges of crimes against women.

A party-wise breakdown shows that 16 of the BJP's 48 MLAs and 15 of AAP's 22 lawmakers have criminal cases against their names.Seven MLAs from the BJP and 10 from AAP are facing serious criminal charges.

The assembly election results were announced on Saturday.

and Tekalgudiyam camps,

emerged victorious. In contrast, three victors from AAP declared assets below Rs 20 lakh.

According to the analysis, 44 per cent of the winning candidates have assets of Rs 10 crore or more while only 3 per cent have a net worth below Rs 20 lakh.

## Fighting guns with pen: CRPF sets up schools for kids in erstwhile Naxal hotbed

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

 $F_{\text{Chhattisgarh's}}^{\text{our}}$  villages in Sukma district, which had been a witnessed a deadly attack on Naxal stronghold, have now security personnel in the past, seen a turnaround with Puvarti is the native of place sound of guns, thanks to an initiative by the Central Reserve Police Force.

The CRPF, which is engaged in anti-Maoist operations in Chhattisgarh, has set up schools for primary children in the four villages as part of an aim to bring education to the people's doorsteps and wean away locals from the outlawed armed movement, officials said.

The facilities, named 'CRPF Gurukul', have been set up in Mukrajkonda,

considered as strongholds of Naxalites till January last year when police camps were in established there. While Tekalgudiyam

hells replacing the of dreaded Navalite leader Hidma, believed to be behind various deadly attacks on security forces in Bastar region. The places where once

slogans of 'Lal Salaam' and bullets reverberated, now the ringing of school bells and chatter of children can be heard, Deputy Inspector General, CRPF (Sukma Anand Range) Singh Rajpurohit told PTI over phone.

The four villages were once dominated by Naxalites, but Tekalgudiyam and Puvarti after security camps were villages, which were opened there in January-



development started reaching these areas, he said. On April 3, 2021, 22 security personnel were killed in a ambush Maoist

February last Tekalgudiyam area. January 30 last year, three CRPF personnel were killed

year, and 15 others injured in an encounter with Naxalites when a police camp was being set up in Tekalgudiyam. "As these villages did not have schools, we decided to open them to cater to the primary

school children," the DIG

schools adjacent to the camps at the four places and one civilian teacher has been hired for each school having a strength of 50 to 60 students,

the official said. Honorarium is paid to the teachers through a fund under the civic action programme provided by the Ministry of Home Affairs, he said. As of now, the schools have classes till standard 5th. Initially, students have been enrolled for classes 1 and 2 and efforts will be made later

to upgrade these facilities till class 12, the official said. Special arrangements have

The CRPF's 150th battalion been made for providing has been stationed in Puvarti uniforms, books, bags, shoes, socks and various types of and the 2nd battalion in games like volleyball, football Mukrajkonda and Duled and basketball for physical and mental development of A one-room set up with tin-shed roof has been laid out for Rajpurohit said.

Various types of boards have been installed on the school walls, and a big television set with a projector is also proposed for each of the facilities, he said. The local administration's

support will be sought for further expanding infrastructure like setting up buildings, toilets and hand pumps in the gurukul premises and introducing the facility of mid-day meal provided in government schools, he said.

Asked about any problem faced by the CRPF in enrolling children to these

schools, the DIG said villagers force, own).

problem in hiring teachers as Naxalites killed a man, who (temporary visiting teacher) at a government school in Jagargunda area of Sukma in September last year, and locals were scared, he said. On the idea behind the initiative, the DIG said, "The priority was to first secure the area and then facilitate development. Extending better education facilities to deprived tribal children will help them in getting a dignified livelihood and developing a better developing a better understanding about society

and the country."
Nearly 40,000 personnel of CRPF, the largest paramilitary

have been sending their extensively in south Bastar for children "suo-motu" (on their c o u n t e r - i n s u r g e n c y counter-insurgency operations.

But, there was bit of a Following the setting up of police camps, development works were being carried out worked as 'shiksha doot' in these four villages, a district administration off said.

Murum (a type of soil) work of the roads connecting Duled, Mukraikonda, Tekalgudiyam and Puvarti has been completed and the construction will be over soon, he said.

Duled While Mukrrajkonda have electricity supply lines, it is under progress in the two other villages, he said. Under the Jal Jeevan Mission,

pipelines have been laid to provide tap water in all the four villages, the official added.

### Gujarat: 150 students from government residential schools suffer viral infection, 18

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE **SURAT** 

As many as 150 students of government Athree government residential schools located within one campus in Gujarat's Surat district suffered from a viral infection and 18 of them, all girls, were hospitalised with fever, officials said Sunday. Wadi village in Umarpada

taluka has a cluster of three

650 male and female students.

Chief District Health Officer Dr

residential schools with over respiratory tract infections with symptoms of cough and fever over the past three to four days. As many as 18 girl students Anil Patel said 150 of these suffering from fever were students contracted upper

admitted to a community health centre on Saturday, he

deployed a team of more than

said. The district administration two dozen health personnel to screen the students at the school campus and take care of their health, he said. "We have directed the principal

to ensure that the airborne infection does not spread, and keep students with fever and cough in isolation with face masks. A medical team of 30 personnel is on the school campus," he said.

Principal Jaideepsinh Rathod of the Sainik School, one of the three educational facilities, said several students complained of cough and fever in the last few days after which he contacted the local health centre. "We contacted the nearby primary health centre and got the students examined. Of them, 18 students were admitted to a community health centre," he said. Both boys and girls of the residential schools were affected, but all those admitted with fever are girls, he said.

MLA and former tribal development minister Ganpat Vasava visited the school campus. "A team of the Surat district health officer reached the school and screened the students," he said.

### Manipur ready for change of guard

From page 1

AICC general secretary incommunications charge Jairam Ramesh said the Congress was all set to move a no-confidence motion against Singh and his council of ministers in the Manipur Assembly on Monday. "Sensing the climate, the Manipur chief minister has just resigned. This was a demand that the Congress has been making since early May 2023, when Manipur erupted," he said in a social media post.

### Dry spell to cast on...

From page 1

On Friday, the former Shimla deputy mayor urged the government to consider declaring the state as "drought-affected." Standard

"I urge you to ensure that the necessary protocols and Operating Procedures (SOPs) are implemented so that the looming drought crisis can be addressed proactively," Tikender Panwar said in a letter addressed to Chief Secretary Prabodh Saxena.

### **Climate change** affects arrival of

From page 1

AWC supports conservation of wetland and water birds globally and it is an important tool generates the data for the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC), Government of India's "National Action Plan for conservation of Migratory Birds and their habitats along the Central Asian Flyway".

— Writer is Ecologist,

Ornithologist, AWC Delhi State Coordinator Wetlands International South Asia

## huddles for new Del

According to sources, the BJP's discussions on the best person for the chief ministerial seat are learnt to have revolved around possibilities ranging from picking one of its seven Lok Sabha MPs from the national capital. Another source said could also be one of its new MLAs with the highest victory margin, especially a woman leader, for the post. A BIP leader said the party could also consider an MLA 'Purvanchal'

woman, depending on the political calculations guiding its top brass. Past experience, including in

Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan in 2023, and Odisha last year, leave little room for speculation on such the potential Chief Minister matters, he added. The BJP picked Mohan Yadav in Madhya Pradesh, Bhajanlal Sharma in Rajasthan and Mohan Charan Majhi in Odisha, taking most political observers by surprise. In addition, the selection of

background ( keeping in "more than one deputy chief mind of upcoming Bihar minister" was also a elections ) a Sikh, or a possibility. "You never know... The national leadership can come up with an altogether fresh face who fits the bill and is capable of discharging the duties as Delhi chief minister amid high expectations of the people," the BJP leader said. The BJP's Delhi unit president Virendra Sachdeva said the decision on the chief minister would be taken by the party's central leadership, adding that all newly-elected MLAs were capable of discharging the duties assigned to them.

Senior leaders, including

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, had held consultations at the BJP headquarters on Saturday as well after Modi delivered a victory speech to jubilant party workers.
With the BJP making

impressive gains in every region and among most communities in the polls, it has been left with a wide pool of potential chief ministerial candidates.

The last BJP government in Delhi served from 1993 to 1998, marking this win as a significant comeback for the party. The BJP's victory marks the end of the Aam Aadmi Party's decade-long dominance in Delhi, signalling a major shift in public sentiment. The party's decisive win in the recent election comes after suffering losses in 2015 and 2020. With a strong mandate, the BJP is poised to implement its vision for Delhi, ending the Kejriwal-led governance era in the city. This landslide victory saw several prominent AAP leaders, including Kejriwal, former deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia, former minister Satyendra Iain, and Saurabh Bharadwaj, losing their constituencies.

## Atishi quits, Delhi Assembly

After the meeting, Senior AAP Leader and MLA-elect Atishi reaffirmed the party's commitment to serving the people and holding the BJP government accountable and said the AAP will play the role of a constructive opposition and ensure that the BJP pays ₹2,500 per month to women by March 8 as was promised by it, provides 300 units of free electricity and continues other facilities for the people. Kejriwal also held a meeting

with senior party leaders and which attended by MP Sanjay Singh, AAP's National General Secretary (Organisation) and MP Dr. Sandeep Pathak, Delhi State Convenor Gopal Rai, and

other key leaders. Discussions centered around future strategy, strengthening the party's role as a strong opposition in Delhi, and putting pressure on the BJP to fulfill all its promises. Arvind Kejriwal urged all party leaders to remain united in serving the people of Delhi

concerns. Meanwhile, rebel AAP leader

Rajya Sabha MP Swati Maliwal slammed outgoing Delhi CM after she was seen dancing post victory from the Kalkaji seat. "What kind of shameless display is this? The party lost, all the big leaders lost and Atishi Marlena is celebrating like this," Maliwal, once a close associate of Kejriwal, shared a video on social media of Ms Atishi celebrating her win with AAP

# Israeli forces begin to withdraw from key Gaza corridor

**AP** ■ MUGHRAQA (GAZA STRIP)

rsraeli forces began withdraw-Ling from a key Gaza corridor on Sunday, Israeli officials said, part of Israel's commitments under a tenuous ceasefire deal with Hamas that is moving ahead but faces a major test over whether the sides can negotiate its planned extension. Israel agreed as part of the truce to remove its forces from the 6 km Netzarim corridor, a strip of land that bisects northern Gaza from the south that Israel used as a military zone during the war.

At the start of the ceasefire last month, Israel began allowing Palestinians to cross Netzarim to head to their homes in the war-battered north, sending hundreds of thousands streaming across Gaza on foot and by car. The withdrawal of forces from the area will fulfil another commitment to the deal, which paused the 15-month war. However, the sides appear to have made little progress on negotiating the deal's second phase, which is meant to extend the truce and lead to the release of more Israeli hostages held by Hamas.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was sending a delegation to Qatar, a key mediator in talks between the sides, but the mission included low-level officials,

sparking speculation that it won't lead to a breakthrough in extending the truce. Netanyahu is also expected to convene a meeting of key Cabinet ministers this week on the second phase of the deal.

Separately on Sunday, the Palestinian Health Ministry said that a 23-year-old Palestinian woman who was eight months pregnant was fatally shot by Israeli gunfire in the northern occupied West Bank, where Israeli troops have been carrying out a broad operation.

The ceasefire is fragile and its extension is not guaranteed: Since it began on Jan 19, the ceasefire deal has faced repeated obstacles and disagreements between the sides, underscoring its fragility. But it has held, raising hopes that the devastating war that led to seismic shifts in the Middle East may be headed towards an end.

On Sunday, cars heaped with belongings, including water tanks and suitcases, were seen heading north through a road that crosses Netzarim. Under the deal, Israel is supposed to allow the cars to cross through uninspected, and there did not appear to be troops in the vicinity of the road.

Hamas spokesperson Abdel Latif Al-Qanoua said the withdrawal showed Hamas had "forced the enemy to submit to to discuss troop movement



A Thai hostage who was freed from Hamas, Sathian Suwannakham, center, hugs relatives upon arrival at Suvarnabhumi International Airport, in Samut Prakarn Province, Thailand, Sunday.

our demands" and that it thwarted "Netanyahu's illusion of achieving total victory". The Israeli officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity

because they weren't authorised

with the media, did not disclose how many soldiers were withdrawing. Troops currently remain along Gaza's borders with Israel and Egypt and a full withdrawal is expected to be negotiated in a later stage of the

During the first 42-day phase of the ceasefire, Hamas is gradually releasing 33 Israeli hostages captured during its Oct 7, 2023, attack in exchange for a pause in fighting, freedom

prisoners and a flood of humanitarian aid to war-battered Gaza. The deal also stipulates that Israeli troops will pull back from populated areas of Gaza as well as the Netzarim corridor. In the second phase, all remaining living hostages would be released in return for a complete Israeli withdrawal from Gaza and a "sustainable calm". But details beyond that are unclear and repeated stumbling blocks throughout the first phase and the deep mis-trust between the sides have cast doubt on whether they can nail down the extension. The truce faces many chal-

lenges, including Trump's Gaza proposal: Israel has said it won't agree to a complete withdrawal from Gaza until Hamas' military and political capabilities are eliminated. Hamas says it won't hand over the last hostages until Israel removes all troops from the territory. Netanyahu meanwhile is under heavy pressure from his far-right political allies to resume the war after the first phase so that Hamas, which carried out the deadliest attack on Israelis in their history, can be defeated. He is also facing pressure from Israelis who are eager to see more hostages return home and want to deal to continue, especially after the gaunt appearances of the

three male captives freed on Saturday stunned the nation. Complicating things further is a proposal by US President Donald Trump to relocate the population of Gaza and take ownership of the Palestinian territory. Israel has expressed territory. Israel has expressed openness to the idea while Hamas, the Palestinians and the broader Arab world have

rejected it outright.
The suggested plan is saddled with moral, legal and practical obstacles. But it may have been proposed as a negotiation tactic by Trump, to try to ratchet up pressure on Hamas or as an opening gambit in a bargaining process aimed at securing a normalisation deal between Israel and Saudi Arabia. That grand deal appeared to be rattled on Sunday as Saudi Arabia condemned remarks by Netanyahu who said Palestinians could create their state in that territory.

Saudi Arabia said his remarks 'aim to divert attention from the successive crimes committed by the Israeli occupation against our Palestinian brothers in Gaza, including the eth-nic cleansing they are being subjected to".

In an interview Thursday with Israel's Channel 14, Netanyahu said: "The Saudis can create a Palestinian state in Saudi Arabia; they have a lot of land over there."

Violence surges in the occupied West Bank: The war in Gaza, sparked by Hamas' attack that killed 1,200 people and saw 250 taken hostage, has killed more than 47,000 Palestinians according to local health authorities who do not differentiate between fighters and noncombatants in their count. Vast parts of the territory have been obliterated in the fighting, leaving many Palestinians returning to damaged or destroyed homes.

Violence has surged in the West Bank throughout the war and has intensified in recent days with an Israeli military operation in the north of the territory. The shooting of the pregnant woman, Sundus Shalabi, happened in the Nur Shams urban refugee camp, a focal point of Israeli operations against Palestinian militants in the territory. The Palestinian Health Ministry also said that Shalabi's husband was critically wounded by the gunfire.

The Israeli military did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Israel's Defence Minister Israel Katz announced on Sunday the expansion of the Israeli military operation, which started in the city of Jenin several weeks ago. He said the operation was meant to prevent Iran from establishing a foothold in the occupied West Bank.

## 40 held after violence, vandalism at Awami League leader's house

 $F_{\text{arrested in Bangladesh in an operation launched following a}}$ violent attack on a student group's activists during vandalism at an Awami League leader's house on the outskirts of Dhaka that left several people injured, according to a media report. Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus's government ordered "Operation Devil Hunt" on

Saturday after the attack on students and civilians in the Gazipur district on Friday

Superintendent of Police (SP) of Gazipur Chowdhury Jaber Sadek said that the 40 people were rounded up from parts of the district as part of the operation, United News of

Bangladesh reported. On Friday night, at least 14 evil forces. This operation is individuals, all belonging to the mobs out to vandalise and destroy all signs of deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina's Awami League party, were injured as they came under attack in Gazipur city's Dakshinkhan area. The violence occurred during the attack on the residence of former Liberation War Affairs Minister Mozammel Haque.

The injured were immediately taken to Shaheed Tajuddin Ahmad Medical College Hospital for treatment. Later, some of them were referred to Dhaka Medical College and

Citizens Committee held a day-long protest and rally in Gazipur. After the protest, a student was injured in a shooting by miscreants in front of the Deputy Commissioner's office around 6:30 pm. Home Affairs Advisor Md

Jahangir Alam Chowdhury has said that Operation Devil Hunt will be targeting those who seek to destabilise the country, stressing that the crackdown would continue until the "devils" are brought to book.

The operation is being jointly conducted by the Bangladesh Army, Air Force, and Navy, along with members of the police, Border Guard Bangladesh, Ansar, and Coast Guard.

Asked about the goals of the operation, Jahangir said, "What does 'devil' mean? It refers to aimed at those who try to destabilise the country, break the law, engage in criminal activities, and commit acts of terrorism."

Jahangir, a former military officer, added that those involved in the recent attacks on students in Gazipur would be brought to justice. "Many of those responsible have already been arrested. Those who haven't will be caught soon and we will ensure they receive the maximum punishment."

The Anti-Discrimination Student Movement leaders claim their activists went to the ex-minister's house to prevent In protest, the Anti- looting but were attacked by Discrimination Student miscreants. Saturday's incident

was part of the widespread violence that erupted across the country on Wednesday night over a live online address by Hasina. Mobs targeted supporters of the deposed prime min-ister and vandalised their homes and businesses in Dhaka and other cities.

Some media tallied about 70 attacks in at least 35 districts across the country since Wednesday. Protesters also set fire to the historic 32 Dhanmondi residence of Bangladesh's founding leader, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. It was from this residence that Rahman proclaimed the country's independence from Pakistan in 1971.

Hasina, 77, has been living in India since August 5 last year, when she fled Bangladesh following a massive student-led protest that toppled her Awami League's 16-year regime.

In a statement on Friday, Yunus called for "complete law an order" and an end to attacks on the properties of the deposed premier's family and leaders of her "fascist" Awami League. Former Prime Minister Khaleda Zia's Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) urged the interim government to curb "mob culture" and restore law and order, warning that failure to do so could lead to the reemergence of "fascist" forces. The party announced a series of rallies across the country starting on February 11, demanding effective measures to address the deteriorating law and order situation and push for an electoral roadmap.

### Two mass graves with 50 bodies of migrants found in Libya

T ibya authorities uncovered Lnearly 50 bodies this week from two mass graves in the country's southeastern desert, officials said Sunday, in the latofficials said Sunday, in the latest tragedy involving people seeking to reach Europe through the chaos-stricken North African country.

The first mass grave with 19 bodies was found Friday in a former than the characteristics of the country of the characteristics.

farm in the southeastern city of Kufra, the security directorate said in a statement, adding that authorities took them for

autopsy. Authorities posted images on its Facebook page showing police officers and medics digging in the sand and recover-ing dead bodies that were wrapped in blankets. The al-Abreen charity, which helps migrants in eastern and southern Libya, said that some were apparently shot and killed before being buried in the mass grave.

A separate mass grave with at least 30 bodies was also found in Kufra after raiding a human trafficking center, according to Mohamed al-Fadeil, head of the security chamber in Kufra. Survivors said nearly 70 people were buried in the grave, he added. Authorities were still searching the area.

Migrants' mass graves are not uncommon in Libya. Last year, authorities unearthed the bodies of at least 65 migrants in the Shuayrif region, 350 km south of the capital, Tripoli.

Kurds in Syria aim to keep

cultural rights gained in war

Libya is the dominant transit point for migrants from Africa and the Middle East trying to make it to Europe. The country plunged into chaos following a NATO-backed uprising that toppled and killed long-time autocrat Moammar Gadhafi in 2011. Oil-rich Libya has been ruled for most of the past decade by rival governments in eastern and western Libya, each backed by an array of militias and foreign govern-ments. Human traffickers have benefited from more than a decade of instability, smuggling migrants across the country's borders with six nations, including Chad, Niger, Sudan Egypt, Algeria and Tunisia. Once at the coast, traffickers pack desperate migrants seeking a better life in Europe into ill-equipped rubber boats and

other vessels for risky voyages on the perilous Central Mediterranean Sea route. Rights groups and UN agencies have for years documented systematic abuse of migrants in Libya including forced labour, beatings, rapes and torture. The abuse often accompanies efforts to extort money from

families before migrants are allowed to leave Libya on traffickers' boats. Those who have been intercepted and returned to Libya — including women and children — are held in government-run detention centres where they also suffer from abuse, including torture, rape and extortion, according to

### 7.6 magnitude earthquake shakes Caribbean

Mexico City (AP): A magnitude-7.6 earthquake shook the Caribbean Sea southwest of the Cayman Islands Saturday, according to the US Geological Survey, and some islands and countries urged people near the coastline to move inland in case of a tsunami.

The quake struck at 6:23 pm local time in the middle of the sea and had a depth of 10 kilometers, the USGS said. Its epicenter was located 130 miles (209 kilometers) south-southwest of George Town in the Cayman Islands.

The US National Tsunami Warning Center said there is no tsunami alert for the U.S. mainland but issued a tsunami advisory for Puerto Rico and the US Virgin Islands, which was later cancelled.

The sounding of alarms in Puerto Rico's northwest region caused people to leave coastal areas and caused heavy traffic. according to local media.

Hazard Management Cavi Islands urged residents near the coast to move inland and to higher ground. It said wave heights of 0.3 to 1 meter are expected.

Puerto Rico Gov Jenniffer Gonzalez Colon said in a statement she is in contact with emergency agencies after the tsunami advisory, but did not recommend anyone leave the coast.

The Dominican government also issued a tsunami alert and recommended residents on the coast move to high areas "of more than 20 meters of altitude and 2 kilometers inland." But it later canceled the alert.

### Trump's actions leave Afghans who aided US airstrikes in limbo

Tirana (AP): They helped the US military order airstrikes against Taliban and Islamic State fighters and worked as drivers and translators during America's longest war. They were set to start new lives in the United States. Then President Donald

Trump issued executive orders that put an end to pro-grammes used to help Afghans get to safety in America. Now those same Afghans, who underwent a yearslong background check, find themselves in a state of limbo. "I was shocked. I am still in

shock because I have already waited four years for this process, to get out of this hell and to get to a safe place and live in peace and have a new beginning," said Roshangar, one of the Afghans whose life was upended by Trump's action.

Roshangar requested that The Associated Press only use his first name because he was afraid of Taliban reprisals. He spoke in an interview from Afghanistan where he, his wife and son live in hiding, fearing punishment or even execution by the Taliban for his more than a decade-long partnership with American forces.

Roshangar served as a legal adviser to the Afghan Air Force, helping US officials review and eventually approve airstrike packages that were used against the Taliban and

the Islamic State group from 2007 until the fall of Kabul, the Afghan capital, in 2021.

"This was an unexpected move from Mr. Trump and everything went wrong and against us and leave us in severe danger under the Taliban regime," he said.

His family's experience is just one aspect of the fallout from Trump's orders, many of which were implemented without broad consultation with experts in the areas affected.

"It's an absolute stain on our national honour that we've pulled the rug out from under people who have patiently been awaiting relocation and those here in the US who have recently arrived," said Shawn VanDiver, a Navy veteran and head of #AfghanEvac, a coalition supporting Afghan reset-tlement efforts. "This is an imminently solvable issue and our national security demands we fix it."

During the US evacuation from Kabul in August 2021, American military planes airlifted tens of thousands of Afghans from the main air-

port.
But many more Afghans did not make it onto the planes. Since then, the US has had various ways to help Afghans emigrate to the US depending on what their role was in helping the US-led mission in Afghanistan.

Those path have been halted at this point.

### Trump's AI ambition, China's DeepSeek overshadow summit

**Paris (AP):** The geopolitics of artificial intelligence will be in focus at a major summit in France where world leaders, executives and experts will hammer out pledges on guiding the development of the rapidly advancing technology. It's the latest in a series of global dialogues around AI governance, but one that comes at a find the state of the stat

fresh inflection point as China's buzzy and budget-friendly DeepSeek chatbot shakes up the

US Vice President JD Vance making his first trip abroad since taking office — will attend the Paris AI Action Summit starting Feb. 10, while China's President Xi Jinping will be sending his special envoy, signalling high stakes for the meeting. Heads of state and top government officials, tech bosses and researchers are gathering in Paris for the two-day summit cohosted by French President Emmanuel Macron and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi.The event aims to address how to harness artificial intelligence's potential so that it benefits everyone, while containing the technology's myriad

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen is attending, along with officials and CEOs from 80 countries, including German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, OpenAI CEO Sam Altman, Microsoft President Brad Smith and Google CEO Sundar Pichai. Tesla CEO Elon Musk, who attended the inaugural 2023 summit at former codebreaking base Bletchley Park in England and DeepSeek founder Liang Wenfeng have been invited, but it's unclear if either will attend. Panel talks and workshops at the Grand Palais venue on Monday will be followed by a dinner at the Elysee presidential palace for world leaders and CEOs. Leaders and company bosses are expected to give speeches at Tuesday's closing session.

More than two years after ChatGPT's debut, generative AI continues to make astounding advances at breakneck speed. The technology that powers all-purpose chatbots is transforming many aspects of life with its ability to spit out high-quality text, images or video, or carry out complex

Qamishli (Syria (AP): Kurds in Syria were marginalised during five decades of Assad family rule, with many denied citizenship and wrongly described as Arabs. Now they are seizing the chance during the post-Assad transition to keep the cultural gains they made in the northeast enclave they carved out during the country's civil war.

Mothers can now give children Kurdish names. The Kurdish language is taught in schools. The new year, Nowruz, can be celebrated openly. The Kurds, one of the world's largest populations without a state of their own, have been feeling some control over their lives and want to make that permanent with a new government in

But that depends on Syria's new leaders, and the outcome of an ongoing conflict between the Kurds and Turkish-backed rebels that's been overshadowed by the dramatic shift from Assad rule. Two months of fighting have left scores dead on both sides.

We have made all these gains. There is no way we will abandon them, even over our bodies and the bodies of our children," said Amira Ali, a Kurdish woman from the northeastern city of Hassakeh whose husband is a member of the local police force known as "Asayish", the Kurdish term for security. Shortly after the uprising

against the Assad government began in 2011, the Kurds filled the vacuum created by the withdrawal of government forces from wide areas of Syria's northeast. The main Kurdish-led force now controls about 25% of Syria. An autonomous authority runs day-to-day affairs of the region that many Kurds call "Rojava Kurdistan" or "western Kurdistan".

Now Kurdish leaders are negotiating with the new authorities in Damascus on the future of their people, who made up 10% of the country's prewar population. They don't want full autonomy with their own government and parliament; they want decentralisation, room to run their day-to day-

The new authorities, however, are allied with the Turkish-backed armed groups that launched an offensive against the Kurds in December during the chaos around Assad's fall. The fighting between the Kurds and the coalition known as the Syrian National Army has forced about 100,000 people to flee their homes.

rights groups and UN experts.

The conflict has major implications for Syria's future as its new government, led by the Hayat Tahrir al-Sham former Islamist rebel group, tries to consolidate control and begin rebuilding after nearly 14 years of civil war.

Mazloum Abdi, commander of the US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces, the main Kurdish-led force, said the country should be a secular, civil and decentralised state that treats all citizens equally. Western countries have called on Syria's new rulers to respect minorities and women's rights. Abdi recalled the Syrian identity cards that described all its citizens as "Syrian Arab citizens," including non-Arabs like the Kurds. They want it to be changed to "Syrian citizens". "Kurds were persecuted by previous authorities," he said. He wants anti-Kurd laws to be abolished. Abdi and others point out that the Kurds played an important role in defeating

the Islamic State group as it

rampaged across Syria and neighbouring Iraq for years during Syria's civil war.

#### president, dies aged 95 Oshakati (Namibia) (AP): Sam Nujoma, the fiery white-beard-Africa.

Sam Nujoma, Namibia's first

ed freedom fighter who led Namibia to independence from apartheid South Africa in 1990 and served as its first president for 15 years, and became known as the father of his nation, has died. He was 95. Nujoma's death was announced

on Sunday by current Namibian President Nangolo Mbumba, who said Nujoma died on Saturday night after being hospitalised in the capital, Windhoek. "The foundations of the Republic of Namibia have been shaken," Mbumba said in a statement. "Over the past three weeks, the Founding President of the Republic of Namibia and Founding Father of the Namibian Nation was hospital-ized for medical treatment and medical observation due to ill health." Unfortunately, this time, the most gallant son of our land could not recover from his illness," Mbumba added.

Mbumba said Nujoma "marshalled the Namibian people during the darkest hours of our liberation struggle."

Nujoma was revered in his arid. sparsely populated homeland in southwestern Africa as a charismatic father figure who steered it to democracy and stability after long colonial rule by Germany and a bitter war of independence from South

He spent nearly 30 years in exile as the leader of its independence movement before returning for Parliamentary elections in late 1989, the first democratic vote in the country. He was elected president by lawmakers months later in 1990 as Namibia's independence was confirmed. Nujoma was the last of a generation of African leaders who brought their countries out of colonial or white minority rule that included South Africa's Nelson Mandela, Zimbabwe's Robert Mugabe, Zambia's Kenneth Kaunda, Tanzania's Iulius Nyerere and Mozambique's

Samora Machel. Many Namibians credited Nujoma's leadership for the process of national healing and reconciliation after the deep divisions caused by the independence war and South Africa's policies of dividing the country into ethnically based regional governments, with separate education and health care for each race. Even his political opponents praised Nujoma — who was branded a Marxist and accused of ruthless suppression of dissent while in exile — for establishing a democratic Constitution and involving white businessmen and politicians in government after independence.

### 25 killed in Mali gunmen attack

Gunmen have attacked a con-

voy of vehicles escorted by

Bamako

(Mali)(AP):

Mali's army, killing 25 civilians mostly gold miners, a military spokesman said Sunday. The attack took place Friday about 30 km from Gao, the largest city in the country's northeast where armed groups hostile to the ruling junta operate. It was the deadliest attack on civilians this year. The assailants targeted a convoy of some 60 vehicles escorted by the army, military spokesman Col Maj Souleymane Dembélé told The Associated Press. He said soldiers assisted the victims and transferred 13 wounded to the Gao hospital. He said four of the attackers were wounded and declined to comment on any army casualties."My sister survived the attack, but she's in a state of mental shock.

She saw a lot of dead and wounded, a whole scene of horror. It was the first time she had seen dead people," said a Gao resident, who spoke on condition of anonymity for his own safety. No armed group has claimed responsibility for

# **Government looking at procedural** easing to further promote FDI: Official

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The government is looking at further easing of procedures in certain sectors to attract more foreign direct investments (FDI) into the country, a government official said. The department for promotion of industry and internal trade (DPIIT) has held stakeholder consultations with different government departments, regulators, industry different associations, advisory and law firms, pension funds, private equity and

venture capitals. The department sought their views on ways to further attract foreign direct investments into the country.

"We have completed the consultations. The department has received suggestions on different issues. Things have not yet been finalised... Looking at easing of norms at the procedural front," the official said.

However, the official did not disclose the sectors where the government is considering the procedural easing. In the consultations, issues which were raised included permitting ecommerce players to receive FDI in inventory-based models of online trade for export purposes only; easing press note 3 by defining beneficial ownership; and some tweaking of the policy for single-



brand retail trading.

Under this press note, government approval is mandatory for investors from countries sharing land borders with India in any sector.

Foreign direct investment inflows into India have crossed the \$1 Trillion milestone in the April 2000-September 2024 period.

The key sectors attracting the maximum of these inflows include the services segment, computer software hardware. and trading, telecommunications, development, construction automobile. chemicals,

The investment in India rose by 45 per cent year-on-year to \$29.79 Billion in April-September this fiscal. Experts suggested that steps such as implementing time-bound approvals for FDI applications, clear guidelines for approvals, and a seamless singlewindow clearance system will help

climate for overseas players. "India's FDI inflows are largely into brownfield projects, but the real opportunity lies in greenfield plug-and-play expansion. A infrastructure ecosystem, coupled with streamlined land acquisition processes, efficient dispute

India further improve its business

resolution, and easy clearances can unlock India's full investment potential," Rumki Majumdar, Economist, Deloitte India, said.

Rudra Kumar Pandey, Partner, Shardul Amarchand Mangaldas, said that at present, the approval process for FDI often involves cumbersome bureaucratic procedures, creating an environment of uncertainties - as generally speaking the overall timeline goes beyond six months and in some cases even 9-12 months.

"This perception can be addressed by introducing greater transparency, particularly in the objectives and criteria the government considers when assessing FDI applications. Clear guidelines and timelines for approvals would help eliminate uncertainty, ensuring that investors feel secure and informed," Pandey

One of the most impactful reforms would be the introduction of "deemed approvals", he said, adding, deemed approvals, ne said, adding, under this system, FDI applications that are not processed within a specified timeframe would be automatically approved, thereby eliminating unnecessary delays.

Avimukt Dar, Founding Partner, IndusLaw, suggested the government provide clarity and alignment on the

meaning of beneficial owners under

Markets to track inflation data, global trends this week: Analysts

Tnvestors would track a host of macroeconomic data announcements scheduled this week, including inflation numbers, and also monitor global market trends, and trading activity of foreign institutional investors, analysts

The ongoing quarterly earnings announcements and the rupee-dollar trend would also influence the markets.

'This week is set to be dynamic for global and Indian markets, driven by key macroeconomic data releases and corporate earnings. Market sentiment will be shaped by inflation figures, industrial production data, and major earnings announcements," Master Trust Group Director Puneet Singhania said.

On Wednesday, the US inflation data for January will be in forms. Letters of be in focus. Later in the day, Fed Chair Jerome Powell's testimony will be closely watched for insights into interest rate expectations, Singhania said.

"For India, inflation and industrial production data will be released on February 12," he

On Thursday, the UK's GDP



growth data will be released and on Friday the US retail sales data for January will provide insights into consumer spending, Singhania said.

Corporate earnings will also drive market sentiment. Major companies reporting earnings include Eicher Motors, Grasim Industries, Vodafone Idea, Steel Authority of India, he added.

The BJP on Saturday trounced the Aam Aadmi Party in Delhi and returned to power in the city after more than 26 years, extending its saffron imprint and dealing a body blow to the Arvind Kejriwal-led party whose top leadership crumbled or barely made it. "The sentiments in the Indian market are slowly improving in response to an excellent

Budget and the rate cut by the MPC. The victory of the BJP in

long-term trend in the market will depend on the recovery in GDP growth and earnings recovery," V K Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist, Geojit Financial Services, said.

achievement for the ruling

dispensation. This is likely to

positively impact the market in

"However, the medium to

the short run.

Last week, the BSE benchmark climbed 354.23 points, or 0.45 per cent, and the Nifty went up by 77.8 points, or 0.33 per cent. Ajit Mishra, SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd, said, "Looking ahead, investor focus will shift to earnings and upcoming macroeconomic data, including IIP, Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation, and Wholesale Price Index (WPI) inflation, scheduled during the week

## Increase in MSME financing right step to boost biogas industry: IBA

loans, thus reducing financial

Additionally, the revised MSME classification criteria

allow for almost 2-2.5 times

higher investment and

now even the larger-capacity CBG projects are eligible for these incentives, it noted. While the recent Budget takes

adequate steps in supporting the MSME sector, inclusion of

specific policy measures for

the CBG industry would have

made it even more conducive

So, to foster the growth of the

biogas and CBG producers,

the IBA has already requested

the Indian government for

development of a framework

for the sector, it suggested.

barriers for the

developers, it pointed out.



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Indian Biogas Association (IBA) on Sunday said the proposed increase in MSME financing in the General Budget 2025 is a right step to boost biogas industry.

With a strong push for turnover limits as compared manufacturing, green energy, to earlier regime. and digital transformation, The amendment ensures that this Budget sets the stage for Aatmanirbhar and Viksit Bharat, an IBA statement said. From the standpoint of the fledgling biogas/CBG fledgling biogas/CBG (compressed biogas) industry, the announced increase to the MSME Credit Guarantee Scheme will significantly benefit the biogas industry, which often faces challenge in securing credit wireasonable terms, it noted.

By expanding the credit guarantee cover from ₹5-10

Crore, the scheme ensures

The policies further must include funding for collection of agricultural residues, subsidised transportation costs, and expansion of the

anti-crop burning scheme as that existing in Haryana to the rest of the country, it suggested. Investment would production through stimulated corporate tax holiday and, in turn, investment would boost

promoters to sell carbon credits in both international

and domestic platforms, enhancing financial viability

and aiding climate targets, it

employment and cleaner energy, it also suggested. Tax incentives would yield losses in the short-term, but with CBG producers, about commercial plants generating ₹1,200 Crore in

benefits. These steps will greatly sustainability, enhance economic development, and elevate India's clean energy standing, it said.

25, there will be long-term

recently Overall, the presented Indian Budget is a consumption-driven blueprint that gives the economy a much-needed push by increasing domestic demand, improving credit access, and encouraging entrepreneurship, it added. that allows the biogas plant

### Significant reduction in gold smuggling post July import duty cut, says CBIC Chief

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Gold smuggling has freduced significantly since July 2024 when the government slashed import duty on the precious metal to 6 per cent, Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) Chairman Sanjay Kumar Agarwal said. As per the latest available

data, Customs and DRI officers seized 847 kg of gold worth ₹544 Crore at various airports in the April-June period of the current fiscal. In July, the government reduced customs duty on gold to 6 per cent from 15 per cent.

"After the rate of duty was reduced on gold in the last year's budget, there is a significant reduction in the smuggling of gold," Agarwal told PTI in an interview. Although Agarwal did not reveal the quantum or value of gold seizures, he said authorities are keeping regular watch over the international processory. regular watch over the international passenger traffic, porous borders, and commercial cargoes coming into the country to cut the smuggling of narcotics through any route.

Smuggling is the secret movement of goods across national borders to avoid

national borders to avoid customs duties or import or

restrictions. typically occurs when either customs duties are high enough to allow a smuggler to make a large profit on the clandestine goods or when there is a strong demand for prohibited goods, such as narcotics or weapons.

The Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI), under CBIC, is the apex agency of the Indian customs in the field of anti-smuggling in

During the 2023-24 financial year, DRI officers alone seized 1,319 kg of gold and smuggling through India's porous eastern borders, particularly with Bangladesh and Myanmar, has also emerged as a major concern law enforcement agencies.

This is part of the 4,869.6 kg seized by the CBIC of gold of gold seized by the CBIC, including by Customs officers, in 2023-24. 1,922 persons were arrested by the CBIC during the year.

As per DRI's Smuggling in India Report released in Desember India has become

December, India has become a major destination for illicit gold imports, with gold and silver predominantly originating from Gulf states such as the UAE and Saudi make it a primary car, it is very important to provide a good Arabia, where these metals are sourced and available at after-sales support," Banerjee

## Maruti Suzuki plans to boost charging infra

Maruti Suzuki India aims to bolster charging infrastructure in the country before it drives in e VITARA with plans to establish the model as a primary vehicle in a household, according to a senior company executive.
The auto major also plans to

boost after-sales support, bring in a leasing model and more finance options to encourage customers to buy the model.

"One of the major concerns for the customer is the adequacy of the public infrastructure in terms of the chargers. So we are planning to have a fast charger at a frequency of 10 kilometers in the top 100 cities," Maruti Suzuki India (MSI) Senior Executive Officer (Marketing and Sales) Partho Banerie told PTI in an interaction. Currently top 100 cities in the country account for almost 97 per cent of the total EV sales,

he stated while elaborating on the plan. "We believe that the customer who will be buying the car will be moving out of the city as well so we want to make our e VITARA as the primary car, not the secondary car and to

said. As per the industry figures, electric passenger vehicles in the country today are mostly bought as a second or third vehicle in a household.

Banerjee said the auto major is planning to have 1,000 cities where it will be providing the EV after-sales support in case someone is having an emergency, he added.

"So this more or less covers the entire India. We want to make e VITARA as the primary car, then only the EV car penetration will go up," he stated. MSI unveiled the electric SUV

in the Bharat Mobility Global Expo. The e VITARA will first be

exported to a few key markets overseas before being put on sale in India.

The production of the model is expected to commence later this year at MSI's Gujarat plant which would also cater to all export markets.

"We are planning to have an overall ecosystem before we launch it here. When we started 40 years back, we first created the infrastructure, and then we started selling the product. So this time, also our thought is that when we start selling the product, the ecosystem should be in place," Baneriee said.

The company is also training mannower network with soft skills to handle customer queries regarding EVs, he said.
"Soft skills is an ongoing

thing, actually, that is more to do with the etiquette and how you handle the customer, but fundamentally, rightly said that it is very important that how we address the concerns and the query of the customers pertaining to the electric vehicle. So for that also, our work is going on," Banerjee noted.

## Saudi's USD 63-Billion giga project Diriyah sees keen interest from Indian investors

PTI ■ NEW DELHI/DAVOS

Several Indian firms have shown a keen interest in investing in Diriyah, a \$ 63-Billion Saudi Arabian giga project, while some big names like Tatas and Oberois having already signed up, its CEO Jerry Inzerillo said.

Diriyah, being billed as the City of Earth, is being built on the outskirts of Saudi Arabia's capital Riyadh and it will have homes for 100,000 people and office space for a further 100,000 plus.

This new city will include over 40 luxury hotels, more than 1,000 shops, over 150 restaurants and cafes, a university, arts and cultural coefficients. assets, museums, an opera house, a 20,000-seater multipurpose event arena, a golf course and an international equestrian and polo centre, among other facilities.

The \$63.2 billion real estate development and tourism project aims to restore the historic birthplace of the modern Saudi kingdom and the site includes the UNESCO World Heritage Site of At-

"At Diriyah we are keen to enhance the impact of India as one of Saudi Arabia's biggest trading partners, ranking among the top in bilateral



trade, with a trade volume of approximately \$52.8 Villion in 2022-23," Inzerillo told PTI. He was in Davos for the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting 2025.

Inzerillo said over 3,000 Indian companies are already operating in the Kingdom, contributing to sectors such as construction, IT, energy, and telecommunications, strengthening the economic partnership between the two

"Diriyah is very keen to work with firms here already and those based in India itself. This is a \$63.2 Billion project backed by the Public Investment Fund and it means the investment opportunities in Diriyah are countless and cover multiple asset classes,"

he said. "The scope for the Indian investment community and partners is enormous. Diriyah already has multiple partners on board from around the world, but there remains an

amazing array of opportunities for Indian companies and organisations across the full spectrum of urban development to partner with Diriyah," Inzerillo said. He said India is an important part of their global investment outreach strategy and they have hosted CEOs and founders of prominent companies in India, to showcase Diriyah and Saudi

Arabia. "There is already a lot of interest from Indian companies – especially the hotel sector with the Taj Hotel group set to open their 250th property here in Diriyah with 202 rooms.

'An Oberoi Hotel is being developed close to our new equestrian and polo centre and these two properties are among the more than 40 luxury hotels being built at Diriyah," he said.

Inzerillo said companies and investors from India can also benefit from a number of new investment packages tailored across various sizes and asset classes, including for mixed-use, residential, hospitality, office, education and healthcare assets.

"Given the size and economic impact India has in the Kingdom - we are confident that Indian firms will have a significant part to play in the continued success of The City

of Earth," he said. He said Diriyah will also have a major role in helping showcase Saudi Arabia in the most beautiful light for tourists from India and other countries.

"Two of our biggest attractions – the UNESCO World Heritage Site of At-Turaif and neighbouring Bujairi Terrace – are heavily featured and have welcomed over three million visits since opening just over two years

"For Indian tourists and others their journey into the Kingdom will typically start at Diriyah and we are confident that Indian visitors will play a major part in our anticipated 50 Million visits a year from 2030 onwards," he said.

### Ministry of DoNER working with Amazon, two other companies to boost Bamboo market: official

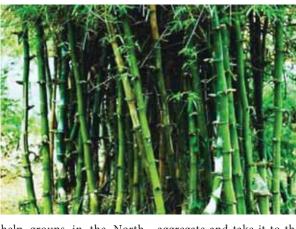
PTI CHENNAI

The Ministry of Development of North East Region would explore the market opportunities for Bamboo in domestic and overseas markets and it was working with Amazon and two other companies in this connection, a senior government official has

said.
Besides promoting Bamboo locally, the Ministry would also look for shipping them to neighbouring countries like Bangladesh, Myanmar, Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (MDoNER) Secretary Chanchal Kumar said Chanchal Kumar said.

At a recent roadshow in Chennai, Union Minister for Communications and Development of North Eastern Region Jyotiraditya M Scindia said nearly 38 per cent of the Bamboo was produced in the North Eastern States. This provides a huge opportunity for Chennai which has a huge furnitus industry, he said. furniture-making

"Today, we can grow that Bamboo, process it to manufacture furniture and export it (to other parts of the country). Right now, my Ministry is working with Amazon and two other companies to adopt self-



help groups in the North East. Starting with two states - Tripura and Nagaland, where we plan to do end-to-end value processing of Bamboo. So, the possibilities are endless," Scindia said.

In a brief interaction with Ministry's the Secretary Chanchal Kumar said the government intends Bamboo promote products in both domestic and overseas markets.

and overseas markets.

"We are going to market it.

Marketing can be domestic
and export. You have to
come with quality. These
companies will be helping
them (Self Help Groups in
North Fast) in designing North East) in designing world-class Bamboo items like furniture, and boards. So it will help the farmers

aggregate and take it to the end user. The entire value chain has to pick up," Kumar

Elaborating on the initiative he said that after the companies entered into a tie-up with the ministry, it (the ministry) will help the companies to market the

products easily.
"Once it captures the domestic market, then we will go international. The ultimate aim is to go to the markets of neighbouring including countries Bangladesh, Thailand, and Myanmar," he noted.

He underlined that the North East holds a majority of Bamboo resources in the country and offers a great opportunity to the furniture industry in Chennai.

### Narcotic drug seizure declines about 22 per cent in 2024

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Narcotic drug seizures have declined by about 22 per cent year-on-year to over 1,087 tonnes in 2024, government data showed. In 2024, 1,087 tonnes of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances (NDPS) worth ₹16,966 Crores were seized in 72,496 cases across the country. The Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) authorities had seized 1,389 tonnes of NDPS worth ₹16,123 Crore in over 1.09 Lakh cases in 2023.

To curb the smuggling of narcotics, the Customs Department is keeping a watch over international passenger traffic, porous borders, and commercial cargo coming into the country, CBIC Chairman Sanjay Kumar Agarwal told

"We keep on making the cases but the border is porous. We are able to catch (smugglers) but still a lot may be coming which may go unnoticed, said, without Agarwal disclosing the quantum of

seizures. As per the government data, in 2024 as many as 94.19 lakh narcotic drug tablets valued at ₹376 Crore were seized at ports in just two cases.

## vivacity vacity Wesself 11

Whole Foods

Whole Flavours

Must-Do Yogasanas

**BY YASH GUPTA** 

reathe in! Breathe out! As long as you live there are certain things that you cannot control but there are other things that you can control. Having control over your senses is considered one of the wealth and the path is through yoga.

Nadi Shodhan: The

pranayam, the instant

stress buster and

balancing the entire

thumb on your right

nostril and inhale

from the left press

the right exhaling

through the left.

the ring finger close

left nostril and release

breath, inhale through

the right, and exhale

body. Place your right

king of all the

The list of activities is forever going,

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



Tadasana: The most common asana for a healthy spine is the tadasana just be barefoot and balance your body weight on both legs equally, join the feet together and lock your fingers together, and stretch up lengthening your spine, come on your feet, lift your heels and hold the position. Keep breathing and after a while slowly come down, relax your feet and hand by the side.

Repeat 2-3 times. People with shoulder injuries can just lift the shoulder without raising hands and elderly people can also do it while sitting on a chair.

Yogic breathing: The most

breathing. Sit in an upright

Start breathing in slowly,

chest. Repeat 3-5 times.

not rush, the slower the

breathing process the

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

effective way to increase prana or

vital life force is the pranayamas,

simple yet effective and soothing

too. It is also known as conscious

position, relax yourself, and relax

your body, place one hand on your

expanding your chest and stomach

slowly, don't rush it and when you

Do not hold your breath and do

reach full capacity, even more

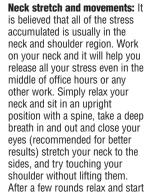
slowly release the breath slowly

contracting your abdomen and

chest and the other on your navel.

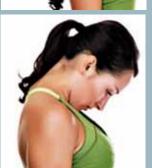


People having knee issues, can try pulling knees towards the chest while sitting on the cushion surface.



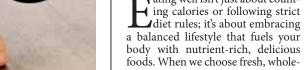
rotating your neck clockwise and anti-clockwise and open your eyes slowly. People sufferina from survival do it very gently and not more than two rounds.











body with nutrient-rich, delicious foods. When we choose fresh, wholesome ingredients, we not only boost our health but also enhance the flavours and textures of our meals.

ating well isn't just about count-

Whether you're looking to add more plant-based goodness to your

plate, experiment with creative ingredient combinations, or simply prepare meals that are both nutritious and sat-

isfying. From salads packed with fibber and antioxidants to hearty grains and protein-rich legumes, each dish is crafted to bring out the best in natural ingredients while keeping things easy, flavourful, and fulfilling.

These carefully curated recipes prove that healthy food can be just as your favourite comfort meals.

#### **Barley Salad With Chickpeas And Cherries**



#### Ingredients

**TEAM VIVA** 

- 1 cup hulled barley (uncooked)
- 14.5 oz can chickpeas, drained & rinsed 1/2 cup diced celery
- 1/4 cup chopped green onion 1 cup pitted & halved cherries
- 1/4 cup toasted slivered almonds 2 oz crumbled goat cheese

#### Dressing:

- 2 tbsp fresh lemon juice 1 tbsp white balsamic vinega
- 1 tbsp grape seed oil
- 1 tbsp Dijon mustard
- 1 tbsp honey

- 1/2 tsp kosher salt 1/8 tsp black pepper

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

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

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



#### Ingredients

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

#### Directions

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

 Serve at room temperature or chilled



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

psychiatrist, I have felt that self-care is a biological necessity as it has a direct relation to improving mental and physical Stress reduction: - When a person stays in persistent stress, the body's cortisol

levels rise, leading to poor sleep quality and anxiety too. But to alleviate stress, it's best to practice self-care activities such as deep breathing, mindfulness practices, exercise, etc. These activities are responsible for activating the

parasympathetic nervous system. Boosting up emotional health: The activities that are guided towards self-care are responsible for releasing the 'feel

good

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

**health:** Self-care activities are inclusive of a good quality night sleep, consuming a well-balanced diet, and engaging in regular physical exercise. They lay the foundation for a healthy mind and body.

■ Better decision making: When your mental health stays sound, it creates an opportunity to develop a recharged brain that is efficient in problem-solving and is more focused on chores.

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



about the self-care activity that you need the most and aligns with your lifestyle, values, and thoughts. You may need it in physical form such as exercise or sleep, emotional form such as therapy or

journaling, social form such as connecting with friends, and spiritual form like prayer, nature therapy, etc Wise choice - After identification of your

alignment with your personality. For instanceyou may prefer solitude or social gatherings as per vour nature **Building a routine:** After choosing the activity

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

Tracking progress: Keep a record of your selfcare activities and also reflect on your feelings post accomplishing them.

—Inputs by Dr Ashish Bansal, MD, Consultant Psychiatrist & co-founder of House of Aesthetics

in touch at vivacity@dailypioneer.com

## Real Madrid vs Atletico Madrid ends in 1-1 draw

ylian Mbappé scored in his first capital derby against Atletico Madrid as Real Madrid fought back for a 1-1 draw and kept its slim lead of the

Spanish league on Saturday. Next up for Mbappé and Madrid is a trip to Manchester City on Tuesday for the first leg of their Champions League knockout

round playoff.
Julián Álvarez put Atletico ahead from the penalty spot in the 35th minute. Mbappé equalised in the 50th for the hosts, which stayed one point ahead of Atletico in the

standings.
Jude Bellingham hit the crossbar with a header as Madrid searched for a second goal. Atletico goalkeeper Jan Olbak made saves to deny Rodrygo, Vinícius Júnior and Mbappé to split the points at the Santiago Bernabeu.

"We knew how to hang in there and had our chances," Álvarez said. "We are in the fight and will stay in it right to the end."

Atletico, which spent big last summer to acquire Álvarez and other reinforcements, is trying to add to league titles in 2021 and 2014 under coach Diego Simeone.

Barcelona, in third place, is five points behind Madrid before visiting Sevilla on Sunday.

Mbappé had missed the first Atletico derby of the season, a 1-1 draw in September, because of

First half to Atletico

A spate of injuries left Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti relying on a makeshift backline of Lucas Vázquez, regular midfielder Aurélien Tchouaméni, youth player Raul Asencio, and Fran

A reckless stretch of his boot by Tchouaméni that ended up tripping Samuel Lino was spotted by a video review referee and sent

Álvarez to the penalty spot. The former Man City striker gently stroked his penalty down the middle as Thibaut Courtois dived to his left.

Antoine Griezmann showed again his great value to Atletico with precision passing even under duress. The French midfielder twice placed perfectly weighted balls that left Álvarez and Lino in good position to get off shots inside the area, but clumsy touches by both ruined the opportunities.

"It is a draw that leaves both teams thinking they could have



said. "We had some situations that we lacked the clarity we needed to resolve better."

Second half to Real Rodrygo sparked the Madrid comeback just after halftime

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

Mbappé had missed the first Atletico derby of the season, a 1-1 draw in September, because of

injury. Madrid poured forward searching for a second goal with Atletico rattled. Vinícius dribbled

down the left side and scooped 14 consecutive rounds, dating woodwork.

Simeone changed both his full backs with Reinildo and Nahuel Molina in the 63rd, but Oblak still had to come to Atletico's rescue on three occasions.

"It is going to be a tightly contested league until the very end," Ancelotti said. **Changes for Man City** 

Ancelotti hinted that he will make changes to his starting 11 for City, most likely in midfield since he has few options in defense other than including Ferland Mendy, and will find it hard to touch his attack. That means that Dani Ceballos could likely make way for Eduardo Camavinga or Luka Modric. Former Madrid defender Marcelo was honored before kickoff after he announced his retirement this week.

Sancet hat trick

Oihan Sancet scored a hat trick to lead fourth-placed Athletic Bilbao's 3-0 rout of Girona as the Basque club moved to within one point of Barcelona.

Ernesto Valverde's Athletic, which only fields players from or near the Basque Country region a second time to treat recurring of northern Spain, hasn't lost in

the ball for Bellingham, who back to a defeat at Girona on smashed a header off the October 6.

Antony scores but Celta wins Antony scored his first goal since joining Real Betis on loan from Manchester United, but Celta Vigo rallied from two goals down to earn a thrilling 3-2 comeback

victory. Antony deftly curled in a shot from inside the box to put Betis ahead before Diego Llorente headed in a second goal in the 22nd.

Betis twice hit the woodwork before Fran Beltran started Celta's fightback with a powerful strike from outside the area in the 63rd. Javi Rodríguez scrambled in the equalizer before Williot Swedberg got the 87th-minute winner. Support for Kirian

Alejandro Baena and Ayoze Pérez scored in Villarreal's 2-1 win at Las Palmas.

The teams stopped playing momentarily in the 20th minute to join the fans in applauding Kirian Rodríguez, who wears No. 20, in a show of support for the Las Palmas midfielder. Rodríguez announced this week that he will be stepping away from soccer for

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

**PTI** ■ GALLE

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

Labuschagne flicked a delivery from retiring Sri Lankan player Dimuth Karunaratne to midwicket to complete the triumph, just 15 minutes before lunch on the fourth day.

It's Australia's first test series win on Sri Lankan soil since

Their last success here came under Ricky Ponting's captaincy, a 1-0 victory in 2011. However, they suffered a 3-0 whitewash in 2016 under Steve Smith's leadership, and the 2022 series ended in a 1-1 draw. This time, with Smith standing in as captain for Pat Cummins, the victory was a welcome redemption.

"I thought it was a real good series and we played well from the outset," said Australia captain Steve Smith, who was named Player of the Series after his consecutive hundreds. "Everyone had their methods and stuck to it over a long period of time and to score that many runs was great.

"All our spinners and lone quick Mitchell Starc did quite well. Been a great series win." Australia approached the series

with meticulous planning including a training camp in Dubai — and executed their strategies with precision.

Their batters laid the foundation with big hundreds, allowing the bowlers to dictate terms with attacking fields. Meanwhile, the spinners displayed remarkable discipline and variety, putting relentless pressure on Sri Lanka and paved the way for a resounding 2-0 series win.

The tourists had early, winning the first test by an innings and 242 runs – Sri Lanka's heaviest ever test defeat. They remained clinical in the second match, ensuring there was no way back for the hosts. Hosts unable to set a testing

target Sri Lanka resumed Sunday on 211-8, holding a slender lead of iust 54 runs, with much riding on vice-captain Kusal Mendis, who had remained unbeaten

overnight. Mendis brought up his second half-century in the game by guiding Nathan Lyon to deep cover but perished in the same over, caught at short square leg

by Steve Smith. The dismissal was a milestone moment - Smith's 200th Test catch, a feat previously achieved by only four players: Jacques Kallis, Mahela Jayawardene, Rahul Dravid,

and Ioe Root. Beau Webster wrapped up the

innings soon after, leaving Australia with a modest target of 75 runs.

Sri Lanka briefly found hope when Prabath Jayasuriya removed Travis Head (20) early, caught behind. However, Usman Khawaja (27 not out) and Marnus Labuschagne (26 not out) calmly guided the visitors home with an unbroken 37-run stand.

Alex Carey was named Man of the Match for his outstanding 156 and four dismissals behind the stumps. His innings stands as the highest score by an Australian wicketkeeper in

This victory marks Australia's fourth consecutive test win, having also won the final two matches of its recent 3-1 home series against India. It plays South Africa in the final of the World Test Championship at Lords in June.

Karunaratne farewell Sri Lanka slumped to its fourth straight defeat and marked a disappointing end for 36-yearold opener Karunaratne in his 100th and final test.

Very emotional day for me. It has been a long career," said Karunratne who scored 7,222 runs at 39.25 with 16 centuries. 'When I started my cricket, I Just wanted to play one test match. To go onto play 100 Tests was amazing.
"Playing cricket for so long has been a privilege.

# MI Cape Town wins maiden SA20 title

**PTI** ■ JOHANNESBURG

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

After finishing last in the previous two seasons, the Rashid Khan-led MI Cape Town hardly put any foot wrong in the third season. Rabada on Saturday night claimed 4/25 in 3.4 overs to

dismiss Sunrisers Eastern Cape for just 105 in response to MI Cape Town's 181 for 8 – the second-highest score in a SA20 final. Rabada was ably supported by player-of-the-match Trent Boult, who took two wickets

for just nine runs from his four overs, spin twins George Linde (2/20) and skipper Rashid Chasing 182, the Aiden

Markram-led Sunrisers, which had registered consecutive



wins over Joburg Super Kings and Paarl Royals in the last two matches, could not maintain the momentum and except Tom Abell and Tony de Zorzi, no other batter could live upto the expectations.
Leg-spinner Rashid, who had

surprised the cricket world by leading Afghanistan to the semifinals of the T20 World Cup last year, has added another feather in his already illustrious career.

Earlier, in the tournament, he became the highest wicket-taker in the

High on confidence after five wins on the trot before the final, MI Cape Town won the toss and chose to bat.

In-form Ryan Rickelton (33 off 15; 1x4, 4x6s) and Rassie van der Dussen (23 off 25; 2x6s) showed their intent from the onset, giving an aggressive start to MI Cape Town's innings.

Craig Overton bowled an economical first over in which only three runs came but in the second over Rickelton smashed sixes over deep third man and fine-leg besides a straight four over Marco Jansen's head.

Overton too was not spared as Van der Dussen hit a six over square leg while Rickelton continued his attacking game against Jansen by hitting two brilliant sixes in the fourth

But MI Cape Town suffered consecutive blows which gave Sunrisers a chance to make a comeback in the game.

Rickelton was the first to depart, deceived by a slower ball from Overton and Liam Gleeson took a fine catch. In the very next over, Liam Dawson dismissed Reeza

Hendricks, who failed to open his account. MI scored 52 runs for the loss

of two wickets in the Powerplay. The wickets stemmed the flow

of runs as left-arm wrist spinner Dawson gave only four runs in the seventh over. Van der Dussen looked uncomfortable from the beginning and was the next to depart stumped by Tristan Stubbs off Dawson in the

and had to leave the field.

Fast bowler Matt Henry chipped in with 3-55.

No. 10 batter Abrar Ahmed hit

an unbeaten 25 that included

three successive boundaries

Phillips unleashed his power-

hitting against Pakistan's two

### Shuttler Sindhu pulls out of **BAMTC 2025**

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

shuttler PV Sindhu has pulled out of the Badminton Mixed Asia Championships in China due to a hamstring issue, dealing a huge blow to the country's chances of improving the colour of their medal in the prestigious edition.

wo-time Olympic medallist

The tournament is set to be played in Qingdao from February 11-16 with the Indian shuttlers currently undergoing training at a camp in Guwahati. Besides Sindhu, the other leading players in the camp are Lakshya Sen, and HS Prannoy, along with the formidable doubles pair of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty. Sindhu was a part of the squad that won bronze in the previous edition of the tournament.

"It is with a heavy heart that I share I won't be travelling with the team for BAMTC 2025. While training on the 4th (February) in Guwahati, I felt a twinge in my hamstring. Despite my efforts to pu through with heavy taping for our country, an MRI has revealed that my recovery will take slightly longer than I initially expected," said the 29-year-old Sindhu in a post on 'X'. Sindhu has grappled with injuries since winning her maiden women's singles gold medal at the 2022 Commonwealth Games in Birmingham.

However, the star shuttler sustained a left foot stress fracture injury during the Games, which kept her out of all remaining tournaments in 2022, including the World Championships and the World Tour Finals.

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

### **New Zealand beat Pakistan ahead of Champions Trophy** Khushdil Shah in the outfield

**PTI** LAHORE

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

Phillips smashed an unbeaten 106 off 74 balls, including six boundaries and seven sixes, at a newly renovated Gaddafi Stadium. The No. 6 batter propelled New Zealand to 330-6 in its 50 overs on a flat wicket with Darvl Mitchell (81) and Kane Williamson (58) also getting the feel of the wickets for the upcoming Champions Trophy with half centuries.

In reply, Fakhar Zaman, playing his first international in more than seven months because of illness, made a belligerent 84 off 69 but the



rest of the top-order batters struggled against spin. Pakistan was bowled out for 252 in 47.5 overs. Perfect day

Phillips capped a perfect day by trapping Zaman leg before wicket with his off-spin and also took a brilliant diving catch to dismiss Babar Azam early in Pakistan's run chase. Babar struggled in his new role as opener in ODIs for the first

time since 2015 and scored a painstaking 10 runs off 23

New Zealand captain Mitchell

Santner (3-41) clipped the top-order with his left-arm spin while Bracewell took 2-41.

New Zealand, which is already sweating on the fitness of fast bowler Lockie Ferguson, had another injury scare when the ball hit Rachin Ravindra in the face as he misjudged a catch of premier fast bowlers – Shaheen Shah Afridi and Naseem Shah -- in the last five overs that cost the home team 84 runs. Pakistan, which lost the toss, had kept New Zealand in check at 246-5 before Phillips cut loose

off Henry

Phillips power

against the two pacers. Williamson, playing his first ODI since November 2023, took his time to settle down. He reached the slowest ODI half century of his career in 82 balls before he edged Afridi after sharing a 95-run stand with Mitchell.

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

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

The ICC event starts in Pakistan on February 19 with India playing all their matches in Dubai under a hybrid model agreement.

"India has the home advantage in Dubai, and it almost like every other team is playing an away match problem for the other teams, moreover, we don't have a lot for sure," Ashwin said on his of pleasant memories of

Youtube channel.

With the long-forgotten triseries making a return after a gap of many years, Ashwin wondered if India should also have played in a triangular tournament instead of a series against for better preparation before the Champions Trophy.
"Is this preparation with

England enough for the Indian team ahead of CT in Dubai? Should we have played a tri-series too? Pakistan, New Zealand and South Africa are playing in Pakistan conditions, which would help them in the CT. "India only played against against India. This is a England in India, and

playing T20s in Dubai. The toss becomes really crucial in Dubai. I think winning the toss becomes crucial." Ashwin said New Zealand,

despite the absence of the long-serving pace duo of Trent Boult and Tim Southee, who have quit playing the 50-over format, will pose a challenge to India. "After India, New Zealand is

one of the strongest teams in the Champions Trophy. Since the likes of Southee and Boult are not playing, there is a question mark about their bowling attack. Who will accompany Matt Henry? Will it be Will O-Rourke, who has the potential to be a runaway champion of next generation. Will it be Ben Sears? "They have an experienced



spin attack with Michael Bracewell and Glenn Phillips. Mitchell Santner is the captain, how is he planning to marshall his resources. New Zealand is definitely a strong team. They are one of the challengers to India." As far as Australia are



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

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

"Considering Australia have a few issues in their bowling department, a lot will depend on Smith's form and captaincy." Skipper Pat Cummins and

Josh Hazlewood were on Thursday ruled out of the Champions Trophy due to injuries. They are also without Mitchell Marsh, who is

grappling with a back injury and was ruled out of the tournament on January 31, and Marcus Stoinis, who announced on Thursday that Trophy. Will Smith, Head, he would be retiring from

ODI cricket, removing himself from the squad. Ashwin also expressed his excitement at the return of

tri-series tournaments after a

gap of many years.

Another moment happiness is the return of the tri-series. Yeah, there are bilateral series happening, including the India-England one. But it feels like England isn't playing serious enough cricket.

"In the recent series against Pakistan, England's template worked, and the absolutely trampled them. Brooke and Duckett scored heavily.

"I don't think the Champions Trophy in Pakistan will have such pitches. It will be far from easy for bowlers, and would be back to shooting blanks in the tournament. The great off-spinner, who

announced his retirement from international cricket during the Border-Gavaskar Trophy in Australia, added, "90s kids would definitely understand this fascination for tri-series.

"Now, South Africa, New Zealand, and Pakistan have decided to reignite the interest in the tri-series and organise a tournament. The revival of tournaments would breathe life into the ODI format that is gradually overlooked.

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

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