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## GYANESH KUMAR TO BE NEW CEC OF INDIA

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The selection committee headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, which met on Monday evening, is learnt to have recommended the name of the next chief election commissioner to President Droupadi Murmu. Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar, a senior most official of the three member panel, is expected to take over from Rajiv Kumar as Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) of India. Kumar's term ends on February 18 on attaining the age of 65 years. This comes after the Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi asking the government to adjourn the meeting to select the new chief election commissioner until the Supreme Court hears on February 19 a petition on the constitution of the selection panel. The Congress' statement came soon after a meeting of the three-member selection committee. Besides Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Leader of the Opposition Rahul Gandhi are part of the panel which met here. Incumbent CEC Rajiv Kumar demits office on Tuesday on attaining the age of 65 years. Sources said the notification announcing the name of the next CEC could be issued "in the next few hours". The CEC's term can last up to six years from the date of appointment, though they must retire upon



turning sixty-five, regardless of whether their term has concluded. This marks the first time a selection panel has been set up to appoint the head of the country's election watchdog. Earlier, there was no law passed by Parliament for the appointment of the CEC and ECs. The appointments were done by the President on the advice of the Prime Minister. Traditionally, the successor to the incumbent CEC has been the next senior-most Election Commissioner. Seniority was usually defined by who was appointed earlier to the Commission. However, a new law on the appointment of the CEC and ECs came into force last year under which a search committee shortlists five names from among secretary-level officers for consideration and finalisation by the prime minister-led panel. After Rajiv Kumar, Gyanesh Kumar is the

senior-most election commissioner. His tenure as Election Commissioner is until January 26, 2029. If Gyanesh Kumar is approved as the next CEC, a new EC could also be appointed to fill the vacancy created by his elevation. This marks the first time a selection panel has been set up to appoint the head of the country's election watchdog. The Election Commission (EC) is a three-member body made up of one Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) and two Election Commissioners. Although all three election commissioners are equal, the CEC, like the Chief Justice of India, is the first among equals. According to sources, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi was learnt to have asked the government to defer its decision till the Supreme Court hearing on a petition challenging the composition of the selection panel. **Continued on page 8**

## Earthquake in Delhi causes panic and tremors

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Residents of Delhi-NCR and several parts of northern India were jolted early Monday morning as strong tremors shook high-rise buildings, prompting many to rush outdoors. Residents were terrified by the loud sound while the tremors were felt as they watched their buildings shake for a few seconds which lasted for 35 seconds. According to the National Centre for Seismology (NCS), the earthquake, measuring 4.0 on the Richter scale, struck at 5:36 AM IST with its epicentre located within Delhi's Dhaula Kuan.



A man stands near an uprooted tree at Dhaula Kuan's Jheel Park, the epicentre of the earthquake that struck the Delhi-NCR

Prime Minister Narendra Modi took to social media to raise concerns and urged residents to stay alert for any aftershocks. "Tremors were felt in Delhi and nearby areas. Urging everyone to stay calm and follow safety precautions, staying alert for possible aftershocks. Authorities are keeping a close watch on the situation," he said. The Dhaula Kuan area, which has a lake nearby, has been experiencing low-magnitude quakes once every two to three years. It recorded an earthquake of magnitude 3.3 in 2015. Soon after the tremor, the Ministry of Earth Sciences warned the people of Delhi and surrounding areas of a possible "aftershock" hours after the city was rocked by a low magnitude but strong earthquake. Union Earth Sciences minister Dr Jitendra Singh has asked the people of Delhi to stay calm and exercise safety precautions and preparedness for the aftershocks. "Following the earthquake tremors felt this morning in and around Delhi at about 5:36 AM, the authorities are keeping a close watch and professional experts as well officials in the Ministry of Earth Sciences are constantly monitoring. However, it is advised to stay calm and exercise safety precautions and preparedness for possible aftershocks, if any. Meanwhile, regular updates are being shared by the department through its different communication channels and social media handles," he wrote on X. Several political leaders mentioned

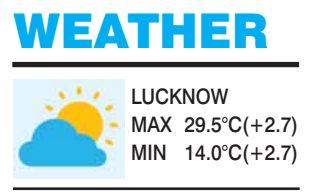
experiencing the earthquake tremors and prayed for everyone's safety. The Delhi Police also wrote on X, saying, "We hope you all are safe, Delhi! For any emergency help, dial 112." According to NCS official, a loud sound was heard when the earthquake hit Delhi-NCR. The rumbling sound heard during the earthquake could have been the result of the earthquake's shallow depth. It could have been due to movement in tectonic plates and several bursts of energy. Though a 4.0-magnitude quake is considered moderate, its impact felt stronger than usual because of its shallow depth and close proximity to densely populated areas. Earthquakes with epicentres within a city result in more intense shaking since seismic waves travel a shorter distance before reaching structures, amplifying the tremors. The Delhi Police and the Delhi Fire Service did not receive any calls about untoward incidents during the earthquake but the sudden tremors sparked concern among residents. Seismologists continue to monitor aftershocks and have advised citizens to stay informed about earthquake preparedness measures. However, National Centre for Seismology Director OP Mishra said, "The epicentre was at Jheel Park in

Dhula Kuan, it was a 6.0 magnitude earthquake. It was in the depth of 5 km, it is called shallow depth, hence people felt the effect. People getting panicked was natural. Seismologically, it is not new region, earthquakes have happened earlier in the region. Earlier, there was 4.6 magnitude earthquake in 6 km periphery, but it was deeper, with 10 km depth. There is a difference. It was not a plate tectonic earthquake, it was due to in situ material heterogeneity, it was due to local effect. We can expect aftershock of around 1 or 1.2 magnitude." He said the Dhula Kuan region has witnessed 420 shallow earthquakes and the national capital has remained safe from such incidents for the past several years. "The epicentre of Monday's earthquake was at Jheel Park in Dhula Kuan, it was a 4.0 magnitude earthquake. It was in the depth of 5 km, it is called shallow depth, hence people felt the effect," Mishra said. Srijan Pal Singh, the former advisor to the 11th President of India and founder of Kalam Centre and Homi lab, also explained the phenomenon on X. He said that the residents felt "bigger tremors than ever before" because the epicenter was in Delhi itself. "This is how quakes feel at the epicenter," he said. **Continued on page 8**

## Student from Nepal dies by suicide at KIIT

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ BHUBANESWAR

A third-year B-Tech student of a private engineering institute hailing from Nepal died here allegedly by suicide in her hostel leading to tension in the campus, police said on Monday. Taking note of the incident, Nepal Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli said his government is working on this issue through diplomatic channels and is in touch with the authorities. The deceased was identified as Prakriti Lamsal. She was a B-Tech third-year student of Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology (KIIT), varsity Registrar said. The deceased's cousin lodged a complaint at Infocity police station in Bhubaneswar alleging that his sister hanged herself in her hostel room on Sunday. **Continued on page 8**



## SC to hear Places of Worship case in April



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Expressing displeasure over filing of several pleas on the Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act, the Supreme Court on Monday said a three-judge bench will hear in April the pending post-notice petitions related to the 1991 law which mandates the religious character of a place to be maintained as it existed on August 15, 1947, except in Ayodhya's Babri Masjid - Ram Mandir case. The top court, however, granted liberty to the petitioners like Samajwadi Party leader and Kairana MP Iqra Choudhary, who have filed the pleas recently and notices have not been issued on them, to file applications for intervention in pending ones by citing new legal grounds.

Dismissal fresh petitions, on which notices were not issued yet, a bench comprising Chief Justice Sanjiv Khanna and Justice Sanjay Kumar said, "The writ petitioners can file an (intervention) application raising new grounds." "We are constrained to pass this order after taking note of the number of fresh petitions filed. The pending writ petitions, which have no notices, stand dismissed with liberty to file an application raising additional grounds, if any. The new IA will only be allowed if there is any new point or new legal issue that has not been raised in the pending petitions," the bench said. "People keep on filing fresh petitions alleging that they have raised new grounds...It will become impossible for us to deal with the petitions besides whatever has already been filed," said CJ. The Bench then listed the batch of petitions and cross ones pertaining to the 1991 law in the week commencing April 1 before a three-judge bench. Senior advocate Dushyant Dave agreed to the bench and said no fresh plea be allowed on the issue. Another senior advocate Vikas Singh, appearing for one of the old petitioners, raised the issue of non-filing of the response by the Centre to the petitions and said the last opportunity be given to the government for this purpose. Earlier in the day also, the CJ expressed displeasure over filing of many fresh cases. **Continued on page 8**

## Pitroda's China comment sparks row

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI



Congress Indian Overseas leader Sam Pitroda courted yet another controversy with his comments negating Chinese threat to India which brought him in line of fire by ruling BJP while Congress distanced itself from their celebrated leader. The Congress leader, whose comments have been a frequent fodder for the BJP's attacks on the opposition party, is reported to have said that he does not understand the threat India faces from China, claiming that it is often blown out of proportion. Congress distanced itself from Pitroda's remarks, saying these are not the views of the party and that China remains India's foremost external security and economic challenge. Addressing a press conference, BJP national spokesperson and MP Sudhanshu Trivedi sought to draw a link between US-based Pitroda's remarks, US-based groups funding for "voter turnout" in India and the ruling party's charges against Congress MP Gaurav Gogoi for his alleged links to Pakistan. Trivedi claimed that Pitroda's comments should not be seen in isolation as he recalled Congress leader Rahul

Gandhi's positive words in the past for China's growth story and the manner in which it tackled issues like unemployment. What Pitroda has said is a severe blow to India's prestige, diplomacy and sovereignty, he said, accusing the veteran Congress functionary of speaking as if it is India which is the aggressor in the conflict with China. "All these things make clear the agenda of harming India. The 'mohabbat ki dukan' of the Congress is for anti-national forces be it George Soros or China," said Trivedi. The opposition party has nothing but a hateful agenda for India by pitting people against each other in the name of region, caste and language, he alleged. Pitroda, he said, has openly acknowledged the Congress agreement with China's ruling party. "The views reportedly expressed by Mr Sam Pitroda

on China are most definitely NOT the views of the Indian National Congress," AICC general secretary, communications, Jairam Ramesh, said in a social media post. Another BJP spokesperson Tuhin Sinha said, "Those who ceded away 40,000 square km of our land to China, still see no threat from the Dragon.. No wonder Rahul Gandhi is in awe of China." Pitroda's comments, Trivedi said, are an insult to Indian military and the sacrifices made by its personnel, invoking the Galwan clash in which 20 Indian Army personnel laid down their lives while an unspecified number of Chinese soldiers died too. He said India wants good relations with every country, adding it will be, however, done by maintaining its prestige and security. The BJP spokesperson also took up the issue of funding from the US-based ground into India for "voter turnout" and the ruling party's allegation against Congress MP Gaurav Gogoi for links to Pakistan to hit out at the opposition party. Asserting that there is no ground left for the Congress to defend itself, he, however, demanded that the opposition party must come out with a clarification. **Continued on page 8**



Security personnel manage passengers boarding a train at the New Delhi Railway Station

## Rail minister promises action on Delhi stampede

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■ NEW DELHI

In his first reaction, two days after the tragic stampede at New Delhi Railway Station, which claimed 18 lives, Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw while regretting the "unfortunate" incident said that investigations are going on and responsibility shall be fixed. Simultaneously, Vaishnaw who held a second round of meeting with Home Minister Amit Shah on Monday, said action will be against the principle of natural justice till the time the inquiry report comes. "I have maintained a principle of 'We Fail! So far as action is concerned, we have not taken any action against any official as we are waiting for the

inquiry committee to give its report. This is in line with the principle of natural justice," Vaishnaw stated. On a question on the time frame for the committee to give its report, the railway minister said no time period has been fixed as it will put undue pressure on the committee members. Sources said that the Railway Minister and top brass was not given the correct status of the un-fateful day till two hours after the it happened on platform 14-15 on Saturday around 9 pm. Well placed sources in Delhi Division of Northern Railway said that top officers of the division, including DRM, for more than an hour, maintained that the chaos was minor. **Continued on page 8**

## Snow delays Khelo India Winter Games

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

In the absence of a thick blanket of snow at the famous Gulmarg Ski resort, the Jammu and Kashmir Sports Council Monday decided to postpone the 5th edition of the Khelo India Winter Games, initially set for February 22-25, 2025. The Jammu and Kashmir Sports Council also announced that a new assessment will be conducted once snow conditions improve, after which a revised schedule will be announced. According to official sources in the Jammu and Kashmir Sports Council, around 300 athletes were set to compete in four snow sports-ski mountaineering, alpine skiing,

snowboarding, and Nordic skiing-from February 22 to 25. "We have decided to postpone the event as key ski slopes lack sufficient snow," said Rauf Trambo, president of the Winter Games Association of Jammu and Kashmir. Normally, the slopes receive seven to eight feet (about 2 meters) of snowfall, but this year's conditions have been unusually dry. Several parts of Jammu and Kashmir have already witnessed a sudden rise in the day temperature by 2 to 4 degrees Celsius. However, the weathermen have raised hopes by predicting a fresh spell of rain/snow in parts of Kashmir between February 19-20. According to the forecast, "Weather is expected to



remain generally cloudy with light to moderate rain/snow at many places from the 19th evening till the 20th of February". "The Plains of Kashmir and Jammu may receive light to moderate Rain/Thunder with gusty winds at a few places. Higher reaches of Chenab Valley & South Kashmir may receive moderate snowfall (6-10 inches) while higher reaches of North & Central Kashmir may receive 4-8 inches of fresh snow". Jammu and Kashmir is

currently witnessing a prolonged winter dry spell with the Union Territory recording 79 percent rainfall deficit against the normal precipitation of 144 mm. In February so far, the UT has recorded just 29.8 mm rainfall as per official data. Baramulla has recorded a deficit between 70-79 percent this year. The dry spell has also taken a toll on Kashmir's water bodies, with dozens of springs drying up, including one in the 17th-century Mughal Garden in Achabal town, located south of Srinagar. Meanwhile, several parts of Kashmir valley are already grappling with massive forest fires in the absence of adequate fire fighting measures in place.

## UP school named after war hero renamed, locals protest

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ GHAZIPIUR

The name of Param Vir Chakra awardee Shaheed Veer Abdul Hamid was removed from the main entrance of a primary school in Dhamapur village, sparking protests from his family and locals. Following their objections, the martyr's name was restored but only on an external wall, not the main gate, leading to further controversy. The school, previously known as 'Shaheed Abdul Hamid Vidyalaya', was renamed 'PM Shri Composite School' after a

recent repainting, according to officials. Jameel Ahmed, Hamid's grandson, stated that the name was erased during the repainting work four days ago. When the family raised objections, headmaster Ajay Kushwaha directed them to approach Basic Education Officer (BSA) Hemant Rao. Rao later assured the family that Abdul Hamid's name had been inscribed on one of the school's external walls, but the entrance continued to bear only the new name. Dissatisfied with the response, the family lodged another complaint on Saturday, demanding that the

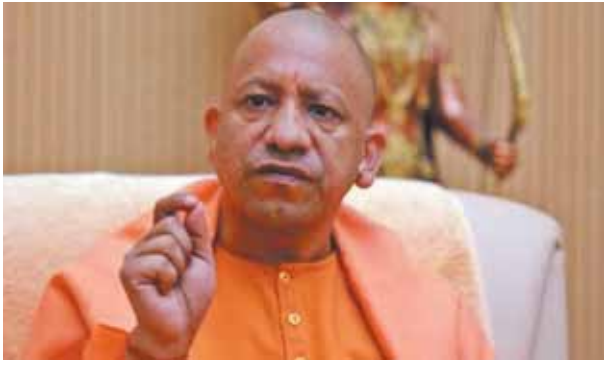
martyr's name be reinstated at the entrance. Despite assurances from officials that the matter would be addressed immediately, as of Monday, the name remained missing from the main gate, leaving the family "deeply hurt." Abdul Hamid is revered for his bravery during the 1965 Indo-Pak war, where he single-handedly destroyed three Pakistani Patton tanks, forcing the enemy to retreat. His valor earned him India's highest military decoration, the Param Vir Chakra, awarded posthumously to his wife, Rasoolan Bibi. **Continued on page 8**



# 'Prayagraj, Kashi, Ayodhya showcase India's potential'

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, on Monday, highlighted how honouring India's culture and traditions fosters unity and economic growth, as seen during the Maha Kumbh. He noted that under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership, cities like Ayodhya, Kashi and Prayagraj have not only revived Indian culture but also significantly boosted the economy, showcasing India's immense potential on the global stage. Speaking at a 'Dialogue with Young Entrepreneurs' event on Monday, organised by Yuva Bharat Sanstha, the chief minister engaged with industrialists from Mumbai and challenged critics of Maha Kumbh with facts. He posed a question to the entrepreneurs: "If an investment of Rs 7,500 crore by the Central and state governments can generate economic activity worth Rs 3-3.5 lakh crores, isn't it a wise investment?" He further highlighted the world-class infrastructure of cities like Ayodhya, Prayagraj, Kashi, Chitrakoot, Gorakhpur and Nainiwarh. Recalling past opposition to developmental projects such as road widening in Ayodhya, the construction of an international airport, and the Kashi Vishwanath Dham corridor, he noted that strong political will ensured their successful completion. The chief minister also shared that, so far, 53 crore devotees have taken a sacred dip in Sangam during Maha Kumbh, and the celebrations will continue for the next nine days. He underscored that this is a testament to India's spiritual and economic strength. Addressing entrepreneurs, he invited them to visit key pilgrimage sites, including Ram Janmabhoomi in Ayodhya, Prayagraj and Kashi, where millions of devotees from India and across the world are not only reaffirming their faith but also showcasing India's cultural and economic power to the world. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath highlighted that under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the past decade has witnessed unprecedented resurgence of faith and cultural pride in the country. He



emphasised that India's spiritual heritage has been restored, and places long associated with its identity have regained their recognition. He said, "The 500-year wait ended with the grand consecration of Ram Lalla. In 2016-17, when there was no BJP government in Uttar Pradesh, the number of devotees visiting Ayodhya was merely 2.35 lakh. By 2024, this number has surged to over 14-15 crore." He credited this remarkable transformation to the collective devotion and support of the people. Speaking on Kashi Vishwanath Dham, the chief minister noted that the number of devotees visiting Kashi was significantly lower before its redevelopment. Today, it has grown manifold. Recounting a recent conversation with locals in Kashi, he shared how they had never witnessed such an overwhelming influx of visitors as they have in the past one and a half months. Comparing pilgrimage attendance, he stated that in the 2013 Prayagraj Kumbh, 12 crore devotees participated over 55 days. In 2019 Ardh Kumbh, the number doubled to 24 crore. This year, during the 45-day Maha Kumbh in Prayagraj, an astounding 53 crore devotees have arrived in just 36 days. The chief minister highlighted the massive logistical efforts to accommodate this surge. In just 35 days, alongside 40 routine flights, more than 700 chartered flights landed in the region. The Indian Railways has been operating hundreds of special trains daily, while the UP State Road Transport Corporation has deployed a fleet of 14,000 buses to facilitate travel. He stated, "From January 28 to 30, 15 crore

devotees took a holy dip. On January 28, around 5.5 crore devotees came, followed by eight crore on January 29, and 2.5 crore on January 30." He said by 8 am on Monday, 40 lakh devotees had taken a holy dip, and the rituals would continue throughout the day. He emphasised that while respecting faith is essential, its economic impact is equally significant. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath stated that there was a time when foreign goods dominated Indian markets. However, inspired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision, the One District, One Product (ODOP) scheme was launched in 2018 to revive and promote Uttar Pradesh's traditional MSME sector. A comprehensive mapping of locally produced goods identified unique products from each district. With targeted support in design, packaging, technology, and marketing, UP successfully expanded its exports and established a distinct brand identity for the state. This initiative has also generated employment opportunities for lakhs of people. Chief Minister Yogi also emphasised the transformation of Varanasi, Bhadohi, and Mirzapur, key hubs of India's carpet industry, by integrating them with global design and market trends. The establishment of Expo Mart further boosted exports, with carpets worth Rs 8,000-Rs 10,000 crore now being shipped worldwide. Similarly, Firozabad's glass industry has been revitalised, and every district is witnessing significant industrial growth. Addressing entrepreneurs, Chief Minister Yogi encouraged them to experience the energy and enthusiasm of Ayodhya firsthand.

# People missing may be involved in Sambhal violence: Police

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Sambhal (PTI): People reportedly missing from Sambhal are probably the ones who were involved in the November 24, 2024 violence in the district that claimed four lives, a senior police official said on Monday. Speaking to reporters here, Sambhal SP Krishan Kumar said, "There is a discussion of exodus ('palaayan') in Sambhal. Around 2,500 to 3,000 people were involved in the violence that took place in Sambhal on November 24. Policemen were pelted with stones and also fired at." So far, 79 people have been arrested and posters of some people have been put up at public places and photos released on social media. "The people missing from here are probably the same people who were involved in the violence that day," Kumar said, adding normal life is prevailing with children going to schools, markets open and "any talk of exodus is absolutely wrong". The Sambhal SP's remarks came a day after AIMIM chief Asaduddin Owaisi claimed that such an "atmosphere of fear and oppression has been created in Sambhal that people are being forced to leave their homes". In a post on X in Hindi, Owaisi on Sunday said, "An atmosphere of such fear and oppression has been created in Sambhal that people are being forced to leave their homes. The government must stop targeting Sambhal's Muslims and punishing them collectively, steps for reassurance must be taken as soon as possible." Responding to the allegations levelled by Owaisi, the SP said that in the violence, 2,500 to 3,000 people were involved, in which only 79 people have been arrested, the rest can be automatically calculated. "Those who were involved in the violence must have seen their photo in posters. On the basis of that, those people cannot be here. But, there is no fear of any kind among the general public," he said, and added that the criminals should always be afraid of the police. "I want to assure you that no innocent will be harassed, but strict action will be taken against those who are guilty, those who have attacked the police," the SP said.

# There should be no scope for cheating in UP Board exams: Chief Secretary

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Chief Secretary Manoj Kumar Singh on Monday called for peaceful and transparent conduct of UP Board examinations. While reviewing the preparations for the exams, to be conducted by the Madhyamik Shiksha Parishad from February 24 to March 12, he emphasised that there should be no scope for cheating. He gave necessary guidelines to all the divisional commissioners, district magistrates, and senior police officers through video conferencing. The chief secretary said that the High School and Intermediate examinations of UP Board will be held at a total of 8,140 centres, of which 576 are government, 3,446 aided, and 4,118 self-financed schools. A total of 54,37,233 candidates, including 27,32,216 High School and 27,05,017 Intermediate candidates, are likely to take the exams. "Before the examinations commence, 100% inspection of

the centres should be done to ensure basic facilities," he said. He noted that 17 districts - Agra, Mathura, Baghpat, Aligarh, Mainpuri, Etah, Hardoi, Azamgarh, Ballia, Mau, Prayagraj, Kaushambi, Chandauli, Jaunpur, Ghazipur, Deoria, and Gonda - have been declared highly sensitive. "Special vigilance should be exercised in these districts. STF and LIU should keep special vigil on these centres," he said. He also said that candidates should not face any inconvenience in reaching the examination centres on time. "Buses should be operated regularly as per the exam timings. Candidates should not be stopped anywhere unnecessarily. The use of loudspeakers should be banned during the examination. Unnecessary announcements should not be made by the police near the examination centres of Prayagraj, Ayodhya, and Varanasi. Apart from this, uninterrupted power supply should be ensured during this

period," he said. He also gave instructions to keep special vigil on copying mafia and anti-social elements and take strict action against them. He said that action should be taken under cognisable offence against elements obstructing the examination work. "The strong room should be monitored online through CCTV 24x7, and armed forces should be deployed for security. In view of the security of question papers, surprise inspections of the strong room of examination centres should also be done by forming a team," he said. He stressed that strict action should be taken against those who indulge in improper printing or publishing and spread rumours on social media, etc. "After the completion of the examination, answer sheets must be sent from the examination centres to the collection centres under police custody," he said. He also gave directions to

ensure cleanliness around the examination centres, arrangements for first aid, etc. Additional Chief Secretary, Secondary Education, Deepak Kumar, said that new arrangements have been made to ensure that the examinations are fair and free of cheating. These include additional reserved sets of question papers for the main subject at all districts and examination centres, centre-wise coding in question papers, and arrangements for online registration of objections/complaints regarding the determination of examination centres. He said that arrangements have been made for geo-tagging of examiners' presence in the practical examination and online uploading of marks on a mobile app and portal. Page numbers have been printed in the main and supplementary answer sheets. Certificates and marks will be printed on non-tearable and waterproof paper, with a primary verification that can be done using a sun-light reflective logo.

# IU convocation: 3,830 degrees conferred

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A total of 3,830 degrees were conferred on students, including 177 PhD scholars, 1,075 postgraduates, 2,389 undergraduates and 189 diploma holders, at the 16th Annual Convocation of Integral University (IU) on Monday. Furthermore, 86 gold medals and 87 silver medals were presented to the achievers. Iram Naaz (MSc, Mathematics) and Alveera Parveen Aqil (MTech, Biotechnology) received gold and silver medals, respectively, for being the university toppers. Chairman of the Uttar Pradesh Legislative Council, Manvendra Singh, who was the chief guest, congratulated the degree recipients and emphasised that the bright paths that lay ahead for them, which represents a significant portion of the nation's population, should actively contribute to the goal of making India a 'Viksit Rashtra', underscoring the idea that their collective efforts, knowledge, and skills would be the driving force behind the coun-



try's growth and prosperity. Chancellor and Founder Prof Syed Waseem Akhtar extended best wishes to the degree recipients, acknowledging their hard-earned success and the bright paths that lay ahead for them. He urged the students to remain steadfast in the pursuit of their goals. Highlighting the trajectory of India's GDP, distinguished guest Dr Arun Maira, former member of the Planning Commission of India, and former Chancellor of the Central University of Himachal Pradesh, noted how the country has emerged as one of the fastest-growing economies in the world. He elaborated on the critical factors that could further amplify this growth and stressed the importance of policymakers prioritising income generation and job creation. Dr Maira also touched upon the role of listening, empathy, and understanding in building a democratic and harmonious society, fostering a culture of broader well-being, mutual respect, and compassion. Pro-VC Dr Syed Nadeem

Akhtar applauded the students for their achievements and encouraged them to develop the spirit of inquiry, compassion, innovation, and leadership, emphasising the importance of critical thinking in shaping their future. He encouraged them to cultivate empathy and creativity in their pursuits. Vice-Chancellor Prof. Javed Musarrat presented the annual report of the university, focusing on the institution's achievements, progress, and key initiatives over the past year.

## CLASSIFIEDS

### NOTICE

I have changed my name SYED SHAHID HUSAIN TO SYED SHAHID HUSAIN RIZVI S/O SYED KAUSAR HUSAIN for future purpose. Add- VILLAGE LAHANA POST KARARI KAUSHAMBI

### NOTICE

I have changed my name Ram Singh to Ashutosh Singh S/o Jitendra Singh for future purpose. Add-village datauli post soharamau unnao

### NOTICE

I have changed my name from Abdiya Sultana to Abdiya Gulzar W/o Shri Mohd. Gulzar, R/o 93/210, Razabi Road, Kanpur.

### NOTICE

I have changed my name from Mohammad Arafat Khan to Arafat Khan for all future purpose. Arafat Khan S/o Mohammad Rais Khan R/o 529D/1/415, Shankarpurwa Vikas Nagar Lucknow

### NOTICE

I have changed my name from Mansoor Haider to Mohammad Mansoor Haider S/o Shri Zaheerul Haq, R/o House No.16/20, Flat No.203, Navin Enclave, Civil Lines, Kanpur.

### NOTICE

I HAVE CHANGED MY NAME AKEEL TO MOHAMMAD AKEEL S/O JAMEEL AHMAD FOR FUTURE PURPOSE.H.No. 174 B CHANDARI SUJAT GANJ KANPUR NAGAR.

### NOTICE

I, Brijesh Kumar Ojha S/o Late Pander Ojha R/o Plot No.45, Gate No.76, Nahar Road, Saidpur Jagir, Kunj Vihar, Jankipuram, Extension, Lucknow have changed the name of my minor daughter Maanika Ojha and she shall hereafter be known as Dikshika Ojha.

### NOTICE

I have corrected the spelling in my name from Mohd. Minazuddin to Mohd. Minajuddin S/o Mohd. Nizamuddin R/o- 396/1, Shastri Nagar, Kanpur Nagar. In future I would be known by this name only.

### NOTICE

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
Be informed that my client IDBI Bank Ltd. holds the original sale-deed dated 29.01.2016 executed by Sri Satish Kumar son of Mela ram in favour of Smt. Neelam Chaudhary, wife of Sri Gopal Kishan Chaudhary and smt. Anushree Chaudhary wife of Sri Diwakar Chaudhary vide document No. 1446 duly registered at the office of sub-registrar-II, Lucknow, the last page whereof is missing and the same stands mortgaged. If any person or any institution has the last page of said sale-deed in its possession and has any right, title or interest over the said property on the basis of said only page, he/it may approach to the undersigned within seven days in writing along with the evidence of his such right, title or interest and if no such objection will be received within the said period it will be presumed that the property in question is free from all encumbrances and any claim in respect thereof against purchasers shall be void and ineffective.  
(Arun Prakash Srivastava)  
Advocate  
Mob: 9335914262 Office: Room No.111, CITI Hotel, 24, B.N. Road, Lucknow

### NOTICE

To be informed that I have changed my son's Name from Abhiraj yadav to Abhiraj Singh, in future for all purpose corrected Name is Abhiraj Singh s/o Ravikumar yadav, R/O H.N. 57 Teekapurwa C- Block Indira Nagar Lucknow

### NOTICE

To be informed that in my pan card No. JCRPK7183J, D.O.B mentioned 11/7/2002 & Father name JAGVEER SINGH is mentioned wrongly, in future for all purpose corrected Name & DOB is NEERAJ KUMAR, DOB 01/01/2002 & Father name RAM JIYAWAN, R/O Gauri Bazar, Tabil Sarojini Nagar Kanpur Road, Lucknow

# Three arrested for robbing cab driver after booking ride

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Three suspects have been arrested for assaulting an Uber driver and robbing him of his vehicle, police said on Monday. The victim, identified as Rakesh Mishra, was targeted on Sunday night and thrown out of the vehicle near IIM Crossing on Sitapur Road after he fell unconscious. According to the police, the suspects have been identified as Samaksh Shukla (26) from Para Road, Anurag Dubey (24) from Rajajipuram, and Izhar Hussain (24) from Aishbagh. The trio booked an Uber ride from Polytechnic Crossing to Dr Ram Swaroop Institute for a fare of Rs 400 at around 11:50 pm on Sunday (February 16). Once the vehicle was en route, Shukla allegedly overpowered the driver and demanded a change of direction. He took Rs 400 in cash, along with

Mishra's Aadhaar card, driving licence, identity card, and vehicle-related documents. When the driver protested, the suspects assaulted him, leaving him unconscious. The accused then abandoned Mishra near IIM Crossing at around 2:30 am. After regaining consciousness, Mishra managed to reach Ghazipur police station at 5 am with the help of locals. Taking swift action, the police launched an investigation and, with the assistance of an informer, traced the whereabouts of the suspects. The three suspects were seen in a taxi matching the registration number from the incident. A raid was carried out at 8 am at the main gate of Ujala Apartment in Ghazipur. The accused attempted to flee but were apprehended by the police. All of Mishra's stolen belongings were recovered and the suspects were sent to jail, the police said.

# Committee formed to streamline movement of e-rickshaws in city

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A committee has been formed by the district magistrate under the supervision of the ADM (City) for the streamlining of the movement of e-rickshaws in the state capital, Deputy Commissioner of Police (Traffic) Prabal Pratap said here on Monday. The DCP, who is also a member of the committee, said that it is currently carrying out its work and will submit a report by the end of this month. "The committee will sort out the numbers and addresses of the e-rickshaws, and after verification, their routes will be identified, conversion points will be designated, and a scheme will be made for them. The committee has already carried out the address verification of the e-rickshaws, and it will decide how many e-rickshaws will run in a particular area," he said. He said that there were 40,000 e-rickshaws registered in the Lucknow district by

December 31, 2023, and in the year that has passed, there are likely 15,000-20,000 more e-rickshaws. "We are working on this data as well," he added. The DCP admitted that the earlier plan, made for 16 zones, had some complications that are now being resolved. "We will be carrying out the colour coding of the e-rickshaws as had been planned, as well as the bar coding, and we are currently devising the plan through which the colour coding will be implemented," he said. He noted that the e-rickshaws plying in zones where they are not allowed are being fined, and vehicles are being seized. The DCP said that they have already sent a list of 13,000 repeat offenders whose licences will be suspended. "This way, strict action is taken against those who have broken the rules more than five times," he added. Talking about the problems faced with their previous plan, he said that the zones which

were allotted to the e-rickshaw drivers were six zones away from their residences. "This way, any e-rickshaw driver would have to travel 15-16 kms to reach their route, and the battery would be exhausted in the process. Hence, we are identifying how many e-rickshaw drivers are residing in areas under a particular police station so that we can give them priority to ply in that particular area only, which will not put them at a disadvantage and they can use their battery optimally," he added. He said that there are 40,000 e-rickshaws and 51 police stations, and the committee is working on how many can ply under one police station. "The numbers of the e-rickshaw drivers are not excessive. The periphery of the city is around 50 km and the population is around 50-60 lakh. If we scatter them in various areas, they will function effectively. It becomes chaotic when they are moving on one road, such as towards Charbagh," he added.

## CITYBRIEFS

**CDRI TRANSFERS RT-PCR KIT TECH**  
The Central Drug Research Institute on Monday transferred the technology for an indigenous RT-PCR kit to MyLab Discovery Solutions, Pune. This is the first indigenous multiplexed detection kit for dengue, chikungunya, and Zika viruses, offering high sensitivity and specificity for rapid, accurate, and simultaneous diagnosis of arboviral infections with overlapping symptoms such as fever, joint pain, muscle pain, and rashes. The kit features indigenously developed RT-PCR probes, promoting self-reliance under the Atmanirbhar Bharat initiative. CDRI celebrated its 74th Annual Day, marking a legacy of excellence in pioneering drug research and development in India. The event also featured the '50th Sir Edward Mellanby Memorial Oration' by Prof Sandhya S Visweswariah, Honorary Professor and National Science Chair at the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore.

**DAD BADMINTON TOURNAMENT**  
The 11th All India DAD Badminton Tournament (Men & Women) for the Defence Accounts Department, under the aegis of the Defence Accounts Sports Control Board (DASCB), will be held at Surya Khel Parisar (SKP) in Lucknow Cantonment from February 18 to 21. The tournament will be inaugurated by Devika Raghuvanshi, IDAS, Controller General of Defence Accounts (CGDA) and Chairman of DASCB. This knockout tournament will feature five categories: Men's and Women's Singles, Men's and Women's Doubles, and Mixed Doubles. Around 192 participants from 31 Controllers' offices across India will compete, with 131 men and 61 women taking part. The competition will be divided into three categories: Sports Quota (13 participants), IDAS Officers (41 participants), and Open Category (138 participants). DASCB, established in May 1996, organises various sports events like cricket, badminton, volleyball, etc across India.

# Skating rink comes up at waste disposal area in Raj Bhavan

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A skating rink created by Lucknow Municipal Corporation was inaugurated at Raj Bhavan by Governor Anandiben Patel on Monday. The governor said that the garbage dumping area in the Raj Bhavan campus had been beautified and converted into a skating rink, bringing new hope and opportunity for the children. She also said that such efforts would bring significant changes in the lives of children, as it would lead them to new skills and confidence. Patel said that the happiness visible on the faces of the young children was the achievement of today's occasion. She remarked that the

skating rink is not only for the children of Raj Bhavan, but will also be available for students from various schools. The governor said that skating rinks should be set up in the city parks too, so that more and more children can benefit from this sport. Apart from this, she also discussed the idea of setting up skating rinks in the campuses of various universities. The governor set a target of establishing at least 10 such skating rinks in Lucknow and said that this initiative will inspire children to participate in physical activities and will contribute to their mental and physical development. She said that poor and underprivileged children have talent but often lack guidance. When



such children are provided with a proper platform, they can establish their identity on

a global level, she added. Giving the example of the excellent performance of such

children in sports, she mentioned how they have made their mark on the world stage. "We should come forward for such children and think about their bright future. Our only aim should be how small children can progress. The establishment of the skating rink today is an important step that will prove helpful in enhancing the abilities of children and guiding them towards a better future," the governor said. Minister for Urban Development, Arvind Kumar Sharma, said that from the idea of the skating rink to its implementation, it is the result of the governor's vision. He said that the construction of this skating rink will enhance the physical and mental abilities of young children.



# UP Budget session from today

## Yogi stresses on raising issues of public interest

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Budget session of Uttar Pradesh assembly is set to begin on Tuesday. Ahead of the session, an all-party meeting chaired by Speaker Satish Mahana was held at Vidhan Bhavan on Monday. In the meeting, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath stressed on raising public interest issues. The chief minister, who is the leader of the House, urged parties to work collaboratively for the smooth functioning of the House. He called on the leaders of opposition parties to contribute to the development of the state by engaging in healthy discussions on public matters. "As public representatives, it is our responsibility to ensure that all matters concerning public interest are debated smoothly in the House," the chief minister said. He urged all members to ensure that there are no obstacles in the proceedings of the House. Chief Minister Yogi also asked for a detailed debate on the Maha Kumbh mela in Prayagraj. Speaker Satish Mahana also appealed to all members to cooperate for the smooth conduct of the session. Present at the meeting were Deputy Chief Minister Brajesh

# CM inaugurates main gate of Vidhan Bhavan



**Lucknow (PNS):** A day before the commencement of the Budget session of the Uttar Pradesh legislative assembly, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath inaugurated the main gate of Vidhan Bhavan on Monday. On this occasion, various graffiti depicting historical events were also unveiled on the assembly premises. The work has been carried out as part of efforts to make the assembly both hi-tech and more artistic. The newly-created graffiti depicts historical events and the political system of India. Several incidents from the Bhagavad Gita are also featured, adding to the grandeur and appeal of the assembly building. Previously, the assembly had a wooden gate, which has now been

replaced by a state-of-the-art and robust gate made of carved steel. Continuous efforts are being made for the beautification and modernisation of the Vidhan Bhavan. Along with upgrading the technical infrastructure, special focus is being placed on enhancing its historical and cultural significance. The programme was attended by Speaker Satish Mahana, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Suresh Khanna, leader of opposition Mata Prasad Pandey and Congress leader Aradhana Mishra. Satish Mahana said the mural paintings at the main gate depict the growth story of Uttar Pradesh, showing the rapid strides made by the state in the field of infrastructure, agriculture and culture.

Pathak, Finance Minister Suresh Khanna, leader of opposition Mata Prasad Pandey, Congress Legislature Party leader Aradhana Mishra, Suheldev Bhartiya Samaj Party MLA Bedi Ram, and Vinod Saroj from Jansatta Dal Democratic Party, among others.

Leader of opposition and Samajwadi Party leader Mata Prasad Pandey said the opposition party would raise all important issues concerning the interests of the common people. He said the Samajwadi Party would focus the attention on issues like inflation, unemployment, law and order and interests of the students and farmers. He alleged that the Bharatiya Janata Party had made huge promises in its election manifesto (Sankalp Patra) but the government did nothing to fulfill those promises. The leader of opposition remarked that the chief minister desires a debate on Maha Kumbh mela but "the government has nothing to showcase". Pandey said the government had claimed to provide facilities of global standards at the Maha Kumbh mela, but the stampede at Prayagraj and hardships faced by the common people and pilgrims had exposed its tall claims.

# Assembly proceedings to be to conducted in regional languages

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

After the implementation of the paperless conduct of the proceedings of the legislature in 2022, the Uttar Pradesh assembly in another innovation will also conduct its proceedings in regional languages of the state and English. The regional languages are Awadhi, Bhojpuri, Braj and Bundeli. This will be implemented from the budget session of the assembly commencing here from Tuesday. "It's a new beginning to be done by the UP assembly, rest of the state assemblies follow the ini-

tatives taken by the most populous state of India," said UP assembly Speaker Satish Mahana, adding that in future if the need arises use of artificial intelligence will also be considered. He said for implementing the move of adding five more languages, enabling provision will be made in the Rules of Business for the Conduct of the Proceedings of Uttar Pradesh Assembly. He said if the members of the assembly wanted to speak in their respective regional language like Bhojpuri, Braj, Bundeli and Awadhi, they could speak in the particular

language and simultaneous translation would be done by the interpreters. Mahana said the assembly secretary had hired the services of translators who would provide the translation in Hindi during the proceedings of the House. He said the base of all regional languages of Uttar Pradesh was Hindi and there would be no practical difficulty in translation of the regional languages in Hindi. Mahana said the use of regional languages would create a sense of belonging among the people living in different regions of the state.

"Hindi is the official language of the Uttar Pradesh assembly. It is also important to pay due attention to the regional languages of the state as Uttar Pradesh is full of linguistic and cultural diversity. Particularly the people of Uttar Pradesh whose mother tongue is Bhojpuri are living in different places; they are also a significant part of the Indian diaspora across the globe; the conduct of proceedings in Bhojpuri will certainly strengthen their sense of belonging to the their cultural and linguistic roots," Mahana said.

# Govt to illuminate underprivileged homes with solar energy

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Uttar Pradesh government, under the leadership of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, is not only providing housing for the underprivileged but also enhancing their quality of life. In this sequence, the government will now provide key amenities such as solar lighting, free electricity, LPG connections, better drainage and enhanced road access to the beneficiaries of Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Gramin (PMAY-G) and Mukhyamantri Awas Yojana-Gramin. Cement concrete (CC) and khadjanja roads will be constructed under MGNREGA to ensure seamless connectivity and address mobility challenges for PMAY-G beneficiaries. A planned drainage system will also be implemented to mitigate waterlogging issues, providing the much-needed relief from seasonal hardships like rain and mud to the resi-

dents. Prioritising environmental sustainability and energy conservation, the Yogi Adityanath government is introducing solar lighting in rural houses, ensuring families benefit from free, renewable energy while reducing dependency on traditional power sources. Additionally, every house will receive a free electricity connection, while LPG gas connections under the Ujjwala scheme will enhance convenience for rural households. The government is integrating health and sanitation initiatives to further uplift poor families, including toilet construction in every home and free healthcare coverage under Ayushman Bharat Yojana. Moreover, drumstick (moringa) plants will be planted in front of each house, promoting nutrition and environmental protection. Beneficiaries will also receive

90 to 95 days of wages under MGNREGA, strengthening their financial stability. With a vision to provide every needy family with a pucca house by 2025, Chief Minister Yogi's initiative ensures not

just housing but a dignified, self-reliant life. This comprehensive approach will boost rural infrastructure, empower women, and enhance overall living standards across Uttar Pradesh.

**सेंट्रल बैंक ऑफ इंडिया**  
Central Bank of India

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**NIT No.: 01 TENDER NOTICE** Date: 18/02/2024

The Central Bank of India invites online tenders from eligible bidders for Furnishing (Furniture, Electrical, Data cabling & Low side Air-conditioning) work at new premises of "Pali" Branch under Regional Office Jhansi. For a detailed Notice Inviting Tenders visit the webpage:- <http://www.centralbankofindia.co.in/en/active-tender> and for online submission of bids visit the webpage:- <https://centralbank.abprocure.com/EPROC/>

**The deadline for submission of bids is 11.03.2025 up to 3.00 pm REGIONAL HEAD**

# Delhi polls: Maya voices concern over alleged funding by America

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Bahujan Samaj Party national president and former chief minister of Uttar Pradesh, Mayawati, has made a big claim after America's decision to stop the aid given to India. The BSP chief met party workers and leaders during a review meeting in the national capital Delhi. In a statement issued after the meeting, the BSP chief said that the news from America that India had been receiving a huge amount of 21 million dollars in the name of "increasing the number of voters", was shocking. The people of the country should definitely be alert about whether this is interference in free and fair elections and if it is, then who is getting benefit



from it, she added. The issue of people coming to India from America has also been raised in the statement issued by the BSP. According to the BSP press release, Mayawati said, "The incident of hundreds of Indians being continuously sent back home by handcuffing and shackling them on the pretext of being illegal immigrants in America, is very sad and worrying." She said the Central government should

take proper cognisance of this inhumane return of Indian citizens from a friendly country like America, mostly from states like Punjab, Haryana, Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh, and find a solution to it. In fact, the US Department of Government Efficiency has canceled the funding of 21 million dollars related to India's elections. Congress leader Rashid Alvi cornered the Bharatiya Janata Party over this. Expressing apprehension, he said that this should be investigated in India as well and the truth should come out. He alleged that BJP candidates in Delhi distributed huge amounts of money among the public, but the Election Commission did not pay attention to it. Meanwhile, during the meeting, Mayawati

informed party leaders and workers about the outline of the all-India programmes to be organised on the birth anniversary of Bahujan Samaj Party founder and Bahujan leader Kanshi Ram on March 15. She said that this time the people of Delhi state would not go to Noida but would pay their tributes to the BSP founder at the Bahujan Prerna Kendra in New Delhi. Similarly, the 'Shradha Suman Arpi' programme to be held on Kanshi Ram's Nirvana Divas on October 9 will also be organised by the people of Delhi state at the Bahujan Prerna Kendra in New Delhi, whereas the BSP followers in other states of the country will celebrate his birth anniversary as before by organising programmes like seminars etc. at the division or state level.

# CRPF jawans stand guard for safety of devotees

**Mahakumbh Nagar (PNS):** The Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) stands fully prepared to ensure the security of devotees at the Maha Kumbh, exemplifying unwavering dedication and patriotism. The CRPF jawans ensure round-the-clock security at ghats, mela grounds and key routes, leveraging modern technology and vigilance for seamless emergency preparedness. In addition to their security duties, the CRPF jawans are playing a vital role in crowd control and providing guidance to thousands of devotees attending the religious event. Their polite behaviour and quick response make the experience comfortable and reassuring for all. The CRPF's disaster management team is on high alert, prepared to address any unforeseen circumstances with efficiency. Furthermore, the CRPF is making significant contributions to reuniting missing children and elderly individuals with their families, reinforcing their commitment to safety and support during the event. A CRPF officer emphasised that the jawans are performing their duty with the spirit of 'Nation First' during the Maha Kumbh. This spirit not only enhances the event's spiritual significance but also instills confidence among the devotees in the security arrangements.

# Temp hospital, healthcare system impress foreigners

PNS ■ MAHAKUMBH NAGAR

This time, the world's largest spiritual gathering, Maha Kumbh, is witnessing an ocean of faith and an extraordinary integration of world-class healthcare services. The temporary hospital established under Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's leadership in Mahakumbh Nagar has astonished devotees from across India and visitors from abroad. Citizens from countries like the United States of America, the United Kingdom, Australia and Israel have hailed the medical services here as the best in the world. In the record book of the Central Hospital, they have officially acknowledged that the healthcare infrastructure created by the Yogi government in Prayagraj is unparalleled globally. As of Monday evening, more than 7.5 lakh devotees have received medical care at Mahakumbh Nagar, with significant contributions from AIIMS Delhi and IMS BHU experts. Catenian Davidson from the UK, who received treatment at the Central Hospital of Mahakumbh Nagar, expressed his astonishment at the exceptional medical facilities, stating that he had never seen such advanced healthcare services in a temporary hospital before -

not even in his own country. He remarked that the setup felt entirely permanent. Israel's Deitch praised the medical centres across Mahakumbh Nagar, including the Central Hospital, for their state-of-the-art facilities and thorough patient examinations with remarkable efficiency. London's Neckel commended ICU in-charge Dr Siddharth Pandey and his team, sharing his gratitude for the timely treatment of his brother. "We are completely satisfied with the medical care provided here. Mahakumbh has showcased India's best healthcare services," he said. Australia's Daniel also lauded the health infrastructure, calling it highly impressive. He emphasised that the Central Hospital has reinforced the significance of the world's largest spiritual gathering. Meanwhile, Supreme Court judge, Justice Animesh Gupta, applauded the Yogi government for deploying a team of expert doctors and ensuring world-class medical facilities. Vasu, a devotee from Delhi, shared his personal experience: "I had come with my family to take a dip in the Sangam when my health condition suddenly worsened. People advised us to visit the Central Hospital, where doctors immediately attended to

me, conducted a thorough examination, and provided the necessary treatment. I felt relieved and returned with my family. The arrangements made by Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath for Maha Kumbh are unparalleled in the country." By Monday evening, over 7.5 lakh devotees had received top-tier medical care at Mahakumbh Nagar. **KTS DELEGATION VISITS PRAYAGRAJ** Meanwhile, the grand spectacle of the Prayagraj Maha Kumbh became even more special as a confluence of North and South Indian cultures unfolded with the arrival of 200 representatives from the Kashi Tamil Sangamam (KTS) 3.0 on Monday. The visit marked the second stop of the ongoing cultural exchange programme, which first commenced in Varanasi before moving to Prayagraj and would now continue to Ramnagar Ayodhya. The first group of Kashi Tamil Sangamam 3.0, an initiative aimed at reviving the historic ties between Varanasi and Tamil Nadu, two significant centres of education and culture in ancient India, was welcomed with grandeur by the Maha Kumbh Mela and district administration. A special reception was organised at

the Kumbh Retreat Tent City in Sector 22 of Mahakumbh Nagar, where the guests were felicitated. Following the welcome, the delegation proceeded to the Triveni Sangam, where they took a holy dip in the sacred waters and offered prayers. District Development Officer Bholanath Kanaujia confirmed that 200 guests from Tamil Nadu participated in this sacred ritual. Expressing his feelings, Sridhar Radhakrishnan from Panruti, Tamil Nadu, described the Maha Kumbh as a divine and unforgettable experience. Narayanamurthy, a research scholar from Tiruvannamalai, Tamil Nadu, highlighted the global significance of Maha Kumbh, saying, "It is not just a cultural confluence between North and South India but also a meeting ground for global culture and brotherhood." After their sacred bath at Triveni Sangam, the guests were scheduled to visit Lat Hanuman Ji and Shankar Viman Mandapam. However, due to the overwhelming crowds at Maha Kumbh, the visit could not take place. Instead, they explored the Digital Kumbh Exhibition, which offered them insights into the grandeur and significance of the Maha Kumbh.

# Swift action averts major fire

PNS ■ MAHAKUMBH NAGAR

Fire incidents were reported on Monday at the camps of Shri Kapi Manas Mandal and the Consumer Protection Committee during Maha Kumbh 2025. However, due to the prompt action of the Fire Service unit, the fires were quickly brought under control, preventing any major damage. No loss of life was reported in either incident. It may be mentioned here that comprehensive fire safety and security arrangements have been made for Maha Kumbh 2025, ensuring an immediate response to such emergencies. Maha Kumbh's Nodal and Chief Fire Officer Pramod Sharma reported that on Monday morning, a fire broke out in two tents at the

Shri Kapi Manas Mandal camp all of a sudden. Upon receiving the alert, the fire unit swiftly arrived at the scene and brought the blaze under control. While extinguishing the fire at Shri Kapi Manas Mandal, the fire team noticed smoke billowing from Sector 8. Upon reaching the location, they discovered that the Consumer Protection Committee camp had also caught fire. The team quickly acted, using water spray from pumping vehicles to douse the flames completely. In both incidents, FS Bhardwaj, in-charge of fire station at Koteswar Mahadev, led the firefighting efforts with his unit. His swift response helped prevent casualties. Thanks to the prompt action of the Fire Services, the flames were brought under control in time, and no loss of life was reported.

# Railways exhibition displays heritage

**Mahakumbh Nagar (PNS):** Maha Kumbh 2025 showcases the government's commitment to heritage and development. In line with this vision, Indian Railways is leaving no stone unturned to ensure seamless travel for pilgrims through efficient crowd management and record Maha Kumbh mela special trains. Adding to the grandeur, a railway exhibition in the Maha Kumbh mela area is offering visitors a glimpse into Indian Railways' heritage and future advancements. The exhibition features models of Chenab and Pamban bridges.

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**APPENDIX- IV-A [See proviso to rule 8 (6) & 9 (1)] SALE NOTICE FOR SALE OF IMMOVABLE PROPERTIES**

E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 8(6) & 9(1) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002

Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower (s), Co-Borrower (s) and Guarantor (s) as per column (ii) that the below described immovable properties as per column (iv) mortgaged/charged to the Secured Creditor, the possession of which has been taken by the Authorised Officer of Formerly known as IDFC Bank Ltd, will be sold on "As is where is", "As is what is", and "Whatever there is" as described hereunder, for the recovery of amount due to IDFC FIRST Bank Limited (Formerly known as IDFC Bank Ltd) from Borrower (s) and Co-Borrower (s) as per column (i). For detailed terms and conditions of the sale, please refer to the link provided on IDFC FIRST Bank website i.e. [www.idfcfirstbank.com](http://www.idfcfirstbank.com).

S. NO	(i) Demand Notice Amount	(ii) Agreement ID	(iii) Name of Borrower (s), Co-Borrower (s) and Guarantor (s)	(v) Reserve Price Amount	(vi) EMD Amount	(vii) Date and Time of Auction	(viii) Date and Time EMD of Auction	(ix) Date and Time of Inspection	(x) Authorized Officer Name & Contact Number
1	INR 17777566.76/- Demand Notice dated: 23-Sep-2023	42670317	Natraj Hosiyar, Natraj Cosmetic And Gift Centre, Anurudh Kumar Gupta, Anurudh Kumar Gupta (In The Capacity Of Available Legal Heir Of Late Santosh Kumar Gupta), Arjuna Gupta, Chitra Gupta, Arjuna Gupta (In The Capacity Of Available Legal Heir Of Late Santosh Kumar Gupta) & Chitra Gupta (In The Capacity Of Available Legal Heir Of Late Santosh Kumar Gupta)	INR 12000000.00/-	INR 1200000.00/-	07-Mar-2025 11.00 AM To 1.00 PM	06-Mar-2025 10.00 AM To 5.00 PM	28-Feb-2025 10:00 AM To 4:00 PM	Name- Sujeet Jha Contact Number- 9795811000 Name- Vidyansh Gupta Contact Number- 8899428998

**(IV) MORTGAGED PROPERTY ADDRESS :** All That Piece And Parcel Of The House Bearing Municipal No. 133/75, First Floor, Admeasuring 156.133 Sq Mtr., i.e. 1680 Square Feet, Situated At Aminabad, Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh-226018, Bounded As Below:- North: Suhelraj Siddiqui/ Plot Of Sushil Nigam, South: Plot Of Mr. Lal Chand Rastogi, East: Aminabad Road & West: Government Property Badhu Gali

**Disclaimer:** Please note that the said notice is issued for sale of immovable property only and IDFC FIRST Bank Limited has no right to sale of the movable assets, if any, present at the immovable property.

**Authorized Officer**  
IDFC FIRST Bank Limited (Formerly known as IDFC Bank Ltd)

Date: 18.02.2025 Place: Lucknow



## KTS witnesses important day of knowledge exchange in agriculture, traditional crafts

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The ongoing Kashi Tamil Sangamam (KTS) 3.0 witnessed a significant day of knowledge exchange in agriculture and traditional crafts as over 210 delegates, including farmers and artisans from Tamil Nadu, participated in comprehensive sessions at Banaras Hindu University (BHU) on Monday. The day began at the Agricultural Farm of the varsity, where Prof Uday Pratap Singh, Director, Institute of Agricultural Sciences, led a team



Tamil delegates of KTS at BHU Agriculture Farm in Varanasi on Monday.

of distinguished faculty members in welcoming the delegates. The delegation received detailed insights into integrated farming practices, with Prof Singh providing comprehensive briefings on fisheries, poultry and innovative cropping systems focused on family nutrition and income generation. During the farm visit, delegates explored various agricultural demonstrations, including modern crop management techniques, dairy production systems and innovative approaches to nutritional crop management. Special emphasis was placed on sustainable practices such as vermiculture using cow dung, alongside strategies to address pressing challenges like carbon reduction and climate change impacts on farming. The practical demonstrations particularly resonated with the visiting farmers and artisans from Tamil Nadu, who gained first-hand experience of northern Indian agricultural techniques.

Prof MK Singh, Prof M Raghuraman, along with other members of the institute provided the delegation with insights into the innovative initiatives currently underway. The programme then shifted to the Omkar Nath Thakur Auditorium for an insightful session touching upon several aspects of agriculture as well as handicraft. Prof V Ramanathan from IIT-BHU hosted the session, which featured an impressive lineup of speakers including Prof M Raghuraman, Institute of

Agricultural Sciences, Dr Suresh Chandra Jangid, Faculty of Visual Arts, and Padma Shri Chandrashekhar Singh, a renowned figure in organic research and farming techniques. The session began with an informative video presentation showcasing various government initiatives, including the PM Vishwakarma Yojana, applications of artificial intelligence in farming and modern training programmes for agricultural advancement. Prof M Raghuraman of the Institute of Agricultural Sciences provided

provides an excellent platform for people from both the north and south to exchange and enrich knowledge, spanning from culture to agriculture. He emphasised the importance of leveraging technology and innovation to enable farmers to achieve both higher crop production and improved revenues. The session featured significant contributions from local experts, with UP farmer Kailash Narayan Singh sharing insights on the Blue Revolution scheme and fisheries development. Dr Shashikant Rai and Sudheer Singh offered valuable perspectives on black rice cultivation and zero farming techniques, demonstrating the region's agricultural innovations. Balram, a representative from DIC Varanasi, presented an overview of state government initiatives, highlighting Uttar Pradesh's commitment to supporting farmers and artisans.

The academic session concluded with an interactive session, fostering meaningful dialogue between the Tamil Nadu delegation and local agricultural professionals. During the interactive session that followed, delegates shared their experiences regarding the implementation of various Government of India policies and schemes in their farming initiatives. Representatives from the Vishwakarma sector presented their innovations, including the production of thread from pineapple leaves, demonstrating their commitment to sector modernisation, reducing foreign market dependence and advancing self-reliance in order to realize the vision of Viksit Bharat. The session exemplified the KTS's core objective of bridging cultural and knowledge gaps between different regions of India while promoting sustainable agricultural practices and traditional crafts. The exchange of expertise between Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh practitioners particularly highlighted the programme's success in fostering national integration through practical knowledge sharing.

comprehensive insights into various crop types and introduced the innovative BHU FARM ADVISORY App. He informed about various crops and technologies developed by the institute which are not only being used by farmers but also benefiting them. He emphasised the role of the institute in prosperity of farmers as well as ensuring food security through agricultural research.

Dr Suresh Chandra Jangid from the Faculty of Visual Arts, elaborated on Kashi's rich art and craft traditions, with particular focus on iconic crafts such as Banarasi silk weaving, Gulabi Meenakari and traditional sculpture. He said art, music and literature is the essence of life and the Faculty of Visual Art is contributing significantly in this regard. Dr Jangid also discussed the contribution of the Design Innovation Centre functioning under the Faculty.

Padma Shri Chandrashekhar Singh, a prominent figure in organic research and farming techniques, stated that the KTS

meaningful dialogue between the Tamil Nadu delegation and local agricultural professionals. During the interactive session that followed, delegates shared their experiences regarding the implementation of various Government of India policies and schemes in their farming initiatives. Representatives from the Vishwakarma sector presented their innovations, including the production of thread from pineapple leaves, demonstrating their commitment to sector modernisation, reducing foreign market dependence and advancing self-reliance in order to realize the vision of Viksit Bharat. The session exemplified the KTS's core objective of bridging cultural and knowledge gaps between different regions of India while promoting sustainable agricultural practices and traditional crafts. The exchange of expertise between Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh practitioners particularly highlighted the programme's success in fostering national integration through practical knowledge sharing.

## Acharyas tell students about history of Ganga ghats



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

On the third day of Kashi Tamil Sangamam (KTS) 3.0 on Monday, a group of farmers from Tamil Nadu arrived at Hanuman Ghat, where they bathed in the sacred Ganga, offered prayers to the river goddess and sought blessings for happiness and prosperity. Simultaneously, the acharyas present provided students with in-depth insights into the history of various ghats along the Ganga. KTS, being organised by the Union Ministry of Education, is aimed at realising the vision of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. This marks the third edition of the event, following two successful iterations. After taking a holy dip in the Ganga, the guests offered prayers at the ancient temples on the ghat. They were provided with insights into the rich history, spiritual significance, and architectural grandeur of these temples.

Following this, the Tamil guests proceeded to famous poet Subramania Bharati's house at Hanuman Ghat, where they met his family members. Later, the group visited Kanchi Math to learn about its historical and cultural significance. The youth in the group were particularly excited to witness a South Indian temple in the heart of Kashi. Senior scholar Pt Venkat Raman Ghanpati emphasised the deep-rooted connection between Kashi and Tamil Nadu, stating that this bond is not just a matter of a fortnight but has existed for centuries. He highlighted that a 'mini Tamil Nadu' thrives in Kashi, particularly around Hanuman Ghat, Kedar Ghat, and Harishchandra Ghat, where thousands of families from various South Indian states reside. This enduring presence, he noted, reflects the strong and harmonious relationship between the two regions.

## Quiz competition organised

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

A quiz competition was organised on Monday among the audience in the picture exhibition pandal set up by the Central Bureau of Communication, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India on the theme of Rishi Agastya and Viksit Bharat in Kashi Tamil Sangamam (KTS) 3.0 organised at Namoh Ghat. The winners who gave the right answers were awarded prizes by Manoj Kumar Verma, Director,

CBC, Lucknow. The initiatives of the Government of India like 'Ekdam Balam Samajasya' which means unity is the strength of society, 'One Nation One Tax', 'One Country One Power Grid', 'One Country One Ration Card' have been prominently displayed in the exhibition. All these initiatives of the central government are strengthening the unity of the country. The picture giving the message of unity also displays the statue of Sardar Patel, the symbol of national unity.

## Officials monitoring arrangements at Banaras railway station

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

In view of recent stampede at New Delhi railway station and the increasing number of passengers at Banaras railway station due to the return of the passengers from Maha Kumbh in Prayagraj, Additional Divisional Railway Manager (Operations) Rajesh Kumar Singh, along with Assistant Security Commissioner Nagendra Mahadev Yadav and Railway Protection Force (RPF) Banaras team, is monitoring the staff deployed for crowd management and other arrangements made at both the entry gates, platforms, foot over bridges, general passenger hall, food stalls and main entry and exit gates of the circulating area at Banaras railway station. Keeping in mind the huge crowd of pilgrims in the Maha Kumbh, North Eastern Railway (NER) is continuously running Mela special trains at regular intervals from Jhusi and Prayagraj Rambag stations for the return of Banaras, Gorakhpur, Ayodhya and other places. Till 4 pm on Sunday, about 1,63,552 rail passengers travelled at these stations and the number is expected to increase. Besides, provision was made to run 55 (regular + Mela special) trains for different directions and apart from this, a plan was made to run other trains as per the need. The entire process of bringing the passengers from the passenger shelter and safely seating them in the trains and sending them off was

successfully completed in a very planned manner through mutual coordination of all the departments. As many as 21 Mela special trains were operated for Jhusi and Prayagraj Rambag from/to Banaras, Gorakhpur, Ayodhya and other stations on Monday. During this, the RPF personnel were requesting the passengers not to gather in one place. Hundreds of passengers who have to catch trains from other stations were talked to and they were given proper guidance regarding catching the train. Other passengers were sent to the holding area and appealed to come to the platforms only when their train is placed there. Along with this, passengers were also informed about catching the trains. All passengers who were gathering on the platforms without any valid reason were removed. Along with this, Divisional Railway Manager (DRM) of Varanasi Division (NER) Vineet Kumar Srivastava along with senior officials of the division are also monitoring all the activities, including crowd management, fair special trains and passenger facilities at Jhusi and Prayagraj Rambag stations. More than 300 TTEs are providing their services at Prayagraj Rambag and Jhusi stations to provide information about trains to passengers, avoid crowd gathering at one place and ensure proper arrangements. As many as 16 help counters have also been operated at Prayagraj Rambag, Jhusi and Banaras stations to provide accurate information

about trains and their status to passengers, which are providing help 24 hours. For security purposes, RPF teams are instructing and making passengers aware through megaphones at station premises, passenger shelters, FOBs and platforms at Prayagraj Rambag and Jhusi. Rapid Action Teams (RATs) have been deployed at Prayagraj Rambag and Jhusi stations, which are providing assistance to the elderly, sick, handicapped, women and children as per the need. RPF are providing assistance to the passengers to reach their destination safely. Continuous coordination is being maintained with the local police, Government Railway Police (GRP), fair administration and railway administration. All RPF/RPSF members deployed at Prayagraj Rambag and Jhusi stations are being provided communication resources like VHF sets, walkie talkies, mobile phones, PA system etc for proper management of security and maintaining mutual contact. "Surveillance is also being done through drones and 240 CCTV cameras at Prayagraj Rambag and Jhusi stations for security purposes. RATs have been formed at Prayagraj Rambag and Jhusi stations to deal with any disaster. These are multi-disciplinary teams and include employees of RPF, medical, commercial, mechanical, electrical and signal and telecom departments," Public Relations Officer (PRO), Varanasi Division (NER) Ashok Kumar said.

## Three die as truck hits car

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Three persons, including a couple, returning from Maha Kumbh in Prayagraj, died while two others, including the driver, injured when their car was hit by a speeding truck on Kanpur-Agra national highway near Nagla Kanhai village in Etawah early on Monday morning. Farmer Bachchu Singh of Utarda under Nadbai police station, Bharatpur (Rajasthan) district along with wife Kamlesh, Lila Devi, Mohan and Rajkumari of

the family had gone to take a holy dip in Maha Kumbh. When they were returning home on Monday the speeding truck rammed into their car which led to the killing of Bachchu Singh, his wife Kamlesh and Lila Devi while the driver Mohan and Rajkumari were injured. Police and highway team rushed to spot and sent the injured to the hospital. In another incident a man was fatally knocked down by a speeding truck on Chhibramau-Saurikh road in Kannauj district on Monday

morning. Irate kin blocked the road while truck driver fled leaving the vehicle behind. Rajesh Yadav (32) of Nakatpur was going towards the field to ease himself on Monday morning. He was hit by the truck coming from Saurikh while crossing the road due to which he died on the spot. On getting information Kotwali in charge Ajay Awasthi along with force rushed to spot. Tehsildar Ram Prakash also reached there. Police sent the body for autopsy. The deceased is survived by wife Rita and three daughters.

## MoU signed



Officials of Indian Bank and Namaste India at the MoU signing ceremony.

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

A memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed between Indian Bank and the Namaste India Pvt Ltd. Under it Indian Bank will give digital loan up to Rs 2 lakh on concessional rates to small dairy producers of Namaste India to meet their requirements for animal husbandry and other products under its KCC Scheme. The MoU was signed by Deputy General Manager, Indian Bank, GM Office, Lucknow and President of Namaste India Pvt Ltd Sushil Kumar Bajpai. Zonal Chief Sanjay Kumar Mishra, Deputy Zonal Chief Atul Prakash Bajpai and Senior General Manager of Namaste India Santosh Kumar Thakur were also present on the occasion.

## Special camp on TB Mukht Bharat Abhiyan

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

A one-day special camp on TB Mukht Bharat Abhiyan was organised here on Monday under the National Service Scheme (NSS) at DAV PG College. Chief guest Dr Anvit Srivastava, TB Medical Officer of Shri Shiv Prasad Gupta (SSPG) Divisions Hospital, Kabirchaura, while addressing the volunteers said that about one crore patients have been identified with TB disease worldwide, out of which 25 per cent are from India alone that is about 25 lakh patients. "Out of that, 33 per cent TB patients come from Uttar Pradesh. Currently, there are 6,500 active TB patients in Varanasi who are undergoing treatment", Dr Anvit said, adding that the Government of India has set the target of TB free India by 2025 and this target is difficult but not impossible. He said that as per the government policy, the volunteers

of NSS can fully cooperate in the TB free India campaign by becoming Nishchay Mitra. While presiding, acting principal Prof Mishra said that only a healthy and disease-free body can help in nation building. In the TB-free India campaign, volunteers can prove their usefulness by performing their duty for public awareness. Programme Officer and Programme Coordinator Dr Omprakash Kumar said that NSS was established keeping in mind the various goals of nation building, this time the government has increased the provision for NSS from Rs 250 crore to Rs 450 crore in the budget, which is highly commendable. TBHB Shashikesh Maurya, Sandeep Kaushal, Sanjay Bharti, TB Champion Mohammad Ahmed along with volunteers Khushi Singh, Shiksha Mishra also expressed their views in the programme. The volunteers were also examined by TB officials.

## Two killed in mishap

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

Two persons died while 18 others were seriously injured when a Roadways bus carrying them collided with a trailer parked on the highway near a dhaba on Gauharpur National Highway under Utraon police station area on Sunday night. A bus carrying 35 devotees from Rohtas district of Bihar collided with a trailer parked on the highway. In the accident, Ram Saroj Chaudhary (80) and Bajinath Paswan (70) died on the spot. They were residents of Rohtas, Bihar. The police and local people rushed to the injured to the hospital, where the condition of some is said to be critical. The police sent the bodies of the deceased for post-mortem. Utraon police station in charge Pankaj Tripathi said the front part of the bus was badly damaged in the accident. The bus driver fled from the spot taking advantage of the darkness.

## V-C highlights unprecedented pace of technological transformation

Kanpur (PNS): The 29th FAI International Conference on Global Issues in Multidisciplinary Research for a Digital Future (ICGIMRDF 2025) was organised at the Senate Hall of Chhatrapati Shahu Ji Maharaj University (CSJMU) bringing together distinguished academics, researchers and thought leaders from across the globe. Organised by the FATER Academy of India (FAI) in collaboration with CSJMU the event focused on harnessing collective expertise to address the complex challenges of the rapidly evolving digital age. The inaugural session commenced with a formal welcome address by Director of the School of Basic Sciences Prof RK Dwivedi, who expressed gratitude to all present and emphasised the overarching goal of fostering robust knowledge exchange. Following the traditional lamp lighting and Kulgeet ceremony, the felicitation



of the guests underscored the importance of honoring international collaboration and scholarly contributions. Pro-Vice-Chancellor of CSJMU Prof Sudhir Kumar Aswathi highlighted that the digital future is not responsibility of any single discipline. "It is an endeavour of many to fulfill", he said and urged institutions to come together and share resources, knowledge, and research to make significant strides in digital innovation. Vice-Chancellor of CSJMU Prof Vinay Kumar Pathak underscored the unprecedented pace of technological transformation. "We are living in an era where the internet takes years, AI takes hours and models take minutes", he noted. Prof Pathak remarked that while these changes have the power to disrupt traditional systems positively, they also raise critical questions about sustainability. He concluded by invoking the spirit of "Atithi Devo Bhava", invit-

ing all global voices to come together in pursuit of a more livable planet. Prof CC Tan, Foreign Secretary of FAI and a faculty member at the Rattanakosin International College of Creative Entrepreneurship (RICE), Rajamangala University of Technology in Thailand, delivered a powerful message on the importance of "knowledge exchange in generation." He commended the conference for providing a broad platform that allows emerging scholars to interact with seasoned experts, thereby fostering fresh perspectives. General secretary of FAI and a professor in the Department of Mathematics at MNNIT Prayagraj, Prof Pankaj Srivastava, emphasised that "the process, the approach, and the labour" that go into research ultimately culminate in visible, impactful outcomes. He urged young researchers to remain dedicated, reminding them that patience and perseverance often pave the way for breakthrough discoveries.

## Deepa Malik stresses on being mentally strong

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Uttar Pradesh Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Stamp and Court Registration Fees Ravindra Jaiswal inaugurated the first Divyang Premium Leave (DPL) T-10 Cricket Competition at Dr Sampurnanand Sports Stadium, Srigra on Sunday evening. In his address as the chief guest Jaiswal praised the enthusiasm of the Divyangs people participating in the competition and expressed confidence that every possible effort will be made to provide sports facilities to the Divyangs people from the government level. Addressing the ceremony, a Padma Shri and Major Dhyan Chand Sports Award winner para athlete Deepa Malik said this DPL being organised with social participation is commendable. She said, "Whenever I come to Kashi, I feel a new energy, which makes me ready to discharge my responsibilities again." She said that we get new friends through sports and playing honestly is like worshipping God. She said

being physically weak does not matter, we should be mentally strong. On the occasion she presented a book written on her life to the organising committee. While presiding over the programme, V-C of Sampurnanand Sanskrit University (SSU) Prof



Bihari Lal Sharma said, "Divyangs are born winners. They do such work with their will power which becomes an example for normal people also. Sports teach us to deal with the challenges of life and develop a sense of collectivism among people." Leading paediatrician and General Secretary of All India Divyang Cricket Association Dr Sanjay Chaurasia said the whole world is watching the live telecast of this day-night match organised in Kashi. President of the sssociation

Dr Uttam Ojha said the team continuously strives for the encouragement and self-reliance of Divyangs year after year. "In future, plans are being made to organise international level games in which Divyang players from all over the world will participate", he

added. Kripnanand Ji Maharaj said in sports, victory is only a formality, sometimes even defeat is more important than victory. The inaugural ceremony was conducted by Dr Sunita Tiwari. The guests were welcomed by Dr Uttam Ojha and the vote of thanks was proposed by Dr Sanjay Chaurasia. It was also addressed by Praveen Basani of Ranchhod Das Charitable Eye Hospital Trust, Dr Rajesh Pandey, Keshav Bhai Jalan, Pankaj Srivastava and Ashok Chaurasia. A total of three match-

es were played during the day. The first one was between West Warriors and South Survivors in which West Warriors won the toss and batted first and scored 75 runs for 7 wickets. Giriraj Jadeja from West Warriors side contributed 22 runs with the help of one four by playing 18 balls. Arjun bowled brilliantly for South Survivors and took two wickets for 14 runs. Playing in reply, South Survivors won the match by losing only 1 wicket in 6 overs. Nishant from South Survivors side contributed 29 runs with the help of 5 fours and 1 six. South Survivors captain Sachin Shiva was declared the Man of the Match. He contributed 15 runs for his team as well as took a wicket. The second match was played between Central Lions and East Eagles in which Central Lions won the toss and batted first and scored 113 runs by losing three wickets in the stipulated 10 overs. On behalf of the team, Suman contributed a total of 47 runs with the help of three fours and two sixes. Bowling for East Eagle, Anjesh and Suman took one wicket each. Playing in reply, East Eagles team was all out

after scoring 88 runs for the loss of 5 wickets. On behalf of East Eagles, Rajiv contributed the highest 39 runs with the help of 4 fours and 2 sixes. Bowling for Central Lions, Sonu Gautam took 2 wickets for 19 runs. Suman Thakur of Central Lions was declared the Man of the Match. The third match was played between Kashi Tridents and West Warriors in which Kashi Tridents captain Subodh Rai won the toss and decided to bat first and scored 113 runs for the loss of 7 wickets in the stipulated 10 overs. Ramesh Pal scored the highest from Kashi's side who scored 32 runs with the help of 3 fours and 2 sixes in 14 balls. The most successful bowler from West Warriors was Mayuresh who took 2 wickets for 17 runs in 2 overs. In reply, West Warriors defeated Kashi Tridents by 6 wickets in the last over. Imran batted aggressively and scored 60 runs in 25 balls with the help of 8 fours and 3 sixes. The most successful bowler from Kashi Tridents was Jai Prakash who took 3 wickets for 19 runs in 2 overs. The Man of the Match was Imran of West Warriors.

## Cultural & secular aspects of spring discussed

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

A colourful event 'Vasantik' was organised by the Hindi department of Christ Church College in the Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan auditorium on Monday to celebrate spring. Students enthusiastically displayed their talent in this innovative combination of dance, music, art and poetry organised on entirely classical basis. The chief guest was Suzy Joseph and the guest of honour was Prof Shweta Chand. The programme was presided over by Principal Joseph Daniel. 'Vasantik' started with a group performance of the instrumental ensemble on Raag Yaman and then the song and dance performance of 'Var De Veenavadini' composed by Mahapraan Nirala spread the aura of spring. The recitation of poem by Arjit written by Dev, various songs related to spring, Kathak dance and Shabad singing made the entire atmosphere melodious and colourful. An alumnus, Ankit Srivastava, well versed in classical singing, gave a beautiful performance



on spring season. Rahil Ahmed, Supriya Das, Tanishka Vajpayee and Anaya contributed songs. Prof Meet Kamal of the Department of Chemistry doubled the effect of spring by presenting Shabad singing. A former student Abhigya Chaturvedi and Anaya Mishra gave captivating presentations of classical traditional dance of Kathak. Tanvi, Divyanshi, Sakshi, Shalvi, Chahak and Shrishti impressed everyone with their mesmerising presentation of classical dance. Udit on tabla, Harshit on flute, Rahil on harmonium and Sharad on dafali presented Raga Yaman and Raga Hansdhwani. Chief guest Suzy Joseph encouraged students and discussed cultural and secular

aspects of spring. The presidential address was delivered by principal Prof Joseph Daniel. Blessings all participants, he explained the importance of cultural programmes organised in the college and importance of participating in them. Under the 'Vasantik' programme, a flower rangoli competition was held at the main gate of the auditorium. The students of the college participated in it with great enthusiasm. The winning students include Shivang Shukla (first), Tanishka Chaurasiya (second), Kanchi Tripathi (third), Lavanya, Sriшти Mishra and Fairy (consolation). While the flower rangoli competition heralded 'Vasantik' in the college, the students worked hard to decorate the entire auditorium with flowers and brought spring to its courtyard. Anjali, Anant, Sundaram, Kanchi, Vikhyat, Pragma, Fairy were responsible for the arrangements. The programme was conducted by Gaurangi Mishra. A large number of teachers, students, research scholars and staff were present during the programme.



# Qatar's Amir to strengthen ties with India in two-day state visit

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■  
NEW DELHI

Amir of Qatar Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al-Thani, who is scheduled to pay a state visit to India on February 17-18, will meet President Droupadi Murmu and hold talks with Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday.

According to a media advisory issued by Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) on Monday, he is expected to arrive in New Delhi later this evening. His visit will provide "further momentum to our growing multifaceted partnership", the MEA had said in a statement on Saturday. He will be accompanied by a high-level delegation, including ministers, senior officials and a business delegation, it said.

According to the media advisory, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar will call on him on Monday evening after his arrival.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi receives the Amir of the State of Qatar Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al-Thani upon his arrival in India, in New Delhi. PTI

On Tuesday morning, the Amir of Qatar will be accorded a ceremonial welcome at the forecourt of the Rashtrapati Bhawan, which will be followed by his meeting with Prime Minister Modi at the Hyderabad House. He will hold talks with Prime Minister Modi, covering various aspects of the bilateral relations, the

MEA said in the statement on Saturday. Exchange of MoUs are scheduled on Tuesday afternoon after which the Amir of Qatar will meet President Murmu, as per the advisory. His visit comes at the invitation of Prime Minister Modi. This would be the second state visit of the Amir of Qatar to India. He earlier visited India in March 2015, the MEA earlier said. India and Qatar have deep-rooted historical ties of friendship, trust and mutual respect. In recent years, the ties between the two countries, including in the areas of trade, investment, energy, technology, culture and people-to-people ties, have continued to strengthen. The Indian community residing in Qatar forms the largest expatriate community of Qatar, and is "appreciated for its positive contribution in the progress and development of Qatar", it said earlier.

# India, Bangladesh holds key border talks amid tensions

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■  
NEW DELHI

A high-level delegation of the Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB), the border guarding force of the neighbouring country, reached Delhi on Monday for bilateral talks on issues like fencing and attacks on Border Security Force (BSF) personnel and civilians by Bangladeshi miscreants, officials said.

The 55th Director General-Level Border Coordination Conference between the two forces will be held at the Border Security Force (BSF) headquarters here on Tuesday.

The Bangladeshi delegation reached India onboard a flight and they will be here till February 20. Apart from participating in the bi-annual talks, they may also call on some senior Union home ministry authorities, the officials said. This is the first top-level meeting between the two border guarding forces after the fall of the Sheikh Hasina government in August last year. The Indian delegation is led by BSF Director General (DG) Daljit Singh Chawdhry while the visiting Bangladeshi team is headed by



BGB DG Major General Mohammad Ashrafuzzaman Siddiqui. The BSF said in a statement last week that the conference is being organised to discuss border-related issues and improve coordination between the border guarding forces. Discussions will be held on preventing attacks on BSF personnel and Indian civilians by Bangladesh-based miscreants/nationals as well as trans-border crimes, construction of single row fence, action against Indian Insurgent Groups in Bangladesh, issues related to border infrastructure, joint efforts for effective implementation of Coordinated Border Management Plan, Confidence Building Measures and other issues, it had said.

The last edition of these bi-annual talks was held in Dhaka in March last year. The 4,096 km long India-Bangladesh boundary spans across five states - West Bengal (2,217 km), Tripura (856 km), Meghalaya (443 km), Assam (262 km) and Mizoram (318 km). The BSF is designated as the lead security and intelligence-gathering agency for this front. The ties between the two countries came under some stress after the neighbours summoned each other's high commissioners in December last year over the construction of the border fence by India and some other issues.

# SC orders UP authorities to explain Mosque demolition amid contempt allegations

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■  
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday directed Uttar Pradesh authorities to respond as to why contempt proceedings should not be initiated against them for razing a portion of a mosque at Kushinagar in alleged disobedience of the apex court's direction. A bench of Justices B R Gavai and Augustine George Masih also directed that until further orders, there shall be no demolition of the structure in question.

The bench passed the order while hearing a contempt plea against the authorities concerned in Kushinagar for their alleged wilful disobedience and failure to comply with the top court's November 13 last year directions.

In its November 13, 2024 verdict, the top court laid down pan-India guidelines and barred demolition of properties without a prior show cause notice and 15 days' time to the aggrieved party to respond. The fresh petition, filed through advocate Abdul Qadir Abbasi, said the authorities had demolished the outer and



Photo: File photo

front area of the Madni mosque in Kushinagar on February 9. Senior advocate Huzefa Ahmadi, appearing for the petitioners, said the structure in question was constructed on a private land owned by the petitioners.

He said the construction was with due sanction of municipal authorities according to a sanction order of 1999. Ahmadi argued that the demolition was carried out in "egre-



gious contempt" of the directions issued by the apex court in its November last year judgement. "Issue notice as to why proceedings for contempt should not be initiated against the respondents," the bench said and posted the matter for hearing after two weeks. "It is further directed that until further orders, there shall be no demolition of the structure," the top court said.

At the outset, the bench told Ahmadi that the apex court was asking the petitioners alleging contempt in demolition matters to approach the jurisdictional high courts with their grievances. While referring to the directions issued by the top court in its last year verdict, the senior advocate said, "Please see the manner in which they have demolished this (structure)." The plea alleged that the demo-

lition was carried out without following the due legal process and in clear contravention of the guidelines issued by the top court. It claimed the authorities failed to provide the mandatory opportunity of a hearing to the petitioners before proceeding with the demolition. "This act of proceeding without affording opportunity of hearing is a violation of the fundamental principles of natural justice, which were explicitly expected to be followed by the authorities, as outlined in the directions issued by this court," the plea said. "The administration, by taking such an action in haste, has shown complete disregard for the religious sentiments of the local Muslim community, who rely on this structure for their religious practices," it said. The plea said the land on which the mosque was built upon was purchased by the petitioners through registered sale deeds dated June 29, 1988, March 28, 1989, June 30, 1989 and February 23, 2013. It said the map for construction of mosque was sanctioned in September 1999 by the nagar panchayat, Hata.

The plea alleged that a local politician had lodged a complaint in December last year claiming encroachment of the land in question. It said the SDM of Hata had carried out an inspection and filed a detailed report which said there was no encroachment by the petitioners. The plea sought direction to the authorities to maintain status quo at the mosque. It also sought directions for restoration or suitable compensation to rectify the situation caused by the demolition. Passing a slew of directions, the apex court in its November 2024 verdict made clear that they would not be applicable in case of unauthorised structures in a public spaces such as roads, streets, footpaths, abutting railway lines or a river or water bodies apart from cases where there was a court order for demolition. "No demolition should be carried out without a prior show cause notice returnable either in accordance with the time provided by the local municipal laws or within 15 days time from the date of service of such notice, whichever is later," said the top court verdict.

# BJP has highest income share among national parties: ADR report



BJP campaign

Photo: File photo

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■  
NEW DELHI

The BJP reported the highest income among national parties in the financial year 2023-24, declaring total earnings of ₹4,340.47 Crore, according to poll rights body Association of Democratic Reforms (ADR). The amount accounted for 74.57 per cent of the total income of six national parties during the period under review, the report by ADR said. A large portion of the income for national parties came from donations through electoral bonds.

"The BJP declared a total income of ₹4,340.47 Crore during FY 2023-24 but spent only 50.96 per cent of it, amounting to ₹2,211.69 Crore. The total income of Congress was ₹1,225.12 Crore, while its expenditure for the year was ₹1,025.25 Crore or 83.69 per cent of its total income," the report said.

While the BJP received the highest amount, securing ₹1,685.63 Crore, the Congress received ₹828.36 Crore, and the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) ₹10.15 Crore. Collectively, these three parties raised ₹2,524.1361 Crore - 43.36 per cent of their total income - through the electoral bond scheme, which the Supreme Court struck down as "unconstitutional and mani-

festly arbitrary" in May last year. As per the data shared by the State Bank of India in response to an RTI application filed by the ADR, ₹4,507.56 Crore worth of electoral bonds were redeemed by various political parties in the 2023-24 fiscal. The national parties accounted for 55.99 per cent - ₹2,524.1361 Crore - of this amount. The report said the maximum expenditure by the Congress was made towards election-related expenses, amounting to ₹619.67 Crore, followed by ₹340.702 Crore spent on administrative and general expenses.

In comparison, the Communist Party of India (Marxist) spent ₹56.29 Crore on administrative and general expenses and ₹47.57 Crore on employee costs. Among the national parties, six declared receiving a total of ₹2,669.87 Crore from donations and contributions. The report also noted that out of these six parties, only Congress (₹58.56 Crore) and CPI(M) (₹11.32 Crore) declared receiving a total income of ₹69.88 Crore from the sale of coupons. The audit reports of CPI(M), Congress and BJP were submitted with delays ranging from 12 to 66 days. The most common expenditure among national parties was on elections and administrative expenses, the report said.



# Delhi government to challenge acquittals in 1984 anti-Sikh riots cases

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■  
NEW DELHI

The Delhi Government on Monday informed the Supreme Court that it will file six appeals challenging acquittals in the 1984 anti-Sikh riots cases.

The court was hearing a PIL filed by former Shiromani Gurudwara Prabhandak Committee member S Gurlal Singh Kahlon. In 2018, the apex court on his plea constituted an SIT to probe 199 cases where investigations stood closed.

On Monday, Additional Solicitor General Aishwarya Bhati, representing the Delhi government, told a bench of Justices Abhay S Oka and Ujjal Bhuyan that a decision has been taken to challenge acquittals in the top court.

Taking note of the submission, the bench directed the Delhi government to file the appeals in six weeks and said the special leave petitions be placed before Chief Justice Sanjiv Khanna for tagging with the present case.

During the hearing, senior advocate H S Phoolka, representing petitioner Kahlon,

submitted judgments showing that prosecution was "hand in glove" with the accused in the case. "These are not normal cases. There was cover up and the state did not prosecute properly. These cases are crimes against humanity," he said. The court had earlier quizzed Delhi Police for not filing appeals against acquittals in the 1984 anti-Sikh riots cases and said prosecution should be carried out "seriously and not just for the sake of it". Delhi witnessed large-scale violence and killings of persons from the Sikh community following former PM Indira Gandhi's assassination by her bodyguards in 1984 and the cases stemming from the incident have seen some major twists and turns 40 years on.

According to a report of the one-man Nanavati Commission, formed to probe the violence, 587 FIRs were registered in Delhi in relation to the 1984 riots in which 2,733 people were killed. Of that total, the police shut about 240 cases as "untraced" and about 250 cases resulted in acquittals.

# Shivraj Singh Chauhan to launch NAKSHA pilot program to digitise urban land records

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■  
NEW DELHI

Union Rural Development Minister Shivraj Singh Chauhan on Tuesday will inaugurate the National Geospatial Knowledge-based Land Survey of Urban Habitations (NAKSHA) to create and update land records in urban areas in 152 Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) across 26 states and three Union Territories (UTs). The event will take place in Raisen, Madhya Pradesh, the ministry said in a statement.

The Department of Land Resources, Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India, has initiated this pilot program. The NAKSHA program aims to create and update land records in the urban areas to ensure accurate and reliable docu-



Union Rural Development Minister Shivraj Singh Chauhan Photo: File photo

mentation of land ownership. The Rural Development Ministry said this initiative will empower citizens, improve ease of living, enhance urban planning and reduce land-related disputes. "The IT-based system for property record administration will foster trans-

parency, efficiency and support sustainable development," the ministry said. The Survey of India is the technical partner for NAKSHA programme which is responsible for conducting aerial surveys and providing accurate imagery, through third party vendors, to

state and Union Territory governments. An end-to-end web-GIS platform will be developed by the Madhya Pradesh State Electronic Development Corporation (MPSEDC) and storage facilities will be provided by the National Informatics Centre Services Inc (NICSI).

The states and Union Territory governments will conduct field surveys and ground truthing using the orthorectified imagery, ultimately leading to the final publication of urban and semi-urban land records. The NAKSHA pilot program is expected to cost approximately Rs 194 crore, fully funded by the Government of India. The occasion will be marked by flying of drones, launch of Standard Operating Procedure (SoP) booklet, video and flyer on NAKSHA Programme, the statement added.

# SC court flags centre for absence in key cases, citing lack of courtesy

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■  
NEW DELHI

Show some courtesy to the SC court, the Supreme Court said on Monday while flagging that law officers or lawyers on behalf of the Centre were not present before it during the hearing of a suit filed by the West Bengal Government. A bench of Justices BR Gavai and Augustine George Masih expressed displeasure while observing that no law officer was present in the court when the matter was called for hearing. A lawyer told the bench that Solicitor General Tushar



Mehta, who was to appear in the court in the matter, was arguing another case before a bench headed by Chief Justice Sanjiv Khanna.

"Somebody should be here. This is showing no courtesy to the court. There are so many law officers," Justice Gavai said.

"Show some courtesy to the court. It is a dispute between a state and the Union," the judge said and pointed out that there are also many senior lawyers on the Centre's panel. The bench then passed over the matter on the request of the lawyer. Later in the day, when the solicitor general appeared in the court in some other matter, Justice Gavai told him, "Mr solicitor, in that West Bengal matter, nobody was present. It cuts a very sorry picture that the Union is not interested in important matters. There are so many law offi-

cers, there are so many senior counsel on your panel and not a single lawyer was present." At the solicitor general's request, the bench adjourned the matter for two weeks. "Mr Tushar Mehta cannot be in every court. There are 17 courts," Justice Gavai said in a lighter vein. The West Bengal government has filed an original suit in the apex court against the Centre under Article 131 of the Constitution, alleging that the CBI has been filing FIRs and proceeding with its investigation, despite the state having withdrawn the general consent to the federal

agency to probe cases within its territorial jurisdiction. Article 131 deals with the Supreme Court's original jurisdiction in a dispute between the Centre and one or more states. In July last year, the top court had rejected the Centre's objection to the lawsuit's maintainability and listed the matter for framing of issues. Senior advocate Kapil Sibal, appearing in the matter for the West Bengal government, had argued that once the state had withdrawn its consent on November 16, 2018, the Centre could not allow the CBI to enter its territory for investigation.





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PAPER WITH PASSION

## Heart-wrenching

The New Delhi Railway Station stampede exposes administrative lapses and highlights the need for better crowd control

It is as heart-wrenching as it is unfortunate. The stampede at New Delhi Railway station has shocked the capital. At least 18 people, including five children, lost their lives, and over a dozen sustained injuries in a horrific stampede at the Station on Saturday night. The tragedy unfolded on the foot-overbridges connecting platforms 14 and 15, as a sudden surge of passengers waiting to board trains for Prayagraj resulted in a deadly crush. The incident raises critical questions about mismanagement, infrastructural inadequacies and lapses in crowd control that led to the catastrophe. The primary trigger of the incident appears to be a confluence of factors, including excessive passenger load, misleading announcements and poor crowd management. The surge of pilgrims traveling to Prayagraj for the ongoing Maha Kumbh Mela significantly increased the footfall at the station. Reports indicate that around 1,500 general tickets were being sold every hour. Sources suggest that a wrong announcement regarding a change of platforms may have led to confusion among passengers.



In the ensuing rush, some individuals slipped while descending the foot-overbridge stairs, triggering widespread panic. Besides, extended waiting periods for departing trains may have resulted in a bottleneck effect. While overcrowding was an expected challenge, poor planning and mismanagement turned it into a disaster. Given the predictable surge of passengers, railway authorities failed to deploy adequate personnel to regulate the movement of people. Despite previous incidents highlighting the risks of overcrowding, no significant upgrades had been made to ensure smoother pedestrian movement. Moreover, the response from railway officials and security personnel was reportedly delayed. A more robust system to alert and manage surging crowds could have prevented the incident from escalating into a full-fledged disaster. Could this have been prevented? Surely. Deployment of additional railway police and personnel during peak travel periods could have averted the disaster. Besides, real-time monitoring of passenger density using surveillance cameras and AI-based crowd control systems could have definitely helped in such situations. This stampede must jolt the authorities from their deep slumber as this is not for the first time such a tragedy has happened. Expansion and widening of foot-overbridges to accommodate high passenger traffic must be done on priority. Clear and accurate digital signage to minimise confusion is also very important. Besides, there must be a system to cap the number of the general tickets issued per hour, especially during mega events. While accountability is being fixed, the focus must remain on implementing long-term solutions to prevent such tragedies in the future. The railway authorities must ensure that infrastructure, security and operational protocols are robust enough to handle high footfall scenarios safely.

Moreover, the response from railway officials and security personnel was reportedly delayed. A more robust system to alert and manage surging crowds could have prevented the incident from escalating into a full-fledged disaster. Could this have been prevented? Surely. Deployment of additional railway police and personnel during peak travel periods could have averted the disaster. Besides, real-time monitoring of passenger density using surveillance cameras and AI-based crowd control systems could have definitely helped in such situations. This stampede must jolt the authorities from their deep slumber as this is not for the first time such a tragedy has happened. Expansion and widening of foot-overbridges to accommodate high passenger traffic must be done on priority. Clear and accurate digital signage to minimise confusion is also very important. Besides, there must be a system to cap the number of the general tickets issued per hour, especially during mega events. While accountability is being fixed, the focus must remain on implementing long-term solutions to prevent such tragedies in the future. The railway authorities must ensure that infrastructure, security and operational protocols are robust enough to handle high footfall scenarios safely.

### PICTALK



A flock of ibis flying over a paddy field, in Nagaon

## Delhi High Court reinstates fraud claims against Reliance

The Delhi High Court quashes an international arbitration award that had dismissed government claims of 'insidious fraud' and 'unjust enrichment' against Reliance Industries



PRASHANT TEWARI

The resounding victory of the Central Government's legal team, led by the Attorney General of India A.R. Venkatramani reinforced by the active participation of the eminent jurist and the former Attorney General of India K.K. Venugopal, under the astute administrative guidance of Union Petroleum & Natural Gas Minister Hardeep Singh Puri, in the Delhi High Court verdict against Mukesh Ambani's Reliance Industries Ltd. (RIL), has decisively dismantled allegations of favouritism levelled against the Modi government.

This landmark ruling categorically refutes opposition claims that the government promotes select business houses, reaffirming its commitment to transparency, fairness, and the rule of law in corporate governance and policy-making. In a landmark judgment dated February 14, 2025, the Delhi High Court delivered a decisive verdict in the case of Union of India vs. Reliance Industries Ltd. (RIL), addressing long-standing allegations of crony capitalism and favouritism towards major industrialists by the current government.

This 79-page judgment not only exonerates the government from accusations of bias but also underscores the integrity of India's judicial system and the competence of its political and legal leadership. Background of the Case: The dispute centres around the Production Sharing Contract (PSC) executed between the Union of India and Reliance Industries Ltd. in 2000, about the exploration and extraction of natural gas in the Krishna-Godavari basin.

The Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas alleged that RIL had engaged in "unjust enrichment" by extracting and selling gas that had purportedly migrated from fields operated by the state-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) to RIL's adjacent block. The government sought compensation, contending that RIL's actions resulted in significant financial losses to the state exchequer. Details of Judgement: The Delhi High Court's single judge judgment in Union of India vs. Reliance Industries Ltd. examined the allegations of unjust enrichment, contractual breaches, and fraud against RIL, ultimately dismissing them due to a lack of concrete evidence.



The court upheld the findings of the international arbitration tribunal, reaffirming that RIL operated within the bounds of the Production Sharing Contract (PSC) and could not be held liable for natural gas migration beyond its control. However, the Division Bench of the Delhi High Court has quashed an arbitral award that had dismissed the Central government's claims against Reliance Industries Limited (RIL) and its foreign partners. The government had accused the conglomerate of "insidious fraud" and "unjust enrichment" amounting to over \$1.729 billion by allegedly extracting natural gas from deposits beyond its entitlement.

The Bench, comprising Justices Rekha Palli and Saurabh Banerjee, overturned the ruling of a single judge, who had, in May 2022, set aside the Petroleum Ministry's allegations. The court determined that the international arbitration award dated July 24, 2018, which had favoured the RIL-led consortium, was "contrary to public policy" in India. This decision marks a significant legal setback for RIL, as it reinstates the govern-



THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS ALLEGED THAT RIL HAD ENGAGED IN 'UNJUST ENRICHMENT' BY EXTRACTING AND SELLING GAS THAT HAD PURPORTEDLY MIGRATED FROM FIELDS OPERATED BY THE STATE-OWNED OIL AND NATURAL GAS CORPORATION (ONGC) TO RIL'S ADJACENT BLOCK

ment's claims concerning unauthorized gas extraction. The ruling also strengthens the government's position in regulatory disputes within the oil and gas sector. With the arbitral award nullified, the matter may now proceed further in Indian courts, potentially leading to fresh legal battles over financial liabilities and resource allocation in the country's hydrocarbon sector. Beyond the legal nuances, the judgment serves as a crucial precedent for future contracts, emphasizing the importance of precision in drafting and adherence to arbitration mechanisms for dispute resolution. It underscores the independence of the judiciary in adjudicating disputes involving powerful corporate entities and government bodies, dispelling claims of crony capitalism.

The case also highlights the competence of the central government's legal representation, particularly the diligence of Attorney General A.R. Venkatramani and Union Petroleum & Natural Gas Minister Hardeep Singh Puri in defending the government's stance. It further reflects the abysmally woeful performance of the RIL legal team in defending the case. Furthermore, the ruling reassures investors about India's

commitment to the rule of law, ensuring that legal processes remain transparent and evidence-driven. By challenging the political narrative of undue favouritism towards industrialists, the judgment reinforces the integrity of India's governance, corporate regulations, and media responsibility in shaping public discourse.

**Conclusion**  
The Delhi High Court's latest judgment in Union of India vs. Reliance Industries Ltd. is a testament to the robustness of India's legal system and its capacity to adjudicate high-stakes disputes impartially. It dispels allegations of governmental bias towards prominent industrialists, affirming that decisions are grounded in evidence and legal merit. The ruling also underscores the importance of adhering to contractual obligations and the role of arbitration in resolving intricate commercial conflicts. As India continues to navigate its path towards economic growth, this judgment reinforces the principles of fairness, transparency, and the rule of law as cornerstones of its democratic ethos.

(The writer is a prominent columnist and Public Policy Expert; the views expressed are personal)

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

#### US CRITICISES EUROPEAN LEADERS

Madam — At the 61st Munich Security Conference, American Vice President JD Vance left no stone unturned in reprimanding and threatening the European leaders. He has launched a monstrous attack on Europe, in which he has accused its leaders of failing to give free speech, restricting illegal migration, and living in fear of religious ideology. He has put the biggest threat to Europe's security on the European countries themselves. Along with this, he also said that the European countries do not pay the full price for their security. America will no longer provide security to Europe with closed eyes. This simply means that Donald Trump has indicated that if the NATO organisation has to be run, then it will have to be run on Trump's terms, or else America will leave that organisation. America has also indicated that it wants to see Russia back in the G-7 countries' organisation. The White House has already announced that it will impose additional tariffs on goods imported from countries around the world. Now the rest of the world, especially the European Union, will have to decide without any delay how they will learn to live without America. Before America leaves NATO, the campaign to expel it will have to be intensified. Also, every possible help will have to be given to Ukraine to save it from the clutches of Russian terrorism. Because Trump is completely determined to hand over the reins of Ukraine to the Kremlin.

Jang Bahadur Singh | Jamshedpur

#### HOPES HIGH FOR TROPHY

Madam — This refers to your caption in Sunday Pioneer, "Rohit, Kohli lead Team India for Champions Trophy". Indeed, it was a brilliant century from skipper Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli against Bangladesh in the ICC Champions Trophy opener while I occupied the studio box as a special guest from which I was witnessing the

#### Stampede at New Delhi Railway Station



The stampede incident at New Delhi Railway Station claimed 15 innocent lives, but it also serves as a warning that the time for change has arrived. Chaos, lack of crowd control and failure of security measures led to this tragedy. It is now essential that we learn from this incident and take steps to prevent such occurrences in the future. This disaster has made it clear that the railway must adopt modern strategies for

crowd management and passenger safety. The railway administration should anticipate potential crowds during major events and pilgrimages and make appropriate arrangements in advance. By utilising new technologies, entry and exit points should be better organised to ensure smooth passenger movement. The government has expressed condolences over the incident, and Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnav has ordered a high-level inquiry. However, beyond this, we must take proactive steps with a positive mindset to prioritise passenger safety. By improving traffic management, deploying adequate police forces and making the information system more effective, we can prevent such incidents. R K Jain | Barwani

match. The entire box was surrounded by the players' family, and I can see all the cheers in Anushka Sharma and Rohit's wife.

The recent rule of restrictions has not permitted the player's family to join them for this tour. When my opinion about Rohit and Virat has been changing while watching them play, there came a strong pat behind my back, which brought me to reality. Oh, it all happened in my dreams that I woke up to my wife's call and went for a quick shower and to get ready to start at my office. Hitman and Kohli thus became the dream object in fans lives, and I am also one among those impacted much by their failures. One hopes that both will come good in the upcoming Champions Trophy.

A P Thiruvadi | Chennai

#### MSMES MUST REINVENT TO SHINE

Madam — The US's push for reciprocal tariffs, framed as a 'fair trade' corrective, has sent shockwaves through global markets-but for India's MSMEs

industry, this moment could be less about survival and more about reinvention. Critics argue that this move will spark a trade war, hobbling economic growth and benefiting no one. However, for India's MSME sector, this moment could be a catalyst for transformation. By upgrading to world-class standards at affordable costs, Indian MSMEs can tap into vast export markets and become more competitive, resilient and export-ready.

This would require a multi-pronged approach, involving government incentives, technology transfers, and skill development programmes. By doing so, India can turn a potential trade threat into a transformative opportunity, ultimately boosting its economic growth and global trade prospects and proving that even in the midst of tariff wars, MSMEs can shine as stars of innovation and growth.

Shruti Saggur | Pune

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

## India advances carbon market reforms following COP 29

India, already a leader in renewable energy, reinforced its commitment to climate action by proposing a unified carbon market

The 29th Conference of the Parties (COP 29) under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) concluded in Baku, Azerbaijan, on November 24, 2024. While key expectations regarding climate finance remained unmet, significant progress was achieved in carbon market regulations. A landmark agreement on carbon trading rules was reached, aiming to accelerate climate action by enabling countries to meet their emission reduction goals efficiently and cost-effectively. Under its Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), the country initially aimed to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emission intensity by 33-35% from 2005 levels by 2030, later revising this target to 45% in 2022. India has launched multiple initiatives to combat climate change. On the supply side, renewable energy generation helps mitigate carbon footprints, while demand-side initiatives like Perform-Achieve-Trade (PAT), star labeling, energy conservation building codes, and improved lighting solu-



tions further reinforce India's climate commitments. Existing frameworks, including Renewable Energy Certificates (RECs) and Energy Saving Certificates (ESCs), serve as a foundation. These were introduced under the National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC) in 2008 and have been successfully traded on Indian power exchanges. RECs drive renewable energy adoption by allowing obligated entities to purchase either renewable energy or its certificates. One REC equates to 1 MWh of renewable energy generated from sources like solar, wind, hydro, and biogas. This system benefits both electricity generators and buyers, ensuring environmental compliance. Similarly, ESCerts promote energy efficiency by enabling designated energy-intensive

industries to either enhance energy savings or buy corresponding certificates. One ESCert represents a reduction of 1 million tonnes of oil equivalent energy. Currently, 13 key industrial sectors, including aluminum, cement, power distribution, and railways, participate in this program, covering nearly 50% of India's primary energy consumption. Since their inception, RECs and ESCerts have driven significant emissions reductions, saving over 73 million tonnes of CO2 through REC trading and preventing 106 million tonnes of CO2 emissions via ESCerts. Recognizing the need for a unified carbon market, India proposed a comprehensive system merging RECs and ESCerts into a single, internationally aligned framework. The regulatory foundation was set with the amendment of the Energy Conservation Act in January 2023, followed by the notification of the Carbon Credit Trading Scheme, 2023. The scheme designates the Central Electricity Regulatory Commission as the market regulator and power exchanges as trading plat-

forms, while the Bureau of Energy Efficiency oversees compliance mechanisms. India's carbon market will consist of two segments: a compliance market and an offset market. The compliance market will impose emission caps on obligated entities, allowing overachievers to sell surplus carbon credits to underachievers. The offset market will enable voluntary participation by non-obligated entities aiming to reduce their carbon footprints. Carbon credit certificates will be traded through a regulated bidding process. The transition from existing REC and ESCert markets to a unified carbon trading system is expected to be seamless, given India's well-established power exchanges and transaction mechanisms. With this development, India moves closer to integrating its climate action efforts into global carbon markets, reinforcing its commitment to reducing emissions and achieving long-term sustainability goals.

(The writer works with Indian Institute of Management, Sirmaur; views are personal)



ATUL AGRAWAL





## FIRST COLUMN

## RAISING GEN ALPHA AND GEN BETA

To ensure their well-being, parents must strike a balance between traditional values and modern approaches



SHAINY SHARMA

The 21st century has introduced new challenges and opportunities in parenting. As we raise Generation Alpha (born 2012-2024) and Generation Beta (born 2025-2039), it is crucial to adapt parenting strategies to their digital upbringing, rapid technological advancements and changing societal norms. Ensuring these children grow up healthy, happy, and disciplined requires a balance of traditional values and modern approaches. There is no denying that, unlike previous generations, Generation Alpha and Generation Beta are growing up with easy access to technology, which affects their lifestyle habits.

It is of utmost importance that parents/guardians take proactive steps to ensure their children's well-being such as providing balanced nutrition such as a diet rich in proteins, vitamins, and fibres while limiting processed foods and sugary snacks; reducing screen time and promoting physical activities such as cycling, swimming, and team sports to improve fitness and social skills; setting screen-free bedtime routines to ensure quality sleep, which is crucial for the cognitive and emotional development and encouraging children to spend time offline by engaging in hands-on activities like painting, gardening and DIY projects.

Not only these, but in an era of social media influence and fast-paced lifestyles, parents/guardians need to support their children by creating a strong emotional connection; encouraging resilience and a growth mindset; guiding them in reducing digital overload, and engaging them in mindful activities such as yoga, meditation, journaling, or simple relaxation exercises to help them cope with stress. Above all, what matters the most is the art of discipline. With instant gratification becoming a norm in the digital age,



parents/guardians must realise that these generations will grow up in an AI-driven world, requiring skills beyond academics. Parents/Guardians can help prepare them by encouraging critical thinking and creativity and providing problem-solving challenges, STEM activities, and artistic outlets along with proper guidance on responsible internet usage, cybersecurity, and online ethics followed by developing social skills in a hybrid world. Raising healthy, happy, and disciplined Gen Alpha and Gen Beta children requires a thoughtful blend of love, guidance, and adaptability. Parents/Guardians must embrace new-age parenting by integrating digital awareness with traditional values while fostering emotional resilience and self-discipline. By prioritising wellbeing, education and strong moral foundations, one can ensure these generations grow into responsible, fulfilled, and future-ready individuals.

Also, by providing proper nutrition, encouraging physical and mental well-being, fostering social skills, and setting positive examples, parents/guardians can create an environment where children thrive for it is aptly said that a happy and healthy child is not just the result of luck but of consistent efforts, care, and understanding from those who nurture them. By promoting healthy habits, setting strong moral foundations, and nurturing adaptability, parents can equip their children for a fast-evolving world. Ultimately, a happy and well-rounded child is shaped not by chance, but by consistent love, guidance, and understanding.

(The writer is an educator; views are personal)

## Unlocking nature's secrets: A journey through India's forests

Nature is an open book, rich with stories waiting to be uncovered. There are intricate connections between land, life, and time, write BKP Sinha & Arvind Jha

Nature, in its boundless complexity, holds countless wonders and mysteries. A walk through the forest offers a unique opportunity to engage deeply with the natural world, observing its intricate details and uncovering its hidden stories. Every tree, rock, and animal track contributes to the landscape's rich history, revealing the dynamic processes that have shaped it over time. The towering trees, with their rings cataloguing centuries of climatic shifts and environmental changes, stand as silent witnesses to the passage of time. A noticeable absence of middle-aged trees, for example, often points to a past forest fire. These fires, while natural and sometimes devastating, selectively eliminate younger trees while leaving behind older, more resilient ones. India, with its diverse ecosystems ranging from coastal regions to mountain valleys, offers a unique opportunity to observe the intricate relationships between flora, fauna, and their environment. Even the soil beneath our feet, a mosaic of organic matter, testifies to the endless cycle of life and decay that sustains the ecosystem. The contours of the land, the steepness of slopes, the presence of valleys and ridges – these are not mere accidents of geography. They are the fingerprints of geological forces, millennia in the making. The Himalayas, Western Ghats, and Vindhya ranges are iconic examples of such geological artistry, showcasing the dynamic processes that have shaped the nation's landscape and influenced its biodiversity. The forest is a timeless classroom, where nature's lessons unfold with every step. But to truly unlock these secrets, requires more than a casual glance; it demands a mindful approach and willingness to slow down and truly engage with our surroundings. As you walk through the forest, you'll notice the forest floor is covered with a thick layer of leaves, twigs, and decomposing organic matter.

This layer, known as the leaf litter, plays a crucial role in nutrient cycling and provides a habitat for many small creatures. The type and distribution of vegetation provide insights into the region's climate, soil conditions, and water availability. Lush rainforests, like those in the Western Ghats and Northeast India, thrive in areas with abundant rainfall. These verdant ecosystems boast a rich variety of plant species, from towering trees to intricate understory plants, each adapted to thrive in the humid, water-rich environment. This dense vegetation supports a wide range of wildlife, contributing to the region's biodiversity and ecological stability.

In contrast, the arid deserts of Rajasthan present a landscape where life has remarkably adapted to survive with minimal water. Vegetation here is sparse, but highly specialized, with species like cacti, acacias, and thorny bushes dominating the terrain. These species are equipped with unique adaptations, such as water-storing tissues and deep root systems, allowing them to conserve and access water efficiently and ensuring their survival in such harsh conditions.

The intimate relationship between plants and their environment becomes even more evident when observing specific species in particular areas. For instance, in floodplains, trees such as sycamore, Gular, and ash Gurjan thrive in fertile, wet conditions where water and nutrients



accumulate. On the other hand, the hardy Casuarina is well-suited to coastal environments, where the salty conditions pose a challenge for many other species, including Karanj (Pongamia). Similarly, along riverbanks, trees like Jamun and Arjun flourish in the constantly wet conditions, highlighting how plant life reflects the local ecosystem. Just as plant life reflects environmental conditions, rock formations provide a window into the geological history and processes that have shaped the land. Sedimentary rocks, often rich in marine fossils such as shells, corals, and fish, indicate that the region was once submerged underwater.

These rocks may also display ripple marks or mud cracks, further supporting the presence of ancient water bodies. For example, the fossil-rich Shivalik Hills provide a glimpse into prehistoric times, showcasing the variety of life forms that once thrived in the area. The types of sediment and their layering can also offer insights into past climate conditions, such as periods of drought or heavy rainfall. For instance, fine-grained sediments suggest calm, shallow waters, while coarser sediments point to more turbulent conditions.

Igneous rocks, formed from cooled magma, reveal the area's volcanic history, while metamorphic rocks provide evidence of the intense transformations that occur deep within the Earth. Understanding the geology beneath the surface, which shapes the land, is equally important, and soil reveals much about this. For example, limestone regions, where rock weathering creates caves and stone pillars, typically have alkaline soils high in calcium. Conversely, granite-dominated areas, where rock breakdown leads to acidic soils, often develop wetlands due to poor drainage.

Soil colour offers further clues: Dark brown soil, rich in organic matter, supports diverse ecosystems; grey soil suggests wetter conditions; yellowish soil may indicate nutrient depletion. Dramatic shifts in soil colour often point to human influence. For example, in Karnataka and

Odisha, vibrant red and ochre hues reflect historical iron ore mining. In Rajasthan and Gujarat, white caps on the soil signal high salt levels from over-irrigation. Physical signs in the landscape—such as fissures or cracks in the soil—can indicate instability, caused by factors like erosion, seismic activity, or human intervention.

In hilly regions like the Western Ghats or Himalayas, slipping or bending tree bark may signal shifting ground, a clear indicator of potential soil movement. Recognizing these signs is crucial for the safety of campers and hikers. Water bodies, including rivers, lakes, and wetlands, are vital components of India's ecosystems and are deeply intertwined with the land's geology. Major rivers such as Ganges, Brahmaputra, and Godavari are true lifelines for the nation.

The Ganges River, revered as sacred, flows over 2,500 kilometres across northern India, supporting numerous aquatic and terrestrial species. Its waters irrigate fields that feed millions, and it is a critical source of drinking water for countless communities. Similarly, the Brahmaputra River, originating from the Tibetan Himalayas, meanders through Northeast India, sustaining rich floodplain ecosystems and supplying water for agriculture and hydropower.

The Godavari, often called the "Dakshin Ganga," flows through central India, nourishing one of the largest river basins in the country and supporting diverse habitats. India's wetlands, such as the Sundarbans, the world's largest mangrove forest, span the Ganges-Brahmaputra-Meghna delta and are a haven for Bengal tigers, crocodiles, birds, and other wildlife, while its mangroves protect the coastline from storms and floods. As we explore these natural habitats, subtle signs like paw prints, droppings, and other traces offer glimpses into animals' presence and activities.

Each animal leaves a distinct signature reflecting its unique anatomy and behaviour. For example, cats,

with their stealthy grace, leave tracks showcasing the soft pads of their paws, devoid of sharp imprints of their retractable claws, hinting at their elusive nature.

Rabbits, in contrast, leave bounding tracks with hind legs landing ahead of their forelegs, showcasing their hurried movements and vulnerability. Understanding these signs provides deeper insights into wildlife behaviour and habitat preferences. Like us, animals are drawn to places that offer the essentials of life: food, water, and shelter. A patch of trees followed by an open field and a water source, such as a lake or pond, indicates a popular spot for wildlife. However, animals in these areas are often cautious and aware of their surroundings.

They possess an innate ability to detect and avoid human presence long before we notice them, typically only breaking cover to make a quick escape. Birds, in particular, use vocalizations to mark territory and alert others to predators.

For instance, the sudden flight of pigeons on a quiet woodland path can trigger a group warning system, notifying nearby animals—deer, rabbits, and foxes—of a potential threat. Similarly, a chorus of noisy bird calls may indicate a coordinated defence against a predator, such as a crow mobbing an owl. Birds also emit sharp alarm calls, like the high-pitched "seet," specifically designed to warn others of a bird of prey overhead. It is in paying close attention to these subtle cues that we begin to truly understand the richness of the natural world. The next time we find ourselves amidst the whispers of the woods, let us listen closely.

The forest invites us to unlock its wisdom, learn from its resilience, and contribute to its legacy. By embracing the profound lessons found within the diverse elements of the forest, we not only enrich our own lives but also ensure that this invaluable library remains open for generations to come.

(The writers are former principal chief conservator of Forests, UP and Maharashtra; views are their own)



THE GANGES RIVER, REVERED AS SACRED, FLOWS OVER 2,500 KILOMETRES ACROSS NORTHERN INDIA, SUPPORTING NUMEROUS AQUATIC AND TERRESTRIAL SPECIES. ITS WATERS IRRIGATE FIELDS THAT FEED MILLIONS,

## The rise of religious realty: How India's infrastructure push is transforming spiritual tourism

This emerging sector is transforming pilgrimage sites with upscale hospitality and commercial developments, meeting the needs of faith-driven travelers

The Indian economy has witnessed a significant push towards infrastructure, real estate and tourism, especially spiritual tourism especially in the 2025-26 Union Budget. The government's focus on urban redevelopment, affordable housing, and tourism-friendly policies has positioned India as a global hotspot for real estate and hospitality investments. Among the most prominent emerging trends is the rise of religious realty—an intersection of real estate, hospitality, and spiritual tourism, where projects are developed to cater to the growing number of pilgrims and faith-driven travellers.

With disposable incomes on the rise due to tax relief measures—such as no income tax



MAYANK JAISWAL

up to Rs 12 lakh under the new tax regime—India's middle class is set to invest more in homeownership and travel. Additionally, the introduction of the Rs 15,000 crore SWAMIH Fund 2 for affordable and mid-income housing will fast-track stalled projects, ensuring homebuyers see the fruition of their investments. Simultaneously, India's hospitality sector is poised for an

exponential rise, with 50 top-tier tourist destinations being developed with state partnerships, reinforcing the nation's status as a must-visit destination for both spiritual and leisure travellers.

**The Rise of Religious Realty: A New Era in Development** India's spiritual destinations have long been major attractions for domestic and international tourists. However, what was once a fragmented market with limited infrastructure is now being transformed into a sophisticated segment within the hospitality and real estate industries. The religious tourism boom has led to a surge in demand for premium hotels, commercial complexes, and mixed-use developments that cater to both pilgrims and high-end

travellers. The Solitaire Group has been at the forefront of this evolution. Recognising the immense potential in religious realty, it has strategically invested in prime pilgrimage destinations such as Ayodhya, Varanasi, Prayagraj, and Haridwar.

Its flagship development in Ayodhya—a luxury Taj hotel in partnership with the Indian Hotels Company Limited (IHCL)—exemplifies its commitment to redefining spiritual tourism. The 300-key Taj Ayodhya, spanning 7.2 acres, will feature high-end villas, luxury accommodations, wellness facilities, and state-of-the-art banqueting spaces to cater to both pilgrims and travellers seeking opulent experiences. **Unlocking the Potential of Tier II and III Cities**



The narrative of real estate growth in India is no longer limited to metro cities. Government-backed infrastructure projects, improved regional connectivity under the modified UDAN scheme, and growing investor interest are propelling the development of Tier II and III cities. Cities with religious and cultural significance are seeing an influx of premium residential and commercial projects, as

demand for quality real estate soars. The Solitaire Group has been a pioneer in this domain. Its developments in Prayagraj, including the city's first and largest township, are a testament to its vision of creating world-class urban spaces beyond metro hubs.

Through strategic land acquisitions and partnerships, the Group aims to bridge the infrastructure gap in smaller cities and deliver projects that enhance both living standards and economic prosperity. **Hospitality Meets Spiritual Tourism**

India's push for religious and spiritual tourism has been backed by key government initiatives, including hotels in pilgrimage hubs being added to the Infrastructure Harmonised Master List (HML), ensuring

easier access to low-cost financing, streamlined e-visa services and visa fee waivers for select international tourists to encourage global arrivals, and MUDRA loans for home-stays to support budget travel and rural tourism.

This structured approach to hospitality growth has enabled developers like the Solitaire Group to envision and execute projects that cater to a diverse range of travellers. The focus remains on integrating world-class amenities into heritage-rich locations while maintaining the cultural and spiritual essence of these sites.

**Building a Legacy of Excellence** Since its inception in 2005, the Solitaire Group has established itself as a leading player in real estate and hospitali-

ty. From residential developments in emerging urban centres to luxury hotels in religious destinations, its portfolio reflects its commitment to innovation, sustainability, and excellence.

With the Indian government's ambitious push for infrastructure, tourism, and real estate reforms, the opportunities in religious realty are boundless. Indian leading players would continue this transformative journey, crafting spaces that offer both spiritual fulfilment and contemporary luxury. The focus is on delivering exceptional living experiences and fostering economic growth in the communities that are being served.

(The author is the founder and CEO of Solitaire Group. Views expressed are personal)



# MP logistics policy to drive growth: CM Adhikari, four others suspended from Bengal Assembly

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ BHOPAL**

Chief Minister Mohan Yadav stated that to strengthen the state's economy and attract investors participating in GIS, the Madhya Pradesh government has launched the Madhya Pradesh Logistics Policy-2025. The policy aims to reduce logistics costs and improve supply chain efficiency through innovative measures. Yadav emphasized that the primary goal of this policy is to develop an efficient, reliable, and strategically sustainable world-class logistics infrastructure in the state. By 2030, logistics costs will be reduced to align with global standards, making Madhya Pradesh an attractive destination for domestic and international businesses. The Madhya Pradesh Logistics Policy-2025 will play a pivotal role in the state's overall economic growth. It will position the state as a major logistics hub, attract investors, and boost trade. Over the coming years, the policy will elevate Madhya Pradesh's economy to new heights.

To ensure effective implementation, the government is focusing on reducing port turnaround time, improving supply chain efficiency, and introducing a PCS-One system for e-delivery orders, making logistics processes more streamlined and transparent. Additionally, dedicated Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) labs will be established to ensure compliance with safety and quality standards. Innovations like Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) doors will enhance security and expedite the movement of goods. The inclusion of a Unified Logistics Interface Platform (ULIP) will facilitate seamless data exchange across the logistics value chain. One of the policy's key innovations is the introduction of the Green Card Scheme, which will provide fast-track approvals to logistics operators adopting green transportation practices. To develop infrastructure

suitable for domestic and international logistics transportation, the state government is establishing over 20 cargo terminals, which will strengthen the logistics network. These terminals will be equipped with state-of-the-art facilities, ensuring smooth freight movement. Reduced transportation costs will increase profitability for businesses and attract higher investments in the state. A key component of Madhya Pradesh Logistics Policy-2025 is enhancing the state's export capacity. The policy includes provisions for the development of export parks, where developers will receive 50 per cent reimbursement on stamp duty and registration fees, Financial assistance up to Rs 40 crore or 50 per cent per acre for infrastructure development, and up to 25 per cent or Rs 25 crore financial aid for establishing common pre-processing facilities for exporters. The policy also promotes green industrialization by encouraging zero-liquid discharge waste management

systems and centralized waste management systems, with a 50 per cent reimbursement incentive. The policy focuses on increasing exporters' participation by Encouraging export diversification, Enhancing efficiency in export-oriented units, and Strengthening export-focused logistics infrastructure. Its objectives include boosting export volume, increasing the value of 'Made in Madhya Pradesh' products, and creating employment opportunities in the logistics sector. By reducing logistics costs, traders and entrepreneurs will directly benefit, leading to Job creation in warehouses, transportation, and logistics companies. It is a golden opportunity for domestic and international investors. The reduced logistics costs will provide better transportation and storage facilities for farmers' produce. This forward-looking policy is set to transform Madhya Pradesh into a logistics powerhouse, fostering economic growth, sustainability, and global competitiveness.

**SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA**

Following alleged unruly scenes inside the State Assembly Speaker Biman Bandyopadhyay on Monday suspended Bengal Opposition Leader Suwendu Adhikari and three other MLAs for the rest of the Budget Session or for 30 days "whichever is earlier," leading the entire battery of the saffron legislators to stage a walkout on the issue. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leadership said that if the Speaker would not withdraw his suspension then the party would boycott Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's speech in the House. Banerjee is scheduled to deliver her speech on Tuesday. "If there is no Opposition Leader in the House then, the BJP will boycott the Chief Minister," Adhikari said adding in that case he would deliver his speech

at the gate of the Assembly. The other legislators who were suspended are Agnimitra Paul, Bankim Ghosh and Biswanath Karik. The Opposition Leader subsequently said that Karik was suspended though he was not present in the scene. The Monday's fracas started after an adjournment motion brought by BJP MLA Agnimitra Paul to highlight the incidents of disruption of Sarswati Puja at many places in the State earlier this month. After Paul read out her speech the BJP demanded discussion on the matter alleging at many places the organisers had received threats for organising Saraswati Puja and in some places either they even had to perform the Pujas with police protection after obtaining order from the Calcutta High Court. When the Speaker disallowed the discussion the BJP MLAs

descended in the well shouting slogans and they even tore off the minutes, inside sources said. The Speaker subsequently suspended the four MLAs. This is the fourth time when Adhikari has been suspended. Referring to the disruption of Sarswati Puja -which organised throughout the State every year on Basant Panchami day - Adhikari referred to how the students of the Jogesh Chandra Chaudhuri Law College in South Kolkata had to perform the Puja with police protection which was obtained through an order of the Calcutta High Court. A former Trinamool Congress Chattr Parishad leader Shabir Ali had allegedly threatened the students of JCLC with dire consequences if they performed the Puja inside the college leading the students to move the High Court seeking police protection. A similar situation allegedly occurred

inside a school in South 24 Parganas where the headmaster of the school had to abandon the Puja after receiving threats from the local toughies. The BJP had been raising the issue for the past several days. A section of the TMC leadership however said that the faceoff in the JCLC had no communal angle as it was an affair between the two groups of the party's students' arm. "Shabir backed by a local MP wanted to control the affairs of the Puja himself while the rival group backed by another TMC leader wanted to retain its sway this led to the face-off," said a professor, adding "it is only about controlling the huge money that is raised from the Puja and has nothing to do with any communal angle. Meanwhile, the BJP is planning to take out processions against the Speaker's order, sources said.

## Jamia students boycott classes

**STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI**

Several students of Jamia Millia Islamia (JMI) boycotted classes on Monday in protest against the suspension of 17 students for participating in demonstrations against disciplinary action taken earlier against two PhD scholars. Supporting the students, CPI-ML Liberation MP from Bihar's Karakat, Raja Ram Singh, urged Jamia Millia Islamia (JMI) Vice Chancellor

Mazhar Asif to withdraw FIRs against students and remove the university's Chief Proctor for "illegally publishing personal details of students." The Left-affiliated All India Students' Association (AISA), which called for the boycott, accused the university of suppressing student activism. "Jamia administration may lock us out but cannot silence our resistance. Students stand united in the boycott against repression. We refuse to be muted," the student body said

in a statement. Protesting students marched from the Hygienic Canteen to the Office of the Dean of Student Welfare (DSW) and submitted a memorandum demanding the immediate revocation of the suspensions. "As the Dean of Students' Welfare, you are supposed to be concerned about the students' welfare. However, the incidents happening on campus against these 17 students do not align with that responsibility," the memorandum read.

The students' demand include revocation of the FIR, suspension orders, and disciplinary proceedings against all dissenting students; halting the issuance of show-cause notices to protesting students; and an immediate withdrawal of all previous show-cause notices related to student activism, it added. Meanwhile, in a letter to the VC, Singh wrote, "The Jamia administration has initiated disciplinary action against two students and suspended 17 others for exercising their democratic rights. Was it wrong to voice support for democracy and uphold Constitutional values?"

## Harjinder Singh Dhama steps down as SGPC president

**PTI ■ CHANDIGARH**

The president of Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC), Harjinder Singh Dhama, resigned from his post with immediate effect on Monday. Dhama's resignation came days after Akal Takht Jathedar Giani Raghbir Singh strongly condemned the dismissal of services of Giani Harpreet Singh as the jathedar of Damdama Sahib by the SGPC. Dhama said he is always committed to the Akal Takht, the highest temporal seat of Sikhs. Referring to a February 13 Facebook post of Jathedar Raghbir Singh on the termination of services of Giani Harpreet Singh, Dhama said he wrote that removing the latter was "highly con-

demnable" and "unfortunate." "I being 'pardhan' (president of SGPC) take responsibility and resign from the post on moral grounds with immediate effect," he said while addressing the media in Amritsar. Dhama also said he has written to the Akal Takht Jathedar to relieve him from his position in the seven-member committee formed to supervise the new membership drive of the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD). On February 13, Giani Raghbir Singh in a Facebook post condemned the dismissal of services of Harpreet Singh as the jathedar of Takht Sri Damdama Sahib in Bathinda. In the post, he said Giani Harpreet Singh's removal was "highly condemnable" and "unfortunate" which will

harm the independent existence of the 'Takht Sahibs'. On December 10, the SGPC had dismissed the services of Giani Harpreet Singh as the jathedar of Takht Sri Damdama Sahib in Bathinda. The decision was taken dur-

ing an executive committee meeting of the SGPC. The committee accepted a report by a three-member committee formed to probe the allegations against Giani Harpreet Singh in an 18-year-old domestic dispute matter.

## Earthquake in Delhi causes panic and tremors

**From page 1**

"The Delhi earthquake you just witnessed was around 4.0 on the Richter scale. That is not very high (quakes can go up to 6.0 and more) but you felt bigger tremors than ever before. Why? Because the epicenter is within Delhi itself. This is how quakes feel at the epicenter," he wrote on X. Delhi, which falls in Seismic Zone IV, is prone to moderate-to-strong earthquakes, making localised tremors more pronounced as the Experts noted that buildings, particularly high-rises, sway more due to their design, increasing the perceived intensity of shaking. Delhi is placed in seismic zone IV in

the seismic zoning map of India, the second highest in the country. The national capital region is exposed to moderate to high risk seismic activity due to Himalayan earthquakes such as the 7.5 magnitude Garhwal Himalaya quake in 1803, 6.8 magnitude Uttarkashi earthquake in 1991, 6.6 magnitude Chamoli earthquake in 1999, 7.8 magnitude Gorkha earthquake in 2015 and a few moderate earthquakes from the Hindukush region. Local earthquakes recorded in the region include 6.5 magnitude Delhi earthquake in 1720, 5 magnitude Mathura earthquake in 1842, 6.7 magnitude Bulandshahr earthquake in 1956 and 5.8 magnitude Moradabad earthquake in 1966.

## Gyanesh Kumar is the 26th CEC

**From page 1**

Addressing a press conference soon after the meeting, Congress leader Abhishek Singhvi said that by removing the Chief Justice of India from the selection committee, the government has made it clear that it wants control and not preserve the credibility of the Election Commission. Singhvi did not disclose anything on what transpired in the meeting apart from saying that Gandhi attended it. Singhvi said the case challenging the new act is pending before the Supreme Court, which has issued a notice, and the matter is now listed for next hearing on

February 19. It was just a matter of 48 hours and the government should have approached the apex court for an early hearing of the petition, he said. "It is our suggestion that the Central government adjourned this meeting until after the hearing and instruct its counsels to appear and assist the court so that the hearing may be an effective one. Only then, can a decision be taken in earnest," Singhvi said. AICC treasurer Ajay Maken, who also addressed the press conference, said, "The Congress believes that when the SC has indicated that they will hear the case on the constitution of the committee

on the 19th, this meeting should have been postponed." Singhvi said the essence of the Congress' stand is that the letter and spirit of the Constitution have to be followed. "It is necessary that a transparent, balanced, impartial decision is taken, which is in the public interest, and in the interest of democracy. Which can create a level-playing field, which is in the foundation of our republic. This is the stand of the Congress," he said. Singhvi referred to the Supreme Court judgment in the Anoop Baranwal case in which it said the committee to select the CEC and ECs should have the

Chief Justice of India along with the prime minister and the Leader of the Opposition in it. Quoting the judgment, he said the Election Commissioners, including the CEC, must be chosen not by the executive exclusively. "The executive has the right to form a law, but without understanding the spirit of the judgment, in a rush, within months, the Modi government brought a new law, which did just the opposite. It had provisions for selection totally by the executive," he said. He said the basic structure of the republic is that there should be an independent Election Commissioner, especially as

several allegations and counter-allegations have been made on the poll panel over the last two years. Kumar, a 1988-batch IAS officer from Kerala cadre, is the senior of the two commissioners on the three-member panel that was led by Rajiv Kumar till he demitted office on Monday. The other commissioner on the panel is Sukhbir Singh Sandhu, an officer from the Uttarakhand cadre. Kumar is likely to oversee conduct of the Bihar Assembly election later this year and the polls in Bengal, Assam, and Tamil Nadu next year. Kumar has worked with Union Home Minister Amit Shah before. He retired as

secretary in the Ministry of Cooperation, which comes under Amit Shah, on January 31, 2024. Before that, he also served as the secretary in the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs. And, in the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance government, he was posted to the Defence Ministry. Kumar holds a B.Tech degree in Civil Engineering from the Indian Institute of Engineering in Kanpur, and has also studied Business Finance from the Institute of Chartered Financial Analysts of India. Additionally, he has also studied Environmental Economics from Harvard University.

## SC to hear Places of Worship case in April

**From page 1**

The bench also indicated that it may not take up the pending scheduled petitions, heard earlier by a three-judge bench, during the day as it was sitting in a combination of two judges. "We might not be able to take it up," the CJ said when senior advocate Indira Jaising, appearing for a litigant, mentioned a fresh plea for hearing during the day. "There is a limit to which petitions can be filed. So many IAs (interim applications) have been filed... we might not be able to take it up," the CJ said, adding that a date may be given in March.

Samajwadi Party leader and Kairana MP Iqra Choudhary and the Congress Party, seeking effective implementation of the 1991 law, prohibits conversion of any place of worship and provides for the maintenance of the religious character of any place of worship as it existed on August 15, 1947. However, the dispute relating to Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid at Ayodhya was kept out of its purview. Muslim bodies like Jamiat Ulama-i-Hind seek strict implementation of the 1991 law to maintain communal harmony and to preserve the present status of mosques, sought to be reclaimed by Hindus on grounds that they were temples before invaders razed them. The Gyanvapi Mosque management committee, in its intervention plea, opposed several pending petitions that challenge the constitutional validity of the 1991 law. The mosque committee listed a series of contentious claims made over the years concerning various mosques and dargahs (shrines), including the Shahi Idgah Masjid in Mathura, the Quwwat-ul-Islam Mosque near Delhi's Qutub Minar, the Kamal Maula Mosque in Madhya Pradesh, and others. It, therefore, said the petitions challenging the Act were filed with "mischievous intent" to facilitate lawsuits against these religious sites, which the 1991 Act currently protected.

## UP school named after war hero renamed, locals protest

**From page 1**

In response to growing criticism, BSA Hemant Rao said: "Shaheed Abdul Hamid's name will soon be reinstated at the school's entrance, and it has already been inscribed on an external wall." However, locals and the martyr's family remain dissatisfied, insisting that his

name be prominently displayed on the main gate as well. "If the government truly respects our war heroes, they should ensure that their legacy is honored properly," said a local resident. The issue has now taken a political turn, with the Congress party strongly opposing the name change.

Uttar Pradesh Congress President Ajay Rai condemned the move in a Facebook post, calling it an "insult to the country's heroes" and vowing to fight against it. "The Yogi government has changed the name of a school that was dedicated to one of India's greatest warriors. This is unacceptable, and we will not

remain silent," he said. The party has announced a protest at Sarju Pandey Park, Kachheri, on February 17 at 1 PM. Congress leaders, including State Secretary Fashat Hussain, will participate in the demonstration, and a memorandum addressed to the Governor will be submitted to the District Magistrate.

## Student from Nepal dies by suicide at KIIT

**From page 1**

He suspected that another male student of the varsity was blackmailing his sister for which she committed suicide. KIIT in a statement said: "A Nepali student studying in the third year of B-Tech committed suicide in the hostel yesterday. It is suspected that the student was in a love affair with another student studying at KIIT. It is suspected that the student may have committed suicide due to some reason." The KIIT said the incident was immediately reported to the police. Bhubaneswar DCP Pinak Mishra said: "We have registered a case at Infocity Police Station based on the allegation that a male student abated her suicide. The accused student is in police custody and subjected to interrogation. The police have seized the mobile phone, laptop and other gadgets of

the deceased woman. We are undertaking a scientific investigation into the matter." The DCP appealed to the students not to take the law into their own hands and to maintain peace. Many students from Nepal assembled on the KIIT campus on Sunday night and staged demonstration demanding justice. Since there was mild tension among the Nepali students studying at KIIT over the girl's death, the university authorities had a discussion with the agitating foreign students. "Keeping in view the situation, the Nepal students have been sent to their respective homes. The situation presently remained calm," the KIIT said. Two platoons of police force were deployed to maintain law and order situation on the campus. Additional Commissioner of Police (ACP) Prakash

Chandra Pal said that the police were maintaining law and order both inside and outside the campus. "The police have sealed the deceased girl's room and kept the body at the mortuary till the arrival of her parents," a varsity official said. Two busloads of Nepali students were dropped at the Cuttack Railway Station on Monday. "We were told to vacate hostel room and dropped at the railway station. We had to appear for examination on February 28..." a male student told reporters at the Cuttack railway station. Meanwhile, students from other states alleged that they were not allowed to go outside the hostel by private security guards of the varsity. The KIIT authorities refused to comment on the allegations made by the students that they were not allowed to go outside the hostel.

## Rail minister promises action...

**From page 1**

It was believed to be normal at any given day but when media and social media platforms shared videos of stampede then the Chairman Railway Board accompanied by top officers reached the New Delhi Railway Station to realise the fact which turned out to be major blot on national transporter amidst the progress of Mahakumbh. The Rail Minister who has been on line of fire in last two days following the incident, said first on the agenda is creating holding area at 60 stations with high footfalls. He said the railways have identified 60 stations across the country to make permanent or temporary holding areas outside the station to regulate the flow of passengers to the platforms. "A separate crowd management manual and raising awareness among

passengers to not sit at stairs are among the measures being taken to prevent untoward incidents," Vaishnav said. New Delhi, Patna, Surat, Bengaluru, Coimbatore are some of them identified for creating a holding area to manage the flow of passengers inside the station. They will be allowed to enter the platform according to departure of their trains so that the station areas don't get overcrowded. "A separate crowd management manual and raising awareness among passengers to not sit at stairs are among the measures being taken to prevent untoward incidents," Vaishnav said. He cited the example of stations in Prayagraj — where the Maha Kumbh is taking place — where such holding areas have been created and flow of passengers regulated successfully so far. Vaishnav also said a separate crowd management manual will be

created by merging all existing provisions, and a Standard Operating Procedure will be developed to handle passenger rush during festivals and special occasions. "We will have to make a comprehensive manual for crowd management," the railway minister said. Officials say the current crowd management norms are robust and efficient, but they are scattered in various circulars and communications of the Railways, bringing them at one place in a form of manual will help a lot. According to the minister, raising awareness among passengers to not sit at stairs or at any place that can block the free movement of other travellers can also help in a big way to prevent incidents like the one which occurred at the New Delhi Railway Station.



# Top Russian officials will hold talks with US in Saudi Arabia on Tuesday

## Zelensky says Ukraine won't take part in talks this week as they would 'yield no results'

AP ■ MOSCOW

Top Russian officials will hold talks with US counterparts on restoring ties, negotiating a peaceful settlement to the war in Ukraine and preparing a meeting between Russian President Vladimir Putin and US President Donald Trump, the Kremlin said Monday.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said that Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and Putin's foreign affairs adviser Yuri Ushakov will fly to the Saudi capital later in the day to take part in the talks set for Tuesday. US Secretary of State Marco Rubio will lead the US

delegation. Trump's envoy Steve Witkoff told Fox News Sunday that he and national security adviser Mike Waltz also will take part in the talks.

Peskov said the talks will be primarily focused on "restoring the entire complex of US-Russian relations, as well as preparing possible talks on the Ukrainian settlement and organizing a meeting of the two presidents."

Speaking to journalists on a conference call from the United Arab Emirates on Monday, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said his country won't take part in the talks this week, adding that they would "yield no results,"

given the absence of any Ukrainian officials. European governments have also demanded a role.

The talks follow last week's telephone call between Trump and Putin in which Trump said they "agreed to have our respective teams start negotiations immediately." The call upended years of US policy, ending the isolation of Moscow over its Feb. 24, 2022, invasion of Ukraine. After the call with Putin, Trump phoned Zelensky to inform him about their conversation.

Trump on Sunday told reporters that Zelensky "will be involved," but did not elaborate. Zelensky said he would

travel to Turkey on Monday and to Saudi Arabia on Wednesday, but that his trip to the Arab nation was unrelated to planned US-Russia talks there on Tuesday.

Andriy Yermak, a top Zelensky adviser, said earlier Sunday there was no possibility of Ukrainian and Russian representatives meeting directly in the immediate future. In a Telegram post, Yermak said the Ukrainians weren't planning to do so "until we develop a plan" to end the war and bring about a "just peace."

Speaking on Fox News Channel's "Sunday Morning Futures" program, Witkoff said he and Waltz will be "having

meetings at the direction of the president," and hope to make "some really good progress with regard to Russia-Ukraine." In his TV interview, Witkoff didn't directly respond to a question about whether Ukraine would have to give up a "significant portion" of its territory as part of any negotiated settlement.

"Those are details, and I'm not dismissive of the details, they're important. But I think the beginning here is trust-building. It's getting everybody to understand that this war does not belong continuing, that it should end. That's what the president has directed us to do," he said.

# Israel says drone strike kills Hamas chief in Lebanon

AP ■ JERUSALEM

An Israeli drone strike in southern Lebanon on Monday killed the head of the militant Hamas group in the country, Israel's military said.

The strike came on the eve of the deadline for Israel's full withdrawal from southern Lebanon under the ceasefire agreement that ended the 14-month war between Israel and Hezbollah.

The Israeli military said it killed Mohammad Shaheen, the head of Hamas' operations department in Lebanon. The army accused Shaheen of "recently planning terror attacks, directed and funded by Iran, from Lebanese territory against the citizens of the state of Israel."

Footage circulating online showed a car engulfed in flames. The strike occurred near a Lebanese army checkpoint and Sidon's municipal sports stadium.

The original withdrawal deadline was in late January, but under pressure from Israel, Lebanon agreed to extend it to February 18. It remains unclear whether Israeli troops will complete their withdrawal by Tuesday.

Since the ceasefire, Israel has continued airstrikes in southern and eastern Lebanon, saying it is targeting military sites containing missiles and combat equipment. Israel and Lebanon have exchanged accusations of violating the ceasefire agreement.

Meanwhile, Israel issued a tender for the construction of nearly 1,000 additional settler homes in the occupied West Bank, an anti-settlement watchdog said Monday.

Peace Now says the development of 974 new housing units would allow the population of the Efrat settlement to expand by 40% and further block the development of the nearby Palestinian city of Bethlehem.



Palestinian children walk amid the rubble of homes, destroyed by the Israeli army's air and ground offensive against Hamas in in Bureij refugee camp, central Gaza Strip on Monday. AP/PTI

# Ukraine, Europe worry about being sidelined

AP ■ WASHINGTON

President Donald Trump's approach to ending Russia's war against Ukraine has left European allies and Ukrainian officials worried they are being largely sidelined by the new US administration as Washington and Moscow plan direct negotiations.

The outreach comes after comments by top Trump advisors this past week, including Vice-President JD Vance, raised new concerns in Kyiv and other European capitals that the Republican administration is intent on quick resolution to the conflict with minimum input from Europe.

"Decades of the old relationship between Europe and America are ending," Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky in an address at the Munich Security Conference. White House officials on Sunday pushed back against the notion that Europe has been left out of the conversation.

During his visit to Munich and Paris, Vance held talks with French President Emmanuel Macron, British Foreign Secretary David Lammy, German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier, NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte as well as Zelensky. "Now they may not like some of this sequencing that is going on in these negotiations but I have to push back on this ... notion that they aren't being consulted," Waltz said.

"They absolutely are and at the end of the day, though, this is going to be under President Trump's leadership that we get this war to an end," Waltz said.

Rubio, who was in Israel on Sunday before heading to Saudi Arabia, said the US is taking a careful approach as it reengages with Moscow after the Biden administration's clampdown on contacts with the Kremlin following the February 2022 invasion.

Trump spoke by phone with Russian President Vladimir Putin last week and the two lead-

ers agreed to begin high-level talks on ending the war. They were initially presented as two-way but Trump later affirmed that Ukraine would have a seat — though he did not say at what stage. "I don't want to foreclose the opportunity to end a conflict that's already cost the lives of hundreds of thousands and continues every single day to be increasingly a war of attrition on both sides," he said.

Heather Conley, a deputy assistant secretary of state for Central Europe during Republican president George W. Bush's administration, said that with Trump's current approach to Moscow, the US appears to be "seeking to create a new international approach based on a modern-day concert of great powers."

"As in the 19th and early 20th centuries, it is only for the great powers to decide the fate of nations and to take — either by purchase or force — that which strengthens the great powers' economic and security interests," Conley said.

There is some debate inside the administration about its developing approach to Moscow, with some more in favour of a rapid rapprochement and others wary that Putin is looking to fray the Euro-Atlantic alliance as he aims to reclaim Russian status and wield greater influence on the continent, according to the US official who spoke on condition of anonymity.

The anticipated Saudi talks also come amid tension over Trump's push to get the Ukrainians to agree to give the US access to Ukraine's deposits of rare earth minerals in exchange for some USD 66 billion in military aid that Washington has provided Kyiv since the start of the war, as well as future defence assistance.

Zelensky, who met on Friday with Vance and other senior US officials in Munich, said he had directed Ukraine's minister to not sign off, at least for now.

Zelensky said in an interview the deal as presented by the US was too focused on American

interests and did not include security guarantees for Ukraine. The White House called Zelensky's decision "short-sighted," and argued that a rare-earth deal would tie Ukraine closer to the US.

European officials were also left unsettled by some of Vance's remarks during his five-day visit to Paris and Munich last week in which he lectured them on free speech and illegal migration on the continent.

Throughout Europe, officials are now looking to recalibrate their approach in the face of the Trump administration's unfolding Ukraine strategy.

Macron will convene top European countries in Paris on Monday for an emergency "working meeting" to discuss next steps for Ukraine, French Foreign Minister Jean-Noel Barrot said on Sunday.

"A wind of unity is blowing over Europe, as we perhaps have not felt since the COVID period," Barrot told public broadcaster France-Info.

# US 'gravely backpedaled' on Taiwan, says China

AP ■ BEIJING

China's Foreign Ministry took issue Monday with a revised US government fact sheet that removed a line on American opposition to independence for Taiwan.

The United States has "gravely backpedaled" on its position on Taiwan and sent the wrong message to "separatist forces" on the island, ministry spokesperson Guo Jiakun said.

Taiwan and China split in 1949 during the civil war that brought the communists to power in China. The defeated Nationalists fled to Taiwan and set up a rival government there. Taiwan has its own government and military but has never declared formal independence from China.

"We urge the US to ... stop emboldening and supporting Taiwan independence and avoid further damaging China-US relations and the peace and stability of the Taiwan Strait," Guo said when asked about the revision at a daily media briefing. The Taiwan Strait is a narrow waterway that separates the island of Taiwan from China's east coast.

The US State Department removed the phrase "we do not support Taiwan independence" from the fact sheet last week. The document on America's relations with the self-governing island is posted on its website.

Taiwan's government wel-

comed the move, though a statement sent to The Associated Press on Monday did not mention the language specifically.

"The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has noted that the US State Department updated the Current State of US-Taiwan Relations" page ... with text that is positive and friendly toward us, reflecting the close and amicable partnership between Taiwan and the United States," it said.

It's not the first time the State Department has removed the phrase. It did so in May 2022 but restored it a few weeks later after a strong protest from China.

The government in Taiwan is worried that Trump might not be as steadfast a supporter of the island as his predecessor, former President Joe Biden.

The US does not recognise Taiwan as a country but is its strongest backer and biggest arms supplier.

Trump said last week that Taiwan, a leading maker of semiconductors, had taken the chip business away from the US and that he wants it to come back. China, which says that Taiwan must come under its control, has stepped up military exercises around the island of 23 million people in recent years. The US government fact sheet says that it expects "differences to be resolved by peaceful means, free from coercion, in a manner acceptable to the people on both sides."

# Trump admn tries to bring back fired N-weapons workers in DOGE reversal

AP ■ WASHINGTON

The Trump administration has halted the firings of hundreds of federal employees who were tasked with working on the nation's nuclear weapons programmes, in an about-face that has left workers confused and experts cautioning that DOGE's blind cost cutting will put communities at risk.

Three US officials who spoke to AP said up to 350 employees at the National Nuclear Security Administration were abruptly laid off late on Thursday, with some losing access to email before they'd learned they were fired, only to try to enter their offices on Friday morning to find they were locked out. The officials spoke on the condition of anonymity for fear of retaliation.

One of the hardest hit offices was the Pantex Plant near Amarillo, Texas, which saw about 30 per cent of the cuts. Those employees work on reassembling warheads, one of the most sensitive jobs across the nuclear weapons enterprise, with the highest levels of clearance.

The hundreds let go at NNSA were part of a DOGE purge across the Department of Energy that targeted about 2,000 employees.

"The DOGE people are coming in with absolutely no

knowledge of what these departments are responsible for," said Daryl Kimball, executive director of the Arms Control Association, referencing Elon Musk's Department of Government Efficiency team.

"They don't seem to realise that it's actually the department of nuclear weapons more than it is the Department of Energy," By late Friday night, the agency's acting director, Teresa Robbins, issued a memo rescinding the firings for all but 28 of those hundreds of fired staff members.

"This letter serves as formal notification that the termination decision issued to you on February 13, 2025, has been rescinded, effective immediately," said the memo, which was obtained by AP. The accounts from the three officials contradict an official statement from the Department of Energy, which said fewer than 50 National Nuclear Security Administration staffers were let go, calling them "probationary employees" who "held primarily administrative and clerical roles".

But that wasn't the case. The firings prompted one NNSA senior staffer to post a warning and call to action.

"This is a pivotal moment. We must decide whether we are truly committed to leading on the world stage or if we are content with undermining the

very systems that secure our nation's future," deputy division director Rob Plonski posted to LinkedIn. "Cutting the federal workforce responsible for these functions may be seen as reckless at best and adversely opportunistic at worst."

While some of the Energy Department employees who were fired dealt with energy efficiency and the effects of climate change, issues not seen as priorities by the Trump administration, many others dealt with nuclear issues, even if they didn't directly work on weapons programmes. This included managing massive radioactive waste sites and ensuring the material there doesn't further contaminate nearby communities.

That includes the Savannah River National Laboratory in Jackson, South Carolina; the Hanford Nuclear Site in Washington state, where workers secure 177 high-level waste tanks from the site's previous work producing plutonium for the atomic bomb; and the Oak Ridge Reservation in Tennessee, a Superfund contamination site where much of the early work on the Manhattan Project was done, among others.

US Rep Marcy Kaptur of Ohio and US Sen Patty Murray of Washington, both Democrats, called the firings last week "utterly callous and dangerous".

The NNSA staff who had been reinstated could not all be reached after they were fired, and some were reconsidering whether to return to work, given the uncertainty created by DOGE.

Many federal employees who had worked on the nation's nuclear programmes had spent their entire careers there, and there was a wave of retirements in recent years that cost the agency years of institutional knowledge.

But it's now in the midst of a major USD 750 billion nuclear weapons modernisation effort — including new land-based intercontinental ballistic missiles, new stealth bombers and new submarine-launched warheads. In response, the labs have aggressively hired over the past few years: In 2023, 60 per cent of the workforce had been there five years or less.

Edwin Lyman, director of nuclear power safety at the Union of Concerned Scientists, said the firings could disrupt the day-to-day workings of the agency and create a sense of instability over the nuclear programme both at home and abroad.

"I think the signal to US adversaries is pretty clear: throw a monkey wrench in the whole national security apparatus and cause disarray," he said. "That can only benefit the adversaries of this country."

# Dissanayake govt unveils first budget, projects 5 pc growth for Sri Lanka

PTI ■ COLOMBO

The Sri Lankan economy is expected to grow at 5 per cent in 2025, President Anura Dissanayake said Monday while presenting the budget for this year.

This is the first full-year budget presented by the National People's Power (NPP) government, which came to power in November last year.

Introducing the budget, Dissanayake said a budget is a "reflection of the government's approach to building the economy and overall policy."

He added that this year's budget intends to set a foundation of an economy where "all citizens are active participants, active stakeholders, and active beneficiaries," news portal Adaderana.lk reported.

"We expect the 2025 economic growth to be around 5 per cent," said Dissanayake, also the island nation's Finance Minister.

He asserted that all fiscal measures would be directed towards the commencement of repaying the external debt from 2028.

"...Growth in non-debt creating inflows along with robust economic growth and a primary budget surplus of 2.3 per cent of GDP will ensure Sri Lanka is well placed to meet the gradual increase in debt service payments from 2028 onwards," the report quoted the president as saying.

Last year, under then-president Ranil Wickremesinghe, Sri Lanka received capital grace periods on bilateral loan payments until 2028.

Dissanayake also said a budget deficit of 6.7 per cent of the GDP or SLR 2.2 trillion was expected in 2025, down from the previous year's 6.8 per cent.

In line with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) programme targets, tax revenue is expected to be increased to 15 per cent of the GDP in



2025, he said.

Dissanayake said the government would prioritise digitising government services and would move towards a cashless economy.

Despite his pre-election statements to review the IMF programme of his predecessor Wickremesinghe, he has continued to steer the economy within the global lender's reforms.

Since the IMF and Sri Lanka entered a USD 2.9 billion bailout in March 2022, three tranches of over USD 330 million have been disbursed. The fourth tranche of the four-year facility is expected to be materialised soon after the IMF executive board's approval.

The president also announced a phased wage hike for state sector employees while presenting the budget.

"We propose to increase the minimum monthly basic salary from SLR 24,250 to 40,000 by 15,750. The current ad-hoc interim allowance and special allowance will be integrated into the basic salary giving a net increase of SLR 8,250 in the minimum salary," he said.

"Of the total net salary increase, SLR 5,000 and 30 per cent of the balance amount will be paid starting from April 2025, with the remaining 70 per cent being paid in equal portions beginning in January 2026 and January 2027," he said.

# Downloads of DeepSeek's AI apps paused in South Korea over privacy concerns

AP ■ SEOUL

DeepSeek, a Chinese artificial intelligence startup, has temporarily paused downloads of its chatbot apps in South Korea while it works with local authorities to address privacy concerns, according to South Korean officials on Monday.

South Korea's Personal Information Protection Commission said DeepSeek's apps were removed from the local versions of Apple's App Store and Google Play on Saturday evening and that the company agreed to work with the agency to strengthen privacy protections before relaunching the apps.

The action does not affect users who have already downloaded DeepSeek on their phones or use it on personal computers. Nam Seok, director of the South Korean commission's investigation division, advised South Korean users of DeepSeek to delete the app from their devices or avoid entering per-

sonal information into the tool until the issues are resolved.

Many South Korean government agencies and companies have either blocked DeepSeek from their networks or prohibited employees from using the app for work, amid worries that the AI model was gathering too much sensitive information. The South Korean privacy commission, which began reviewing DeepSeek's services last month, found that the company lacked transparency about third-party data transfers and potentially collected excessive personal information, Nam said.

Nam said the commission did not have an estimate on the number of DeepSeek users in South Korea. A recent analysis by Wiseapp Retail found that DeepSeek was used by about 1.2 million smartphone users in South Korea during the fourth week of January, emerging as the second-most-popular AI model behind ChatGPT.



Canada's Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Britain's Prince Harry, the Duke of Sussex, attend the indoor rowing competition at the 2025 Invictus Games, in Vancouver, British Columbia. AP/PTI



# Profit booking leading FIIs to sell Indian equities: FM

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Seeking to assuage concerns over Foreign Institutional Investors (FII) selling Indian equities lately, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Monday attributed the action to profit booking. Speaking to reporters in the financial capital, Sitharaman said the Indian economy is one where the investors are bagging better returns which leads to profit booking. "FIIs also go out when they are able to or in a position to book profits. Indian market today, Indian economy today, has an environment in which investments are also yielding good returns and profit booking is also happening," she said. It can be noted that FIIs have sold over ₹1.56 Lakh Crore of stocks since October last year, including nearly ₹1 Lakh Crore



Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman addresses a press conference, in Mumbai

PTI

in 2025 itself, which has led to a sharp correction on the indices and wiping out investor wealth. Finance Secretary Tuhin Kanta Pandey said FIIs are not moving from one emerging market to other, and added that

in times of global uncertainties like the one being witnessed right now, they tend to go back to the country of origin, which is mostly the US. He also hinted that these shifts may be temporary, and added

that Indian markets are resilient. Explaining that apart from demand-supply issues, growth prospects also influence investor behavior, Pandey said India remains the fastest growing large economy and

added that the recently announced Budget has a slew of growth-oriented measures. "We have faced global headwinds in the past, and will continue to face them. But I think India is in a strong position to handle it," he added. Ajay Seth, Secretary of the Department of Economic Affairs, dismissed any idea of a government interference in the market because of the heavy sell-offs, stating that such a move can be carried out only if there is any evidence of market failure, which is not the case at present. Seth said equities do not function on government policies alone, and added that foreign investors go to developed or bigger markets in periods of uncertainties. He said that while India has shown resilience when it comes to world events in parts, it is not fully de-coupled either.

# Experts intrigued by inclusion of electoral bonds in Income Tax Bill

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Experts are intrigued by the new Income Tax Bill, 2025 retaining provisions related to electoral bonds, which were rendered unconstitutional by the Supreme Court last year, saying it could be because of legislative oversight or the government's intention to bring it back in some other form. Electoral bonds have been mentioned in the new Income Tax Bill's Schedule VIII which deals with 'Income not to be included in the total income of political parties and electoral trusts'. In a judgement passed on February 15 last year, the Supreme Court had scrapped the Centre's electoral bonds scheme of anonymous political funding, calling it "unconstitutional" as it was "violative" of the right to freedom of speech and expression and right to information.

Under the existing Income Tax Act, 1961, donations received from companies and individuals through electoral bonds are exempt in the hands of political parties. The government has brought in a new Income Tax Bill to replace the 64-year old I-T Act. The 622-page Bill is a simplified version of the existing Act which has become complicated over the years because of over 4,000 amendments. About the electoral bond related provisions in the new I-T Bill, AMRG and associates senior partner Rajat Mohan said the mention of electoral bond provisions in the new Income Tax Bill could be because of a legislative oversight, or a deliberate move to keep the door open for a modified version of the scheme in the future. "While the Supreme Court had strong and justified grounds for striking down

the scheme, the concerns it highlighted can be addressed through structured dialogue and expert consultations. The government still retains the legislative authority to reintroduce a revised political donation framework, provided it aligns with constitutional principles and ensures transparency in electoral funding," he said. Mohan said mentioning of the electoral bond in the new Bill may be a strategic decision by policymakers to leave room for future electoral financing reforms. Shardul Amarchand Mangaldas and Co Partner Rohit Garg said the changes in the new income tax bill are merely structural in nature. There have been no major changes in the substantive provisions and the charging sections. Every provision which was not rendered obsolete has been carried forward into the new Act.

# IPO-bound NSDL profit jumps 30 per cent

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

National Securities Depository Limited (NSDL) on Monday reported a 30 per cent rise in its consolidated net profit to ₹85.8 Crore for three months ended December 2024. The depository registered ₹66.09 Crore profit in the year-ago period. The total income rose 16.2 per cent to ₹391.21 Crore in the October-December quarter of the current financial year (FY25) against ₹336.67 Crore in the same quarter preceding fiscal. NSDL said in a statement. For the nine months ended December 2024, NSDL posted a 32.6 per cent year-on-year growth in net profit to ₹259.82 Crore and a 13.3 per cent year-on-year increase in total income to ₹1,141.4 Crore. NSDL is India's first securities depository to reach ₹500 Lakh Crore (₹6 Trillion) in value of assets held in custody in September 2024. In October, NSDL received markets regulator Sebi's go-

ahead to launch an initial public offering (IPO). The proposed IPO is a complete offer for sale (OFS) of more than 5.72 Crore equity shares by shareholders, including National Stock Exchange of India (NSE), State Bank of India (SBI), and HDFC Bank, as per the draft red herring prospectus (DRHP). Since the public issue is completely an OFS, NSDL will not receive any proceeds from the IPO. NSDL is a SEBI-registered infrastructure institution offering a wide range of products and services to the financial and securities markets in India. Following the introduction of the Depositories Act in 1996, NSDL pioneered the dematerialisation of securities in India in November 1996. This will become the country's second publicly traded depository to list on the bourse, after Central Depository Services (CDSL), which got listed on NSE in 2017.

# Udaan secures \$75 million in funding round

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Online business-to-business platform Udaan has closed a Series G equity funding round of \$75 Million, led by M and G Plc, according to people in the know. Company Co-Founder and CEO Vaibhav Gupta announced the round's closure to employees on Monday, and mentioned that the company is in advanced discussions to close an additional equity round of \$25 Million from potential investors in the "coming quarter". The Series G funding round, led by M and G Plc and supported by existing investors like Lightspeed Venture Partners, comes after a \$340 Million fundraise in December 2023. A query to the company did not elicit any response till the filing of this story. Udaan intends to use the newly acquired capital to improve customer experience, expand its market reach, strengthen partnerships with vendors, and bolster long-term capabilities in supply chain



and credit, sources said. Last month, The National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) gave a green light for Udaan to merge its multiple business entities into one - Hiveloop Ecommerce Pvt Ltd. The unification of its business under a single umbrella strengthens Udaan's operating model as it prepares for a potential IPO in 2026. The company is on track to achieving profitability, with

a 65 per cent revenue growth and over 70 per cent increase in daily transacting buyers, the sources said. Founded in 2016, Udaan enables technology-based supply chain and logistics operations, focusing on B2B trade. It operates across diverse categories, including FMCG, staples, fruits and vegetables, and pharma. It claims to hold about 70 per cent market share in India.

# Airtel completes landing of SEA-ME-WE-6 submarine cable

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Bharti Airtel on Monday said it has completed the landing of the new Southeast Asia-Middle East-West Europe-6 or SMW6 (SEA-ME-WE 6) submarine cable system in Chennai. The company recently landed the SEA-ME-WE 6 cable in Mumbai on December 30, 2024. "The cable landing, both in Mumbai and Chennai, will be fully integrated with Airtel's data centre arm, Nxttra by Airtel, at its large facilities in the respective cities with an aim to enable global hyperscalers and businesses in the country to seamlessly access international connectivity and data centre services," Bharti Airtel said in a release. These cable landings were completed by SubCom, a leading supplier of subsea fibre optic cable data systems responsible for the engineering, manufacture and installation of SEA-ME-WE-6. Cable landing stations connect submarine cable systems with

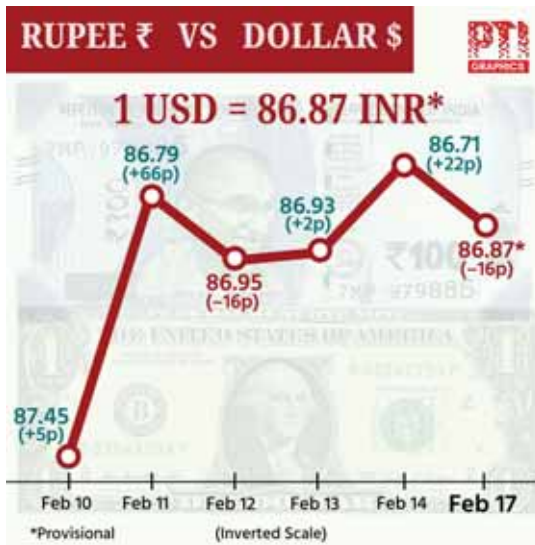
land-based networks. According to the release, the 21,700 route kilometres (Rkm) submarine cable system connects India to Singapore and France (Marseille) crossing Egypt through terrestrial cables. With this, Airtel has further enhanced its network presence with diversified capacity in the submarine cable system, globally. Sharat Sinha, Director and CEO of Airtel Business, said this new investment and milestone would further improve the company's secure, diverse and scalable global network. "We are delighted to further strengthen our global connectivity by landing one of the largest cable systems into our facilities. This complements our existing network strength of 400,000Rkms across 50 countries," Sinha said, adding that the move underlines Bharti Airtel's commitment to address Digital India's growing demand for global connectivity and data with additional routes, diversity

and capacity. As a key member of the consortium of the SEA-ME-WE-6 cable system, Airtel has invested in the core cable and has additionally co-built a private network of four Fiber Pairs between Singapore, Chennai and Mumbai. This cable system will bring a whopping 220 terabits per second (TBPs) of global capacity to India. Airtel's global network spans five continents. The company has investments in 34 cables globally with some of the recent ones, including two Africa, Southeast Asia-Japan Cable 2 (SJC2) and Equiano. Apart from these cables that connect India to key regions like Asia Pacific, Europe, the Middle East and US, Airtel's global subsea network investments also include large cable systems like i2i Cable Network (i2icn), Europe India Gateway (EIG), IMEWE, SEA-ME-WE-4, AAG, Unity, EASSY, Gulf Bridge International (GBI) and Middle East North Africa Submarine Cable (MENA Cable) among others.

# Rupee falls 16 paise against USD Sensex, Nifty eke out gains in volatile session

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The rupee depreciated 16 paise to close at 86.87 (provisional) against the US dollar on Monday, weighed down by significant foreign fund outflows and a recovery in the US dollar index from intraday lows. Forex traders said the Indian rupee is trading with a negative bias as foreign banks went on a dollar-buying spree and importers scrambled to secure dollars, as they feared further depreciation amid global uncertainty. At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 86.70 and touched the high of 86.68 against the greenback during intraday. It also touched the low of 86.88 before ending the session at 86.87 (provisional) against the dollar, logging a loss of 16 paise from its previous close. On Friday, the rupee extended its recovery and settled 21 paise higher at 86.71 against the US dollar. "Indian rupee declined today on a weak tone in the domestic markets and a recovery in the US dollar index from intraday lows. However, weak tone in crude oil prices and a decline in US



weigh on the rupee. However, any further decline in the US treasury yields or any further intervention by the RBI may support the rupee at lower levels," Choudhary added. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 0.14 per cent higher at 106.85. Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, rose 0.12 per cent to USD 74.83 per barrel in futures trade. In the domestic equity market, the 30-share BSE Sensex advanced 57.65 points, or 0.08 per cent, to settle at 75,996.86, while the Nifty rose 30.25 points, or 0.13 per cent, to 22,959.50 points. Foreign institutional investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth ₹4,294.69 Crore in the capital markets on a net basis on Friday, according to exchange data. Meanwhile, India's forex reserves jumped by \$7.654 Billion to \$638.261 Billion in the week ended February 7, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) said on Friday. This is the third consecutive week of a jump in the kitty, which had increased by \$1.05 Billion to \$630.607 Billion for the week ended January 31.

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Stock markets snapped the eight-day losing run in a volatile session on Monday with benchmark Sensex closing higher by 57 points on the back of value buying in blue-chip stocks HDFC Bank and Reliance Industries. Helped by flag-end buying, the 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 57.65 points or 0.08 per cent to settle at 75,996.86. During the day, the barometer tanked 644.45 points or 0.84 per cent to 75,294.76. The NSE Nifty rebounded 30.25 points or 0.13 per cent to 22,959.50. Reports that the US and India will meet soon to decide on broad contours of a trade agreement for reducing tariffs supported buying in metal, pharma and financial shares, analysts said. From the 30-share blue-chip pack, Bajaj Finserv, Power Grid, IndusInd Bank, Adani Ports, UltraTech Cement, HDFC Bank, Zomato and Tata Motors were among the major gainers. Mahindra and Mahindra,



Bharti Airtel, Tata Consultancy Services, Infosys, ICICI Bank, and ITC were the biggest laggards. Foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) offloaded equities worth ₹4,294.69 Crore on Friday, according to exchange data. A crisis at one entity should not lead anybody to cast doubts on the overall sector, he added, pointing out that it is the job of the regulator to take actions against errant entities. As per reports, 90 per cent of New India Co-Operative Bank's 1.3 Lakh depositors will have their entire sums covered under the DICGC.

Prashanth Tapse, Senior VP (Research), Mehta Equities Ltd, said. The BSE midcap gauge climbed 0.51 per cent, while smallcap index declined 0.56 per cent. Among BSE sectoral indices, healthcare jumped 1.14 per cent, energy (0.89 per cent), services (0.82 per cent), metal (0.76 per cent), power (0.75 per cent), oil and gas (0.74 per cent). Consumer Discretionary, industrials, IT, telecommunication, auto, tech and BSE Focused IT were among the laggards. In Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo and Shanghai settled in the positive territory while Hong Kong ended lower. European markets were trading higher. US markets ended mostly lower on Friday. Global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 0.21 per cent higher at USD 74.90 a barrel. The BSE benchmark dropped 199.76 points or 0.26 per cent to settle at 75,939.21 on Friday. The Nifty declined 102.15 points or 0.44 per cent to 22,929.25.

# Bajaj Consumer Care to acquire Vishal Personal Care

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

FMCG firm Bajaj Consumer Care Limited will acquire rival Vishal Personal Care, which owns hair and skin care brand Banjara's, at an enterprise value of ₹108.3 Crore to deepen its penetration in the South Indian market. The board of Bajaj Consumer Care Ltd (BCCCL), which operates in the personal care space and owns the Bajaj Almond Drops brand, in its meeting held last Friday, approved the acquisition 100 per cent stake in Vishal Personal Care in two tranches - a 49 per cent in the first followed by remaining 51 per cent in the second tranche. "The estimated transaction

value stands at ₹120 Crore, with an enterprise value of approximately ₹108.3 Crore," BCCCL said in a statement. This move aligns with BCCCL's vision to expand its footprint across Indian markets, leveraging the growing demand for natural and Ayurvedic personal care products, it added. Banjara's, founded in 1991 in Hyderabad, has a diversified product portfolio, including facial kits, herbal powders, aloe vera gels, shampoos, and hair care powders. Its products have a retail presence of over 70,000 outlets across the five South Indian markets through cosmetics stores, supermarkets, pharmacies, and grocery chains. "With the acquisition of Vishal Personal Care, BCCCL

will be leveraging Vishal's extensive distribution network to deepen their penetration in South India," BCCCL said, adding that it "will also introduce brand Banjara's products in its stronghold Hindi-speaking markets (HSM), effectively doubling its reach in both the regions." BCCCL Managing Director Jaideep Nandi said, "Acquisition of Vishal Personal Care Pvt Ltd is a strategic step in strengthening BCCCL's footprint in the five southern markets. The addition of Banjara's to our portfolio enhances our ability to serve the evolving consumers across India, while also complementing our product range for further expansion."

# Centre considering raising deposit insurance limit above ₹5 Lakh

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The government is "actively considering" raising the deposit insurance limit beyond the current ₹5 Lakh, a top finance ministry official said on Monday. Days after the New India Co-operative Bank scam came to light, Department of Financial Services Secretary M Nagaraju announced that such a proposal is in the works. "The point about increasing insurance. That is under active consideration. As and when the government approves, we will notify it," he said at a press conference in the presence of

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman. He, however, declined to speak on the crisis at New India Co-operative Bank, saying the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is seized of the matter. A deposit insurance claim gets triggered when a lender goes down, and over the years, the Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation (DICGC) has paid out such claims. The body collects premiums from banks for the cover it offers, and a majority of the claims have had to be done in case of cooperative lenders. It can be noted that following the PMC Bank scam, the

DICGC insured limit was raised to ₹5 Lakh from ₹1 Lakh in 2020. Economic Affairs Secretary Ajay Seth said the cooperative banking sector is well regulated under the RBI's watch and termed the overall health of the sector as strong. A crisis at one entity should not lead anybody to cast doubts on the overall sector, he added, pointing out that it is the job of the regulator to take actions against errant entities. As per reports, 90 per cent of New India Co-Operative Bank's 1.3 Lakh depositors will have their entire sums covered under the DICGC.

# IL&FS Group initiates ₹5,000 Crore interim payout to creditors

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The IL&FS Group on Monday said the company has initiated ₹5,000 Crore interim payout to eligible creditors as part of its ongoing resolution mandate. Post this payout, the company said that the aggregate debt discharged will stand at approximately ₹43,000 Crore, which is over 70 per cent of the estimated total debt resolution target pegged at ₹61,000 Crore. "IL&FS Group companies have initiated an interim distribution of ₹5,000 Crore

of ₹3,500 Crore of Infrastructure Investment Trust (InvIT) units and ₹1,500 Crore in cash to eligible creditors as part of the Group's ongoing resolution efforts," the statement said. The interim distribution is largely being initiated by three holding companies - Infrastructure Leasing and Financial Services (IL&FS), IL&FS Financial Services (IFIN), and IL&FS Transportation Networks (INTNL) - that collectively hold the majority of the Group's debt and nests large creditors and public funds.



# India hope for Shami's wrist magic to reclaim Champions Trophy

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Mohammed Shami's right hand has more sleight than a magician. A simple cock of his wrist can outfox the best batters in the world. But can he unlock the sorcery and help India reclaim the ICC Champions Trophy (CT) after 12 years? The fans will certainly expect Shami to hit his strides straightaway in the marquee event because India's primary strike weapon Jasprit Bumrah has been ruled out due to an injury. But there are multiple concerns as well about Shami's readiness for an event of this magnitude. India start their Champions Trophy campaign on February 20 against Bangladesh in Dubai. The 34-year-old is coming back from an injury. Even though he has played a few matches at various levels and formats since his re-entry into cricket late last year, delivering in a high-pressure tournament is an altogether different proposition. Another reason for the trepidation surrounding Shami is the absence of Bumrah, his trusted ally in the last six years or so at the other end. In the Champions Trophy, Shami

is all set to partner Arshdeep Singh. But for all his skills and promise, Arshdeep is not yet at Bumrah's level. **So, can Shami drag the train forward all by himself?** Former India pacer Laxmipathy Balaji found no reason to believe otherwise. "Actually, he had out-bowled Bumrah in the 2019 (50-over World Cup) and in the last World Cup (2023). Bumrah is the champion bowler across formats. But Shami has experience and, before Bumrah's arrival, it was Shami who carried India's attack all through," Balaji, now a reputed pace bowling coach, said. Bumrah's unavailability makes it imperative for Shami to strike upfront consistently. Balaji underlined that factor. "I think it's very important. If India has to do well, then Shami has to come good with the new ball. The kind of impact he can make in his first six overs with the new ball, it will play a crucial role for India. "Old ball is anyway... It is a defensive game now. If he can make early inroads regularly that will give a huge booster to India," he added.



But can he find his optimal and ideal running speed, because Shami's effectiveness totally depends on his rhythm. Balaji thought it was not a task beyond Shami. "Since that (ankle) injury has happened, there was a little bit of slowness, maybe. It's natural. But there is nothing you can do about it. It's part of any sports person's career. "He has the experience to get over it and he will do it as he bowls more. It's just about accepting the (physical) condition and continuing his best practices," he said.

However, Shami's duty will not be just restricted to taking wickets, as the senior bowler will also have to guide understudies like Arshdeep and Harshit Rana during the course of the Champions Trophy. Balaji felt the body of work that Shami has built over the last 12 years makes him an ideal candidate for it. "Shami is the leader of the pack right now. I mean, he has been the leader of the pack for a long time now. If you see what Shami has done in 12 years of cricket and, especially, in Test cricket, it has been humongous. "Now, if he starts striking with the new ball the confidence it gives to other bowlers will be huge," he said. It could be a blessing for Shami that India is playing their matches in Dubai, a venue where pacers found appreciable help in the past. "He keeps attacking the stumps, a quality that is very critical in a place like Dubai, where batsmen may get a little bit more assistance," said Balaji. How does Shami manage to be so effective with the new ball? "Shami has one of the best wrist positions in the game, helping him bring all of his variations. See,

conditions in Dubai will more or less be similar to India, so he just needs to follow his methods there," he added. **So, what are those methods?** "What Shami does is hit the seam and move the ball off the deck. It is dangerous as batsmen will not be able to guess easily which way the ball is going to move. "It also brings into the equation the LBWs and clean bowled dismissals. The away movement ensures that slip cordon too will be in the mix," said Balaji. "And he also bowls closer to the stumps, which allows him to explore those subtle angles. So, he will always be among the wickets," he added. But Shami will have another reason to go full tilt in the Champions Trophy. Despite achieving so much in his career, the Bengal man is yet to win a global trophy, the status brag for any cricketer. And already closer to the dog days of his career, Shami might not get another chance to do it either. It might give him that extra dose of motivation to run in hard in Dubai heat, snap his wrists, before batsmen walk out with a confused stare at the splayed stumps.



## Geraint Thomas to retire from cycling

PTI ■ LONDON

Geraint Thomas, the former Tour de France champion who also won gold medals in track cycling for Great Britain at the Olympic Games in 2008 and '12, announced Monday that this will be his final year as a professional. Thomas, a loyal teammate with a tremendous appetite for victory who transformed into a leader in his own right over his almost two-decade career, said he will focus on the Tour this summer with Ineos Grenadiers. Aged 38, Thomas told the BBC that he will ride in support of the team's ambitions and "maybe try to win a stage but just enjoy the race" that he won in 2018. "Since I was a kid I dreamt of riding the Tour and being part of the Olympics and winning was obviously a dream as well, but to achieve that was just nuts," he told BBC Breakfast. "I think now the decision is official, you do start to reflect because when you're in it, it's just one thing after the next, year after year, so you don't really appreciate it. I guess at the time you enjoy it but I don't think you sit back and reflect and think, so there will be a bit of that this year." For a long time, Thomas had a reputation as a party boy, always up for a few pints of beer while watching a rugby match. But his longevity at the highest level speaks volumes about his

dedication and balanced lifestyle. "He is a true fighter," said Dave Brailsford, the man who masterminded Britain's successes at the Olympics and Tour de France. Growing up on the outskirts of Cardiff, Wales, Thomas started bike racing at 10, and his exceptional qualities did not remain unnoticed for long. "I first saw him when he was about 13 or 14 and he joined me at 17," recalled Rod Ellingworth, the performance director at Team Sky when Thomas won the Tour, who also trained him as a British team coach. "You could see straightaway he was just flying round the track, he was pretty good. As he joined the junior program, you just knew he was going to be pretty talented." Thomas's first successes came on the track. In 2006, he was the youngest member of the British pursuit team that competed at the world championships. In 2008, he won the Olympic gold medal alongside Bradley Wiggins. Four years later in London, with a second gold medal secured in the same event, Thomas left track cycling to focus on road racing. "Thomas had already showed immense skills on the road from winning the Paris-Roubaix junior race in 2004. His initial ambitions on the road were to perform at one-day classics, then he rode the 2007 Tour.

## Malewar, Shorey lead Vidarbha to 308/5 against Mumbai

PTI ■ NAGPUR

Danish Malewar's gritty 79 and opener Dhruv Shorey's attractive 74 made up for a gritty batting show by hosts Vidarbha as they reached 308 for 5 against defending champions Mumbai on the first day of their Ranji Trophy semi-final here on Monday. Karun Nair, who is back in contention for a Test team berth, scored a chiselled 45 before he seemed distinctly unhappy with a caught behind decision of Shivam Dube's bowling although he had opted for DRS. While the two-time champions didn't have a big partnership, they had enough middling stands to see them cross 300-run mark after Mumbai had sent down 88 overs in the day. Mumbai bowlers were also guilty of bowling as many as 13 no balls during the course of the opening day. Left-arm spinner Shams Mulani (2/44 in 18 overs) was easily the best bowler on



the day as he got appreciable bounce and some amount of purchase from the Jamtha track. Dube (2/35 in 9 overs) also had a couple wickets but one of them was more so because of a splendid one-handed diving catch by Suryakumar Yadav in the slip cordon. That Mumbai failed to make more inroads was because the two new ball bowlers Shardul Thakur (0/57 in 14 overs) and Mohit Avasthi (0/61 in 14 overs) were way off the mark with both new

ball and second new ball at the bag end of the day. The morning session belonged to Shorey, who capitalised on the half-volleys provided by Avasthi, who simply doesn't have the required pace to trouble batters if he doesn't get to swing the new ball. As far as Shardul is concerned, he fed Shorey on the legs and got whipped. It was left-arm Royston Dias, who got the breakthrough with a delivery that climbed on left-hander

feet with Malewar hitting the only six off the day off the bat, who was otherwise in full control. Nair, who had hit six boundaries, looked in control before a delivery from Dube in the post-tea session moved a shade and was taken by keeper Akash Anand. While on-field umpire gave it out after some deliberation, Nair asked for review and the decision was upheld. Malewar's 159 ball knock ended when he tried to play forward defence to a Mulani delivery that kissed the outside edge into keeper Anand's gloves. However the bespectacled pair of left-handed Yash Rathod (47 batting) and skipper Akshay Wadkar (13 batting) added 47 for the unbroken sixth wicket to take the total past 300-run mark. **Brief Scores** Vidarbha 308/5; 88 overs (Danish Malewar 79, Dhruv Shorey 74, Karun Nair 45; Shams Mulani 2/44, Shivam Dube 2/35) vs Mumbai.

## Pakistan's Haris Rauf resumes bowling in nets

PTI ■ KARACHI

Pakistan's injured fast bowler Haris Rauf said on Monday he has resumed bowling in the nets and was feeling comfortable, adding that it was up to the team management to decide on his selection for the Champions Trophy (CT) opener against New Zealand. "I have started doing exercises a few days back and also resumed bowling since yesterday," Haris told reporters at the National Stadium. "I am feeling comfortable and my body is okay now the team management will decide about my playing in the opening match," he said. Haris, who remains one of Pakistan's key fast bowlers with his express pace and ability to take wickets in the middle overs, sustained a muscular strain in his lower chest wall in the first match of the recently-held three-nation event.

## Kane Williamson joins Middlesex for 2025 season

PTI ■ LONDON

Former New Zealand captain Kane Williamson has signed a two-year contract with Middlesex Cricket to play in the T20 Blast and County Championship, while also captaining London Spirit in this year's edition of The Hundred. Regarded as one of the greatest modern-day batters, Williamson, who previously played for Gloucestershire (2011-2012) and Yorkshire (2013-2018), will be available for at least 10 of Middlesex's 14 T20 Blast group fixtures and a minimum of five County Championship matches in the second half of the season. "I've played a bit of county cricket in the past, but not for a number of years now, so when this opportunity arose with Middlesex it was a really exciting prospect," Williamson, the all-time leading Test run-scorer for New Zealand, said in a release. "To be able to play for Middlesex - a fine club with a rich heritage - is really exciting and something that I'm really looking forward to being a part of. To play at Lords, the Home of Cricket - which is



first-ever direct signings for The Hundred. London Spirit secured his services outside of the draft process, and he will lead the team under the guidance of newly appointed head coach Justin Langer. Fraser Stewart, General Manager of London Spirit, said: "We're thrilled to have Kane on board for this summer. For us to be able to make a direct signing of this calibre is truly exciting for London Spirit, and I am sure that he will be looking forward to captaining our talented side." A veteran captain in all formats for New Zealand, Williamson has accumulated over 18,000 international runs, including 47 centuries. He boasts an impressive average of 54.88 in Tests, 49.65 in ODIs, and 33.44 in T20Is. Williamson is a familiar face in the world's top franchise leagues, having played for Gujarat Titans and Sunrisers Hyderabad in the IPL, Barbados Tridents in the Caribbean Premier League, and Durban's Super Giants in the South African T20 league.

## Australian team arrives in Pakistan for Champions Trophy

PTI ■ LAHORE

The Australian cricket team arrived in Pakistan on Monday to participate in the upcoming ICC Champions Trophy. The tournament begins with a match between hosts Pakistan and New Zealand in Karachi on Wednesday. Pakistan are also the defending champions having won the last edition of the tournament in 2017 in the UK where they beat India in the title clash. "The Australian cricket team has arrived in Lahore for the @ICC #ChampionsTrophy 2025! They will play their first match of the tournament on 22 February against England at the Gaddafi Stadium," the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) posted on X. The team landed in two separate groups. The first batch, which included captain Steve

Smith, coaches, and support staff, arrived from Colombo via Dubai. The second group, comprising 15 players and two additional members of the support staff, followed the same route and reached Lahore later the same day. Like India, who will be playing all their matches in Dubai as per the hybrid model agreement, the Australian team will also not feature in any warm-up matches, as they were very recently involved in a two-match ODI series against Sri Lanka, which they lost 2-0. After their opener against traditional rivals England, Australia will play their second match against South Africa on February 25 at Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium, followed by a final group-stage outing against Afghanistan on February 28, again at Gaddafi Stadium.

# No success without failure, embrace hard work: Mary Kom, Lekhara, Suhas

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

There is no success without failure and perseverance always pays was the message from boxing great M C Mary Kom and Paralympic stars Avani Lekhara and Suhas Yathiraj when they offered stress-management tips to school students as part of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 'Pariksha pe Charcha' initiative. The three athletes also gave advice on overcoming failure, staying focused, and embracing challenges during the special session conducted annually since 2018 for students preparing for board examinations.

"They say failure is the opposite of success. But I think failure is the biggest part of success. No success comes without failure," said two-time Paralympic champion in shooting Lekhara, who was paralysed from waist down after suffering a car accident as a child. In a shift from the traditional town hall format, this time the Prime Minister opted for a more informal setting, taking the students to Delhi's picturesque Sunder Nursery for his annual interaction ahead of board exams. He also brought on board eminent personalities from different walks of life to answer questions from students in an

episodic format starting with himself on February 10. Mary Kom, a six-time world champion and a London Olympics bronze-medallist, spoke about the challenges she faced while pursuing boxing, underlining the importance of resilience. The 42-year-old struggled to keep her composure while recalling the many challenges she overcame to become a boxing great, which included opposition of her father early on and physical challenge of continuing a high-risk contact sport after embracing motherhood. "Boxing is not a women's game. I took up that challenge because I wanted to prove to



myself and to all the women in the country that we can do it, and I went on to become a world champion several times," she said. "In your life, if you want to take on a challenge, you have to be strong from within. Initially, I faced many challenges. I was often discouraged and had to overcome numerous obstacles," the diminutive

Manipuri said fighting back tears. "Every field is difficult. There are no shortcuts; you have to work hard. If I can do it, why can't you?" she added. Two-time Paralympic silver-medallist in badminton Suhas, who has a congenital deformity in his left ankle that affects his mobility, also stressed on the need to be persistent. "Good things don't come easily. Your journey must go on. If you are willing to shine like the sun, you must be willing to burn like it," he stressed. The questions from students were focussed on tackling anxiety, pressure and the many

distractions that make up the modern life. The athletes gave them just the pep talk to deal with all these issues. Suhas spoke about how eliminating the fear of failure helped him secure a historic gold at the Asian Championships. "Your mind is your greatest friend as well as your enemy. In 2016, I represented India at the Asian Championships, and I got so scared that I lost the first game and was trailing in the second. "During the 30-second drinks break, I said to myself, 'You have come this far; the worst that could happen is that you might lose. So, lose the fear of losing and play your natural

game.' "Not only won that match but went on to win six more, becoming the first ever unseeded player to win a gold medal in China at the Asian Championships. The lesson is, if you lose your fear, you will play your natural game. Never think about who is in front, just give your best." A computer engineer-turned-IAS officer, Suhas urged students to keep three things in mind when they pursued their ambitions. "Consider whether you can achieve a position among the top three-five per cent in your chosen field, and whether you have the passion for it that comes from your heart."

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**DETAIL NOTICE INVITING E-TENDER**

No. PM-Shri/CW/Tender/24-25/86/2025/109 Date : 17.02.2025  
 The Mission Director, Samagra Shiksha, Assam invites bids for the following building and repairing works from registered appropriate class of contractor under PWD (Building), Assam having experience of similar nature of work in Assam. Details of the bid may be seen at e-procurement portal i.e. www.assamtenders.gov.in and also in the office of the undersigned during office hours from 17-02-2025 (11:00 hours) to 11-03-2025 (14:00 hours). The bidders must be enrolled in www.assamtenders.gov.in .

Group no.	Name of work	Approximate value of work (in lakh)	Time of completion (in months)	Tender fee	Earnest Money Deposit	
					General category	Reserved category
Group-1	Strengthening of PM-Shri schools: 1) Construction of 1 Science laboratory and 1 Library at PM-Shri Janata High School in Barpeta district 2) Construction of 1 Biology laboratory, 1 Chemistry laboratory and 1 Physics laboratory at PM-Shri Patacharkuchi Vidyapith HS School in Barpeta district 3) Construction of 1 Science laboratory and 1 Library at PM-Shri Adarsha Vidyalaya, Ganakuchi, Barpeta in Barpeta district	132.79	6	2656	265580	132790
Group-2	Strengthening of PM-Shri schools: 1) Construction of 1 Science laboratory and 1 Library at PM-Shri Navasakti Girls High School in Barpeta district, 2) Construction of 1 Science laboratory and 1 Library at PM-Shri Chata Anchalik High School in Barpeta district, 3) Construction of 1 Science laboratory and 1 Library at PM-Shri Gobardhana High School (Amal) in Barpeta district	113.82	6	2276	227640	113820
Group-3	Strengthening of existing PM-Shri schools construction of 4 additional classroom at Lengtisinga HS School in Bongaigaon district	75.88	6	1518	151760	75880
Group-4	Strengthening of PM-Shri schools: 1) Construction of 1 Science laboratory, 1 Biology laboratory, 1 Chemistry laboratory and 1 Physics laboratory at PM-Shri Judhisthir Saha HS School in Cachar district, 2) Construction of 1 Science laboratory and 1 Library at PM-Shri Satkarakandi High School in Cachar district	113.82	6	2276	227640	113820
Group-5	Strengthening of PM-Shri schools: 1) Construction of 1 Science laboratory and 1 Art & craft room at PM-Shri Dekargaon High School in Darrang district, 2) Construction of 1 Science laboratory, 1 Biology laboratory, 1 Chemistry laboratory and 1 Physics laboratory at PM-Shri Kharupetia HS School in Darrang district	113.82	6	2276	227640	113820
Group-6	Strengthening of PM-Shri schools: 1) Construction of 2 Additional classroom and 1 Science laboratory at PM-Shri Gogamukh HS School in Dhemaji district, 2) Construction of 1 Science laboratory and 1 Library at PM-Shri Puspadhar Pegu Memorial High School in Dhemaji district	94.85	6	1897	189700	94850
Group-7	Strengthening of PM-Shri schools: 1) Construction of 1 Science laboratory and 1 Library at PM-Shri Gutimara High School in Dhubri district, 2) Construction of 1 Science laboratory and 1 Library at PM-Shri Sapatgram Bengali HS School in Dhubri district, 3) Construction of 1 Science laboratory, 1 Biology laboratory, 1 Chemistry laboratory and 1 Physics laboratory at PM-Shri Dhubri Govt. Girls HS School in Dhubri district	151.76	6	3035	303520	151760
Group-8	Strengthening of PM-Shri schools: 1) Construction of 1 Science laboratory, 1 Library at PM-Shri Sital Pathar High School in Golaghat district, 2) Construction of 2 Additional classroom and 1 Biology laboratory at PM-Shri Kuralguri HS School in Golaghat district	94.85	6	1897	189700	94850
Group-9	Strengthening of existing PM-Shri schools construction of 1 Physics laboratory, 1 chemistry laboratory and 1 biology laboratory at PM-Shri Abdul Hasib HS School in Hojai district	56.91	6	1138	113820	56910
Group-10	Strengthening of PM-Shri schools: 1) Construction of 1 Biology laboratory, 1 Chemistry laboratory and 1 Physics laboratory at PM-Shri Govt Girls HS and MP School in Jorhat district, 2) Construction of 2 Additional classroom and 1 Science laboratory at PM-Shri Mihi Ram Saikia High School in Jorhat district	113.82	6	2276	227640	113820
Group-11	Strengthening of existing PM-Shri schools construction of 1 Physics laboratory, 1 chemistry laboratory and 1 biology laboratory at PM-Shri Damdama HS School in Kamrup district	56.91	6	1138	113820	56910
Group-12	Strengthening of PM-Shri schools: 1) Construction of 1 Science laboratory and 1 Library at PM-Shri Marjat Kandi Public HS School in Karimganj district, 2) Construction of 1 Science laboratory and 1 Library at PM-Shri Budhan HS School in Karimganj district, 3) Construction of 1 Science laboratory and 1 Library at PM-Shri Lakshmi Bazar High School in Karimganj district, 4) Construction of 1 Science laboratory and 1 Library at Chorgola Public HS School in Karimganj district	151.76	6	3035	303520	151760
Group-13	Strengthening of PM-Shri schools: 1) Construction of 1 Library, 1 Chemistry laboratory and 1 Physics laboratory at PM-Shri Ghilamara High School in Lakhimpur district, 2) Construction of 1 Biology laboratory, 1 Chemistry laboratory and 1 Physics laboratory at PM-Shri Lakhimpur Govt HS School in Lakhimpur district	113.82	6	2276	227640	113820
Group-14	Strengthening of existing PM-Shri schools construction of 4 additional classroom at PM-Shri Khanamukh HS School in Sonitpur district	75.88	6	1518	151760	75880
Group-15	Strengthening of PM-Shri schools: 1) Construction of 1 Biology laboratory, 1 Chemistry laboratory and 1 Physics laboratory at PM-Shri RBP HS School, South Salmara in South Salmara Mankachar district, 2) Construction of 1 Biology laboratory and 1 Physics laboratory at PM-Shri Janata HS School in South Salmara-Mankachar district	94.85	6	1897	189700	94850
Group-16	Major repairing of PM-Shri Dhupdhara High School under Rongjuli block in Goalpara district	86.931	6	1739	173862	86931
Group-17	Major repairing of PM-Shri Abdul Hasib HS School under Hojai-Municipality block in Hojai district	60.183	6	1204	120366	60183
Group-18	Major repairing of PM-Shri Boko High School under Boko block and PM-Shri Bamunigaon High School under Chaygaon block in Kamrup district	66.87	6	1337	133740	66870
Group-19	Major repairing of PM-Shri Borjuri R.K.S High School under Bajigaon block in Nagaon district	33.435	6	669	66870	33435
Group-20	Major repairing of PM-Shri Barpatradole High School under Gaurisagar block and PM-Shri Banmukh HS School under Sivasagar block in Sivasagar district	86.931	6	1739	173862	86931

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LUCKNOW | TUESDAY | FEBRUARY 18, 2025

## Liverpool continues its charge

PTI ■ LONDON

Liverpool continued its charge toward the Premier League title with a 2-1 win against Wolverhampton. For Manchester United, it just keeps getting worse after a 1-0 loss at Tottenham. The fortunes of England's two most successful teams could hardly be more contrasting. Victory for Liverpool saw the club restore its seven-point lead over Arsenal at the top of the table and move ever closer to equalling Man United's record haul of 20 league crowns. United, meanwhile, lost for the 12th time in the league this season and is 15th in the standings after James Maddison's first-half strike for Spurs. It is turning out to be another miserable campaign for the club that dominated English soccer under former manager Alex Ferguson. That is a distant memory now, with United's wait to end its title drought set to extend to 12 years this season. United has not been champion since Ferguson's final campaign in 2013. Ruben Amorim is the sixth permanent coach since then to be charged with the responsibility of restoring its supremacy, but his early tenure has been fraught with problems. "I am not worried. I understand our fans, what the media think about it. I hate to lose, that feeling is the worst," Amorim said. "I am here to help my players. I understand my situation, my job, I am confident on my work and I just want to win games. The place in the table is my worry, I am not worried about me."

**CLASH OF CLUBS IN CRISIS**  
 This was Amorim's ninth defeat in 21 games in all competitions since taking over in November. He has only overseen four league wins in that time.

## Indian women aims to return to winning ways against Spain

PTI ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Indian women's hockey team will be eager to get back to winning ways when it faces a confident Spain in the doubleheader here. After a promising start with a thrilling 3-2 victory over England in their opener, the India narrowly missed out on a bonus point in their second game, losing 2-1 in a dramatic shootout after the match ended 2-2 in regulation time. Despite showing resilience, India currently sit in eighth place in the standings with four points from two games and will be looking to climb higher in the points table as they face a confident Spanish side on Tuesday and Wednesday. India's performance against England offered glimpses of their potential, particularly in penalty corner conversions, where they scored twice from three attempts in their opening match. However, they failed to replicate that success in the second game, unable to convert any of their



three penalty corners. "Spain is a tricky team, and we know it's going to be a challenging contest. However, we are ready for the challenge," India captain Salima Tete said. "We've analysed our performances against England and identified the areas where we need to improve, especially in converting penalty corners. We are focused on tightening our defense and making the most of our scoring opportunities." Spain, on the other hand, arrives on the back of two consecutive victories against Germany in the India leg. They secured back-to-back 2-1 wins over the Germans, boosting their confidence. Despite their strong recent performances, Spain has had a mixed run overall, with just two wins and one shootout victory in six games. Currently placed fourth in the points table with eight points, Spain will be looking to further consolidate their position. Patricia Alvarez has been their standout player, scoring twice to lead the team's goal tally. Match starts 5:15 PM on Tuesday and 7:30 PM on Wednesday.

## India look to continue winning momentum against German hockey

PTI ■ BHUBANESWAR

Their campaign back on track after a jittery start, India will look to continue the winning momentum when they take on Paris Olympics silver medalist Germany in their next men's FIH Pro League match on Tuesday. India had a woeful start to their home leg matches of the Pro League, losing 1-3 to Spain in their opener. But the hosts bounced back strongly to tame Spain 2-0 in the return match on Sunday. With three points from two games, India are currently sitting in eighth place in the standings and will be desperate to climb up the table. After a relatively off day on Saturday, the Indians looked a completely different side on Sunday, dominating for most part of the match

and scoring two field goals through Mandeep Singh (32nd minute) and Dilpreet Singh (39th) to pocket all three points. While the strikers shone bright in the second game, India's chief coach Craig Fulton would be a bit concerned about penalty corner conversions. Despite winning seven penalty corners across their two games, India failed to convert a single chance. In the absence of India captain Harmanpreet Singh, who was rested for the second match, Hockey India League star performer Jugraj Singh cut a sorry figure from set pieces. The forwardline comprising Dilpreet, Mandeep and Sukhjeet Singh have each netted a goal for India so far in the tournament and will be

looking to add to their tally against Germany. The Indian defence produced a much-better display in the second game, and were able to absorb pressure from the Spanish strikers. Germany, who will be playing their first match of the India leg, are placed just above India in seventh place with four points from as many games and will be determined to turn their fortunes around. Although Germany have won only one match in the tournament so far, their attack has been spearheaded by Raphael Hartkopf, Gonzalo Peillat, and Thies Prinz, who have scored two goals each. Germany will aim to turn around their struggling campaign and secure vital points.

## Cricket fever grips Pakistan ahead of Champions Trophy

PTI ■ KARACHI

Cricket fever has gripped Pakistan as the Champions Trophy unfolds with fans eagerly waiting for the action to begin here on Wednesday and businesses related to the game too picking up before the tournament opener between hosts Pakistan and New Zealand. However, many in the country are disappointed that India are not playing their matches in Pakistan. "It is disappointing because generally there is so much admiration for the Indian team and players, especially Virat Kohli, in our country," shopkeeper Moiz Ahmed said at the famous Zainab Market in the heart of Karachi's bustling Saddar area. Moiz is surprised at the demand for the Indian shirts among the cricket fans along with the Pakistan team. "Virat Kohli definitely has a big fan following in Pakistan," he said as youngsters mingled in the shop choosing different team shirts. Kashif, a college student, said he had always admired Kohli as a player and also because of his humility. "He is so down to earth in his behaviour from what we see in the media," he said.

Shopkeepers in Zainab market, which is famous for selling original licenses and copies of the team shirts whenever a big cricket or football event happens, are clearly happy that the Champions Trophy is being held in Pakistan. "I have sold nearly 4 to 5000 shirts in the last three days of the Pakistan and Indian teams," Javed Pakhali, a shopkeeper, said. Even in the enclosures during matches fans are not shy to wear or display pictures of Kohli and wear shirts with his name printed on them. The Champions Trophy fever is also evident when one visits the match venue, National Stadium, as many fans are moving around the main gate to catch a glimpse of their favourite players as they come and go from the stadium. On Monday, with the Pakistan team having a practice session at the stadium's high performance centre, fans clamoured to see them in action. Ticket sales online and through booths have also picked up according to a Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) official who now just wants the Pakistan team to do well in the tournament. "I am sure if the team keeps on

winning the demand for tickets will keep on increasing," he said. The fact that an ICC event is being held in Pakistan with some matches in Karachi is now evident from the colourful banners, posters put up around the city announcing the staging of the event. It is after 29 years that Pakistan is holding a proper multi team event although it hosted some matches of the Asia Cup in 2023 but the excitement didn't reach the levels being witnessed now. Although the PCB and ICC held a low-key opening ceremony, without the teams at the Lahore Fort on Sunday night, in Karachi clearly the tempo is growing. Former captain Javed Miandad praised the PCB for bringing the ICC event to Pakistan. "I think the next few weeks are a celebration of the passion for cricket we have as a nation," Miandad said. Miandad said that it is after a long time cricket fans will get to see top international players in action in their backyard. PCB chairman Mohsin Naqvi also said at the opening ceremony that the tournament was a platform for Pakistan to showcase its hospitality and love for

cricket. For 10 years, no top team visited Pakistan after the militant attack on the Sri Lankan team bus in Lahore in March 2009. Pace great Waqar Younis said having the Champions Trophy in the country was a big step forward for Pakistan cricket. "I think it means a lot to everyone that we have shown how resilient we were as a cricket nation and how much our people love cricket even when for 10 years no top team played in Pakistan." Waqar, also a former captain and who was head coach when Pakistan were their home matches in UAE, said there was a big difference between playing at home and your home series in UAE. "I think this Champions Trophy will only increase the cricket passion and talent in the country," he added. Naqvi also said they would be trying to get more ICC events in Pakistan. He said, hopefully, Pakistan would also host the women's World Cup qualifiers later this year. The security for the tournament is unprecedented and with Naqvi himself heading the federal interior ministry, no chances are being taken for the visiting teams.

- Note:**
1. Online mode of submission for both technical and financial bid is mandatory.
  2. There are 20 groups and one bidder can participate in more than one group. But no bidder will be awarded more than 2 groups of work, even if their financial bids rank at L1.
  3. A hard copy of the technical bid submitted online is also to be submitted at the office of the undersigned on or before 11-03-2025 upto 14:00 hours for evaluation purpose. For any discrepancy between the online bid and the hard copy of the bid, the online bid will govern and will be considered for evaluation.
  4. Along-with the hard copy of the technical bid, the following documents must also be submitted on or before 11-03-2025 up to 1400 hrs :-
    - a. Original Power of Attorney for signing the bid, if any.
    - b. Copy of bid security/ EMD submitted online at www.assamtenders.gov.in.
    - c. Copy of tender fee submitted online at www.assamtenders.gov.in.
  5. Bidders are advised to scan their original technical papers at a resolution of 100 dpi (in colour mode) in \*.pdf format for multiple pages with maximum file size of 25 MB. If the file size exceeds 25 MB, the bidders are advised to create multiple files and upload the same in "Upload Additional Document" stage.
  6. In the event of date of bid opening being a holiday, the activities will take place on the next working day.
  7. All the interested bidders are requested to read the bid document carefully before submission of their bid.