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INSIDE

WORLD 9
NETANYAHU THREATENS TO RESUME FIGHTING IN GAZA IF HOSTAGES AREN'T RELEASED ON SATURDAY

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SUPREME COURT SLAMS PARASITES

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

On political parties promising freebies ahead of polls, the Supreme Court (SC) on Wednesday said instead of bringing people into the mainstream for national development, Aare we not creating a class of parasites? A bench of Justices BR Gavai and Augustine George Masih said it would be better to make people a part of the society's mainstream and contribute towards national development. "Rather than promoting them to be a part of the mainstream of the society by contributing to the development of the nation, are we not creating a class of parasites?" it asked. Justice Gavai went on to add, "Unfortunately, because of these freebies, which just on the anvil of elections, are declared, like 'Ladki Bahin' and other schemes, people

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

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

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

government did not do anything or show concern for the poor was not in a good taste, the court added. Bhushan said as per a note placed before the bench, as on December 4, 2024, a total of 2,557 shelters was sanctioned by the States or Union Territories and 1,995 shelter homes were functional with a capacity of 1.16 lakh beds. He said a survey showed there were about 3 lakh urban homeless in Delhi alone. Bhushan said as per the Delhi Urban Shelter Improvement Board, the total capacity of the shelters was 17,000 persons of which only 5,900 such facilities had beds. The DUSIB counsel said the board had 197 shelter homes running in Delhi as on date with a total capacity of 17,000 persons. In the last four years, he said, the average maximum occupancy was 5,500 in all shelter homes. **Continued on page 8**



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

Modi, Macron walk together

PTI ■ PARIS

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

global issues, including the UNSC matters. French President Macron reiterated France's firm support for India's permanent membership of the UNSC. The two leaders reaffirmed their strong commitment to India-France Strategic Partnership while noting that it has steadily evolved into a multifaceted relationship over the past 25 years. Prime Minister Modi flew together from Paris to Marseille in the French Presidential Aircraft last evening and held discussions here on the full spectrum of bilateral relations and key global and regional issues. This was followed by delegation-level talks after arrival in Marseille. The two leaders reviewed cooperation in the strategic areas of defence, civil nuclear energy and space. They also discussed ways to strengthen collaboration in the fields of technology and innovation. **Continued on page 8**

UPSC updates registration system online

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) has introduced certain changes in its online application system for the civil services preliminary exam after aspirants complained of technical glitches while applying through it, according to an official notice. The Commission had recently extended the last date to apply for the civil services preliminary exam 2025 till February 18. The UPSC said in the notice that some entries have been made "editable" in the one-time registration for filling up of the online application. "In view of the queries/difficulties raised by the candidates in filling up the online application form for the civil services examination, 2025, the Commission has decided the following changes in the one-time registration (OTR) for filling up of the online application," it said. The candidates are "not allowed to make any change(s) in the columns relating to 'Name (as per Class X)', 'Date of Birth', 'Father's Name', 'Mother's Name', 'Mobile Number' and 'Email ID' in the OTR profile, the Commission said in the notice. **Continued on page 8**

MARKETS

SENSEX 76,171.08 ↓ -0.16%

76,600
76,400
76,200
76,000
75,800
75,600
75,400

12:00 pm 3:00 pm

1 US\$ = 86.87 INR

WEATHER

LUCKNOW
MAX 29.0°C(+3.5)
MIN 13.2°C(+2.9)



MAGHI PURNIMA: 2 CRORE DIPS

More than two crore devotees took a dip in the Sangam till 6 pm on Wednesday on the occasion of Maghi Purnima. With the 'snan' on Maghi Purnima, another auspicious day for holy bath, the month-long 'Kalpavas' will be ending and around 10 Lakh 'Kalpavasis' will start leaving the Maha Kumbh. The administration has requested them to follow traffic rules and use only authorised parking spaces. Overall since the start of the Maha Kumbh, over 47 crore people have taken a dip in the Sangam. The Maha Kumbh will conclude on February 26 with the final 'Amrit Snan' on the occasion of Mahashivratri. Meanwhile, Adityanath greeted everyone on the holy bathing festival while the UP government has also launched a safety drive for the pilgrims. **Detailed story on page 3**

Kerala ragging turns serious

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KOTTAYAM (KERALA)

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

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

Sajjan Kumar convicted for Sikh riots murders

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

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



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

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

incident." The conviction judgment said, "The complainant who witnessed the brutal killing of her husband and son can certainly not be expected to forget the face of the person who was instigating the mob to carry out the said killings and looting and her deposition in court fortifies her stand that it is accused who was not only present during the alleged incident but also instigating and leading the mob which resulted in commission of the aforesaid offences." The judge rejected Kumar's argument that the statement of the complainant couldn't be trusted as she named him belatedly and held at the time of the incident, she was not aware of the identity of the accused as she was admittedly new to the area and had never seen him earlier. **Continued on page 8**

CBI arrests DTC officials

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has arrested six officials of the Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC) on charges of corruption and bribery. This is the first major crackdown by the apex investigating agency in the national capital after the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) lost the recently concluded Assembly elections. Sources said, the arrests follow multiple complaints alleging widespread corruption in the department. The CBI launched a thorough surveillance operation to verify these claims before taking action. Upon investigation, authorities found prima facie evidence indicating corruption at various levels, leading to the arrests. The arrests are a part of a larger corruption case, which is being investigated by the CBI. The DTC has been in the eye of storm over allegations of corruption against its officials. The BJP had alleged a scam in the purchase of 1,000 low floor buses by DTC during the AAP Government in Delhi. The Chief Secretary of Delhi had then recommended the CBI to investigate the matter. The recommendation was approved by Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena. **Continued on page 8**

NEWS BRIEFS

Ram Janmabhoomi chief priest passes away

LUCKNOW: Acharya Satyendra Das, the chief priest of the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi temple, breathed his last at SGPGI, Lucknow. He had been battling health complications after suffering a stroke earlier this month. Despite receiving intensive care, doctors were unable to save him. His passing has cast a pall of sorrow over Ayodhya, where he had served as the chief priest since 1993. Over the decades, he became a symbol of devotion, witnessing the long and tumultuous journey from the Babri Masjid demolition to the consecration of Ram Lalla in the grand new temple. **Continued on page 8**

Tragedy unfolds in Jammu, humanity loses

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

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

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



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

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

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

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

Naik Mukesh Singh Manhas returned to his Army unit in the Akhnoor sector on January 28 after a two-week holiday for his ring ceremony. He too was constructing his home ahead of tying the nuptial knot. Naik Mukesh Singh comes from a family of patriots. His father Chagatar Singh served in the Jammu and Kashmir police while his younger brother is currently serving in the Indian army. Paying glowing tributes to Naik Mukesh Singh, former Sarpanch Mukhtiyar Singh remembered him as an enthusiastic cricketer, motivator, and always ready to extend a helping hand to the needy. Naik Mukesh was set to get married around April 20-21, the grieving father said, as his relatives and neighbors made a beeline in front of the house to convey their condolences. **Continued on page 8**

Mayawati expels Ashok, Nitin

Lucknow (PNS): Bahujan Samaj Party chief Mayawati has expelled Ashok Siddharth, father-in-law of her nephew and

the party's national coordinator Akash Anand, from the party. Mayawati gave this information by tweeting on the social media platform X on Wednesday morning. Along with Ashok Siddharth, the party has also shown the way out to former Meerut MP Nitin Singh. According to the party, both leaders were involved in activities like factionalism despite warnings. Mayawati tweeted, "Dr Ashok Siddharth, former MP and Shri Nitin Singh, district Meerut, who were in charge of the BSP especially the southern states etc, are expelled from the party with immediate effect in the interest of the party."

CLASSIFIEDS

NOTICE

I Chilikamma M/o Mr. Venkunaidu Mummina R/o Vil-Narasayyapeta ,PO & Teh-Chodavaram , Dist - Anakapalli ,State-AP,Pin 531036 have changed my name from Chilikamma to Mummina Chilikamma vide affidavit Dtd 11 feb 2025 before L.R. Narayan (advocate) Kanpur, U.P.

CLASSIFIEDS

NOTICE

I Maymunisa Bagam M/o Mr Kabeer Syed R/o Vil & PO-Chandole ,Teh-Pittalavanipalem, Dist-Bapatla,State-AP,Pin 522311 have changed my name from Maymunisa Bagam to Syed Maimunnisa vide affidavit Dtd 11 feb 2025 before L.R. Narayan (advocate) Kanpur, U.P.

CLASSIFIEDS

NOTICE

I have changed my name from Rumana Jabin To Rumana Jabeen Fatima for future purpose, Rumana Jabeen Fatima W/o Mohd Tariq R/o 105/659, Dipti Ka Parao, Chaman Ganj Kanpur

CLASSIFIEDS

NOTICE

I have changed my Son's name from VANSH VARMA To I S H A N V E R M A for all future purposes, His Aadhar card No.is.270207945778 which should be updated in his Aadhar card as Ishaan Verma.Sanjev Harilal Verma R/o Flat No.301, Sudha Shiv Greens, 127/457, W-1,Block Saket Nagar, Kanpur U.P. 208014

CLASSIFIEDS

NOTICE

My house No.95 -B, Situated Arazhi No.1137 Chandra Nagar Lal Bangla Kanpur Nagar ki Original Sale deed 15.12.1981 Registered book No.1 Zild No.3706 Page No.378/381 on Number 15759 with mussanna No.15760 Sub Registrar Kanpur Nagar is lost. It's use will be illegal. This property is going to mortgage in SBI Branch R.A.C.P.C. Code 05183 Kanpur. The inform of which was registered on LAR No.20250000105143. Jitendra Kumar Agarwal S/o Suresh Agarwal R/o 95 -C Chandra Nagar Lal Bangla Kanpur

CLASSIFIEDS

NOTICE

Griham Housing Finance Ltd , Kanpur Nagar inform the General public that Shop No.5, Sector 2 Lower Ground floor Premises No.365, Hairisganj, Canti, Kanpur Nagar built on the area of 24.49 Sq.M. is owned and the occupied by Rajesh Kumar Awasthi S/o Late Ram Kumar Awasthi. The Original Sale deed related to the said property dated 24.10.2002, which was executed by the previous owner Raghuvarj in favour of Mrs. Sneha Gupta and Vishal Gupta which is registered in the Sub-Registrar's Office Kanpur Nagar. On document No. 3466, has been lost by Rajesh Kumar Awasthi Somewhere and is not found despite a public notice. The boundaries of the said property are the following: North side: Road West Remaining part of house No.365, North Shop No.6, South Shop No. 4. If anyone receives it or it is mortgage if any financial institution,then inform the following address (District - Lucknow) by means of two sale deeds. After the said period, Griham Housing Finance Ltd. will not have any responsibility, Kuldeep Kumar Nigam, Advocate Main Gate Near Gawah Ghar, Civil court Compound Kanpur Nagar Mobile No.8009968582

CLASSIFIEDS

NOTICE

I Sunil Kumar Panda (Army No. JC857671K) R/o Sana Bazar, Ganjam,Chatrapur Odisha-761026 do affirm that in my army service record my mother's name was wrongly entered as Kamal Kumari Panda correct name Kamala Kumari Panda vide affidavit Dtd 03 feb 2025 before kanpur courts only.

CLASSIFIEDS

NOTICE

I have changed my name from Mohammad Hammad To Mohammad Hammad Husain for future purpose, Mohammad Hammad Husain S/o Mohd Tariq R/o 105/659, Dipti Ka Parao, Chaman Ganj Kanpur

CLASSIFIEDS

CHANGE OF NAME

I, hitherto known as Atikrpa Kaur D/o Jasbir Singh R/o 554/221 ka Chhota Barha, Arjun Nagar, Alambagh, Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh-226005 have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as Ashmeet Kaur.

PD(1479)C

Sant Ravidas emphasised karma, spiritual purification: Yogi

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath emphasised the importance of karma while addressing a programme at Ravidas Mandir in Jafar Khera here on the 648th birth anniversary of Sant Shiromani Ravidas on Wednesday. The chief minister paid floral tributes to the revered saint's statue and highlighted his teachings on spiritual purity and dedication to work. Chief Minister Yogi stated that Satguru Ravidas attained the pinnacle of success through the practice of karma. "He gave importance to karma. Our scriptures also emphasise the significance of performing one's duty. The Bhagavad Gita states Karmanye vadhikaraste Ma Phaleshu Kadachana — one must focus on action, not its rewards. Similarly, karma determines one's destiny," he remarked.



Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath pays tribute to Guru Ravidas on his birth anniversary in Lucknow on Wednesday

The chief minister further said that India could achieve its vision of becoming a developed nation by prioritising work. He credited Prime Minister Narendra Modi's commitment to 'Karma Sadhana' over the past 11 years for elevating India to the ranks of global leaders. The chief minister shared an anecdote about Sant Ravidas in Kashi, emphasising the power of spiritual purity. When invited to bathe in the Ganga, Ravidas, busy stitching shoes, asked a saintly associate to offer one anna on his behalf. During the offering, Maa Ganga miraculously accepted Ravidas' coin but not the saint's. Shocked, the saint asked Ravidas about this, to which he replied, "If the mind is pure, then Ganga is in the pot."

"His words highlighted that true spirituality lies in purity of heart and dedication to karma," he said. The chief minister also highlighted the ongoing Maha Kumbh in Prayagraj, describing it as a deeply spiritual occasion. "Since January 13, more than 47 crore devotees have taken a sacred dip in the Ganga, Yamuna and Saraswati confluence. This spiritual journey will continue until February 26, with millions more expected to participate in the coming days," he stated. Chief Minister Yogi stated that, in line with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision, the Bharatiya Janata Party-led dou-

ble-engine government has transformed Shri Govardhan, the birthplace of Sadguru Ravidas in Kashi. He highlighted major infrastructure improvements, including the construction of a grand statue, a public park, and a passenger rest house, along with the expansion of road connectivity from a single-lane to a four-lane highway. "Before 2017, there were no proper facilities. Today, over 1.5 to 2 lakh devotees can sit together in the park. We have also renovated the sacred sites of Maharishi Valmiki and Sant Tulsidas and are planning to introduce a ropeway system," he added. The chief minister assured the

temple committee that the state government is committed to the renovation of the Jafar Khera temple. "The government has already sanctioned Rs 1.06 crore for this project. There will be no shortage of funds and all necessary support for the beautification of the temple and other sites associated with Sant Ravidas Ji will be provided," he affirmed. Several prominent leaders and officials were present at the event, including Deputy Chief Minister Brajesh Pathak, Mayor Sushma Kharkwal, MLA Neeraj Bora, MLC Lalji Prasad Nirmal, BJP district president Vinay Pratap Singh, metropolitan president Anand Dwivedi, BJP leader Neeraj Singh, former Mayor Sanyukta Bhatia, UP Minority Commission member Sardar Parvinder Singh, math priest Nand Maharaj, Sant Ravidas Seva Samiti president Ramkhelawan, among others. Meanwhile, Political leaders across Uttar Pradesh also paid tribute to social reformer Sant Shiromani Guru Ravidas on his birth anniversary. Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav also paid respect on X, stating, "Millions of salutations to the great social reformer, Sant Shiromani Shri Guru Ravidas ji on his holy birth anniversary, and heartfelt best wishes to the people of the state." Bahujan Samaj Party president Mayawati also paid tributes to Sant Guru Ravidas. In a statement, she highlighted BSP's efforts in creating the Sant Ravidas district.

Cyber thugs behind mobile phone thefts and loots: Police

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The arrest of three members of a gang operating from three hill areas of Jharkhand has revealed that cyber thugs were behind the spate of phone thefts and loots. The gang used to withdraw money from the bank accounts linked with the looted and stolen mobile phones by retrieving the data from the hand sets. The three members of the gang were arrested in Lucknow. A team of cyber police station has started a manhunt to nab the other members of this gang. The cyber team has claimed that the other members of the gang will be arrested soon.

Cyber police station in-charge Brajesh Yadav said that nowadays a new modus operandi of cyber fraud has come to light — by stealing mobile phones. He said the gang was run by cyber thugs sitting in Jharkhand. Recently, Colonel Santosh Kumar Mishra's mobile was stolen while he was buying fruits near Bhimrao Ambedkar University in SGPGI police station area. After that, Rs 7.50 lakh was withdrawn from the accounts and credit cards linked to the SIM number in his phone. He lodged a report at the SGPGI police station. In Gomti Nagar Extension, businessman Ram's iPhone was stolen and lakhs of rupees were withdrawn in several transactions from the bank account linked with the mobile phone. Many similar complaints started coming to police stations, cyber cell and cyber police stations. The cyber team's investigation revealed that a gang from Jharkhand was involved in these thefts. The search for these cyber thugs has been intensified. After the arrest of two members of this gang by the SGPGI police on January 7, the cyber team is tracing the gang. According to the police, the cyber team started investigating the case on the complaint filed by the Army officer. The police later arrested three people. One of them was a minor. Seven stolen mobile phones were recovered from them. The minor caught along with Govinda Kumar Mahato and Suraj Nonia were residents of Teen Pahad village of Sahibganj in Jharkhand. They disclosed to the police that they send the data of the stolen mobile to their associates who withdraw money fraudulent from the bank accounts linked with the stolen phones. During interrogation, the accused told the police that their target were iPhones and other costly mobile phones and they used minors to steal them. After stealing or looting the mobile phone, the miscreants break the lock and iCloud lock of the stolen mobile phone and create a digital e-wallet of the bank account linked to the SIM in the phone and transfer the money to their account. They use an app for this. Police investigation revealed that after cyber fraud, stolen and looted mobile phones are sent to Nepal and Bangladesh and sold there. Due to this the police are not able to trace them. The cyber police station in-charge said that these people are very clever. To escape from the clutches of the police, they

Man duped of ₹14.34 lakh

Lucknow (PNS): Cyber thugs duped a young man working in a private bank of Rs 14.34 lakh by promising him a part-time job. When the man asked for his money, the thugs kept demanding money in the name of commission and then switched off their mobile phone. Cyber police are investigating the case on the complaint of the victim. According to the report, a girl, Riya, called Shubham, a resident of Vineet Khand in Gomti Nagar, in December 2024, and offered him a part-time job. When Shubham agreed to take up the job, she connected him to Deepti Sharma and Sunni Stuart on Telegram. Shubham said that after adding him to the group, the fraudsters asked him to send Rs 1,006 to a bank account. After that, they refunded his money and thus gained his trust. "After that, I made two more transactions on their instructions," he said. The victim said that later when the complicated and due to it, he committed a mistake due to which the money did not transfer in his account. He said on talking to Riya, he was told about the mistake and that to get the money transferred in his account, he had to transfer 14.34 lakh rupees in several transactions to different accounts using different methods. "My ID was created in the U-coin link in the fraudsters' app and in the app Rs 18.94 lakh were showing in my name. For the sake of that money, I kept transferring huge amounts to their accounts on their request," he said. Cyber police station in-charge Brajesh Yadav said that on the complaint of the victim, information was being sought about the cyber fraudsters.

commit fraud by sitting in boats in the river so that they can escape before the police arrive. Investigation has revealed that three hill villages in Jharkhand are on the banks of the river Ganga. Out of the 150 houses here, a hundred are involved in this kind of work these days. The main occupation of the people here is theft. With time, the people here started cyber fraud along with mobile thefts. This gang is operating in UP, MP, Rajasthan and Mumbai.

YOUTH DIES IN ACCIDENT
A motorcycle rider was fatally injured when he rammed his bike into a truck parked on the highway from behind in Harikansgarhi area of Mohanlalgarh. He was taken to a community health centre where he was pronounced dead. As per reports, Mukesh Kumar of Mawai in Unnao district, rammed his bike into a truck parked on the highway at Harikansgarhi in Mohanlalgarh on Tuesday. Mukesh was taken to CHC in a critical condition but he died on the way.

Woman held for stealing ornaments

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The police arrested a woman from Gorakhpur who had stolen jewellery worth Rs 70 lakh from a jeweller's shop in Chowk. After stealing the jewellery, the woman kept it at her acquaintance's house in Lucknow. The police also recovered the stolen jewellery. Krishna Rastogi runs a jewellery shop in Chowk Bazaar and deals in branded jewellery. The woman came to the shop on the pretext of buying ornaments at around 12:30 pm on Sunday. While selecting ornaments, she engaged the salesman in conversation and when their attention was diverted, she concealed some ornaments and left. Her picture was caught on the CCTV installed at the shop. When the salesman started putting the ornaments back in the showcase, he came to know

about the theft. Subsequently, a report was lodged with the police. With the help of CCTV footage, the police identified the woman Afsari of Rajhat in Gorakhpur, and arrested her. During interrogation, it was found that after stealing the ornaments, Afsari had kept them in the house of Chhunu of Sarai Agamir Chowk here. Police have recovered 629.6 grams of the stolen gold ornaments on the clues given by the woman.

police for the safe recovery of their daughter. A 17-year-old girl from Harikansgarhi area of Mohanlalgarh had left her house without informing anyone in the evening on February 4. During investigation, the police team of SHO Amar Singh, led by ACP Rajneesh Verma, found that the girl was active on Instagram. The police sent friend requests to the girl's Instagram ID from different numbers, which she accepted the next day. During the conversation, the police traced her location and recovered her safely.

EENAGER ACCUSED OF RAPING GIRL
A 15-year-old girl was raped by teenager in Chinhat police station area. The accused used to live on rent at the victim's house and became close to the girl. As their relationship deepened further, he raped the girl by promising to marry her. The accused later vacated the house to avoid the girl's family. After he vacated the house, the victim attempted suicide by consuming some medicines kept in the house. On coming to know about the incident, her mother filed a complaint against the accused. The victim's mother told the police that the accused sexually exploited her daughter by giving her false promise of marriage. She said the accused suddenly vacated the house on February 8 after which her daughter consumed medicines kept at home and disclosed the reason for her attempting suicide. Police said the statement of the teenager would be recorded in front of a magistrate and further action would be taken on the basis of investigation.

UP focusing on infrastructure, EoDB: Khanna

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Lucknow (PNS): Uttar Pradesh Finance Minister Suresh Khanna along with state Minister for Cooperation JPS Rathore released the State Focus Paper 2025-26 for the state of Uttar Pradesh at the state credit seminar organised by NABARD, UP Regional Office in the city. Khanna, in his address, stated that the government has been focusing on infrastructure, ease

of doing business and improvement in law and order situation to attract investments in the state. He said that after hosting the UP Global Investors Summit 2023, the state implemented more than 14,000 projects with an estimated investment of more than Rs 10 lakh crore in a short span of one year whereas more than Rs 6 lakh crore MoUs were in the pipeline.

Rathore, who was present on the occasion as a special guest, lauded NABARD's contribution in Uttar Pradesh towards promoting the agriculture and cooperative sector. The minister stated that the target of making India a developed country by 2047 can be realised with Uttar Pradesh playing a leading role. He impressed upon the importance of strengthening cooperatives and

PACS in the state for achieving this goal. Sonali Das, GM RBI, highlighted that capital formation in agriculture is crucial for attaining targets under the agriculture sector. She highlighted RBI's initiatives like Unified Lending Interface (ULI), RBI innovation hub for consent based, paperless and effective lending for the borrowers.

CITY BRIEFS



SHREYAS LOHIYA UP STATE TOPPER

Aakash Educational Services Limited (AESL), the national leader in test preparatory services, made an exceptional achievement in the Joint Entrance Examination (JEE) Mains 2025 (Session 1) when Shreyas Lohiya from Lucknow topped the state achieving 100 percentile in the first session of the examination. Atharva Gupta (99.95 percentile), Rishabh Patel (99.88 percentile), Shourya Gupta (99.82 percentile), were among 30 other students from Lucknow who scored above 99 percentile in the first session of JEE Mains 2025. These results highlight the

the best for the next steps in their journey."

UEI GLOBAL STUDENTS WIN PRIZES AND MEDALS

More than 400 students from nine states across the country participated in the three-day National Sports and Cultural Festival "Le Vitesse 2025" organised by UEI Global Education from February 6-8 in Jaipur. This festival reflects the vibrancy of Indian culture and traditions, in which students from all nine institutes of UEI Global, Lucknow, Agra, Ludhiana, Jalandhar, New Delhi, Chandigarh, Jaipur, Pune, and Trivandrum participated enthusiastically. In this festival, various sports competitions like football, cricket, volleyball, basketball, race, badminton, chess, etc. were held in the first two days, while on the third day cultural programs dance, singing, jam session and DJ gala night were organized. Apart from this, some competitions and activities related to hospitality were also organised. UEI Global Lucknow got first place in the country in volleyball, tug of war and 100 meter race men, second place in cricket, basketball, football and 400 meter relay race and third place in 100 meter race women, 200 meter race men and group dance.

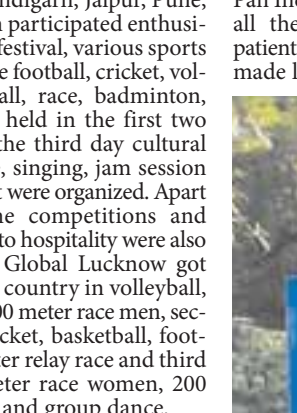
INDIAN BANK BRANCH INAUGURATED

Indian Bank MD & CEO, Binod Kumar inaugurated the bank's branch at the newly constructed Airport Authority of India premises in the presence of CGM Lucknow Sudhir Kumar Gupta, DGM Shyam Shankar, Zonal Head Lucknow Pranesh Kumar and other senior officials of Indian Bank. The new branch premises is at T3 arrival. The Med-Transit House in FGMO Lucknow campus was also inaugurated by him. This Med Transit House is one of the four Med transit houses to be opened Pan India. The Med Transit House has all the basic facilities required for patients. A new ATM machine was also made live in his presence.



Woman sets self on fire

Lucknow (PNS): A 22-year-old woman allegedly committed suicide by setting herself on fire following harassment and exploitation by her neighbour, police said on Wednesday. The victim, in her suicide note, accused her neighbour Rakesh Sharma of sexually assaulting her and extorting Rs 2 lakh from her by threatening to make her obscene photos and videos public. She was to get married on March 3 but the wedding was called off due to harassment by Rakesh and his parents.



PARADIP PORT AUTHORITY E-TENDER CALL NOTICE
No. EM/MCHP/Tender-01/25/53
Date: 10/02/2025
Name of the Work "Design, Fabrication, Supply, Erection and Commissioning of one no. of Stacker 4000 TPH Capacity". Estimated cost: Rs.55,10,00,000/- Last date & time of submission of bid: 12.03.2025 up-to 17:15 Hrs. Refer our website for details https://eprocure.gov.in/eprocure/app.
PPA/PR/2024-2025
11/02/2025
Executive Engineer (M) MCHP, PPA

OVER 1.60 CRORE TAKE HOLY DIP ON MAGHI PURNIMA



Devotees gather at the Sangam for the Maghi Purnima sacred bath during the ongoing Maha Kumbh Mela in Prayagraj on Wednesday. PTI

PNS/PTI ■ MAHAKUMBH NAGAR

Amid elaborate arrangements, over 1.60 crore people took a dip at the Sangam till 12 pm on Wednesday on the occasion of Maghi Purnima during the Maha Kumbh here, the Uttar Pradesh government said in a statement. The sacred bath began early Wednesday with Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath monitoring the event from Lucknow. With the Maghi Purnima bath, the month-long kalpavas also ended and around 10 lakh kalpavasis started leaving the Maha Kumbh mela area. The administration requested them to follow traffic rules and use only authorised parking spaces. While lakhs of devotees headed to the Sangam Nose to take a dip, the Uttar Pradesh government in a statement said that by 12 pm, 1.59 crore people had taken the ritual dip at the Triveni Sangam and other ghats. Devotees from across the country and abroad had started arriving at Mahakumbh Nagar on Tuesday night for the sacred Maghi Purnima bathing festival. In anticipation of the massive influx, Variable Messaging Displays (VMDs) were activated

across the mela grounds, providing real-time guidance and instructions to pilgrims. These displays played a crucial role in assisting devotees, ensuring a smooth and organised bathing experience at the Triveni Sangam. On the special directives of Chief Minister Yogi, the Mahakumbh Nagar administration had made extensive arrangements to accommodate the devotees, ensuring that no inconvenience was faced by them during their pilgrimage. Continuous announcements were made urging devotees not to linger on the ghats after their bath and to move towards their destinations swiftly. This streamlined the bathing process and enhanced crowd management during Maghi Purnima. Maha Kumbh Mela DIG Vaibhav Krishna says, 'Today is Maghi Purnima and more than one crore people have taken the dip. Our arrangements are quite good and police deployment is there at all places. Crowd is moving comfortably. Our SOPs are being followed.' Kumbh SSP Rajesh Dwivedi said, 'The movement of devotees is going on smoothly and we are taking care of all

(crowd) pressure points.' 'We have made elaborate arrangements during the previous 'snan' on Basant Panchami too. Our arrangements have been further augmented this time, he said. Talking about security arrangements in place for today's snan, the SSP said, 'More deployment has been done at all the pressure points. Along with that, we are briefing people to ensure a smooth movement.' Mahakumbh Nagar SSP Rajesh Dwivedi said aerial surveillance and strict anti-drone measures have been put in place to ensure safety. Meanwhile, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath greeted everyone on the holy bathing festival. 'Heartiest greetings to all the revered saints, religious leaders, kalpavasis and devotees who have come for the holy bath at the sacred Triveni in Maha Kumbh 2025, Prayagraj. May everyone's life be filled with happiness, prosperity and good fortune by the grace of Lord Shri Hari. May Maa Ganga, Maa Yamuna and Maa Saraswati fulfill everyone's wishes,' he said in the post. According to officials, the mela area was declared a 'no vehicle zone' from 4 am on Tuesday, while the entire city became a

'no-vehicle zone' from 5 pm onwards, with an exemption for emergency and essential services. To avoid traffic chaos, designated parking lots were marked for public and private vehicles. Prayagraj ADG Bhanu Bhaskar said special police forces were deployed at all places where crowd management becomes challenging. Srinivas, who has come from Andhra Pradesh to take a dip, said, 'It feels good. The UP government has made good arrangements. Many thanks to Yogi Adityanath and Prime Minister Narendra Modi.' Another devotee, Gayatri, said, 'I am very happy to be here at the Kumbh Mela on this auspicious occasion. The UP government has created a good atmosphere here. Actually being a Hindu, this is the first time I have really felt like an Indian. People have shown their religiousness and unity has been promoted.' The state Transport Department arranged 1,200 additional shuttle buses, which were available for the devotees every 10 minutes, the officials said. The Maha Kumbh will conclude on February 26 with the final amrit snan on the occasion of Mahashivratri.

Yogi supervises seamless crowd management

PNS ■ MAHAKUMBH NAGAR

The impact of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's monitoring was evident during the Maghi Purnima snan at Maha Kumbh 2025 on Wednesday, as massive crowds of devotees gathered for the holy dip. To ensure a smooth and memorable experience for the pilgrims, Chief Minister Yogi had issued clear directives, which were efficiently implemented on the ground. From the late hours of the night, officials remained actively engaged at ground zero, ensuring all arrangements were in place. While the police administration was fully alert to maintain the safety of the devotees, the Mahakumbh Nagar administration reinforced the ghats and managed water levels in the rivers to facilitate a hassle-free bathing experience. The well-coordinated efforts resulted in an orderly and spiritually enriching celebration for all pilgrims. Notably, Chief Minister Yogi started live monitoring of the Maha Kumbh Mela from the War Room at his 5 Kalidas Marg official residence at 4 am on Wednesday, along with senior officials. Accompanied by Director General of Police Prashant Kumar, Principal Secretary (Home) Sanjay Prasad and officials of CM Secretariat, he continuously reviewed live updates on TV, issuing necessary instructions in real-time. The chief minister assessed the overall security and logistical arrangements for the Maghi Purnima snan and ensured that devotees faced no inconvenience and were provided with optimal facilities. He also watched live footage of crowd movement, administrative coordination, and infrastructure management across Prayagraj, including Mahakumbh Nagar, ensuring a seamless experience for pilgrims. DIG Prayagraj Vaibhav Krishna shared details about the police administration's preparations for the Maghi Purnima bath. He stated that a large number of devotees were arriving for the holy dip, and the police were well-



Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath watches the Maghi Purnima Snan during the Maha Kumbh Mela on a screen from the War Room in Lucknow. PTI

prepared in advance. Their strategy had been successfully executed on the ground, ensuring smooth arrangements. According to him, everything was under control, with active measures in place for parking, traffic diversions and efficient crowd management. Devotees were following rules and regulations, which further contributed to effective crowd control. This time, security deployment had been extended to additional points to benefit the pilgrims. Additional Fair Officer Vivek Chaturvedi further provided insights into the administration's preparations for Maghi Purnima snan. He mentioned that the turnout for the sacred bath was unexpectedly high, with devotees contin-

uously arriving for the holy dip. Given the massive crowd, riverbanks had been strengthened, and water level management had been ensured. The water police had also set up barricades, and watchtowers and changing rooms had been reinforced. He added that a traffic diversion scheme was in place, with police forces stationed at all designated points. Special arrangements were also made to ensure that kalpavasis faced no inconvenience during their bath and return. To implement smooth traffic flow, effective crowd management, and tight security, teams of police and administrative officials worked with full dedication on the ground.

Flowers showered on devotees

PNS ■ MAHAKUMBH NAGAR

The Yogi Adityanath government upheld its tradition of showering flowers from a helicopter on the millions of devotees gathered at the Sangam banks for the main bathing festival of Maghi Purnima in Maha Kumbh 2025. From 8 am onwards, rose petals were showered on saints, kalpavasis and devotees taking a holy dip at various ghats. Witnessing the floral tribute, the devotees were overwhelmed with devotion and chanted 'Jai Shri Ram' and

'Har Har Mahadev' in reverence. Many expressed profound gratitude to the Yogi government for honouring their religious sentiments. As the sound of the approaching helicopter filled the air, devotees eagerly anticipated the divine shower. The first aerial floral offering took place at 8 am, covering almost all major ghats, with the maximum petals being showered at Sangam Nose, where lakhs had gathered. The helicopter made multiple rounds to ensure every devotee received the blessing, con-

tinuing the flower shower ritual. The tradition of aerial flower showers during Maha Kumbh bathing festivals has been integral to the celebrations. Following this custom, the Yogi government made the Maghi Purnima bathing festival a memorable occasion through its grand floral tribute. Under Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's directives, the Horticulture Department meticulously arranged around 20 quintals of rose petals for the event, with an

additional five quintals kept in reserve. This tradition has been observed throughout the ongoing Maha Kumbh 2025, with flower showers marking significant bathing festivals, including Paush Purnima (January 13), Makar Sankranti (the first amrit snan), and Mauni Amavasya (the second amrit snan). The tradition continued with grand floral showers on Basant Panchami (the third amrit snan) and Maghi Purnima, enhancing the spiritual fervour of the devotees.

Anil Kumble, wife take holy dip

PNS ■ MAHAKUMBH NAGAR

Former Indian cricketer and coach Anil Kumble took the holy dip in Triveni Sangam on the auspicious occasion of Maghi Purnima in Prayagraj. Accompanied by his wife, Chaitra Ramtirtha, Kumble immersed himself in the holy waters, embracing the spiritual significance of the occasion. Later, he shared photos of the event on social media platform X, captioning them with a single word: 'Blessed'. Through this simple message, Kumble expressed that the holy immersion had granted him spiritual merit and the blessings of Prayagraj. Anil Kumble, known for his masterful spin bowling, arrived in Prayagraj on Tuesday. However, he chose



Former Indian cricket captain Anil Kumble prays after taking holy dip at the Sangam on Maghi Purnima during the ongoing Maha Kumbh Mela in Prayagraj. PTI

the auspicious occasion of Maghi Purnima for his sacred dip at Triveni Sangam. On this day, no VIP protocols are observed at the Maha Kumbh, yet Kumble opted to join the devotees as a regular pilgrim. He boarded a boat to reach the confluence and took the holy dip, accompanied by his wife. The couple offered prayers to Lord Sun and performed traditional rituals before immersing themselves in the sacred waters. Kumble also captured the moment, sharing a selfie from the boat and the full moon on Maghi Purnima with his fans. The legendary cricketer appeared deeply moved by the grandeur and spiritual energy of the Maha Kumbh, embracing the divine experience with devotion.

Japanese cos set to invest in UP

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Vice Governor of Japan's Yamanashi Prefecture, Ko Osada, paid a courtesy visit to Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath here on Wednesday. During the meeting, Chief Minister Yogi and Vice Governor Ko Osada discussed four key areas, including investment opportunities in Uttar Pradesh. Ko Osada stated, 'Around 250 CEOs from Japan will visit Uttar Pradesh to explore potential investment opportunities. The Japanese delegation will assess the state's investment prospects, driven by its strong law and order, good governance and rapid economic growth. This initiative will also create significant employment opportunities for the youth of Uttar Pradesh.' He further emphasised his commitment to strengthening friendly relations between Yamanashi and

250 CEOs to visit state

Uttar Pradesh. A key focus of the discussions was green hydrogen. It was felt that a pact between UP and Yamanashi Prefecture will drive green hydrogen initiatives, including a Centre of Excellence, with Japanese technology at its core. Additionally, discussions were held on organising an international seminar that would bring together global experts and stakeholders in hydrogen technology. Yamanashi University will also offer students from Uttar Pradesh the opportunity to study industrial technology in the field of green hydrogen. Highlighting Uttar Pradesh's vast tourism potential, Ko Osada remarked, 'The Buddhist Circuit plays a crucial role in enhancing Japanese tourism in the state. A large number of devotees and

tourists from Japan are keen to visit significant Buddhist sites such as Sarnath, Kushinagar and Shravasti. Efforts will also be made to encourage people from Yamanashi Prefecture to visit these sacred places.' Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and Ko Osada also discussed employment opportunities for the youth of Uttar Pradesh in Japan, particularly in Yamanashi Prefecture. It was emphasised that young professionals from Uttar Pradesh would be equipped with the necessary Japanese language proficiency and specialised skills before being sent for employment opportunities in Japan. Additionally, Ko Osada stated that Yamanashi Prefecture would offer scholarships to students pursuing studies in the region.

Notice

notice is hereby given that the share certificates no(s) 23035 for 15 shares bearing distinctive no(s) 1154417-1154431 standing in the name(s) of GURMEET SINGH ARORA in the books of m/s MAHARASHTRA SCOOTERS LIMITED, has/have been lost/misplaced/destroyed and the advertiser has/have applied to the company for issue of duplicate share certificate(s) in lieu thereof. any person(s) who has/have claim(s) on the said shares should lodge such claim(s) with the company's registrars and transfer agents viz Kin Technologies Private Limited, selenium tower b, plot no: 31-32 gachibowli, financial district, nanakramguda, hyderabad - 500 032 within 15 days from the date of this notice failing which the company will proceed to issue duplicate share certificate(s) in respect of the said shares.

GURMEET SINGH ARORA
120/857 SURJEET NAGAR
HARIHAR NATH
SHASTRI NAGAR, KANPUR

Climate conclave at Maha Kumbh on Feb 16

PTI ■ LUCKNOW

Amid rising global concerns over climate change, the Uttar Pradesh government has decided to approach religious leaders for ways to deal with the climate challenge. The state government, in partnership with the International Forum for Environment, Sustainability & Technology (iFOREST), an organisation of scientists and environmentalists, will host 'Faith of Kumbh and Climate Change' at the Maha Kumbh on February 16 - a climate conclave featuring religious leaders and experts. When asked why religious leaders have been approached for the conclave, UP Chief Secretary Manoj Kumar said, 'Because these dharma gurus are thought leaders too who have the power to influence societal consciousness.' A session on the 'Role of religious leaders in environmental protection and climate change mitigation' would have experts discussing how 'thought leaders' can help find a solution to the vexed issue. Other topics like 'Role of gov-

ernments in promoting and backing faith-based organisations in climate action', 'Role of religious organisations in disaster relief, adaptation and mitigation', 'Water security and climate change', and 'Promoting Mission LiFE (Lifestyle for Environment)' would all witness religious leaders rubbing shoulders with experts. 'We have for long utilised religious leaders to influence minds for various causes. As DM of Aligarh and Moradabad, I remember taking the help of dharma gurus for their support on pulse polio. 'Now, what could be a bigger and better issue than climate change? These seers are repositories of ancient wisdom and knowledge, and we intend to gain from their insight,' Kumar said. The chief secretary further said many seers are going about this task quietly. 'For instance, I saw a seer at the Maha Kumbh reminding his followers that a holy dip would be meaningless if they threw plastic bottles and other waste in the river. So this seer deftly used his influence to

remind the devotees that *punya* would accrue only if they played a part in ensuring that the Ganga and other rivers flow clean,' Kumar said. 'The human disconnect with nature has led to issues like climate change, which means, with the right guidance, we have the power to reverse it too. It is here that these religious leaders fit in perfectly,' he added. Principal Secretary, Environment, Forest and Climate Change Department of UP government, Anil Kumar, said that the climate crisis is also a spiritual crisis because it indicates a human disconnect with the environment. 'This upcoming conclave seeks to bridge the sacred and the sustainable, recognising that faith communities - with their moral authority and grassroots connections - are indispensable allies in tackling the climate crisis,' the principal secretary told PTI. The unique get-together will see religious gurus like Swami Chidanand Saraswati, head of Pramarth Niketan Ashram, Rishikesh, Sister Manorama from Brahma Kumaris, Swami

Mukundananda, founder of Jagadguru Kripalu Yog Trust; and Acharya Hari Das Gupta from the Kailash Mansarovar suggesting the way ahead to tackle climate issues. Besides, Professor Chandramauli Upadhyay, Shri Kashi Vishwanath Temple, Varanasi, Swami Atmashradhananda, secretary of Ram Krishna Mission Ashram, Kanpur and Gaur Gopal Das, member of ISKCON will also attend the conclave. The experts who will participate in the meeting include Dr Chandra Bhushan, CEO of iFOREST, Dr Rajendra Singh, known as the 'Waterman of India', prominent academics like Upendra Tripathi of National Institute of Advanced Studies, Indian Institute of Science, Rajendra Ratnoo, National Institute of Disaster Management, and RR Rashmi from TERI. Besides, industry leaders like Amarendu Prakash, Chairman, Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL) and Anil Kumar Jain, Chairman, Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board (PNGRB) would be there too.

Op Chaturbhuj ensures safety of devotees

PNS ■ MAHAKUMBH NAGAR

A special security operation, 'Operation Chaturbhuj', was launched to ensure the safety of devotees during the holy bath, reinforcing stringent security measures. Additionally, a dedicated team from the Integrated Command and Control Center (ICCC) was crucial in establishing a robust security framework by leveraging advanced technology for comprehensive surveillance. Every aspect of safety, convenience, crime control, and crowd management from Tuesday night onwards was meticulously monitored. The ICCC oversees the mela grounds and the entire city through 2,750 high-tech cameras, an anti-drone system, and specialised security teams, ensuring round-the-clock vigilance. Senior Superintendent of Police Rajesh Dwivedi emphasised that 24x7 aerial surveillance is being conducted via drones, while special security arrangements at the ICCC have significantly enhanced crowd management. He added, 'Furthermore, the anti-drone system remains on high alert in Mahakumbh Nagar, actively preventing unauthorised aerial activity. On the auspicious occasion of Maghi Purnima, stringent measures were in place to detect and neutralise suspicious drones, ensuring an incident-free and secure environment for all devotees.'

IDFC FIRST Bank Limited
(erstwhile Capital First Limited, amalgamated with IDFC Bank Limited and presently known as IDFC FIRST Bank Limited)

Notice under Section 13 (2) of the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002

The following borrowers and co-borrowers availed the below mentioned secured loans from IDFC FIRST Bank Limited (erstwhile Capital First Limited, amalgamated with IDFC Bank Limited and presently known as IDFC FIRST Bank Limited) The loans of the below-mentioned borrowers and co-borrowers have been secured by the mortgage of their respective properties. As they have failed to adhere to the terms and conditions of the respective loan agreements and had become irregular, their loan were classified as NPA as per the RBI guidelines. Amounts due by them to IDFC FIRST Bank Limited (erstwhile Capital First Limited, amalgamated with IDFC Bank Limited and presently known as IDFC FIRST Bank Limited) are mentioned as per respective notices issued more particularly described in the following table and further interest on the said amounts shall also be applicable and the same will be charged as per contractual rate with effect from their respective dates.

Sr No.	Loan Account No.	Type of Loan	Section 13 (2) Notice Date	Outstanding amount as per Section 13 (2) Notice
1.	117351145	HOME LOAN	29.01.2025	13,31,907.83/-

NAME OF BORROWERS AND CO-BORROWERS: 1.VINOD KUMAR SRIVASTAV 2.SALONI PRIYA SRIVASTAVA

PROPERTY ADDRESS: ALL THAT PIECE AND PARCEL OF RESIDENTIAL PLOT NO. 02 (OLD NO.01), AREA 14 LINKS OR 56.7 SQ. MTR., WAKA MAJUA INDARPUR, PARGANA-MAU, TEHSIL-SADAR, DISTRICT-MAU, UTTAR PRADESH-275011, AND, BOUNDED AS: EAST: LAND OF SWATI KUMAR, WEST: LAND OF RAMASHANKAR, NORTH: LAND OF SANGRAM ETC., SOUTH: KACHCHA RASTA 12 FEET WIDE

You are hereby called upon to pay the amounts to IDFC FIRST Bank Limited (erstwhile Capital First Limited, amalgamated with IDFC Bank Limited and presently known as IDFC FIRST Bank Limited) as per the details shown in the above table with contracted rate of interest thereupon from their respective dates and other costs, charges etc. within 60 days from the date of this publication, failing which the undersigned shall be constrained to initiate proceedings, under Section 13 (4) and section 14 of the SARFAESI Act, against the mortgaged properties mentioned hereinabove to realize the amount due to IDFC FIRST Bank Limited (erstwhile Capital First Limited, amalgamated with IDFC Bank Limited and presently known as IDFC FIRST Bank Limited). Further you are prohibited under Section 13 (13) of the said Act from transferring the said secured assets either by way of sale/lease or otherwise.

Sd/- Authorized Officer
Date : 13.02.2025 IDFC FIRST Bank Limited (erstwhile Capital First Limited, amalgamated with IDFC Bank Limited and presently known as IDFC FIRST Bank Limited)
Place : MAU

Devotees celebrate Maghi Purnima, take dip in Ganga

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Lakhs of devotees took a holy dip in the sacred water of Ganga river on the auspicious occasion of Maghi Purnima on Wednesday. Crowds were seen at 85-odd Ganga ghats but famous ghats like Dashaswamedh, Sheetla, Ahilayabai, Man Mandir etc in the central part of this ancient city, Assi in the south and Bainsasur Ghat near Rajghat Bridge in the north, were more crowded. As huge crowds of devotees continued arriving here from Maha Kumbh in Prayagraj, this city of Dwadasa Jyotirlinga remained jam-packed throughout the day.



People gather at the Ganga Ghat on the occasion of Maghi Purnima in Varanasi on Wednesday

Right from the wee hours, despite cold weather conditions, devotees, majority of them women, started thronging different ghats. It is expected that Thursday will also see a rush when lakhs of devotees come here after bathing at Sangam during the ongoing Maha Kumbh. Elaborate security arrangements were made to avoid any untoward incident. The personnel of NDRE, PAC and Water Police were deployed to keep watch and avoid any untoward incident during the bathing. The Traffic police also made several restrictions to

check jams especially in the nearby areas of main ghats. After the bath, the devotees offered 'daan' to the beggars, Brahmins and other poor. The rush of devotees was also seen in Shri Kashi Vishwanath Dham as devotees in a large numbers reached there to offer prayers at this Dwadasa Jyotirlinga after taking holy dip in Ganga. Long queues of devotees was seen in the other temple premises. Meanwhile, activities of Namami Gange along with Vedpaathi Batuks and devotees

gave the message of cleanliness to devotees who gathered to bathe in the Ganga at Tulsi Ghat. They also offered *shramdaan* to collect wastes of garlands, flowers, polythene and other puja materials lying on the banks of Ganga and ensured proper disposal in dustbins. Regional coordinator Rajesh Shukla and others appealed to people through loudspeakers to keep the river clean. They also displayed placards and performed *aarti*. Shukla said by making Kashi and Ganga clean, we should

give the gift of cleanliness to our future generations. If the people of Kashi show their responsibility and sensitivity towards Ganga, then no one can stop it from becoming pollution-free. City co-ordinator Bina Gupta, Seema Srivastava, Ayushi Singh, Vikram, Satyanarayan, Bhanu Prakash and others also participated in the event. On Maghi Purnima, a campaign was also launched for the purification of Uttarvahini Maa Ganga at Rajghat under the joint aegis of Namami Gange Ganga Vichar Manch (Mahanagar Unit) and 137 CETF 39 Battalion Ganga Task Force. The team, led by the district coordinator of the Manch Shivam Agrahari and Ganga Task Force Subedar Devendra Basnet, stepped up public awareness campaign. An appeal was made to devotees to maintain cleanliness. The team members did voluntary work from Rajghat to Rani Ghat. A huge quantity of polythene, clothes, plastic bottles along with puja material wastes etc were taken out from the Ganga and sent for disposal with the help of Municipal Corporation. A number of army personnel and sanitation workers, including Rameshwar, Tipu, Rahul Bharti, Akhilesh were also present.

Lakhs gather at Seer Govardhan for Sant Ravidas Jayanti celebrations

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Lakhs of followers, mostly from Punjab, thronged Seer Govardhan, the birth place of great Dalit poet of medieval and Bhakti period, Sant Ravidas on the occasion of his 648th birth anniversary on Wednesday. The birth anniversary of Sant Ravidas is celebrated on the auspicious occasion of Maghi Purnima.



Sant Niranjan Das and others offering prayers at Shri Guru Ravidas Janmasthan Mandir in Seer Govardhan in Varanasi on Wednesday.

After a gap, the chairman of Shri Ravidas Janmasthan Mandir Trust Sant Niranjan Das arrived here from Jalandhar this time and inaugurated the function by hoisting the traditional flag. Last year, Sant Niranjan Das was unable to attend the celebrations due to illness when Prime Minister Narendra Modi, along with Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, inaugurated the statue of Sant Ravidas and several other projects which are expected to be completed by the 650th anniversary of Sant Ravidas. A festive atmosphere has been there in Seer Govardhan area near Banaras Hindu University (BHU) campus for the past many days and it is expected to remain so till February 14 when the followers gathered here from different parts of the country and abroad will start leaving for their destinations. Whenever the parliamentary or assembly elections are around the corner, politicians reach here to woo Dalit and Punjabi voters. The PM himself visited the temple thrice in the recent years while the Yogi several times since he assumed office as the CM. Punjab CM Bhagwant Maan and former CM of Delhi Arvind Kejriwal, Samajwadi Party (SP) chief Akhilesh Yadav, Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) president Mayawati, Congress leaders

Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi and others have also visited the place in recent years. This time too, several dignitaries, including chief of Bhim Sena, Chandrasekhar, attended the event. Various religious and other programmes, including the recital of Amritbani Paath, were held on the occasion. Thousands of people partook *prasad* in *langar*. The district administration has also made arrangements to provide all the basic amenities at Seer Govardhan for convenience of the followers of Sant Ravidas. The temporary tents have been erected at the birthplace and a grand water-proof *pandal* has been erected keeping the weather in mind so that the followers do not face any inconvenience. The road leading to Sant Ravidas Temple has been repaired and facilities of drinking water and others have been made there to facilitate the followers. The temple of Sant Ravidas was decorated with attractive lighting arrangements. In view of the birth anniversary of Sant Ravidas, the traffic diversion plan remained effective and ADPC (Traffic) Rajesh Kumar Pandey has appealed to the general public to cooperate in maintaining the smooth functioning

of the traffic system. No vehicle was allowed to go towards Sant Ravidas Temple from Bhagwanpur crossing, Ramna Chowki trijunction, Harsewanand crossing, Ramnagar, Nagwa sides etc. Festive atmosphere prevailed on the eve of festival when 2,100 lamps were lit by the supporters under the leadership of Mandeep Singh, representative of Sant Niranjan Das at Sant Ravidas Park in Nagwa on Tuesday evening. The festive mood and rush of followers was also seen at Sant Ravidas Temple at Bainsasur Ghat near Rajghat Bridge. It was attended by general secretary of Ravidas Smarak Society Ratan Lal Bagat, Dr Anshu Abhijeet, son of former Lok Sabha speaker, Dr Meera Kumar, who like her father and former union minister late Babu Jagjeevan Ram, often attended the celebrations at this temple and others. Besides, a special lecture was organised on the eve of the birth anniversary under the joint aegis of Malaviya Moolya Anusheelan Kendra (MMAK) and Inter-Cultural Studies Centre in BHU. The chief guest was eminent political thinker and former professor of Centre for Political Studies, JNU, New Delhi and former editor of 'Economic and Political

Weekly' Prof Gopal Guru. The topic of his lecture was 'Bhakti as a paradigm: From particular to universal'. He said we can see a mixture of faith and scientific consciousness in devotion. Faith includes trust and determination. Sant Ravidas talks about the ideal form of devotion, this is also important because a Dalit person is established and revered as a saint or ascetic. Sant Ravidas was a living symbol of the Indian renaissance who became the pioneer of a big social revolution. They are symbols of the dynamic action that came from the lower classes of India in contrast to the upper classes of Europe and became an important part of social consciousness. Sant Ravidas' Begumpura is a place which is beyond the boundaries of space and time. "The idea of Begumpura is a moral idealistic objective of Sant Ravidas, to achieve which all the people of the society should make a joint effort", he said. According to Sant Ravidas, Nirvana is not the attainment of a different world but creation of a more sensitive humanistic society in this world and his message is to create a compassionate human being, he said. After the lecture, Prof Guru answered various questions of audience present. The vote of thanks was proposed by Prof Sanjay Kumar. The seminar was conducted by Dr Abhilasha Kumar and was attended by BHU adviser Prof Kamalshree, Prof Archana Kumar, Prof P Dalai, Prof Shruti Ray Dalai, Dr Rahul Maurya, Dr Pramod Bagde, Dr Usha Tripathi, Dr Vipin Kadak, Prof AK Srivastava, Dr Omprakash, Dr Rajiv Verma, Dr Dharmajang, Dr Ramesh Lal and research scholars, Ananya, Lalit, Neha, Ranjit, Divyanshi and students.

Minister satisfied with facilities being provided to devotees in Kashi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Uttar Pradesh Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Stamp and Court Registration Fees Ravindra Jaiswal expressed happiness over the basic facilities being provided by the government, administration and local people to the devotees who are coming in large numbers to

this holy city in view of Maha Kumbh in Prayagraj. Jaiswal said the bathing of more than 46 crore devotees in Maha Kumbh is a proof of popularity of Sanatan faith. Attacking the opposition parties, he said they are nervous due to the turnout of more than 46 crore devotees at Maha Kumbh and are deliberately attacking Sanatan faith so that the votes of a particular class

can be secured. The minister said people of Kashi are considering it their good fortune to serve the devotees. "People of all classes have got employment from the large number of devotees who came during the Maha Kumbh, and their income has definitely increased", he said, adding that people of all sections are also providing hospitality to the devotees

who have come to Kashi. He especially emphasised that despite the increase in the number of visitors to Kashi Vishwanath Temple, the temple administration is providing better facilities to the devotees for worship. "Despite the large number of visiting devotees, the district administration has made the traffic system of the city has been made smooth," he claimed.

4 pilgrims killed, 17 hurt in mishap

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Four pilgrims, including the driver, died while 17 others were injured when their traveller bus going to Maha Kumbh collided with a pebble-laden truck on Kanpur Prayagraj highway in Fatehpur early on Wednesday morning. Police sent the injured to the district hospital. The district magistrate along with other officers rushed to the hospital and enquired about the condition of the injured. When the driver of pebble-laden truck slowed down the speed to turn on Baxar turn, the speeding traveller bus going

to Prayagraj from New Delhi carrying 21 pilgrims rammed into it on Dudhi Kagar Baxar turn under Kalyanpur police station area. The truck driver in an attempt to escape from the spot, kept dragging the traveller bus towards Prayagraj up to around two km and escaped by leaving the vehicle at a deserted spot. On getting information about the incident at 5.12 am, police rescued the pilgrims and sent them to the hospital.

Additional Superintendent of Police (ASP) Vijay Shanker Mishra said the truck had been impounded. It is suspected that the incident took place after traveller bus driver dozed off. A first information report (FIR) is being lodged in this connection and action is taken, he said. Vivek Singh (28) of Johnipur, Khajani Nagar, New Delhi, traveller driver

Vimal Chandra Jha (52) of Radhey Enclave, Mohan Garden, Uttam Nagar, New Delhi, Digambar Jha (70) and Prem Kant Jha (55) were killed in the incident. Jagannath, his wife Meera Devi (50) and Rita Devi (45) were referred to Kanpur's LLR (Hallet) hospital in view of their serious condition. The other injured included Satish Mishra (50), Bina Devi (50), Jai laxmi Devi (60), Vandana Jha (45), Manorama Jha (45), Anoop Kumar Jha (48), Rukmani (40), Saloni (48), Anurag (25), Anil Kumar (60), Anandi Jha (50), Shubham (25), Sana Devi (46) and Anuj Kumar Jha (40).



Tree plantation drive organised

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

To commemorate the centenary year of electric traction in Indian Railways, Central Organisation for Railway Electrification (CORE) is organising various programmes. A tree plantation drive was organised in the headquarters premises on Wednesday under the chairmanship

of General Manager Sanjay Kumar Srivastava. The objective of this important programme is to promote environmental sustainability and spread awareness about the importance of maintaining a green eco-friendly environment. Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) Yendra Kumar along with Chief Electrical Engineer (CEE/P&D) SS Negi, Principal Chief Signal & Telecommunication Engineer RN Singh and other officers and employees were also present and planted saplings which will strengthen the commitment of Indian Railways to reduce carbon footprint and increase greenery.

DEVOTEE DIES: A devotee coming from Bihar for Maha Kumbh died after falling from a train here on Wednesday. He was identified as AK Singh (46) of Paddalia Dumra in Rohtas district. The incident took place on the bridge of Tons river located in Katka village under the Karchana police station area,

Seminar ends

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

A two-day national seminar on 'Advanced Technologies to Enhance Productivity and Sustainability in Agriculture' organised by the Department of Agricultural Engineering, Institute of Agricultural Sciences, Banaras Hindu University (BHU), concluded on Tuesday. The event brought together leading experts, researchers and practitioners from across the nation to discuss cutting-edge innovations and strategies for enhancing agricultural productivity and sustainability. Organising secretary Dr Shrinivas DJ briefed about the seminar.

Naga sadhus of Juna Akhara take out Peshwai

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Naga sadhus and sanyasis associated with the largest Juna Akhara took out their first Peshwai (procession) carrying out their traditional flags here on Wednesday. About 2,000 Naga sadhus participated in the procession with pomp and show which was taken out from Baijnatha Japeshwar Mahadev Math to Hanuman Ghat Math. After the three 'Amrit Snan' (baths) of Maha Kumbh in Prayagraj, the procession of Naga sadhus came here and they are camping in Kashi. On the auspicious occasion of Basant Panchami, the camps of Akharas had started moving out from Maha Kumbh and after the Maghi Purnima bath, the stay of the rest of the Akharas will also end and after the spiritual rituals there, the next stop of the sanyasis and Naga sadhus will be this holy city of Lord Shiva, where they will visit and worship at Kashi Vishwanath Temple. The procession was taken out from from their Math in Baijnatha after offering prayers to their deity and taking *prasad* of *khichdi* under the leadership of Bhaala Nishan of Lord



Dattatreya of Juna Akhara. The procession reached the akhara at Hanuman Ghat via Kamachha and Bhelapur. In the procession, Naga sadhus performed stunts and light a fire to the tune of musical instruments like *bandbaja*, *magada* etc. The Naga sadhus and sanyasis of different akharas who came to Kashi have lit the fire (*dhuni*) on the ghats. Some have set up tents at Hanuman, Shivala, Chowki, Dashashwamedh and other ghats, while others are doing meditation. The procession of Shri Panchdashnam Aahwan Akhada will be taken out on February 18. It will go from Kabirchaura Math to the akhara at Dashashwamedh Ghat via Maidagin, Chowki, Godowlia with pomp and show.

GI expert awarded DLitt

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Eminent Geographical Identifications (GI) expert and social worker Padam Shri Dr Rajani Kant has been awarded Doctor of Literature (DLitt) (*honoris causa*) by Arunachal University of Studies. Dr Rajani Kant of Varanasi received the honours by Deputy Chief Minister of Arunachal Pradesh Dr Chowna Mein and Chancellor Dr Kamal Lochan at Arunachal University of Studies, Namsai (Arunachal Pradesh) on Tuesday.



GI expert Padam Shri Dr Rajani Kant receiving DLitt degree (honoris causa) in Arunachal Pradesh on Tuesday.

Dr Rajani Kant played an important role not only in providing GI certification to most of the traditional products and goods of UP but also in many states including Arunachal Pradesh. He also played an important role in helping the region of Purvanchal (eastern UP) to get maximum number of GI certificates. In the *honoris causa* DLitt certificate, the Vice-Chancellor has mentioned that Rajani Kant has been honored for his valuable contribution in the field of sustainable development, empowerment of weavers and artisans and dedicated efforts in GI and Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) in Arunachal Pradesh.

Rozgar Mela held

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

The Placement Cell, Juhari Devi Girls PG College and Employment Office jointly organised a Rozgar Mela. Chief Development Officer (CDO) Diksha Jain, who was also the chief guest inaugurated it by lighting the ceremonial lamp and offering flowers on the idol of Goddess Saraswati.

Secretary, Management Committee, Ashish Singh Chauhan delivered an inspiring speech. Principal Prof Ranju Kushwaha welcomed the guests and highlighted the importance of Rozgar Mela. Member of Placement Cell Dr Namrita Singh told about the event. Dr Shalini Yadav proposed the vote of thanks on the occasion.

Exhibition introduces art enthusiasts to Phad painting

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Dedicated to preserving cultural heritage, Sir Padampat Singhania Education Centre (SPSEC) has been at the forefront of pioneering workshops that explore and sustain indigenous art forms. Upholding this commitment to tradition, Shri Govind Hari Singhania Centre for Advanced Learning organised a month-long Phad painting workshop. It was open to school students, parents and residents of Kanpur, fostering a sense of collaboration and shared creativity. The exhibition introduced art enthusiasts to Phad painting, a 700-year-old Rajasthan folk art, offering an immersive and enriching experience. This elaborate narrative art form, originating from Bhilwara, Rajasthan, is renowned for its vibrant hues, intricate embellishments, and compelling storytelling. Under the guidance of Kalyan Joshi, an internationally acclaimed artist, the workshop was conducted by two distinguished resource persons - Chanchal Soni, a nationally acclaimed artist, and Harsh Joshi. The workshop mentored 500 students from classes I to XII along with participants from across the city, providing them a deep understanding of the rich artistic tradition. The Phad painting exhibition showcased the creations of the participants. The chief guest, Dr Prem Kumari Srivastava (MFA, PhD), Retired Associate Professor and Head of the Department of Drawing & Painting at DAV College, inaugurated the



exhibition. She commended the budding artists for their commendable creative endeavours, while the young participants were elated to receive appreciation from visitors. The event was graced by the presence of esteemed luminaries, including Parul Rajoriya and Preeti Jain, active members of the FICCI group, Renu Shah, a social reformer and passionate artist, Dr Raj Kumar Singh, an art enthusiast and Sumit Thakur, a renowned artist. These dignitaries engaged with the young artists and appreciated their artistic acumen and dedication. Principal Bhawna Gupta highlighted the significant impact of various art workshops hosted by school which have set a benchmark across the city. These workshops have enabled artists to hone their skills in Pattachitra, Cheriyaal, Madhubani, Warli and Gond painting under the expert guidance of renowned artists from West Bengal, Telangana, Bihar, Maharashtra, and MP. She reaffirmed the school's commitment to the holistic development of its students. Parents expressed gratitude to school management—Chairperson Manorama Govind Hari Singhania, Vice-Chairman Abhishek Singhania, Vice-Chairperson Varsha Singhania, and Vice-Chairman & Director Mr. Partho P Kar, for their unwavering dedication to promoting India's rich cultural heritage. Their visionary leadership has ensured that revered traditions such as Phad painting continue to thrive, inspiring future generations to embrace and celebrate the grandeur of Indian art.

Tunnel construction progressing rapidly

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

The tunnel construction work in the underground section of Corridor-2 (CSA - Barra-8) under the Kanpur Metro Rail Project is progressing rapidly. The 'Gomati' Tunnel Boring Machine (TBM) on the 'up-line' recently completed the construction of a tunnel approximately 620 metres long, moving from Rawatpur towards the Company Bagh Chauraha, up to the Corridor-2 depot ramp. Now tunnel construction is also set to begin soon on the 'down-line' of this stretch. The process of lowering all parts of the sixth TBM machine of the Kanpur Metro Rail Project (second of Corridor-2) into the launching shaft located near Rawatpur station has been completed. After the lowering of these parts, the assembly process of all parts and components of the TBM machine is now progressing rapidly. Managing Director of Uttar Pradesh Metro Rail Corporation Limited (UPMRC) Sushil Kumar

visited the under-construction stations during his trip to Kanpur on Tuesday and reviewed the progress of works related to various departments. The Rawatpur underground station being constructed under Corridor-2 (CSA - Barra-8) connected to the Rawatpur elevated station will be an important station linking both corridors of the Kanpur Metro. The work of D-wall lowering started here last April. Along with the station construction work being done through the Top-Down Method two launching shafts were also prepared here for tunnel construction. After being launched in the direction of Company Bagh Chauraha on the 'up-line' from here, the 'Gomati' TBM machine achieved its first breakthrough on January 23 this year by constructing a tunnel approximately 620 metres long. Now, the process of lowering all



parts of another TBM machine for tunnel construction on the 'down-line' of the same stretch has been completed. The lowering process which lasted for 14 days involved lowering the parts of the TBM machine into a launching shaft approximately 15 metres deep. First, the 'front shield' of this machine, weighing about 120 tonnes, was lowered, followed by the middle shield, cutter head, screw conveyor and other parts one by one. After lowering all parts of the TBM machine, they are connected with mechanical components, wires etc. After this the machine will construct a tunnel approximately 620 metres long from Rawatpur towards Company Bagh Chauraha up to the Corridor-2 depot ramp. MD Sushil Kumar visited the under-construction stations of Kanpur Metro along with Director, Works and Infrastructure, CP Singh, Director, Rolling Stock,

Naveen Kumar and other senior officials. Kumar said, "The Kanpur Metro team is fully committed to extending passenger service from Motijheel to Kanpur Central. All tasks are being carried out in a planned manner through mutual coordination and cooperation among various departments. The installation work for the tunnel ventilation system, third rail system, escalators, AFC gates, ticket vending machines etc., has already been completed at all five stations from Chunniganj to Kanpur Central. Construction work for the station and track on the Baradevi-Naubasta elevated section is also progressing rapidly. In Corridor-2 (CSA-Barra-8) the process of tunnel construction on the 'down-line' is about to begin. The lowering process of parts of the sixth TBM machine of the Kanpur Metro Project has been completed. I am confident that the pace of construction work on both corridors will continue like this and the dream of seamless travel by metro across the city will soon be realised."

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

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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



Photo: File photo

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

mitted. Gonsalves said Rohingya refugees resided in Shaheen Bagh, Kalindi Kunj and Khajuri Khas areas of Delhi. "In Shaheen Bagh and Kalindi Kunj they are residing in slums and in Khajuri Khas they are residing in rented accommodations," he had submitted. The top court had said it asked the questions to understand if they lived in camps, the nature



of relief would be different than the one mentioned in the PIL. The PIL has sought a direction to authorities to grant admission to all Rohingya children free of cost irrespective of Aadhaar cards and allow them to participate in all examinations, including Classes 10 and 12 and graduation, without government insistence on the ID proof.

India, France to develop modern nuclear reactors

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

"Prime Minister Modi and President Macron stressed that nuclear energy is an essential part of the energy mix for strengthening energy security and transitioning towards a low-carbon economy," according to the statement.

SMRs are compact nuclear fission reactors that can be manufactured in factories and then installed elsewhere. They typically have a smaller capacity than conventional nuclear reactors.

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



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

notably in relation to the Jaitapur Nuclear Power Project. They also renewed a memorandum of understanding between India's Department of Atomic Energy and France's Commissariat à l'Energie Atomique et aux Energies Alternatives of France, concerning cooperation with the Global Center for Nuclear Energy Partnership (GCNEP). Both the nations agreed to enhance collaboration in training and education for nuclear professionals.

Later on Wednesday, Modi is scheduled to meet US President Donald Trump, with nuclear power expected to be among the topics of discussion. India aims to generate 100 gigawatts of nuclear energy by 2047 as part of its transition to

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

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

India to host first Global Coalition for Social Justice

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

India is spearheading the first 'Regional Dialogue' under the Global Coalition for Social Justice and championing the key intervention "Responsible Businesses for Inclusive and Sustainable Societies" under the Coalition's thematic area of "Expanding access to and capabilities for Productive and freely chosen Employment and Sustainable Enterprises."

The Regional Dialogue will bring together nearly 80 Coalition partners from the Asia Pacific region and beyond to explore innovative approaches, exchange best practices, and strengthen collaboration to advancing social justice in the region.

The event will also mark the 74th Foundation Day of the Employees' State Insurance Corporation (ESIC), celebrating its unwavering commitment to ensuring dignified healthcare and economic security for India's workforce.

The ESIC Foundation Day is an occasion to recognize the vital contribution of the organization in fostering social justice through the extension of comprehensive social security benefits for workers and their families in the formal sector.

Discussions will focus on critical dimensions of social justice, including responsible business conduct and social protection, aligning with the Coalition's thematic priorities.

Ayush Ministry, social justice department sign MoU for senior citizens

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

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



Photo: File photo

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

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

lenges. "By leveraging the holistic approach of Ayush systems alongside social welfare initiatives, we aim to empower our senior citizens and those affected by substance abuse," the Minister stated.

While addressing the gathering, Union Minister of State for Social Justice and Empowerment B.L. Verma, said, "Under the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, our government has taken several steps to ensure the welfare of our senior citizens. The signing of the MoU with the Ministry of Ayush will benefit our senior citizens in a big way.

"The development of elderly-specific training modules, treat-

ment protocols, yoga training programs, sharing of preventive and curative practices, etc., under the MoU will go a long way in enabling our senior citizens to lead a healthy life. By joining hands with the Ministry of Ayush, I am sure that together we can provide comprehensive services to the community," Verma said.

By leveraging the strengths of Ayush systems, both ministries committed to working together on various initiatives, including awareness programmes, capacity-building for service providers and the establishment of geriatric health and addiction units under Ayush autonomous bodies.

Key objectives of the MoU include developing coopera-

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

Supreme Court denies Indrani Mukerjea plea to travel abroad

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

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



Photo: File photo

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

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

consider the request at this stage. We direct the trial court to expedite the hearing and conclude within a year," it said.

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

the trial had reached halfway with the examination of 96 witnesses. The counsel for Mukerjea, a former media executive, submitted she was given bail by the top court and 92 witnesses still remained to be examined in the case. She said the trial court was vacant for the last four months and the proceedings could take a long time to conclude.

The travel restriction matter came up in the Supreme Court after a special court on July 19 allowed Mukerjea's plea to visit Spain and the United Kingdom

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

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

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

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

A bench of Justices B R Gavi and Augustine George Masih heard the submission made by the Centre's counsel. Attorney general R Venkataramani and solicitor general Tushar Mehta appeared for the Centre and apprised the bench about the Unified Pension Scheme (UPS).

The matter relates to the applicability of the New Pension Scheme to the officers of the district judiciary. "It is the submission of the attorney general as well as the solicitor general that the Unified Pension Scheme may address concerns of all the employees, including the judicial officers," observed the bench.

The court therefore found it appropriate to defer the matter for some time to experi-

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

The case raises concerns over the disbursement of pension to officers of the district judiciary and retired high court judges. The top court is dealing with salaries, arrears and allowances of the officers of district judiciary.

The finance ministry notified the UPS on January 25 and it promises an assured pension of 50 per cent of the average basic pay drawn over the last 12 months prior to superannuation.

UPS would be applicable to Central government employees who were covered under the National Pension System and chose the option under the system, according to a gazette notification issued by the finance ministry.

UPS or assured payout would not be available in case of removal or dismissal from service or resignation of the employee, as per the notification published on January 25.

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

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

During the session, the actor shared her struggle with depression and also advised the students to learn to derive happiness from their own strengths.

"To manage stress, talk to your parents the night before exams. Identify the cause of your stress and express it to someone you can trust," she said during the interaction broadcast on Wednesday.

Eminent personalities like Boxer MC Mary Kom and spiritual leader Sadhguru have also shared their experiences and knowledge with students on key aspects of life and learning in different episodes of Pariksha Pe Charcha this year.

Padukone, who revealed her depression diagnosis in 2015, said there was a time when discussion around mental health was not encouraged in India.



Photo: File photo

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

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

light. From there, my journey towards mental health awareness began. Depression, anxiety, stress could happen to anyone, anytime.

"Like Shri Narendra Modi ji has mentioned in his book 'Exam Warriors' - express, never suppress'. When you're preparing for exams, you start feeling better. And you're able to live a happier, healthier life," she told students during the episode of the PPC session which was telecast on Wednesday.

Calling depression an "invisible" illness, the "Pathaan" star said there was a time she was working continuously and one day in 2014 she just passed out. It was

her mother, who was then visiting her in Mumbai from Bengaluru, who realised that something wasn't ok.

"They asked me if something happened, someone said anything to me, something happened at work. And, I said, 'No. I don't know what it is. I'm just feeling completely helpless and hopeless. I just don't want to live anymore. I was lucky in that moment that my mother realised and she decided to call a psychologist," she recalled.

When a student asked for tips to care for one's mental health, Padukone shared three pointers. "Sleep is very important. It is a

freely available superpower. You must go out for adequate sunlight and fresh air. Always reach out for help."

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



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Yunus Govt in the crosshair

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

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



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

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PICTALK



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

Mann ki baat: Leading the global revival of radio



SANTOSH MATHEW

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

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

In India, Mann Ki Baat is a testimony to the enduring power of radio. Launched in 2014, this monthly programme has transformed into one of the largest and most effective communication experiments in the world, reaching millions of listeners not just in India but globally. With an unparalleled ability to engage audiences through storytelling, Modi's initiative underscores the relevance of radio in an era dominated by digital noise. At a time when many predicted the decline of traditional radio, Mann Ki Baat has revived and redefined its significance.

The programme's strength lies in its simplicity and relatability. Every episode delivers not just policy discussions but also inspirational stories of common citizens, grassroots innovations, cultural heritage and national achievements. The 118th episode was no different, weaving narratives that resonated with the spirit of nation-building, environmental consciousness, and collective responsibility. Beyond its national appeal, Mann Ki Baat has become an instrument of India's soft power diplomacy. The global Indian diaspora tunes in eagerly, fostering a sense of connection with the homeland. The broadcast's reach extends beyond national boundaries, often being



translated into multiple languages, including regional South Asian tongues, strengthening India's diplomatic and cultural ties with neighbouring nations. As India emerges as a global leader, leveraging radio as a tool for soft power projection enhances its image as a nation that values dialogue, shared heritage and cooperation. South Asia, a region bound by deep historical, cultural, and linguistic ties, finds an unexpected bridge in Mann Ki Baat.

The programme's themes—self-reliance, community-driven initiatives, environmental sustainability and youth empowerment—are not just relevant to India but also resonate with India's neighbours. In an era where integration efforts in South Asia often face political roadblocks, the revival of radio as a medium of cultural heritage and ideological exchange holds immense potential. India's radio diplomacy, through Mann Ki Baat, can become a catalyst for fostering deeper South Asian engagement, promoting shared developmental narratives, and creating common aspirations among regional populations. The 118th episode once again demonstrated how radio can be used as a participatory medium. Modi's interactions with citizens, his references to



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

letters and messages from listeners, and his emphasis on people-centric governance make Mann Ki Baat an inclusive space for dialogue. Unlike social media platforms that are often fragmented and dominated by echo chambers, radio, through this programme, emerges as a unifying force that connects the masses uninterruptedly and intimately. From the fishermen in Tamil Nadu to the farmers in Punjab, from students in Meghalaya to entrepreneurs in Gujarat, Mann Ki Baat speaks to every Indian, transcending linguistic, geographic, and socio-economic barriers. It harnesses the power of storytelling to amplify the voices of unsung heroes, small businesses, and cultural custodians.

Radio has always been a tool of influence, but Mann Ki Baat takes it a step further by combining traditional broadcasting with modern digital integration. The program is simultaneously aired on multiple platforms, including community radio stations, AIR (All India Radio), podcasts, and social media channels. This hybrid model ensures that the message reaches every demographic, from the rural farmer with a transistor radio to the urban professional tuning in via a smartphone app. On World Radio Day, as global

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

(The writer is an Associate Professor Centre For South Asian Studies, Pondicherry Central University. Views are personal)

Breaking barriers: Building a future for women in science

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

In the 21st century, where scientific breakthroughs continue to shape our world, the persistent underrepresentation of women in science remains a glaring issue. Women have been at the forefront of some of the greatest scientific achievements across the globe in diverse fields from basic science to space science. Despite these inspiring role models, systemic barriers continue to stifle women's participation in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). It's time we confront these challenges and build a future where women can truly thrive in science. What kind of scientific world are we building if we exclude half of our population? Without the full participation of women, we lose access to a vast pool of talent, creativity, and innovative solutions that could address some of our biggest challenges. Many girls are discouraged from pursuing science from a young age due to stereotypes that frame these fields as "unsuitable" or "too difficult." The so-called "leaky pipeline" begins to take its toll as early



as high school, with fewer girls opting for science-related studies and careers. Even for those who break through these initial hurdles, the challenges persist in higher education and professional life. Women in research face a lack of mentorship, unequal access to funding and systemic biases in hiring and promotions. The numbers speak for themselves: UNESCO reports that only 35 per cent of STEM students globally are women, and their representation in leadership roles remains even lower. In India, the All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) confirms that while the number of women pursuing science has grown, their presence in top research positions and leadership roles is still dismal. Despite these odds, many Indian women scientists have

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

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

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



BIJU DHARMAPALAN

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

AI FOR PUBLIC GOOD

Madam — Artificial intelligence has become a truly global technology. The adoption of AI in healthcare, education, finance, labour and transportation is impacting society on a global scale while fundamental breakthroughs are being facilitated by research collaborations around the world. Its rapid deployment also creates major challenges in terms of the reliability of information, the protection of basic rights and accessibility. It is the international community's responsibility to maintain balance in our societies and to craft AI that respects universal values. The Paris AI Summit has been focused on several key themes related to opportunities, benefits and governance of AI.

Also, these themes include AI for public good, for global AI governance, for innovation and culture and for environmentally sustainable AI solutions. The aim of the summit is to strike a balance between technological advancement and the preservation of universal values. The Paris AI Summit is of significant importance for the future of AI due to its focus on global governance, accessibility and ethical development of AI. The AI Action Committee at Paris, co-chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, shed light on India and France's joint work in the five dedicated working groups to tackle key issues for tomorrow: Public interest AI, future of work, innovation and culture Trust in AI and global AI governance. The role of India in the Paris AI Summit is laudable.

A G Rajmohan | Anantapur

US TARIFFS ON ALUMINIUM, STEEL

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

Gandhi's insight on education



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

education by emphasising the importance of moral and ethical principles. He encouraged educators to teach values like truth, non-violence and respect for others. He felt that instilling these values in students would help them become responsible and compassionate individuals.

Gandhi described himself as a curious and eager learner during his student days. He valued education and believed that it was essential for personal growth. We have to apply Mahatma Gandhi's ideas on value education as a demand of time. Gandhi's unique and refined views about value education are not only important but are worth applying not only in India but also in the rest of the world.

Ranganathan Sivakumar | Chennai

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

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

N Sathasiva Reddy | Bengaluru

AFFORESTATION NEEDED TO SAVE FORESTS

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

the forest cover in the country. Already the country's forest cover has come down from the recommended level of 1/3 to 1/5 of the land area.

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

Dattaprasad Shirodkar | Mumbai

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FIRST COLUMN

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

RAJYOGI BRAHMA KUMAR NIKUNJ JI

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

The MBA dilemma: Why degrees alone no longer guarantee success



DINESH SOOD

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



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

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

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



WHAT USED TO BE A CLEAR, STRUCTURED CAREER TRAJECTORY FOR MBA GRADUATES—TYPICALLY LEADING TO CONSULTING, FINANCE, OR MANAGEMENT ROLES—IS NOW BLURRED

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

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

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

must evolve from a broad-spectrum business degree into a dynamic, skills-focused program that integrates emerging industry trends. A 360-degree approach should include everything from finance to marketing and HR.

MBA programmes must incorporate niche skills such as data analytics, digital transformation, sustainability management and entrepreneurship in beauty-wellness, the most emerging sector. Instead of theoretical coursework, there should be a stronger focus on apprenticeships, live projects and problem-solving in real-world business scenarios.

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

Redefining career success means placing equal value on all forms of work. Whether a person is an MBA graduate managing a corporate division, an AI consultant, a skilled tradesperson, or a self-employed barber, their ability to contribute meaningfully to society matters. The prestige of a job should be measured not by its title but by its impact and sustainability.

Parents, educators, and policymakers have a role in fostering this change. We must instil in young minds that success is not confined to traditional white-collar professions. Regardless of their chosen field, a skilled individual should be celebrated just as much as a corporate executive. If an MBA graduate decides to become an artisan,

a chef, a salon owner or a renewable energy technician, they should be seen as pioneers, not failures. **The Need for Institutional Change**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

In today's rapidly advancing healthcare landscape, Artificial Intelligence (AI) plays a transformative role, particularly in predictive healthcare. AI's ability to analyse vast datasets enables early disease detection, personalised treatment plans and improved patient outcomes. The global AI in healthcare market, valued at approximately \$15.4 billion in 2022, is projected to surge to \$187.95 billion by 2030, growing at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 37 per cent. Yet, with this potential comes a responsibility to ensure that AI is used responsibly, ethically, and equitably. Establishing a framework that prioritises privacy, fairness, transparency and accountability is essential to protect patient rights and



GERALD JAIDEEP

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

prehensive datasets, such as medical histories, genetic profiles, lifestyle information and real-time health data, AI can predict the likelihood of conditions ranging from diabetes and cardiovascular diseases to complex ailments like cancer and Alzheimer's. This shift from reactive to preventive care can ease the burden on healthcare systems and improve patient quality of life. For example, AI-based diagnostics for diabetic retinopathy have shown an accuracy rate of over 87 per cent, enabling early detection and timely intervention. Similarly, IBM Watson's Oncology AI has achieved 90 per cent accuracy in cancer treatment recommendations that align with those of human oncologists. However, to har-

ness AI's potential responsibly, it's crucial to address the ethical challenges it introduces. **Safeguarding Data Privacy and Security** The ethical use of AI in healthcare hinges on the responsible management of patient data. Predictive healthcare AI relies heavily on sensitive information, including medical, genetic, and behavioural data. Yet, the need for privacy is ever more pressing—72 per cent of Americans express significant concerns about data privacy in AI applications, particularly in healthcare. In 2022, nearly 50 million healthcare records were exposed to data breaches in the United States, underscoring the need for strong data security protocols. To protect this information, AI systems must



prioritise rigorous security measures such as encryption, anonymisation and regular audits. Patients should also provide informed consent, clearly explaining how their data will be used and stored. By centring data protection in AI development, healthcare can ensure patient confidentiality and foster the trust necessary for AI's

continued adoption. **Addressing Bias for Fair and Equitable Predictions** AI's reliance on historical data introduces the risk of bias, which can lead to predictions that disproportionately impact certain demographic groups. Research has shown that AI models trained on biased data result in 35 per cent more misdiagnoses for Black and Hispanic patients compared to white patients. In healthcare, such biases could exacerbate disparities for marginalised populations. Ensuring fairness requires AI systems trained on diverse, representative datasets, as well as continuous monitoring and adjustments to detect and correct biases. A study published in Nature Medicine found that AI systems trained on

inclusive datasets significantly reduce diagnostic discrepancies, underscoring the importance of inclusivity in training data. Collaboration with healthcare professionals and ethicists is also vital to developing AI solutions that are equitable and serve all patients effectively. **Promoting Transparency and Explainability in AI Models** The complexity of AI algorithms often results in "black box" decision-making, where the reasoning behind predictions is not fully understood by users or developers. In predictive healthcare, this lack of transparency can hinder trust and adoption among patients and healthcare providers alike. In a survey by the American Medical Association, 67 per cent of healthcare providers

expressed reservations about using "black-box" AI systems, highlighting the need for explainable AI. Currently, only 23 per cent of AI-based diagnostic tools meet explainability standards to ensure transparency. By developing interpretable models, researchers can make AI's decision-making processes accessible to healthcare providers, enabling them to communicate AI-driven recommendations clearly and fostering patient involvement in care decisions. As AI continues to advance, a strong ethical framework will be essential to uphold public trust and ensure that AI-driven healthcare remains a force for good.

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

Shiv Sena MLA switches to Shinde Sena camp

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI



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

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

A three-time MLA, Salvi will join the ruling Shinde Shiv Sena at a function to be held on Thursday.

After the recent Maharashtra Assembly polls – in which the Opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) constituent Shiv Sena (UBT) managed to win a meagre 20 seats out of the total 288 seats, there was

speculation that Salvi might join the BJP. However, a loyal Shiv Sainik has now chosen to join the Shinde Sena.

Informed sources in the Sena (UBT) attributed Salvi's decision to quit the party and join the Shinde-led Shiv Sena to the fact that the state Anti-Corruption Bureau had launched a probe into his alleged disproportionate assets, and he did not any future for himself in the crisis-hit Uddhav Sena.

Salvi had met Uddhav last month and explained to the latter the circumstances that led to his defeat in the State Assembly polls. He had told

the Sena (UBT) chief that some of the party men had worked against him in the polls, leading to his defeat. Fifty-nine-year-old Salvi, who had been elected to the State Assembly from Rajapur constituency in Ratnagiri district in 2009, 2014 and 2019, is a force to reckon with in the coastal Konkan region. He had chosen to remain with Uddhav Sena when rebel leader Eknath Shinde engineered a vertical split in the Shiv Sena and teamed up with the BJP to form a government in June 2022. After the Sena split, Salvi unsuccessfully contested the elections for the post Maharashtra Legislative Assembly Speaker against BJP's Rahul Narwekar.

In the 2024 State Assembly polls, Salvi lost to Shiv Sena's Kiran Samant, the brother of state Industries Minister Uday Samant, a close aide of Shinde by a margin of 19680 votes. Winning candidate Kiran Samant polled 80,256 votes as against 60,579 votes secured by Salvi.

Ram Janmabhoomi chief priest passes away

From page 1

For nearly three decades, Acharya Satyendra Das performed daily rituals for the deity, first under a makeshift tent and later in the temporary temple. His dedication remained unwavering through political storms, court battles, and the eventual construction of the temple. When the Ram Lalla idol was finally consecrated in its grand sanctum, it was the culmination of a journey he had been part of since the beginning.

Champat Rai, General Secretary of the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra, along with other temple officials, expressed deep sorrow. "His

contribution to the temple's spiritual foundation is immeasurable. He dedicated his life to Ram Lalla, and his absence will be deeply felt," said Rai.

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, who had visited him in the hospital days before his passing, called his demise an "irreplaceable loss to the spiritual world." Religious leaders, devotees, and members of the temple trust have paid their respects, acknowledging his role in preserving the temple's traditions and rituals.

Acharya Satyendra Das's journey from praying before a deity housed under a tent to witnessing the completion of one of India's most significant religious landmarks will

forever remain a part of the Ram Janmabhoomi's history. His legacy, however, will live on in the temple he served so faithfully.

Acharya Satyendra Das' life was deeply intertwined with the temple's historic transformation, from a makeshift structure to a magnificent shrine.

For over three decades, he stood as the guardian of Ram Lalla's rituals, offering prayers through Ayodhya's most defining years. His journey was not just one of devotion but also of witnessing history unfold before his eyes.

With his passing, an era comes to an end, but his unwavering faith and service to Shri Ram will continue to inspire generations to come.

Sajjan Kumar convicted for Sikh riots murders

From page 1

Kumar was convicted under IPC Sections 147 (rioting), 302 (murder), 308 (attempt to commit culpable homicide), 323 (voluntarily causing hurt) 395 (dacoity), 397 (robbery, or dacoity, with attempt to cause death or grievous hurt), 427 (mischief causing damage to the amount of fifty rupees), 436 (mischief by fire or explosive substance with intent to destroy house, etc), and 440 (mischief committed after preparation made for causing death or hurt) aside from other provisions.

"It is only when she was going through magazine after 1.5-2 months of the incident, that upon seeing the photograph of the accused, she was able to recall that it was Kumar who was leading and instigating the mob on November 1, 1984. The version of the Complainant and her narration of the incident is natural and believable," said the court.

Kumar is currently lodged in

Tihar Jail serving a life sentence handed down by the Delhi High Court in 2018 in a case related to the killing of five Sikhs at Raj Nagar Part I in Palam Colony on November 1-2, 1984, and the burning down of a gurdwara in Raj Nagar Part II.

The trial court had reserved the order after hearing the final arguments in the case last December. The conviction order is another significant milestone in the decades-long pursuit of justice for the victims of the anti-Sikh riots.

Though the Punjabi Bagh police station had initially registered the case, a special investigation team later took over the investigation. The SIT alleged that Kumar, who was then the Congress MP for Outer Delhi, led a mob that burnt alive the two Sikh men-Jaswant Singh and his son Tarundeep Singh-and destroyed and looted their houses acting on his directions. The SIT was represented in the court by Additional Public Prosecutor

Manish Rawat.

Kumar's counsel Anil Kumar Sharma, Anuj Sharma and Apoorav Sharma argued that the complainants, the wife and the mother of the victims, had claimed to be an eyewitness in the case after a long delay of seven years and that their testimonies were therefore unreliable. The complainants were represented by senior advocate H S Phoolka and advocates Kamna Vohra and Gurbaksh Singh.

Widespread riots broke out in Delhi and other parts of the country after then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi was assassinated by two Sikh bodyguards in retaliation for her order for the Army to storm the Golden Temple at Amritsar in June 1984 to flush out militants.

According to a report of the Nanavati Commission, constituted to probe the violence and its aftermath, there were 587 FIRs filed in Delhi in relation to the riots that saw killings of 2,733 people. Of the total, about 240

Delhi HC refuses petition on freebies

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday refused to entertain a petition challenging promises made by political parties to distribute cash to voters ahead of the upcoming Delhi Assembly elections, noting the Supreme Court was already hearing a similar issue.

The plea was filed by retired Delhi High Court Justice SN Dhingra. A bench of Chief Justice D K Upadhyaya and Justice Tushar Rao Gedela asked the petitioner, a retired judge, to move the apex court which is hearing the matter on two aspects -- distribution of freebies to voters and if it amounted to corrupt practices.

"There are two aspects, freebies and whether it amounts to corrupt practice.

This matter is already pending in the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court has taken up both the issues... You better seek implementation there and assist the court there," it said. It said there couldn't be parallel litigations on one issue.

The bench went on, "Essentially the subject matter of this PIL petition is already engaging the attention of the Supreme Court and accordingly, we are not inclined to entertain this petition at this stage." The court however said the petitioner had raised an "important and larger issue".

The petitioner's counsel sought to withdraw the plea and was allowed by the bench. Former Delhi High Court judge SN Dhingra, who is the petitioner, objected to the announcement on "freebies"

by political parties and said the entire election process was in violation of the law laid down by the Supreme Court.

Though the plea was filed days before Delhi elections, it came up for hearing on Wednesday. His counsel said the petition also raised another issue of collection of data of voters by political parties for the purpose of distribution of freebies.

The counsel for the Election Commission of India (ECI) submitted that the Supreme Court was already considering the issue of freebies in the Ashwini Kumar Upadhyay case.

Dhingra, in his plea filed as the president of organisation Samay Yaan (Sashakt Samaj), said schemes like AAP's Mukhyamantri Mahila Samman Yojana, BJP's Mahila Samridhi Yojana and Congress

Pyari Didi Yojna, gave direct cash benefit to women post polls and violated the election laws, amounting to "bribe in the form of election promises".

"The ECI has consistently emphasised that political parties and candidates must refrain from making promises that are akin to bribery or undue influence on the voters under the pretext of welfare schemes. These guidelines aim to ensure a level playing field among contestants, uphold the integrity of elections, and safeguard the principles of free and fair elections," said the plea.

Seeking a declaration that such cash-oriented schemes were unconstitutional and against the spirit of free and fair elections, the plea sought it to be classified as "election manipulation".

Khan alleges being framed

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

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

Tragedy unfolds in Kashmir, humanity loses

From page 1

Referring to the service career of his son, Naik Mukesh Singhs' father told media persons in Bri Kamila village of Samba district, "He served the Army for more than nine years and a half, performing his duties in (Siachen) glacier (in Ladakh), Kashmir and Punjab, before moving to Jammu's Akhnoor recently. He returned to his unit on January 28 after a two-week leave from duty for his ring ceremony."

Narrotam Singh, another resident of the village, said Manhas was full of energy and was always motivating youngsters to get involved in sporting activities.

Mumbai records first GBS death

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

The toll in the incidence of Guillain-Barre Syndrome (GBS) -- an autoimmune disorder where the body's immune system attacks the nervous system -- rose to eight in Maharashtra on Wednesday, as Mumbai recorded its first GBS death.

Of the total deaths, Pune has accounted for the maximum GBS deaths. Of the eight persons who have died so far, four have been confirmed as

GBS deaths, while the remaining four are "suspected" GBS deaths.

The latest death took place at Nair Hospital in Mumbai, where the patient was undergoing treatment. The patient had a history of travelling to Pune.

A bulletin put out by the Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme of the Public Health Department, Maharashtra pegged the total number of suspected GBS cases at 203.

Of the total patients, 176 patients have been diagnosed as "confirmed GBS cases".

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

Of the total patients, 109 have been discharged. "As many as 52 patients continue to be on ventilator in various hospitals," the medical bulletin said.

GBS is a condition in which the body's immune system attacks the nerves. It can cause weakness, numbness or paralysis.

Weakness and tingling in the hands and feet are usually the first symptoms. These sensations can quickly spread and may lead to paralysis.

SUPREME COURT SLAMS PARASITES

From page 1

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

from the ministry concerned if the figure mentioned in the chart depicted the correct position. The hearing was posted after six weeks.

While hearing the matter in December last year, the apex court asked the states and union territories to furnish details about the facilities available for accommodating homeless persons.

UPSC updates registration system online

From page 1

If a candidate has lost access to his/her registered mobile number but he/she has the access to his/her registered email ID, he/she can apply for change in the mobile number and in this case, an OTP will be sent to the registered email ID, it said.

In case a candidate has lost access to his/her registered email ID but has the access to his/her registered mobile number, he/she can apply for change in the email ID and in this case, an OTP will be sent to the registered mobile number, the notice said.

However, if a candidate reports that he/she has lost access to his/her registered mobile as well as registered email ID, the candidate will have to send a request to the Commission for making necessary changes at the (otrups@gov.in) along-with matriculation certificate, Aadhaar card or PAN card or Passport or driving license, recent passport size photograph and an undertaking in a prescribed format, it said.

The UPSC also said the eligible PwBD (person with benchmark disability) candidates, who wish to seek assistance of 'own scribe', will have to mandatorily provide the details of the 'own scribe' for the civil services preliminary exam.

"The PwBD candidates, who wish to seek assistance of 'own scribe' for the CS (Main) exam, may voluntarily indicate the scribe details for CS (Main) while applying for CS (prelim) exam."

"Such candidates may

update/provide details of the 'own scribe' during the window, which will be made available to the candidates after the declaration of the result of CS (Prelim) Exam," it said.

The PwBD candidates can also upload either the UDID PWD certificate issued by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment or the valid PwBD certificate in format as available on the Commission's website.

The civil services examination is conducted annually by the UPSC in three stages -- preliminary, main and interview -- to select officers of the Indian Administrative Service (IAS), Indian Foreign Service (IFS) and Indian Police Service (IPS), among others.

The last date for registration for civil services preliminary exam 2025 and the Indian Forest Service (Preliminary) test was also recently extended till February 18, 2025 (till 6 pm). Earlier, the last date to apply for the exams online was February 11.

Candidates are required to apply online by using the website <http://upsonline.gov.in>.

According to the Commission's notice, in case a candidate's name has changed and there is a mismatch with the name given in his/her matriculation or higher educational certificate, the candidate is required to submit a gazette notification to that effect.

"However, if the gazette notification is not available with them at present, they may upload the copy of the

same during the window, which will be made available to the candidates after the declaration of the result of CS (Prelim) Exam," it said.

The changes come in the backdrop of the controversy involving former IAS probationer Puja Khedkar, who was accused of cheating, wrongly availing Other Backward Class (OBC) and disability quota benefits to ensure her selection in the government service. She has denied all allegations though.

The UPSC said the candidates having integrated master's degree (graduation and post graduation) may fill the same course in their graduation as well as higher qualification column.

"The candidates are advised to go through the entries made by them in relevant columns before finally submitting the same. It may be noted that after submission of the application, the changes/corrections, if any, in the entries in the application form, can be carried out only during the one week correction window..." the notice said.

A correction window will be open for applicants "till expiry of seven days" from the next day after the closure of application window i.e. From February 19 to 25. The civil services preliminary examination is scheduled to be held on May 25.

The number of vacancies to be filled through the examination is expected to be approximately 979, which include 38 vacancies reserved for persons with benchmark disability category.

Modi, Macron walk together

From page 1

This area of partnership assumes greater salience in the backdrop of the just concluded AI Action Summit and the upcoming India-France Year of Innovation in 2026, the statement said.

The leaders also called for enhancing trade and investment ties.

President Macron also hosted a dinner in honour of the Prime Minister in the coastal town of Cassis, near Marseille. Prime Minister invited President Macron to visit India.

The list of 10 outcomes included the India-France Declaration on AI, launch of the logo for the India-France Year of Innovation 2026, and Letter of Intent between India's Department of Science and Technology (DST) and France's Institut National de Recherche en Informatique et en Automatique (INRIA) France to establish the Indo-French Centre for the Digital Sciences.

An agreement was also signed

for hosting 10 Indian startups at the French start-up incubator Station F, while a Declaration of Intent was signed on the establishment of a partnership on Advanced Modular Reactors and Small Modular Reactors.

Other outcomes included the renewal of MoU between Department of Atomic Energy (DAE) and Commissariat a l'Energie Atomique et aux Energies Alternatives of France (CAE), for cooperation with the Global Centre for Nuclear Energy Partnership (GCNEP) and the implementation of an agreement between DAE of India and CEA of France concerning cooperation between GCNEP India and Institute for Nuclear Science and Technology (INSTN), France.

A joint declaration of intent on Triangular Development Cooperation was signed, while the two leaders also jointly inaugurated the Indian consulate in Marseille, and a declaration of intent was signed between The Ministry

for the Ecological Transition, Biodiversity, Forests, Marine Affairs and Fisheries and The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change in the Field of Environment.

Modi reached France on Monday and also co-chaired the Artificial Intelligence Action Summit along with Macron.

This is Modi's sixth visit to France and follows Macron's visit to India in January 2024 as the Chief Guest for the 75th Republic Day of India.

The two leaders also visited the International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor facility here.

The two leaders reiterated their call for reformed and effective multilateralism to sustain an equitable and peaceful international order, address pressing global challenges and prepare the world for emerging developments, including in the technological and economic domains.

The two leaders stressed, in particular, the urgent need for the reform of the United

Nations Security Council and agreed to coordinate closely in multilateral fora, including on UNSC matters.

The two leaders agreed to strengthen conversations on the regulation of the use of the veto in case of mass atrocities.

They held extensive discussions on long-term global challenges and current international developments and agreed to intensify their global and regional engagement, including through multilateral initiatives and institutions.

They welcomed the continuation of the cooperation of air and maritime assets in line with the ambitious Defence Industrial Roadmap agreed in 2024.

Both leaders commended progress in collaboration in the construction of Scorpene submarines in India, including indigenisation, and in particular the work carried out with a view to the integration of DRDO-developed Air Independent

Propulsion (AIP) into P75-Scorpene submarines and the analyses conducted regarding the possible integration of the Integrated Combat System (ICS) into the future P75-AS submarines.

Both leaders also welcomed the commissioning of the sixth and final submarine of the P75 Scorpene-class project, INS Vaghsheer, on 15 January 2025.

Both sides welcomed the ongoing discussions on missiles, helicopter engines and jet engines.

They also welcomed the excellent cooperation between the relevant entities in the Safran group and their Indian counterparts.

Modi invited the French Army to take a closer look at the Pinaka rocket launcher, emphasising that an acquisition of this system by France would be another milestone in Indo-French defence ties.

In addition, President Macron welcomed the decision to include India as an observer to the Eurodrone MALE

programme managed by OCCAR, which is another step forward in the growing strength of our partnership in defence equipment programmes.

Both leaders had a detailed conversation on international issues, including the Middle-East and the war in Ukraine, the statement said.

They agreed to pursue their efforts to coordinate and remain closely engaged regularly.

The two leaders agreed to work together more closely on implementing the India-Middle East-Europe Corridor (IMEC) and acknowledged the strategic location of Marseille in the Mediterranean Sea.

They underlined the key importance of strengthening EU-India relations, in view of the upcoming India-EU summit at the earliest possible in New Delhi.

They appreciated the growing cooperation in trilateral format with Australia and with the United Arab Emirates.

They commended the joint military exercises that took place between France, India and the United Arab Emirates, as well as the participation of India, France and Australia in each others' multilateral military exercises.

The two leaders underlined their common commitment to a free, open, inclusive, secure and peaceful Indo-Pacific region.

They reiterated their desire to continue to deepen bilateral cooperation in the space sector.

The two leaders reaffirmed their unequivocal condemnation of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, including cross-border terrorism. They called for the disruption of terrorism financing networks and safe havens. They further agreed that no country should provide safe haven to those who finance, plan, support, or commit terrorist acts.

The leaders also called for concerted action against all terrorists.

They welcomed the ongoing discussions to create a comprehensive framework for enhanced bilateral cooperation in the civil aviation sector, which is at advanced stages, the statement said.

Noting the record level of bilateral trade in 2024, they acknowledged that there is vast untapped potential for trade and investment between the two countries.

Both leaders highlighted the need to maintain strong confidence for companies investing in France and in India.

Prime Minister Modi congratulated President Macron on the successful organisation of the Paris Olympics and Paralympics 2024 and thanked President Macron for his willingness to share France's experience and expertise regarding the organisation and securing of major international sporting events in the context of India's bid to host the Olympics and Paralympics Games in 2036.

Human rights abuses inflicted on Hindus, Ahmadiyya Muslims during anti-Hasina protests: UN

PTI ■ UNITED NATIONS/GENEVA

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

Report: 'Human Rights Violations and Abuses related to the Protests of July and August 2024 in Bangladesh' also documents "troubling instances" of retaliatory killings and other serious revenge violence targeting Awami League officials and supporters, police and media as the former government started to lose control of the country. "Hindus, Ahmadiyya Muslims, and indigenous people from the Chittagong Hill Tracts were also subjected to human rights abuses. While some 100 arrests about attacks on distinct religious and indigenous groups have reportedly been made, the perpetrators of many other acts of revenge violence and attacks on such groups still enjoy impunity," the report said. It added the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights interviewed Hindu business owners and homeowners in some of these areas who reported that their businesses, houses, land and religious sites had been targeted while shops owned by Hindus were also looted. "The violence often involved property destruction, arson, and physical threats, compounded by insufficient police responses, suggesting systemic impunity, and potential political motives," it said.



One interviewee said that Hindu funeral sites and temples were vandalized in Thakurgaon, and other witnesses described that after attacks on their property, approximately 3,000 - 4,000 Hindus from those villages feared communal violence sought refuge near the border with India. Affected families reported a pervasive sense of insecurity and heavy financial losses, with many losing essential items, livestock, and whole businesses, the report said. The report further said that witnesses and victims' accounts provided to one source indicat-

ed that attacks were primarily carried out by individuals involved in "victory processions" celebrating the Hasina government's collapse. "While the identity of the perpetrators in these attacks was not always clear, witnesses to some of the incidents testified the attackers were local supporters of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), Jamaat-e-Islami, and other organised groups." However, there were also interventions from these political parties condemning the violence. After August 6, there were localised efforts by BNP,

Jamaat-e-Islami, student groups, and social organisations to protect houses and places of worship of the Hindu community, the report said. BNP, Jamaat-e-Islami, Students against Discrimination leaders, and Interim Government Chief Advisor Mohammed Yunus all made public statements condemning the violence, it noted. Several allegations were reported of violent mobs coercing Hindu headmasters and teachers to resign. The report added that "some local members and supporters of the BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami opposition parties bear responsibility for human rights

abuses committed during revenge attacks, including against members of the Hindu community". The report noted there had been a longer record of attacks on places of worship, especially temples and shrines, in Bangladesh. In terms of the period under consideration in this report, between August 5 and 15, media and other local sources reported attacks on places of worship associated with Hindu, Ahmadiyya, Buddhist, and Christian communities across several regions. According to information submitted to OHCHR, three tem-

ples were attacked and set ablaze, along with the looting of approximately 20 houses, in Burashardubi, Hatibandha, and Lalmonirhat, reflecting significant levels of community unrest. There was also an arson attack in Meherpur on a temple of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON), it said. Specific incidents reported to OHCHR also underlined the complexities surrounding these attacks. "For example, the Kali temple in Nandipara was attacked on August 7, but, upon investigation, it became clear the damage stemmed not from religious intolerance, but rather a local dispute over land ownership," it said. "During the protests and in their aftermath, human rights abuses were inflicted on some members of Bangladesh's Hindu, Ahmadiyya Muslim and indigenous communities. The majority of cases concerned vandalising, looting and burning of homes and businesses, but there were also attacks on religious places, aggravated physical assaults and at least one killing. The perpetrators acted with different and often overlapping motives, including political revenge against Awami League supporters among minorities, religious and ethnic discrimination, settlement of personal

disputes, and localised communal conflict," the report said. Based on deaths reported by various credible sources, the report estimates that as many as 1,400 people may have been killed between July 1 and August 15, and thousands were injured, the vast majority of whom were shot by Bangladesh's security forces. Of these, the report indicates that as many as 12-13 per cent of those killed were children. "The brutal response was a calculated and well-coordinated strategy by the former government to hold onto power in the face of mass opposition," said UN Human Rights Chief Volker Turk. "There are reasonable grounds to believe hundreds of extrajudicial killings, extensive arbitrary arrests and detentions, and torture, were carried out with the knowledge, coordination and direction of the political leadership and senior security officials as part of a strategy to suppress the protests." "The testimonies and evidence we gathered paint a disturbing picture of rampant state violence and targeted killings that are amongst the most serious violations of human rights, and which may also constitute international crimes. Accountability and justice are essential for national healing and for the future of Bangladesh," he added.

Netanyahu threatens to resume fighting in Gaza if hostages aren't released on Saturday

AP ■ JERUSALEM

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Tuesday threatened to withdraw from the ceasefire in Gaza and directed troops to prepare to resume fighting Hamas if the militant group does not release more hostages on Saturday. Hamas said Monday — and reiterated Tuesday — that it planned to delay the release of three more hostages after accusing Israel of failing to meet the terms of the ceasefire, including by not allowing an agreed-upon number of tents and other aid into Gaza. Amid the mounting tensions, US President Donald Trump emboldened Israel to call for the release of even more remaining hostages on Saturday. Trump questions ceasefire's durability: After meeting with Jordan's King Abdullah II at the White House on Tuesday, Trump predicted Hamas would not release all the remaining hostages as he had demanded. "I don't think they're going to make the deadline, personally," the president said of Hamas.

"They want to play tough guy. We'll see how tough they are." Since the ceasefire took effect, Hamas has released 21 hostages in a series of five exchanges for more than 730 Palestinian prisoners. A second phase calls for the return of all remaining hostages and an indefinite extension of the truce. However, Trump's statements about both the pending releases and plans for post-war Gaza have destabilised its fragile architecture. It wasn't immediately clear whether Netanyahu's threat referred to the three hostages scheduled for release on Saturday or all the remaining hostages, which would be a departure from the terms of the ceasefire. Netanyahu's office said it "welcomed President Trump's demand". As Trump spoke to reporters in Washington and reassured his demands, an Israeli official who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss a private meeting, said Israel was "sticking to Trump's announcement regarding the release of the hostages. Namely, that they will all be released on Saturday". Netanyahu's office also said it

ordered the military to mobilise troops on and around the Gaza Strip in preparation for scenarios that could arise. Trump has said Israel should cancel the entire ceasefire if all of the roughly 70 hostages aren't freed by Saturday. Hamas brushed off his threat Tuesday, doubling down on its claim that Israel has violated the ceasefire and warned that it would only continue releasing hostages if all parties adhered to the ceasefire. "Trump must remember there is an agreement that must be respected by both parties. This is the only way to bring back prisoners," Hamas spokesman Sami Abu Zuhri said Tuesday. "The language of threats has no value; it only complicates matters." The group later condemned Trump's White House remarks, saying they amounted to a "call for ethnic cleansing" and accusing Trump of seeking to "liquidate the Palestinian cause and deny the national rights of the Palestinian people". It said in a statement it remained committed to the ceasefire, yet did not address its plans to suspend the hostages

releases outlined in the first phase of the agreement. Jordan — a US ally — faces new pressures: Trump hosted King Abdullah II in Washington as he escalates pressure on Jordan to take in refugees from Gaza, perhaps permanently, as part of his audacious plan to remake the Middle East. "We're not going to buy anything. We're going to have it," Trump said of US control of Gaza as the Jordanian king stood by. Abdullah II was asked repeatedly by reporters about Trump's plan to remake the Middle East, but didn't make substantive comments. He also did not comment on the idea that a large number of refugees from Gaza could be welcomed in Jordan, where millions of Palestinian refugees already reside. The king said, however, that Jordan would be willing "right away" to take as many as 2,000 children in Gaza who have cancer or are otherwise ill. Last week, the top World Health Organization official for Gaza said between 12,000 and 14,000 patients still need

medical evacuation from the territory — including 5,000 children. Palestinians and the international community have seethed over Trump's recent comments that any Palestinians potentially expelled from Gaza would not have a right to return. During the first six-week phase of the ceasefire, Hamas committed to freeing 33 hostages captured in its October 7, 2023, attack on Israel, while Israel said it would release nearly 2,000 Palestinian prisoners. The sides have carried out five swaps since January 19. The war could resume in early March if no agreement is reached on the more complicated second phase of the ceasefire. But if it does, Israel will face a drastically different battlefield. After forcing hundreds of thousands of Palestinians to evacuate to southern Gaza in the early stages of the war, Israel allowed many of those displaced people to return to what is left of their homes, posing a new challenge to its ability to move ground troops through the territory.

NASA's 2 stuck astronauts may return to Earth sooner under new plan

AP ■ CAPE CANAVERAL

NASA's two stuck astronauts may come back to Earth a little sooner than planned. The space agency announced Tuesday that SpaceX will switch capsules for upcoming astronaut flights in order to bring Butch Wilmore and Suni Williams home in mid-March instead of late March or April. That will shave at least a couple weeks off their prolonged stay at the International Space Station, which hit the eight-month mark last week. "Human spaceflight is full of unexpected challenges," NASA's commercial crew program manager Steve Stich said in a statement. The test pilots should have returned in June on Boeing's Starliner capsule after what should have been a weeklong flight demo. But the capsule

had so much trouble getting to the space station that NASA decided to bring it back empty and reassigned the pair to SpaceX. Then SpaceX delayed the launch of their replacements on a brand new capsule that needed more prepping, which added more time to Wilmore and Williams' mission. With even more work still anticipated for the new capsule, NASA opted for its next crew to fly up on an older capsule, with liftoff now targeted for March 12. This older capsule had already been assigned to a private crew awaiting launch this spring. The private flight arranged by the Houston company Axiom Space, featuring astronauts from Poland, Hungary and India, was bumped and will launch later to the space station, possibly still this spring.

Addressing the "Towhidi Janata" group, he cautioned that if they engage in violent acts, they will be treated as law-breakers and subjected to severe legal consequences, with no further warnings. Mahfuj made these remarks on Monday after a group of enraged individuals stormed the stall over the sale of a poetry book by Nasrin. Videos circulating on social media show a group of men in Islamic attire crowding in front of the stall and forcing an individual inside to hold his ears and apologise, the report added. Nasrin's writings won critical acclaim and global attention in the early 1990s. However, her radical writings exposing hypocrisy as well as fundamentalism, also infuriated the orthodox clergy in her homeland, some of whom passed 'fatwas' against her, forcing her to flee to Europe and the US. She has been living in India since 2004 (except from 2008 to 2010) after being expelled from Bangladesh in 1994 and her permit to stay in India expired in July 2024. However, in October 2024, India extended her residence permit for another year.

Trump readies matching tariffs on trade partners

Possibly setting up major economic showdown

AP ■ WASHINGTON

President Donald Trump is taking additional action to upset the world trade system, with plans to sign an order as soon as Wednesday that would require that US tariffs on imports match the tax rates charged by other countries. "It's time to be reciprocal," Trump told reporters earlier this week. "You'll be hearing that word a lot. Reciprocal. If they charge us, we charge them." The president had suggested that the order would come on Tuesday or Wednesday. But when Tuesday passed without the tariffs being officially announced, Trump was asked if he would sign the order on Wednesday and Trump answered: "We'll see what happens." As Trump has unleashed a series of tariffs after being in power for less than a month, he has fully taken ownership of the path of the US economy. It's a bet that his economic ideas can eventually deliver meaningful results for voters, even if by Trump's own admission the import taxes could involve some financial pain in the form of inflation and economic disruptions. For all of Trump's talk, the impact will likely depend on the details of the tariffs and how other nations respond. A reciprocal tariffs order could amount to a substantial tax hike to be shouldered largely by US consumers and businesses as the Census Bureau reported that the country had total imports of USD 4.1 trillion last

year. The tariffs could set off retaliatory measures by trading partners that could roil growth around the globe and reset where the United States stands with allies and rivals alike. By signing the order, Trump would fulfil his long-standing pledge to raise taxes on most imported goods, a clear break with his recent White House predecessors who saw tariffs as either targeted tools to use strategically or barriers worth lowering. Trump has broken with that precedent by saying he wants to return the United States to the 1890s when taxes on imports were the government's dominant source of revenues. But should job gains never materialize and should inflation stay high, it's an easy line of attack for Democratic lawmakers and candidates that Trump helped the ultra-wealthy at the expense of the middle class. "No matter which way you slice it, costs are going to climb for consumers," Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer of New York said earlier this month. "I will work with my colleagues to undo this mess, get costs down and get these billionaires out of the way." Trump put 10 per cent tariffs on China over its contributions to the production of the illicit drug fentanyl, and China has taken retaliatory measures. He said he is ready if necessary on March 1 — after a 30-day suspension — to put tariffs on Mexico and Canada over his belief they should do more to fight illegal

immigration and drug smuggling. On Monday, he closed the exemptions to his 2018 tariffs on steel and aluminum, in addition to raising the tariff rates on aluminum. He has also talked about additional taxes on imported autos, computer chips and pharmaceutical drugs. Many of America's dominant trading partners are preparing for an economic rupture in reaction to Trump's possible actions. In response to the steel and aluminum tariffs, European Union chief Ursula von der Leyen said Tuesday: "Unjustified tariffs on the EU will not go unanswered — they will trigger firm and proportionate countermeasures." That means motorcycles, jeans, bourbon and peanut butter from the United States could face new taxes abroad. Mexico and Canada — America's two largest trading partners — have also prepared countermeasures. Multiple Trump aides have privately said that Trump's long-standing goal with tariffs has been reciprocity. But Trump has also portrayed tariffs as an diplomatic tool to try to force Canada and Mexico to spend more resources on stopping illegal immigration and drug trafficking into the United States. He also suggested repeatedly that tariffs would be a source of revenues that could offset his planned income tax cuts. But even before Trump formally signed the order, analysts at Goldman Sachs on Tuesday concluded it was unlikely to be the final word on tariffs.

Israel sells USD 5 billion in bonds to manage budget deficit, finance war: Report

PTI ■ JERUSALEM

Israel has sold 5 billion in dollar-denominated government bonds in international markets to bring down its budget deficit and finance the costs of the war in what is being seen as a strong demonstration of faith in its economic stability, local media reported. In the first debt sale of 2025, the Finance Ministry offered two new series of 5-year and 10-year government bonds. Demand for the debt issuance topped USD 23 billion, or 4.6 times the amount sold, The Times of Israel (TOI) reported. The two notes were priced at a spread of 120 and 135 basis points, respectively, above the US government bond yield for a similar period, the report said. "This is an important public issuance that is a testament to the financial stability of the State of Israel and the high confidence of global investors in the Israeli economy, even in a time the country faces global, security-related and local challenges," Finance Ministry Accountant, General Yali Rothenberg, was quoted by TOI as saying. "The spreads in the debt issuance reflect the significant decrease in Israel's risk premium," Rothenberg asserted. Israel has been fighting a war with the Hamas militants in Palestine on the one hand and Hezbollah in Lebanon on the other hand since October 2023. The sale is said to have attracted 300 investors from over 30 countries, including large institutional investors such as pension funds, insurance companies, hedge funds, financial investors and entities that hold long-term government bonds of the State of Israel. As per the report, Israeli Finance Ministry officials met investors in the UK and US ahead of the bond sale, as the first stage of a ceasefire agreement with Hamas in Gaza was sealed last month. Bookrunners of the issuance were Bank of America, Citi Bank, Deutsche Bank, Goldman Sachs, and JP Morgan, it said.

Protesters attack stall displaying Taslima Nasrin's book, Yunus orders probe

PTI ■ DHAKA

A group of protesters stormed a book stall in Dhaka over the display of books by exiled Bangladeshi writer Taslima Nasrin, prompting Bangladesh's Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus to order a probe into the "disorderly behaviour", according to a media report. The incident took place on Monday at the publishing house Sabyasachi Prokashoni stall at the Amar Ekushey Book Fair, Bdnews24 reported. The incident unfolded on the 10th day of the fair when a group under the banner of "Towhidi Janata" stormed the Sabyasachi Prokashoni stall at Suhrawardy Udyan over the display of books by exiled Bangladeshi writer Taslima Nasrin, the report added. The group surrounded the publisher and chanted slogans, prompting police to intervene and take Sabyasachi publisher Shatabdi Vobo into their control room to restore order, it said. However, the protesters then encircled the police control room, keeping tensions high. Following widespread criticism, Chief Adviser Yunus

ordered authorities on Monday evening to bring those responsible to justice, it added. "This kind of disorderly behaviour disregards both the rights of citizens and the laws of Bangladesh," the Chief Adviser's Office said in a statement. Bangla Academy has formed a seven-member committee to investigate the chaos and attack on the publishing house. The committee has been asked to submit its findings within three working days, Bangla Academy said in a statement on Tuesday. Describing the incident as "undesirable" the academy said the committee was formed to ensure a fair probe. Since the incident, the Sabyasachi stall, number 128, has remained closed. However, Bangla Academy clarified on Monday that it had not shut down any stalls or banned any books. Meanwhile, Mahfuj Alam — considered a de facto minister in the interim government and a key leader of Bangladesh's Anti-Discrimination Students Movement — has issued a stern warning, stating that anyone involved in mob violence will face strict legal action, the report said.

Addressing the "Towhidi Janata" group, he cautioned that if they engage in violent acts, they will be treated as law-breakers and subjected to severe legal consequences, with no further warnings. Mahfuj made these remarks on Monday after a group of enraged individuals stormed the stall over the sale of a poetry book by Nasrin. Videos circulating on social media show a group of men in Islamic attire crowding in front of the stall and forcing an individual inside to hold his ears and apologise, the report added. Nasrin's writings won critical acclaim and global attention in the early 1990s. However, her radical writings exposing hypocrisy as well as fundamentalism, also infuriated the orthodox clergy in her homeland, some of whom passed 'fatwas' against her, forcing her to flee to Europe and the US. She has been living in India since 2004 (except from 2008 to 2010) after being expelled from Bangladesh in 1994 and her permit to stay in India expired in July 2024. However, in October 2024, India extended her residence permit for another year.

Russian citizen freed in US in exchange for Moscow's release of American Marc Fogel

AP ■ MOSCOW

The Kremlin said Wednesday that a Russian citizen was freed in the United States in exchange for Moscow's release of American Marc Fogel. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters that the unidentified individual would return to Russia "in the coming days," and when they are in Russia, their name would be revealed. Fogel, an American history teacher who was deemed wrongfully detained by Russia, has been released and was returned to the US on Tuesday in what the White House described as a diplomatic thaw that could advance negotiations to end the war in Ukraine.



President Donald Trump greets Marc Fogel at the White House on Tuesday. AP/PTI

New tax bill introduces Tax Year, omits Assessment Year

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

Once introduced in the Lok Sabha likely on Thursday, the Bill will be sent to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Finance for further deliberations. The Statement of Objects and Reasons of the new I-T bill said that the Income-tax Act passed in 1961 has been subjected to numerous amendments since its passage 60 years ago.

"As a result of these amendments the basic structure of the Income-tax Act has become complex, increasing cost of compliance for taxpayers and hampering efficiency of direct-tax administration," it said. Tax administrators, practitioners and taxpayers had also raised concerns about the complicated provisions and structure of the Income Tax Act.

Trump readies matching tariffs on trade partners

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

United States (US) President Donald Trump is taking additional action to upset the world trade system, with plans to sign an order as soon as Wednesday that would require that US tariffs on imports match the tax rates charged by other countries. "It's time to be reciprocal," Trump said earlier this week. "You'll be hearing that word a lot. Reciprocal. If they charge us, we charge them."

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the 1890s when taxes on imports were the government's dominant source of revenues. But should job gains never materialise and should inflation stay high, it's an easy line of attack for Democratic lawmakers and candidates that Trump helped the ultrawealthy at the expense of the middle class. "No matter which way you slice it, costs are going to climb for consumers," Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer of New York said earlier this month. "I will work with my colleagues to undo this mess, get costs down and get these billionaires out of the way."

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

Samsung to upskill teachers

ABHI SINGHAL ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

The initiative was launched in New Delhi in the presence of Olympic Gold Medalist Abhinav Bindra, who emphasised the importance of equipping teachers with the right resources to improve education standards. The program will provide teachers with training through workshops, online courses, and certification programs, ensuring they stay ahead in an evolving educational landscape. Samsung's Galaxy Empowered aims to transform classrooms by integrating technology into



daily lessons. Teachers will learn to use interactive apps, digital platforms, and gamification techniques to make learning more engaging for students. The program also focuses on hands-on training, giving educators access to mentorship opportunities and specialised curriculum support. The initiative is structured around three main components: technology upskilling, hands-on training, and networking opportunities. Educators will have access to flexible online courses, in-person bootcamps, and a library of resources. In addition, they can connect with

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

Retail inflation slows to five-month low

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

There is a decline of 91 basis points in headline inflation of January 2025 in comparison to December 2024 and it is the lowest year-on-year inflation after August 2024, the National Statistics Office (NSO) data showed. According to the data, the top five items showing the highest year on year inflation were coconut oil (54.2 per cent), potato (49.61 per cent), coconut (38.71 per cent), garlic (30.65 per cent), peas (30.17 per cent). On the other hand, the key items having the lowest year on year inflation in January were jeera (-32.25 per cent), ginger (-30.92 per cent), dry chilies (-

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

The food inflation in the rural sector was 6.31 per cent in comparison to 8.65 per cent in December 2024. Similarly, urban inflation witnessed a sharp decline from 4.58 per cent in December 2024 to 3.87 per cent in January. Food inflation decreased from 7.9 per cent in December to 5.53 per cent in January 2025. Housing inflation rate was marginally higher in January 2025 at 2.76 per cent over December. "The significant decline in headline inflation and food inflation during the month of January, 2025 is mainly attributed to decline in inflation

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

The data further showed that top five states which had higher inflation than the national average in January were Kerala (6.76 per cent), Odisha (6.05 per cent), Chhattisgarh (5.85 per cent), Haryana (5.1 per cent), and Bihar (5.06 per cent). The lowest inflation was in Delhi at 2.02 per cent. The NSO collects price data from selected 1,114 urban markets and 1,181 villages covering all states and UTs on a weekly roster. Commenting on the data, Aditi Nayar, Chief Economist, ICRA said the CPI inflation fell appreciably sharper than expected to a five-month low, led primarily by food items, vindicating the unanimous rate cut effected by the RBI's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) last week.

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

Equity investors' wealth erode by ₹18 Lakh Crore

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

During the day, the benchmark tanked 905.21 points or 1.18 per cent to sink below the 76,000-level and hit a low of 75,388.39. Since February 4, the BSE bellwether gauge has slumped 2,412.73 points or 3.07 per cent. The market capitalisation of BSE-listed firms slumped ₹18,04,418 Crore to ₹4,07,46,408.11 Crore (\$4.69 Trillion) since February 4.

From the 30-share Sensex pack, Mahindra and Mahindra, ITC, Power Grid, Reliance Industries, IndusInd Bank, Adani Ports, Titan and Infosys were the biggest laggards. Bajaj Finserv, Tata Steel, Larsen and Toubro, UltraTech Cement, Kotak Mahindra Bank and Tata Motors were among the gainers. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth ₹4,486.41 Crore on Tuesday, according to exchange data. "Markets were extremely choppy and gyrated sharply in intra-day trade. After crashing over 900 points in early trade, markets recouped lost ground in late trade but select profit-taking in IT, banking and auto stocks saw benchmarks end marginally lower," Prashanth Tapse, Senior VP (Research) at Mehta Equities Ltd, said. The BSE smallcap gauge declined 0.49 per cent and midcap index went lower by 0.45 per cent. "Equity markets displayed resilience today, with Nifty rebounding nearly 250 points from the day's low to close at 23,045, down just 26 points (-0.1 per cent)," Siddhartha Khemka, head, research, wealth management at Motilal Oswal Financial Services Ltd, said.

Sensex, Nifty fall for sixth day dragged by FII outflows

PTI ■ MUMBAI

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

The 30-share BSE Sensex, which had tanked more than 900 points intra-day, closed at 76,171.08, down by 122.52 points or 0.16 per cent following a recovery in financial stocks in the last hour. During the day, the benchmark tanked 905.21 points or 1.18 per cent to sink below the 76,000-level to hit a low of 75,388.39. The NSE Nifty dipped 26.55 points or 0.12 per cent to 23,045.25, marking its sixth straight day of losses. Intra-day,

it tumbled 273.45 points or 1.18 per cent to 22,798.35, falling below the crucial 23,000-mark. Since February 4, the BSE bellwether gauge has slumped 2,412.73 points or 3.07 per cent, while the Nifty tanked 694 points or 2.92 per cent. From the 30-share Sensex pack, Mahindra and Mahindra, ITC, Power Grid, Reliance Industries, IndusInd Bank, Adani Ports, Titan and Infosys were the biggest laggards. Bajaj Finserv, Tata Steel, Larsen and Toubro, UltraTech Cement, Kotak Mahindra Bank and Tata Motors were among the gainers.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth ₹4,486.41 Crore on Tuesday, according to exchange data. "The Indian market saw a slight recovery from the sharp intraday declines, however, overall sentiment remained weak due to elevated broader market valuations and muted Q3 earnings growth. Concerns over excessive valuations are expected to sustain the ongoing consolidation phase," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services, said. Additionally, uncertainty regarding the impact of metal tariffs added to market caution, Nair said. "The upcoming release of US CPI inflation data will provide further market direction," he added. In Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo, Shanghai and Hong Kong ended in the positive territory. European markets were trading higher.

recovery from the sharp intraday declines, however, overall sentiment remained weak due to elevated broader market valuations and muted Q3 earnings growth. Concerns over excessive valuations are expected to sustain the ongoing consolidation phase," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services, said. Additionally, uncertainty regarding the impact of metal tariffs added to market caution, Nair said. "The upcoming release of US CPI inflation data will provide further market direction," he added. In Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo, Shanghai and Hong Kong ended in the positive territory. European markets were trading higher.

Rupee falls eight paise against USD

PTI ■ MUMBAI

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

According to forex traders, rupee stayed firm initially but lost grounds amid volatile domestic equity markets that also added to the trend of withdrawal by foreign institutional investors. They said the easing crude oil prices supported the Indian currency at lower level but at the same time the currency markets saw muted participation awaiting cues from the inflation and

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

On Tuesday, the rupee appreciated 66 paise, logging the maximum single-day gain since March 3, 2023, to close at 86.79 against the US dollar. The steep surge came a day after the unit plunged to near 88 per US dollar-level during intra-day on Monday, though the currency ended the session with gains at 87.45 against the greenback.

SEBI slaps ₹2.83 Crore notice to ex-TV anchor

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

Apart from Pandya, Toshee Trade, Mahan Investment, Manish Vasani Furiya (HUF), Manish Vasani Furiya, Alpa Alpesh Furiya, Alpesh Vasani Furiya (HUF) and Alpesh Vasani Furiya were also sent notices to pay the fines. The demand notices came after these entities failed to pay the

penalties imposed on them by the SEBI in June last year. The markets regulator warned that assets, including bank accounts of Pandya and other entities, will be attached if they failed to make the payment within 15 days of the notices issued on February 7. In seven separate demand notices, SEBI has directed these entities to pay ₹2.83 crore, including interest and recovery costs within 15 days.

In June last year, SEBI had barred Pandya and seven other entities from the securities market for five years and imposed a fine of ₹2.6 Crore collectively for indulging in fraudulent trading activities. Pandya was the host and co-host of various shows at CNBC Awaaz till August 2021, while

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

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

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

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

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Investors' confidence in equity mutual funds remains strong with the segment attracting ₹39,688 Crore in January, driven by sharp inflow in small cap and flexi-cap schemes, even as market volatilities continued. However, this was 3.56 per cent lower than the net inflow of ₹41,156 Crore registered in December. The latest fund infusion by investors also marks the 47th consecutive month of inflows into the segment, according to data released by Association of Mutual Funds in India (AMFI) on Wednesday. Moreover, inflows into systematic investment plans (SIP) came at ₹26,400 Crore, a tad lower from December's ₹26,459 Crore. The SIP assets under management stood at ₹13.2 Lakh Crore, which is

around a fifth of the overall pie. "Despite market volatility, SIP contributions remained robust, totalling ₹26,400 Crore for the month. We will continue to educate investors to stay invested through phases of volatility with a focus on disciplined, long-term approach to wealth creation," Venkat Chalasani, Chief Executive, Amfi, said. The decline in equity fund inflows occurred amid sluggish equity markets, with the BSE Sensex dropping by 1.28 per cent in January. The investors' focus towards making the most of the market fall in January can also be gauged from the fact that around 30.7 Lakh new folios were added in January, Himanshu Srivastava, associate director-manager research, Morningstar Investment



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

(AUM) for equity-oriented mutual funds dropped by 4 per cent in January to ₹29.46 Lakh Crore from ₹30.57 Lakh Crore in December. Within the equity schemes, sectoral or thematic category attracted investors with the highest net inflow at ₹9,016 Crore, which is way lower than

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

The small and midcap schemes of mutual funds continued to attract investors with inflows highlighting their preference for these segments largely driven by the high returns that they have generated over the last few years, Srivastava said. The large schemes, which are being recommended by a slew of experts as a safer bet, saw inflows rising to ₹3,063 Crore in January from ₹2,010 Crore in December, while inflow in flexi-cap category grew to ₹5,697 Crore from ₹4,731 Crore. Apart from equities, debt funds

registered an inflow of ₹1.28 Lakh Crore in the month of January, against an outflow of ₹1.27 Lakh Crore in December. The inflow in debt funds was primarily in the overnight, ultra-short duration, low duration and money market funds along with liquid funds which offset the outflows in debt funds with a maturity of over one year, Sanjay Agarwal, senior director, CareEdge Ratings, said. Additionally, the inflows into gold Exchange Traded Funds (ETFs) to the tune of ₹3,751 Crore indicate a shift towards safer assets during uncertain times.

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

INBRIEF

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



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

GAUTAM SOLAR AIMS FOR 5 GW BY 2025

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

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

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

Bhaker finishes second in 25m pistol at National selection trials

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

Paris Olympics bronze medallist Swapnil Kusale and Arya Rajesh Borse also won the men's 50m rifle 3 positions (3P) T1 and the women's 10m air rifle T2 events at Dr Karni Singh Shooting range (DKSSR) here. Haryana's Rhythm beat Bhaker -- who won a bronze each in the women's individual and mixed team events in the Paris Olympics -- for the top spot after a couple of shoot-offs from the final group that had four other Olympians in the fray. Swapnil was next, a class apart in the men's 3P T1 final, while Borse registered a memorable triumph in a high-quality high scoring women's air rifle T2 final, falling just one short of the world record score achieved at the same venue. Rhythm wins via shoot-off. Manu has been relentless in her first competition after the Paris Games, topping the women's 25m pistol trials for a second straight time, her



294 in the second rapid-fire qualifying round in the morning giving her a total of 591. Punjab's Simranpreet Kaur Brar, among the most consistent shooters in recent times in the event, was second with 588. Also making the final eight cut were four other Olympians -- Rahi Sarnobat (588, 3rd), Esha Singh (586, 4th), Heena Sidhu (580, 5th) and Sangwan (578, 7th), setting up a thrilling decider. In the end, Rhythm and Manu were tied with 37 hits after the 10-series of

five shots each, and both the shooters needed two shoot-offs to be separated, the former prevailing 4-3 in the second after both had tied 4-4 in the first. Simranpreet finished third. Swapnil, a class apart Swapnil qualified for the men's 3P T1 final with a smooth 592 out of 600, which gave him third spot on the leaderboard. Navy's Kiran Ankush Jadhav topped with a sublime 596, while another top 3P shooter Akhil Sheoran was second with 593.

In the final, however, Swapnil led after the first five shots of the first kneeling position right till the end, pulling away expertly after every stage of the gruelling event. He ended with a 465.1, 2.6 ahead of Akhil, who was second. Veteran Chain Singh finished third. Arya triumphs in women's air rifle Maharashtra's Arya, another shooter in rousing form, won the women's 10m air rifle T2 trial after an intense final. Newly-crowned national champion Ananya Naidu set the tone with a scorching 53.1 after the first five-shot stage and continued to lead the field till the 20th shot of the 24-shot final. Two-time Olympian Elavenil Valarivan gave her company for most part of the contest with Arya at sixth after 10 shots. Then from the 11th to the 21st shot, Arya shot nothing below 10.4, ending the string with a perfect 10.9 to take the lead, as Mehuli Ghosh climbed up to beat Elavenil to the podium. As both Arya and Ananya went into the final two shots on the same score (231.9), the former nailed a couple of 10.8s to finish with 253.5. Ananya also finished with two high 10s to her credit but fell 0.5 short in the end calculations.

Saint-Etienne fans banned from French league game

PTI ■ PARIS

Saint-Etienne supporters have been banned by French authorities from traveling to Marseille for this weekend's Ligue 1 game between the two clubs with the biggest fan bases in France. In an order published Wednesday, France's interior ministry said there is a "real and serious risk of confrontation" between the rival fans. Second-placed Marseille takes on struggling Saint-Etienne at the Stade Velodrome on Saturday. While Marseille vs. Paris Saint-Germain remains the biggest match in French soccer, and is known as "Le Classique", Saint-Etienne and Marseille have a special rivalry of their own. They were the two most decorated clubs in French football before PSG started its dominance after Qatari investors took over in 2011. Saint-Etienne -- which has 10 league titles to its name, one more than Marseille -- dominated French football during the 1960s and '70s. Mediterranean club Marseille



became one of Saint-Etienne's strongest rivals after regaining a spot in the topflight in 1966. Marseille, still the only French club to win the Champions League (in 1993), finished runner-up behind "Les Verts" in 1970 and won its first title in 23 years ahead of Saint-Etienne in 1971. Although their rivalry softened eventually with Saint-Etienne's sporting decline, both clubs still enjoy the support of a national fan base and their matchups are always intense. Off the field, relations between Marseille and Saint-Etienne fans have been marked by animosity for decades. Justifying its decision to ban away fans at the Velodrome,

the interior ministry said "this strong antagonism has on several occasions led to serious clashes requiring the intervention of the police, some of whose members have been injured, and to the throwing of missiles and the lighting of fireworks." In March 2024, Saint-Etienne fans ambushed Marseille fans on a motorway and threw stones at their bus convoy. In response, Marseille supporters got off their bus to attack a Saint-Etienne supporter who had reportedly announced their arrival. Marseille is second in the French league, 10 points behind runaway leader PSG. After 21 matches, Saint-Etienne is languishing in 16th place in the 18-team league.



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

PTI ■ PARIS

Algerian boxer Imane Khelif, who found herself in the middle of a bitter divide about gender in sports during the Paris Olympics, has denounced "false and offensive" accusations from the International Boxing Association. "I have been knocked down more times than I can count. But I have never stayed down," Khelif said late Tuesday on her Instagram account. The IBA said this week it will file criminal complaints against the International Olympic Committee in the U.S., France and Switzerland. The Swiss-based IOC allowing female boxers Khelif and Lin Yu-ting to compete and win gold medals in Paris last year "may serve as grounds for criminal prosecution," the IBA claimed. Khelif responded by saying she "will take all necessary legal steps to ensure that my rights and the principles of fair competition are upheld." "Those responsible of these actions must be held accountable, and we will pursue all available legal avenues to ensure that justice prevails," she added. The Russian-led IBA has been banished from the Olympics but it cited an executive order on transgender athletes by United States President Donald Trump to justify the criminal complaints.

Khelif said the IBA has "again made baseless accusations that are false and offensive, using them to further their agenda. This is a matter that concerns not just me but the broader principles of fairness and due process in sport." The IOC has consistently said the boxers from Algeria and Taiwan, who were assigned female at birth and identify as women, complied with all the rules for the Olympic tournament. Both also competed in Tokyo in 2021 and did not win medals. Khelif and Lin were disqualified from the 2023 world championships run by the IBA, which said they failed eligibility tests. "The two female athletes mentioned by IBA are not transgender athletes," the IOC reiterated on Monday. Khelif advanced through the Olympic Games amid international scrutiny and unfounded speculation about her sex. Despite being born and raised as a woman, she found herself at the center of Western debates about gender, sex and sports after failing unspecified eligibility tests for women's competition from the IBA in 2023. "I have seen adversity before," Khelif said. "I have fought through every setback, every false accusation, every attempt to erase me. And I have won. Each obstacle has only strengthened my resolve."

Jamshedpur FC look to prevail over NorthEast United in ISL

PTI ■ JAMSHEDPUR

Jamshedpur FC will look to bounce back from their away loss to Bengaluru FC and remain in contention for the top-2 place finish when they host NorthEast United in their Indian Super League (ISL) match here on Thursday. Jamshedpur have 34 points from 19 games on the back of 11 wins and a draw to be at the third spot in the standings. Their aim will be to stay in contention for the second spot which FC Goa occupy currently with 36 points. The top-2 finishers do have to compete in the single-leg eliminator since they directly qualify for the semi-finals. NorthEast United, on the other hand, are at sixth spot with 29 points and they have competition from Odisha FC (26), Kerala Blasters FC (24), and Punjab FC (24) who are closely following them. The Highlanders have drawn thrice and won once in their



previous five matches. Earlier this season, the Highlanders had claimed a thumping 5-0 victory against the Red Miners in Guwahati. Another triumph would make Jamshedpur FC the seventh opponent against whom the visitors complete a league double in the competition. Jamshedpur, however, have not faced losses in any of their five home fixtures against NorthEast United, drawing thrice in the process. Notably, the Highlanders are the only side against whom Jamshedpur have kept multiple home clean sheets (three) in the competition. Jamshedpur FC have been on an encouraging run at home in the current campaign, emerging victorious in eight of their 10 games. The Highlanders are unbeaten in their previous four games on the road, and the last time they registered

such a longer stretch was for five encounters between October-December 2018. Jamshedpur FC head coach Khalid Jamil is not reading too much into the reverse fixture. "In our last match against them, we didn't get a good result. We need to approach this match positively and work hard," he said. NorthEast United FC head coach Juan Pedro Benali has a straightforward mindset ahead of the coming match, which is to earn three points. "Jamshedpur FC are a very dangerous team. Any mistake against them can lead to a goal. We need to win as many points as possible and qualify for the playoffs," Benali said in the pre-match press conference. The two sides have played each other 15 times in the ISL, with Jamshedpur FC winning six games and NorthEast United FC emerging victorious thrice. Six matches have produced draws.

Kerala enters Ranji Trophy semifinals

PTI ■ PUNE

Kerala produced a Kdoughty batting effort to hang on to a draw against Jammu and Kashmir, and progressed to the Ranji Trophy semifinals on the back of a slender 1-run first innings lead here on Wednesday. Player of the match Salman Nizar (44 not out, 162 balls, 8x4) and Mohammed Azharuddeen (67 not out, 118b, 9x4 2x6) saw off nearly 43 overs during their unbroken 115-run alliance for the seventh wicket as Kerala made 295 for six in their second innings. Their partnership was enough for Kerala, overnight 100 for two, to see off the final day's proceedings, and set up a semi-final meeting with former champions Gujarat from February 17. This will only be Kerala's second appearance in the Ranji Trophy last four round after the 2018-19 season. They had lost to eventual

champions Vidarbha by an innings and 11 runs at Wayanad last time. "We believed in ourselves and took it (partnership) through the blocks of 10 runs each. J&K bowlers were also made our task tough. It was a similar approach we had adopted in the first innings," said Nizar during the presentation ceremony. The left-handed batter had also made a vital unbeaten 112 in Kerala's first innings and stitched an 81-run alliance with Basil Thampi to give Kerala a crucial 1-run lead. "We tried our best, but unfortunately we could not go all the way in this match. Credit to Kerala batters. But we are proud of the way fought till here, and hopefully, we can achieve more," said J and K skipper Paras Dogra after the match. Jammu and Kashmir left-arm spinner Abid Mushtaq also received an on-the-spot warning by on field umpires for chucking.

Sri Lanka beat Australia by 49 runs

PTI ■ COLOMBO

Asalanka scored a career-best 127 to help Sri Lanka beat Australia by 49 runs in the opener of a two-match One-Day International cricket series here on Wednesday. Sri Lanka were bowled out for 214 in 46 overs after Asalanka won the toss and elected to bat first at Colombo's R Premadasa Stadium. Asalanka played a captain's innings and carried his team with his fourth ODI hundred in his 72nd game. In reply, Australia were bowled out for 165 runs in 33.5 overs. Fast bowler Spencer Johnson (2-44) quickly provided Australia with its first breakthrough, having opener Pathum Nissanka caught behind in the first over of the match. Opening partner



Avishka Fernando fell in the next over when he was caught by Australia captain Steve Smith off fast bowler Aaron Hardie, who took 2-13 in six overs. Kusal Mendis (19), Kamindu Mendis (5) and Janith Liyanage (11) fell in quick succession to leave the hosts precariously placed on 55 runs for five wickets. But Asalanka and Dunith Wellalage's 67-run partnership off 68 deliveries for the sixth wicket provided Sri Lanka with a base for a competitive total. Wellalage made a useful 30 off 34, including a six and two boundaries, before being caught by Smith off spinner Matthew Short.

Sri Lanka looked in trouble again at 135-8 after losing two more quick wickets, but No. 10 batter Eshan Malinga came to Asalanka's assistance by keeping his captain company in a 79-run ninth wicket stand in which he contributed just one run. Asalanka hit 127 off 126 deliveries, including five sixes and 14 fours. Fast medium Sean Abbott took 3-61. Sri Lanka fast bowler Asitha Fernando struck in the first over of Australia's chase by trapping Short lbw with no score on the board. In his second over he had Jake Fraser-McGurk caught and bowled. Cooper Connolly and Smith, too, were dismissed quickly to leave Australia at 31-4.



Torrent Group becomes majority stakeholder in Gujarat Titans

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

Healthcare major Torrent Group became the majority shareholder of Gujarat Titans after acquiring 67 percent (2/3rd) stake from current owners CVC, the IPL franchise announced on Wednesday. The transaction is subject to customary closing conditions and approvals, including from the BCCI. "Torrent Group has entered into a definitive agreement to acquire majority stake of 67% in the renowned Indian Premier League (IPL) franchise, Gujarat Titans (Irelia Sports India Private Limited) from Irelia Company Pte Ltd ("Irelia") -- currently fully owned by funds managed or advised by CVC," the press release stated. "As part of the deal, Irelia will retain a substantial minority stake of 33% in the franchise," it further stated. The CVC in 2021 had bought the Gujarat franchise for INR 5625 crore and incidentally Torrent was one of the bidders. The current valuation of GT

is believed to be INR 7500 crore and as per IPL sources, Torrent has paid something to the tune of Rs 5025 crore to acquire two-third stake. The deal is a win-win situation for both as CVC has not only retained one-third share but also got back 89 percent of the amount originally invested in buying the team. Speaking on the occasion, Jinal Mehta, Director, Torrent Group, said, "With the acquisition of a majority stake in the Gujarat Titans, we are excited to have the opportunity to elevate our fan experience and unlock new growth avenues in the years to come." Siddharth Patel, Managing Partner at CVC, commented: "We are excited to announce this deal, which marks the beginning of a new chapter in India's most popular sporting event and our team Gujarat Titans. "Our participation in Indian Cricket started strongly, securing the Gujarat franchise, winning the IPL title in our first season and emerging as runners up in our second season."

Sachin, Pooja and Sawan win gold in National Games

PTI ■ DEHRADUN

Javelin thrower Sachin Yadav of Uttar Pradesh, 18-year-old high jumper Pooja Singh of Haryana and long distance runner Sawan Barwal of Himachal Pradesh rewrote National Games records and won gold medals on the concluding day of athletics competition here on Wednesday. In the absence of the likes of Neeraj Chopra and Kishore Jena, 25-year-old Yadav sent his spear to a Games-record distance of 84.39m in his fifth attempt to win the gold and establish himself as one of the top javelin throwers in the country. He bettered the earlier Games record of 82.23m set by Rajinder Singh in the 2015

edition. "My goal was to achieve the World Athletics automatic qualification mark (85.50m) but missed it," Yadav said at the post-event interaction. "I'm close to my goal and should be able to achieve 85.50m in the next competition." Yadav's 84.39m now ranks as the fifth career-best throw by an Indian after Chopra (89.94m), Jena (87.54m), Shivpal Singh (86.23m) and Davinder Singh Kang (84.57m). Uttar Pradesh swept the medals with Rohit Yadav -- another member of 80m club -- winning the silver with a performance of 80.47m while state-mate Vikash Sharma took home the bronze with 79.33m. It was Yadav's fourth 80m-plus

throw, having joined the elite club in 2023 with a 80.27m during the Federation Cup. In June, he won the title in the Indian Grand Prix 3 with a throw of 82.69m, which was his earlier personal best before Wednesday's record-breaking effort. He threw 80.04m during the National Open Championships qualification round in September last year. Daughter of a mason from Fatehabad district of Haryana, Pooja cleared 1.84m to defend the women's high jump gold she had won in the 2023 edition, bettering the earlier Games record of 1.83m set by Swapna Barman of West Bengal in the 2022 edition of the Games. Pooja, who has a personal best of 1.85m -- a national U20

record -- which she had produced last year, used to train on makeshift high jump pit made up of sacks of hay when she started the sport. She won a silver medal at the Asian U20 Championships in 2023, a gold in the Asian U18 Championships the same year and finished sixth at the Hangzhou Asian Games last year. Gobika K of Tamil Nadu won the silver after clearing 1.79m while Abhinaya Shetty (1.77m) of Karnataka took home the bronze. Barwal won the men's 5000m in a time of 13 minute and 45.93 seconds, bettering the earlier Games record of 13:50.05s set by G Lakshmanan of Services in the 2015 edition. It was his second gold and second Games record in this

edition. He had clinched the men's 10,000m title on Saturday with a Games record time of 28:49.93s, bettering the earlier mark of 28:54.29s set by Gulveer Singh in the 2022 edition in Gujarat. The 26-year-old Barwal was a bronze medal winner at the 2023 Asian Half Marathon race. He also won the 2024 Delhi Half Marathon title among the Indians. Gagan Singh of Haryana was second with a time of 14:00.04s while Sunil Dawar of Madhya Pradesh finished third with 14:01.33s. In the women's 400m hurdles, Tamil Nadu's Vithya Ramraj pocketed her third successive National Games gold, adding to her top of podium finish in the 2022 and 2023 editions of the Games.

Ramraj, who jointly holds the national record of 55.42 seconds along with the legendary PT Usha, clocked 58.11 seconds to win the gold. The 26-year-old Ramraj, a member of the Indian 4x400m relay team that took part in the 2024 Paris Olympics, joined women's 100m hurdler Jyothi Yarraji and men's 110m hurdler Tejas Shire in winning gold in three successive Games. It was, however, a below-par performance from Ramraj as her timing was more than one second off the mark from her Games record of 56.67 seconds she had set in the 2022 edition. Tamil Nadu finished 1-2 as Shreevarthani SK took home the silver with a time of 59.86 seconds, while Maharashtra's Neha Dhabale (1:00.52) secured the bronze.

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

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

A robust batting show led by the Shubman Gill's attractive century heralded India's 142-run hammering of England in the third and final ODI as the hosts completed a dominant 3-0 clean sweep to culminate preparations for the Champions Trophy, here on Wednesday.

India ticked all the remaining boxes with vice-captain Gill (112) following up his twin fifties earlier in the series with a seventh ODI ton of his career while middle-order mainstays Virat Kohli (52) and Shreyas Iyer (78) pushed India to a formidable 356 in the first half.

Indian bowlers then took over the mantle to complete the England demolition job, bundling out the visitors for a mere 214 in 34.2 overs to complete a comprehensive victory — their second largest in ODIs in terms of runs against a familiar opponent.

There was no change in the script for English, who came crashing down against spin after a sparkling start against

pace, which was provided by the pair of Ben Duckett (34) and Phil Salt (24) in tow.

The slowness of the surface aided Indian bowlers as strike-making became difficult as the match progressed.

Duckett took charge of England's response early on but played one shot too many. After smacking Arshdeep Singh (2/33) for four consecutive boundaries around the park in the fifth over, he again went after the left-arm seamer but was deceived by the 'pace off' knuckle ball.

The mishit was collected cleanly by India skipper Rohit Sharma at mid-off and Arshdeep soon bounced out Salt, albeit off a slower one which the batter hit meekly to Axar Patel for a simple grab.

Tom Banton gave a good example of himself playing his first ODI against India, hitting a couple of attractive reverse sweeps against spinners but he could not push on beyond a 41-ball 38 with four fours and two sixes.

Joe Root perished for just 24 when an inside edge off Axar (2/22) crashed into his



stumps and Harshit Rana (2/31) hastened the end of England's resistance by getting the rid of Harry Brook (19) and Jos Buttler (6) in quick succession. From 84/2 after 10 overs, England's resolve petered

out as Indian bowlers tightened the screws with regular strikes and the visitors also lacked gumption on a pitch which remained true in its nature. Earlier, Gill led the way with a fluent 112 while Kohli and

Iyer also cashed in on ideal conditions in their last outing before the Champions Trophy, helping India set a 357-run target. Gill anchored India's innings en route to his seventh ODI ton — 112 off 104 balls

(14x4s, 3x6s) which also took his average past 60 in the format — while putting on two century stands with Kohli and Iyer to consolidate for India. The India vice-captain Gill also achieved the unique feat

of scoring a century each across the three international formats at the same venue.

Gill, meanwhile, has also scored an IPL hundred here at the Narendra Modi Stadium. Attacking the fast bowlers and spinners alike, Gill's knock was replete with rich strokes particularly down the ground. The opener displayed immaculate footwork at the crease early on to take the attack to the opposition and remained resolute to score off spin, until he was cleaned up by Adil Rashid (4/64).

On his part, Kohli took his time to find the rhythm and when he did, the batting mainstay looked hitting his strides. Kohli made the most of a juicy overpitched delivery from Mark Wood which he drove through the covers for his first four, then got on top of the ball from Saqib Mahmood to swat it for another boundary through mid-wicket and punished the England pacer for being wayward as he cut him for his third four.

While his stroke play was compelling in the run-a-ball fifty for his 73rd half-

century, there were elements of struggle against leg-spinner Rashid.

Rashid continued to have wood over Kohli as soon after he raised his bat for fifty, the England spinner had him caught behind with a loopy leg-break that took an outside edge before settling in the wicketkeeper's gloves. This was the fifth time Rashid has dismissed Kohli in ODIs.

Kohli was stranded 37 runs short of becoming only the third batter ever to make 14,000 ODI runs, missing a personal landmark like his teammate Rohit Sharma earlier in the innings. It is expected to be completed during Champions Trophy.

Coming off a terrific century in second ODI, Rohit (1) could not even get a start as a delivery from Wood which was angled in, straightened enough to take the outside edge and Phil Salt collected a sharp catch. Iyer only had himself to blame for missing out on a triple-digit score after he was caught behind on a delivery fired down the leg stump by Rashid, one that he needlessly chased and edged.

Strac withdraws, Smith to lead Australia in Champions Trophy

PTI ■ SYDNEY

Steve Smith-led Australia will be without their frontline pace attack at the Champions Trophy (CT) after fast bowler Mitchell Starc withdrew from the tournament citing personal reasons. The ODI World Cup holders have been forced to make several changes to their 15-member provisional squad due to injuries to captain Pat Cummins, pacer Josh Hazlewood, and all-rounder Mitchell Marsh, along with Marcus Stoinis' surprise retirement.

"We understand and respect Mitch's decision," Chair of

men's selectors George Bailey said on Wednesday.

"Mitch is deeply respected for his commitment to international cricket and the priority he places on performing for Australia." Starc, who appeared to be in discomfort due to a left ankle issue during the latter stages of the final Test in Galle last week, will also miss the upcoming ODI series in Sri Lanka starting Wednesday.

"His well-documented ability to play through pain and adversity, as well as forgoing opportunities in other parts of his career to put his country first, should be applauded," Bailey added.

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

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

India and England cricket teams took the field for the third and final ODI here on Wednesday wearing green armbands to support the BCCI's initiative of "Donate Organs, Save Lives" campaign.

The BCCI informed this in a statement shortly after the commencement of the match here at the Narendra Modi Stadium. "Both teams are wearing green arm bands to support BCCI's initiative 'Donate Organs, Save Lives'. The initiative is spearheaded by

ICC Chairman Mr Jay Shah," the BCCI release stated.

The initiative was announced by ICC chairman and former BCCI secretary Shah on Monday. Shah wrote on X, "On the occasion of the 3rd ODI between India and England in Ahmedabad on February 12th, we are proud to launch an awareness initiative — 'Donate Organs, Save Lives'. "Sport has the power to inspire, unite, and create lasting impact beyond the field. Through this initiative, we urge everyone

to take a step towards giving the greatest gift of all — the gift of life.

"One pledge, one decision, can save multiple lives. Let's come together and make a difference!" he added.

The initiative was supported by several Indian players, including Virat Kohli and vice-captain Shubman Gill.

"Score the ultimate century. Your organs can help others live beyond your lifetime. Register as a donor and make every life count," Kohli said in a video shared by the BCCI. Gill added, "Be the captain

of life. Just like a captain leads the team to victory, you can lead someone to life by pledging to donate your organs."

Other Indian cricketers to support the initiative were batters Shreyas Iyer and KL Rahul.

"One donor can save up to eight lives. Pledge today and hit a six for humanity," Iyer said.

Rahul added, "Play the ultimate winning shot. Your decision to donate your organs can be the match winning moment in someone's life. Be a hero off the field too."

Ghazanfar ruled out of both Champions Trophy and IPL

PTI ■ KABUL

Teenage Afghanistan off-spinner AM Ghazanfar has been ruled out of both the ICC Champions Trophy (CT) and the IPL due to a lower back fracture that will keep him on the sidelines for at least four months, the country's cricket board announced on Wednesday.

Left-arm spinner Nangeyalla Kharote, originally named as a reserve, has replaced the 18-year-old in the main squad for Champions Trophy, which will be held in Pakistan and the UAE from February 19.

The 20-year-old Kharote is a left-arm spinner and has played seven ODIs and six T20 Internationals since making his debut last year.

Ghazanfar sustained the injury during Afghanistan's tour of Zimbabwe late last year, sidelining him for "at least four months".

"AM Ghazanfar has been ruled out of the ICC Champions Trophy due to a fracture in the L4 vertebra (located in the lower back), specifically in the left pars interarticularis," the Afghanistan Cricket Board (ACB) posted on X.

Shikhar Dhawan among four event ambassadors for Champions Trophy

PTI ■ DUBAI

Former India opener Shikhar Dhawan was on Wednesday named as one of the four event ambassadors for the ICC Champions Trophy (CT) to be held in Pakistan and Dubai from February 19 to March 9.

Besides Dhawan, the ICC has also named Pakistan's 2017 Champions Trophy winning captain Sarfaraz Ahmed, former Australia all-rounder Shane Watson, and New Zealand's legendary fast bowler, Tim Southee as event ambassadors.

The quartet will write guest columns and will also attend matches, sharing their thoughts on the event, where the world's best eight teams will compete for the top honour. "It is such a special feeling to be part of a Champions Trophy, and to be given the opportunity to enjoy the upcoming edition as an Ambassador is an honour," Dhawan said in an ICC release.

"It's the ultimate competition where it's all on the line, and that is what makes it such a thrilling spectacle. It's a tournament full of passion, pride, and determination, and that's what makes it such a thrilling and emotional journey for everyone involved."

As India's highest run-scorer in the Champions Trophy, with an outstanding 701 runs across two editions, Dhawan has long been one of the most iconic players in the history of the

competition. He also holds the distinction of being the only player to win two consecutive Golden Bats (for the highest run-getter) in the tournament.

His remarkable achievements include being named the Player of the Tournament in the 2013 edition, as well as holding the record for the most centuries in Champions Trophy history.

"Some of my most cherished cricketing memories come from playing in the Champions Trophy. In the coming weeks, we will see the world's best teams pouring their heart and soul into every match, with everything they have worked for on the line," said Dhawan.

Sarfaraz was elated that Pakistan has got the opportunity to host the tournament. India will play their share of matches in Dubai.

"I will never forget how special it felt to don the white jackets and lift the trophy aloft as Pakistan captain back in 2017. I am delighted to see the competition return to the cricket calendar and see my country given the opportunity to host such a special event," he said.

Southee and Watson echoed the sentiment with the latter saying, "With the top eight teams going head-to-head for the iconic white jackets, we are sure to see some extraordinary do-or-die cricket across three thrilling weeks."





एनटीपीसी ऊंचाहार के 33 वें स्थापना दिवस की हार्दिक शुभकामनाएं







एनटीपीसी ऊंचाहार

भारत की एक अग्रणी सुरक्षित, पर्यावरण अनुकूल, नॉन-पिट हैड पावर स्टेशन

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