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RAHUL DISSENTS POLL PANEL, BJP DEFENDS



File photo: PTI

government's constitutional mandate through "malicious" judicial activism. The government late on Monday night appointed Gyanesh Kumar as the new CEC hours after the meeting of the PM-led selection committee in which the Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha asked the government to defer the meeting in view of the SC hearing in the matter. Meanwhile the SC on Tuesday said it would take up on February 19 on "priority basis" the pleas against the appointments of the CEC and election commissioners (EC) under the 2023 law.

"During the meeting of the committee to select the next Election Commissioner, I presented a dissent note to the PM and HM, that stated: The most fundamental aspect of an independent Election Commission, free from executive interference, is the process of choosing the Election Commissioner and Chief Election Commissioner," Rahul said in a social media post.

"By violating the Supreme Court order and removing the Chief Justice of India from the committee, the Modi Government has exacerbated the concerns of hundreds of millions of voters over the integrity of our electoral process," he also said in his post while sharing his dissent note.

Rahul said as the LoP, it is his duty to uphold the ideals of Babasaheb Ambedkar and the founding leaders of the nation while holding the government to account.

In his dissent note presented before the panel, the Congress leader cited a speech of BR Ambedkar in the Constituent Assembly in June 1949 to discuss the setting up of an independent Election Commission, where he had warned about executive interference in India's democracy and the affairs of the Election Commission.

Rahul said in a judgement on March 2, 2023, the Constitutional Bench of the Supreme Court ordered the appointment of the CEC and election commissioners should be undertaken by a committee comprising the PM, the LoP and the Chief Justice of India.

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PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Leader of Opposition (LoP) in Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi on Tuesday attacked Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi and Home Minister (HM) Amit Shah for the midnight decision to select the new Chief Election Commissioner (CEC), when the process of selection is being challenged in the Supreme Court (SC).

While Rahul who said it was "disrespectful" and "discourteous" on part of the Centre to ignore his dissent note to the CEC selection panel comprising of PM and HM, the BJP dismissed the Congress leader's criticism and accused the LoP of undermining an elected

SC comes to rescue of 'pervert' Allahabadia

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court (SC) on Tuesday protected influencer Ranveer Allahbadia from arrest over his distasteful comments during a YouTube show while severely castigating him for the remarks it described as "showing a perverted mind". Several FIRs have been filed against Allahbadia, popularly known as BeerBiceps, for the comment on parents and sex on comedian Samay Raina's YouTube show "India's Got Latent". A furious court at the outset berated Allahbadia for his "unacceptable comments" on the

show and said, "... There is something dirty in his mind which has been vomited on the YouTube show." "The words you have used will make daughters, sisters, parents and even the society feel ashamed. It shows a perverted mind. If this is not obscene, what is it? Why should we quash or club the FIRs against you?" asked Justice Surya Kant, who was on the bench along with Justice N Kottiswar Singh.

However, the bench agreed to the submissions of senior advocate Abhinav Chandrachud, representing the influencer, that Allahbadia be protected from arrest keeping in

mind the filing of multiple FIRs on the same issue as well as the death threats against him. "Are you defending the kind of language he has used?" Justice Surya Kant asked Chandrachud, who conceded that he himself was "disgusted". The senior lawyer, however, said the question was whether the remarks constituted a criminal offence as profanity per se would not amount to obscenity. "If you can try to attain cheap publicity by saying these kinds of things, there might be others also who might want to get cheap publicity by making threats," the bench said.

The bench directed that no further FIRs shall be lodged against him for his comments during the YouTube show, "India's Got Latent". The top court also restrained Allahbadia and his associate influencers on the controversial YouTube show from airing any other episode till further orders. It directed Allahbadia to deposit his passport at the Thane police station and said he shall not leave the country without the prior permission of the court. The bench directed Allahbadia to cooperate in the probe of the FIRs lodged at Maharashtra and Assam.

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Preparations underway for the oath ceremony of the new Delhi Government, at the Ramlika Maidan. Photo: Ranjan Dimri

Oath final for 'suspense' CM

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Almost a fortnight after the BJP emerged victorious in the Delhi Assembly elections, the suspense over the chief minister of Delhi still remains as the party has yet to make an announcement. Insiders say the new Delhi Chief Minister and the council of ministers are set to take oath at the Ramlika Maidan on Thursday evening. The decision is likely to be announced on Wednesday, when the new BJP legislature party is scheduled to meet, as per the party sources.

As the iconic Ramlika Maidan is being spruced up with its boundary walls receiving a fresh coat of paint, tents for the grand oath

taking ceremony, sources said the legislature party meeting will take place around 3:30 pm following which final name of candidate will be announced. Earlier, the oath ceremony was scheduled around 4 pm at Ramlika Maidan but it has been rescheduled to 11 am due to some unknown reasons. Party sources said that arrangements have been speed up accordingly.

For the BJP leaders, it was hectic schedule throughout the day on Tuesday as many senior leaders including Vinod Tadvde, Tarun Chugh, etc were seen taking stock of preparations on the ground by visiting with the BJP leaders.

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Nepal embassy visits Odisha institute over suicide uproar



Family members of a Nepal's girl student who died by suicide reach the Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology (KIIT), in Bhubaneswar. PTI

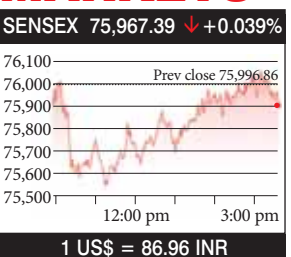
PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ BHUBANESWAR/NEW DELHI

Officers from the Nepal Embassy visited the engineering institute in Bhubaneswar after a student from the neighbouring country was found dead in her hostel on the campus. The officers are also expected to meet a group of students who were allegedly evicted from their hostel, amid tension on

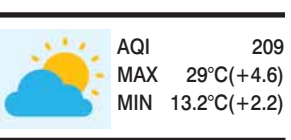
the institute campus. While Nepal Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli offered some relief to the distressed students, Odisha Higher Education Minister Suryabanshi Suraj said the state government has been monitoring the situation and will facilitate the Nepali students, who have allegedly been evicted from their hostel, to return to the KIIT campus.

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MARKETS



WEATHER



President approves Jain's prosecution

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

President Droupadi Murmu on Tuesday sanctioned the prosecution against former Delhi minister and AAP leader Satyendar Jain in a case investigated by the Enforcement Directorate. The case falls under the provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA).

The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) on Friday sought the President of India's approval to prosecute former Delhi minister and AAP leader Satyendar Jain under Section 218 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Suraksha Sanhita (BNS), 2023 in the alleged disproportionate assets were to the tune of Rs 1.47 crore, about 217 per cent more than Jain's known sources of income during 2015-17. The MHA has claimed that there is adequate evidence against the AAP leader to implicate him on charges of laundering money through four shell companies allegedly linked to him. Based on material received from the Enforcement Directorate, he President found sufficient evidence to grant the request, officials said.

Currently, out on bail, Jain has been chargesheeted by the ED. The money-laundering case stems from an August 2017 FIR filed by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) against Jain and others, alleging possession of disproportionate assets. Jain had recently lost Shakur Basti seat to BJP's Karnail Singh by a margin of 20,998 votes.

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Prosecution seeks death penalty for Sajjan Kumar

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The prosecution has sought the death penalty for former Congress MP Sajjan Kumar who was convicted by a Delhi court last week over the killings of two Sikhs in the national capital during the 1984 anti-Sikh riots saying the crime was committed in a "brutal and diabolical manner". The prosecution said the case was "graver than the Nirbhaya case" of 2012 in a written submission filed before special judge Kavari Baweja. "The present case is graver than the Nirbhaya case as in the Nirbhaya case, a young woman was targeted but in the present case, people of a particular community were targeted," it said.

Arguments on the quantum of sentencing will take place on February 20 as the lawyers were on strike on Tuesday. While describing the case as rare of the rarest, Additional Public prosecutor (APP) Manish Rawat in his written submissions has pressed for death penalty for the convict in view of the guidelines issued in Nirbhaya and other cases.

Asking the convict and the victims to file their written submissions, Special judge Kavari Baweja has listed the matter for hearing arguments on sentence on February 21. The minimum punishment for murder is life imprisonment. Senior advocate H S Phoolka, appearing for the complainant, supported the prosecution's demand of death penalty and sought time to



File photo: PTI

argue the matter. The judge deferred the matter to February 21 after Kumar's counsel sought time to argue the matter, saying lawyers were abstaining from work on Tuesday in protest of the Advocate Amendment Bill, 2025.

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Child's drawing raises doubts over mother's death in Jhansi

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ JHANSI

What initially appeared to be a case of suicide has taken a shocking turn after a four-year-old girl's drawing cast doubt on the circumstances surrounding her mother's death. Sonali Budholia, 27, was found dead at her home in Panchavati Shiv Parivar Colony on Monday, with her in-laws claiming she had taken her own life. However, her daughter Darshita's unsettling illustration and statements to the media have pointed to possible foul play, implicating her father, Sandeep Budholia, in the tragedy. Darshita's drawing depicted a violent assault on her mother. She later told reporters that her father had

physically attacked Sonali before staging her death. "Papa assaulted and killed Mummy and said, 'Die if you want to'. He hanged her body and hit her head with a stone. Later, he brought down the body and put it in a sack," the child revealed. Her statements also suggested a history of domestic abuse, alleging that Sandeep often threatened to kill her mother. "I once warned him that if he hurt my mother, I would break his hand. He would hit her and say she should die, and that I should meet the same fate," Darshita recounted. Sonali's father, Sanjeev Tripathi, who lives in Tikamgarh, Madhya Pradesh, described a troubled marriage marred by alleged dowry demands and mistreatment. He claimed

that despite giving Rs 20 lakh in dowry, the demands continued. A previous dowry harassment case was lodged against Sonali's husband, Sandeep Budholya, but was later settled based on alleged false assurances from his family. He claimed that after Sonali gave birth to a daughter in 2020 the abuse intensified. "After the delivery, Sandeep and his family abandoned her in the hospital. I had to clear the bill and take her home. A month later, Sandeep returned to take Sonali and Darshita back," he said. Sanjeev further stated that just days before her death, Sandeep insisted Sonali return home from a cousin's wedding, despite her reluctance.

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SC to take up CEC, ECs appointments case today

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Tuesday said it would on February 19 take up on "priority basis" the pleas against the appointments of the chief election commissioner (CEC) and election commissioners (EC) under the 2023 law. A bench of Justices Surya Kant and N Kotiswar Singh was informed by advocate Prashant Bhushan, appearing for an NGO, that despite the Constitution bench verdict of 2023 directing selection and appointment of the CEC and ECs through a panel including the Chief Justice of India, the Government excluded the CJI and made a "mockery of democracy". He said, "The matter is listed on February 19 but it is listed as item number 41. The government has appointed the CEC and EC as per 2023 law disregarding the view taken by a constitution bench. Kindly take up on top of the board as the matter requires urgent consideration." Advocate Varun Thakur, appearing for petitioner Jaya Thakur, said three appointments were made by the government under the new law, which was under challenge. The bench assured Bhushan and other parties that after some urgent listed matters, it would take up the petitions for hearing on February 19. On February 17, the Government appointed EC Gyanesh Kumar as the next CEC and Vivek Joshi as new Election Commissioner. Gyanesh Kumar is the first CEC to be appointed under



Ranjan Dimri

the new law and his term would run till January 26, 2029, days before the EC is expected to announce the schedule of the next Lok Sabha election. Vivek Joshi (58) born in 1966 would serve in the poll panel till 2031. According to the law, a CEC or an EC retires at 65 or can have a tenure in the poll panel for six years. Bhushan argued that that the 2023 verdict held that the Election Commissioners have to be selected for appointment by an independent panel comprising the Prime minister, Leader of Opposition and Chief Justice of India. "They have brought an Act by which they have removed the Chief Justice and brought in another minister, effectively making the commissioners appointment only at the pleasure of the government. You need to have an independent committee to appoint the election commissioners," he said. The NGO Association for

Democratic Reforms has challenged the CJI's exclusion and contended the election commission should be insulated from "political" and "executive interference" for maintaining a healthy democracy. ADR's plea alleged the verdict was overruled by the Centre without removing its basis and the composition of the selection committee under the new law which amounted to excessive interference of the executive in the appointments and was detrimental to the independence of the poll panel. Former IAS officers Gyanesh Kumar and Sukhbir Sandhu were recommended to be appointed as ECs in 2024 by a selection panel chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi under the new law. The NGO challenged the validity and sought a stay on the operation of Section 7 of the Chief Election Commissioner and Other Election Commissioners Act, 2023, which excluded the CJI.

Shinde dismisses "cold war" between Sena, BJP

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Amid reports of a "cold war" between his party and the ruling BJP over the downgrading of security cover given to 20 of his party MLAs, Maharashtra deputy chief minister Eknath Shinde on Tuesday put up a brave face by saying that the relations between the two parties were 'thanda thanda cool cool'. Downplaying the reports that the State Home department held by chief minister Devendra Fadnavis had reduced the security cover given to his party MLAs from Y+ category to just one constable, Shinde denied that there was any rift between the ruling MahaYuti allies. "There is no cold war (between the allies) as this is not Maha Vikas Aghadi or INDI alliance. Our war is with the people who are opposing the development of Maharashtra...we are 'thanda thanda cool cool,'" Shinde

said. Shinde -- who is the state Urban Development Minister in the BJP-led MahaYuti government -- said that the MahaYuti constituents were "united" and were working towards the progress of the state. The latest slugfest between the Shinde Sena and BJP should be seen in the light of the reduction in the security cover provided to MLAs belonging to the Shiv Sena (Eknath Shinde) and NCP (Ajit Pawar), made during the recent security review. The security cover of some MLAs of NCP led by Deputy CM Ajit Pawar was also reduced, but in terms of numbers, it was much less as compared to that of the Shinde Sena MLAs. As per the protocols of the Special Protection Unit (SPU), which falls under the State Intelligence Department held by Fadnavis, the Chief Minister and two Deputy

CMs have been given Z-Plus category security, the ministers have been given Y-plus category security. NCP (SP) supremo Sharad Pawar and Shiv Sena (UBT) head Uddhav Thackeray continue to be cover under Z-plus category security. In June-July 2022, some of the Shiv Sena MLAs -- who went Shinde after the latter engineered a split in the Shiv Sena -- were provided enhanced security in view of threat to them. As ministers in MahaYuti-NDA government many of them continue to enjoy the Y+ scrutiny. However, after the recent review, the security of 20-odd MLAs was reduced and they have been given just one constable as security cover, a development that has reportedly miffed Shinde. The downgrading of the security to 20 Sena MLAs is the fourth instance where differences have cropped up between Fadnavis and Shinde.

Former British PM Sunak, family visit Parliament



Former British PM Rishi Sunak was welcomed by Lok Sabha Secretary General Utpal Kumar Singh at the Parliament complex. Pioneer Photo

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Former UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak on Tuesday visited Parliament House with his spouse and children. They were accompanied by Rajya Sabha MP Sudha Murthy who is Sunak's mother-in-law. Lok Sabha Secretary General Utpal Kumar Singh welcomed them at the Parliament House complex, the Lok Sabha secretariat said.

During their visit, the Sunak family explored the Parliament House complex and admired its architectural grandeur. They visited the galleries, chambers of the two Houses, Constitution Hall, and the old Parliament building, it said. The visit is part of Sunak's engagements in India. On February 15, the family had visited Taj Mahal. Sunak met External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar in Delhi on February 17.

Ex-Navy officer Tiwary still in Qatar

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

A sub-judice case in a Qatar court is leading to the delay in the return of former Indian Navy officer Purnendu Tiwary, who was freed from death-row charges along with seven of his compatriots last year. The Qatari court released eight former Indian Navy officials, who were on death row for unspecified charges. Seven of them returned to India in February last year, while Tiwary continues to

remain in Qatar. "His matter still remains sub-judice in a local court in Qatar," Arun Kumar Chatterjee, Secretary, Ministry of External Affairs, told reporters here when asked about Tiwary's case. Sources said the sub-judice case in question pertains to another matter and is not connected to the one that had led Tiwary to death row. However, the issue did not figure in Tuesday's talks between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Amir of Qatar Sheikh Tamim Bin

Hamad Al-Thani, who is on a state visit to India. Around 600 Indian nationals are lodged in various jails in Qatar. In 2024, around 85 Indians received pardon. The ordeal of the eight former Navy officials began in August 2022, when Qatari authorities arrested them. The precise charges against the officials, who were employed with Dahra Global, a company that specialised in supplying defence and security-related items to the government of Qatar, were never revealed.

Rahul dissents poll panel, BJP defends

From page 1

Rahul said the government legislation reconstituted the committee to appoint the CEC and Election Commissioners to include the PM, the LoP and a Union Cabinet minister to be appointed by the PM and removing the chief justice from the committee. "This is in flagrant violation of the letter and spirit of the Supreme Court order," he noted. He said this government order was subsequently challenged by a public interest litigant and the SC has indicated its intention to take up this matter on February 19, 2025, which was less than forty-eight hours away. "Therefore, it is the view of the Congress party that the process of choosing the next CEC be deferred until the Supreme Court hearing and this meeting be postponed," he said.

Hitting back, BJP's IT department head Amit Malviya said Rahul Gandhi's dissent on the appointment of the chief election commissioner (CEC) is not just politically motivated but also lacks merit. "It is an attempt to undermine the constitutional mandate of the elected government through malicious judicial activism. Additionally, it conveniently misreads and misinterprets the Supreme Court's judgment on the CEC's appointment," BJP stated. To determine the original intent of the Constitution's framers, Malviya said the court had analysed the 1949 Constituent Assembly debates and noted that it the appointment process was left to Parliament's discretion. He said the President appointed the CEC and election commissioners solely on the prime minister's recommendation before the ruling.

Oath final for 'suspense' CMs

From page 1

A meeting of senior leaders including Tarun Chugh, Virendra Sachdeva and Yogendra Chandolia also took place at BJP office on Tuesday where. "Today there was a very important organisational meeting took place at Delhi BJP state headquarters. In this meeting, there was a detailed discussion about the upcoming activities, programs and campaigns of the organisation," said the Delhi BJP President. After inspecting the ground along with Delhi BJP President Virendra Sachdeva, BJP National General Secretary Tarun Chugh said Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena is overseeing the preparations and people from across the city have expressed desire to be at the event, likely on Thursday. Talking to reporters, Chugh said the people of Delhi have blessed Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who is "trusted by all citizens from Kashmir to Kanyakumari". "On Monday, we ensured the arrival of items for setting up

the stage and sitting arrangements. On Tuesday, items were arranged to give a final shape to the place where gathering of thousands of people will take place. There will be three stages at the ground and entry may take place from all 10 gates of the ground so people could not face any hassle," said a BJP leader. According to party insiders, the names - for CM and Council of Ministers - were likely to include "a mix of experience and youth", with representation from each of the dominant caste and community groupings in the Capital. A colourful musical programme will be held on the stage of Ramlila Maidan before the swearing-in ceremony, in which Kailash Kher will also perform. Chief Ministers and Deputy Chief Ministers of 20 states will attend the mega event. Diplomats of major countries have also been invited. More than 50 film stars and industrialists, will be present. Besides, Farmers of Delhi, beneficiaries of central government schemes

including laadli sisters, and common people from Delhi will also be invited to the ceremony. Over 5,000 security personnel will be deployed in and around the Ramlila Maidan area on the day of the oath-taking ceremony for Delhi's new chief minister, an official said. The officer further stated that over 10 companies of paramilitary forces will also be deployed to maintain law and order and manage traffic during the day. The officer further stated that commandos, quick reaction teams, PCR vans, anti-sabotage checks, and SWAT teams will be deployed at strategic locations at more than 2,500 spots. First-aid kiosks and other facilities will also be set up at the location. Snipers will also be deployed at many strategic spots. Interestingly, internet users have been searching about life, career, age, and other details of BJP leaders they think could be crowned as the New Delhi Chief Minister since February 8. If online user interest is any metric, Parvesh Verma and Rekha Gupta are the top contenders for the chief

minister's post, though interest in them has fluctuated over time. Verma and Gupta have also gained the highest number of followers on social media. He was followed by more than 80,100 people on Instagram and nearly 17,800 people on X (formerly Twitter). On the other hand, Gupta, who emerged victorious from Shalimar Bagh, has added 632 followers on X and 975 on Instagram in this period, as per social media analytics firm Social Blade. In the assembly poll results announced on February 8, the BJP secured 48 seats in the 70-member Assembly, returning to power in the city after 26 years. The AAP won only 22 seats. With the saffron party going into the polls without announcing a chief ministerial candidate, speculations have intensified over who could be the chief minister. Many within the party believe that the BJP leadership could choose a "dark horse" as Delhi's next chief minister, a strategy the party opted in Rajasthan, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, and Chhattisgarh.

Prosecution seeks death penalty for Sajjan Kumar

From page 1

The prosecution said there was something uncommon in the case, arguing the "aggravated circumstances outweighed the mitigating circumstances" and the case fell in the "rarest of rare case" category. Kumar, along with the mob, targeted the particular community people without provocation, it added. The prosecution argued four "helpless women" without any provocation were badly beaten and a young man aged about 18 and a man aged about 50 years showed no provocation but were burnt alive in front of their family members. The murders of Jaswant Singh and Tarundeep Singh, said the prosecution, were committed in an "extremely brutal, diabolical manner so as to shock the collective conscience of the society". "The impact on the psychology of the survivor victims can be seen from their demeanor recorded during their testimonies, even after

39 years, they were inconsolably weeping. Serious bodily and mental harm were caused to such women... There was forced and traumatised displacement of all survivor victims," it said. The court was informed by the prosecution that the impact and magnitude of the crime was so enormous that it was a crime against community and involved genocide of the members of a particular community. "The incident of this kind, break entire fibre of trust and harmony amongst communities, thereby, severely affecting the knitting and assimilation of different religious or social groups," it added. Kumar was said to be a people representative, someone who supposed to help people but "he openly broke the rule of law", argued the prosecution. It pointed out Kumar was convicted for a similar crime. Kumar is currently lodged in Tihar jail. Jaswant Singh and his son Tarundeep Singh were killed on November 1, 1984. Though Punjabi Bagh Police

Station registered the case, a special investigation team later took over the investigation. On December 16, 2021, the court framed charges against Kumar, finding a "prima facie" case against him. The prosecution has alleged a huge mob, armed with deadly weapons, resorted to large-scale looting, arson and destruction of properties of Sikhs to avenge the assassination of former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. Kumar (79) is already serving life imprisonment in another anti-Sikh riots related case and the Supreme Court has refused to grant him bail. He has been in jail since December 31, 2018 when he surrendered after being convicted and awarded life imprisonment by the Delhi High Court in a case relating to 1984 anti-Sikh riots in Raj Nagar part-I area in Palam Colony in South West Delhi in which five Sikhs were killed on November 1-2, 1984, and a gurdwara was burnt down in Raj Nagar part II.

SC comes to rescue of 'pervert' Allahabadia

From page 1

Chandrachud referred to Allahabadia's right to life and said he cannot be prosecuted at several places for the same act. "What are the values of society? What are these parameters, do you even know? Society has some self-evolved values. You need to respect them...In the name of freedom of speech, no one has a licence to speak whatever they want against the norms of the society," the bench observed. Beside granting him protection from any coercive

action in FIRs lodged in Mumbai and Guwahati, the bench also sought responses from the Centre, Maharashtra and Assam governments on Allahabadia's plea seeking clubbing and quashing of multiple FIRs against him. An Assam police team was in Pune to issue summons to Raina in connection with a case filed in the northeastern state over his now deleted YouTube show. Raina has a house in Balewadi in Pune. On Monday, a case was registered in Guwahati by a resident for alleged promotion of obscenity in a

publicly accessible online show. Besides Allahabadia and Raina, others named in the case in Assam are Ashish Chanchlani, Jaspreet Singh and Apoorva Makhija. Earlier, Allahabadia was asked to remain present at Mumbai's Khar police station by the Mumbai police. The YouTuber is also facing a police complaint in Indore, Madhya Pradesh. The Maharashtra Cyber Department has registered the case under relevant sections of the IT Act and sought the removal of all 18 episodes of the comedy show.

Child's drawing raises...

From page 1

On the morning of her death, Sanjeev received a call from her in-laws, claiming she was unwell. Hours later, another call informed him that she had died by suicide. The Kotwali City Police have launched an investigation and sent Sonali's body for an autopsy to determine the exact cause of death. Authorities are also examining Darshita's claims and other evidence to uncover the truth behind the

incident. According to circle officer (CO) City Rambeer Singh, an FIR has been registered against Sandeep, his mother Vineeta, his elder brother Krishna Kumar, his sister-in-law Manisha, and five unidentified persons under sections 80 (dowry death) and 85 (cruelty against a woman by her husband) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, along with Sections 3 and 4 of the Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961. Sandeep has been detained for interrogation.

Nepal embassy visits Odisha institute over suicide uproar

From page 1

The deceased, identified as Prakriti Lamsal, was a third-year B Tech student studying at Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology (KIIT), the institute's registrar said. As the situation escalated on the campus, KIIT authorities allegedly evicted several Nepali students from the hostel and dropped them at Cuttack railway station without making any arrangements for their travel. The incident gained attention

after the deceased's cousin filed a complaint at Infocity Police Station in Bhubaneswar, alleging that his sister hanged herself in her hostel room on Sunday. He claimed that a boy student at the university had been blackmailing his sister, which, he believed, led to her suicide. Legislators cutting across party lines on Tuesday expressed grief in the Odisha assembly over the death of the student and condemned the alleged mistreatment of several other students from

the neighbouring country by the KIIT authorities. In a statement, KIIT said it has always been a home to students from across the world, fostering a culture of inclusivity, respect, and care. "We deeply regret the recent incident and reaffirm our commitment to the safety, dignity, and well-being of all our students, including our dear Nepali students," the institute wrote on social media. BJP MLA Babu Singh also demanded the arrest of

Achyuta Samanta, the founder of KIIT. Singh alleged that Samanta, who was an MP from Kandhamal, was "patronised by the opposition Biju Janata Dal. Several other BJP MLAs also came down heavily on the institute over the Nepali student's death. Father of the deceased alleged that the institute "mistreated" undergraduates from the neighbouring country. Sunil Lamsal, reached the city as the post-mortem examination of his daughter's body was conducted at

AIIMS, Bhubaneswar. "I have lost my daughter. Many other children are studying here. It is known from the media that some students were driven out of their hostel. This is not right. This incident should not be repeated. These people go to Nepal and invite students to study here. The institute mistreated them," Lamsal alleged. He, however, reposed faith in the Odisha government and the police to get justice over the death of her daughter.

Bijapur records lowest voters turnout

Three-tier panchayat polls

STAFF REPORTER ■
RAIPUR

Bijapur recorded lowest voting turnout of 48.56 percent while Rajnandgaon witnessed highest polling turnout of 89.29 percent in a first phase of three-tier panchayat polls in Chhattisgarh.

Besides this, Sarangarh-Bilalgarh secured 88.74 percent followed by 86.39 percent in Balrampur-Ramanujanj.

An overall 81.38 percent voter turnout was recorded in phase one of panchayat body elections held on Monday in 53 development blocks of 33 districts in the state.

As many as 81.66 percent male, 81.10 percent female and 17.31 percent transgender voters exercised their franchises in the panchayat



elections. A total of 57,99,660 voters including 29,28,751 women and 50 transgenders were eligible to exercise their franchise in the first phase of the panchayat elections. The elections for 149 Zila Panchayat Members, 911

An overall 81.38 percent voter turnout was recorded in phase one of panchayat body elections

Janpad Panchayat Members and 3,605 Gram Panchayat Sarpanch and 27,210 Panch were conducted in phase one. In the first phase, 60,203 candidates were in the fray for the posts of panch, 14,646 for sarpanch, 4,587 for janpad panchayat members and 702 for zila panchayat members.

Cong collaborates with India's enemies: CM



STAFF REPORTER ■
RAIPUR

Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai slammed Congress on Tuesday for its Indian Overseas Chairman Sam Pitroda's remark and said

that the grand old party was hand in glove with separatists and enemies of the country. Sai said this in response to Pitroda's statement favouring China. Pitroda had said in an

interview that India should stop presuming China as an enemy and instead change its attitude and respect China. Sai alleged that Pitroda has probably been appointed to strengthen the enemies of the country.

CJI must have included in CEC selection panel: Baghel

STAFF REPORTER ■
RAIPUR

Congress National General Secretary and former Chhattisgarh Chief Minister, Bhupesh Baghel, on Tuesday opposed the selection process of the union government in naming the Chief Election Commissioner.

Citing Supreme Court ruling, Baghel said the selection panel for the CEC must have included the sitting Chief Justice of the Supreme Court.

He said this while releasing a video in his 'X' post.

"Our leader Rahul Gandhi during the meeting of the committee to select the next Election Commissioner has lodged a dissent note to the Prime Minister and Union Home Minister", he informed.

Gandhi stated that the most fundamental aspect of an independent Election



Commission free from executive interference is the process of choosing the Election Commissioner and Chief Election Commissioner. Baghel further said "By violating the Supreme Court order and removing the Chief

"By violating the Supreme Court order and removing the Chief Justice of India from the committee, the Modi Government has exacerbated the concerns of hundreds of millions of voters over the integrity of our electoral process"

Justice of India from the committee, the Modi Government has exacerbated the concerns of hundreds of millions of voters over the integrity of our electoral process.

"The process is being challenged in the Supreme Court and is due to be heard in less than forty-eight hours," Baghel added.

Govt implements new act for shops in C'garh

STAFF REPORTER ■
RAIPUR

The Chhattisgarh government has implemented the State Shops and Establishments (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act, 2017 and Rules 2021 in the entire state, it was announced on Tuesday.

The new act will apply only to those shops and establishments having 10 or more employees, an official statement said.

The registration fee for shops and establishments has been fixed based on the number of employees between the lowest charges of Rs 1,000 and the highest charges of Rs 10,000.

Earlier the fee ranged from Rs 100 to Rs 250.

It is mandatory for all eligible shops and establishments to get registered within 6 months of the implementation of the new Act



through state government's shramevjayate.cg.gov.in online portal.

The shops and establishments can be run 24x7 by providing their employees a week-off.

Earlier it was compulsory to close the shops and establishments once a week.

Also, the women employees are allowed to work at shops and establishments at night with safety measures.

The employers will have to maintain an e-record of their employees.

The shops and establishments will have to

provide an annual report of their employees on the online portal by February 15 of every year.

The registration of shops and establishments will be done by the Labour Department of Chhattisgarh. Earlier, it was done by civic bodies.

C'garh inks MoU with CEGIS, TRI for Administrative Excellence

STAFF REPORTER ■
RAIPUR

In a bid to enhance quality governance, transparency, and administrative efficiency, Chhattisgarh government on Tuesday signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Centre for Effective Governance of Indian States (CEGIS) and Transforming Rural India (TRI).

The agreement, signed in the presence of Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai, is expected to usher in a new era of efficient policymaking, financial discipline, and improved monitoring of government initiatives.

Speaking at the event, the Chief Minister emphasized



the government's commitment to ensuring optimal utilization of public resources and enhancing citizen-centric administration.

"The MoU signed will pave the way for transformative reforms in governance, financial management, and policy implementation", he said

The Chief Minister further elaborated on the strategic role of digital governance, stating that the MoU will help modernize governance by integrating e-governance solutions, real-time monitoring systems, and grievance redressal mechanisms.

"With this partnership, we aim to enhance digital transformation in governance, empower government employees and youth through skill development, and improve the overall efficiency of policy execution. Additionally, it will strengthen anti-corruption measures, ensuring that public welfare schemes reach beneficiaries without bureaucratic hurdles", he said.

JNM medical college to broadcast lectures to other institutions



STAFF REPORTER ■
RAIPUR

The Pt. Jawaharlar Nehru Memorial Medical College in Raipur will launch a live streaming service called "Tele-Lecture Class" on Wednesday for medical colleges across Chhattisgarh.

Under this, lectures will be presented and made accessible to students in other medical

colleges. Head of the Pathology Department, Dr. Arvind Neral, will kick off the programme. His lecture will be live-streamed across all government medical colleges in Chhattisgarh.

Along with educating other students, the lecturers will also virtually interact with them to resolve their doubts.

PHYSICAL POSSESSION NOTICE

Registered office: ICICI Bank Towers, Bandra-Kurla Complex, Bandra (East), Mumbai - 400051
Corporate Office: ICICI HFC Tower, JB Nagar, Andheri Kurla Road, Andheri East, Mumbai - 400059
Branch Office: Crescent Plaza, Unit-H4, 2nd Floor, Near Swaroop, Talkies, Station Road, Durg, Chhattisgarh - 491001
Whereas

The undersigned being the Authorized Officer of ICICI Home Finance Company Limited under the Securitisation, Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of the powers conferred under section 13(12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002, issued demand notices upon the borrowers mentioned below, to repay the amount mentioned in the notice within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice.

As the borrower failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrower and the public in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him/her under Section 13(4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the said rules on the below-mentioned dates. The borrower in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of ICICI Home Finance Company Limited.

The Borrower's attention is invited to provisions of sub-section (8) of section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets.

| Sr. No. | Name of the Borrower/ Co-borrower/ Loan Account Number | Description of property/ Date of Possession | Date of Demand Notice/ Amount in Demand Notice (Rs.) | Name of Branch |
|---------|--|---|--|----------------|
| 1. | Aashma Khatoun (Borrower), Khalikun Nisha (Co-Borrower), LHDRG00001470098. | Property is Situated At Khasra No 5243 2 And 5243 3 Ph No 19 Mouza Kohka Rnm Durg 1 Durg 5243 2 5243 3 Na Bhilai Chhattisgarh- 490023 (Ref. LAN No. LHDRG00001470098) . Bounded By- North: Seller Land, South: Road, East: House of Singh, West: Road./ Date of Possession- 14-Feb-25 | 15-02-2024 Rs. 1,05,287/- | Durg-B |
| 2. | Aashama. (Borrower), Khalikun Nisha (Co-Borrower), LHDRG00001470099. | Property is Situated At Khasra No 5243 2 And 5243 3 Ph No 19 Mouza Kohka Rnm Durg 1 Durg 5243 2 5243 3 Na Bhilai Chhattisgarh- 490023 (Ref. LAN No. LHDRG00001470099) . Bounded By- North: Seller Land, South: Road, East: House of Singh, West: Road./ Date of Possession- 14-Feb-25 | 15-02-2024 Rs. 26,13,838/- | Durg-B |

The above-mentioned borrowers(s)/ guarantors(s) are hereby given a 30 day notice to repay the amount, else the mortgaged properties will be sold on the expiry of 30 days from the date of publication of this Notice, as per the provisions under the Rules 8 and 9 of Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002.

Date: February 19, 2025
Place: Durg
Authorized Officer, ICICI Home Finance Company Limited

SYMBOLIC POSSESSION NOTICE

Branch Office: ICICI BANK LTD, BP-4, Technopolis Building, 4th Floor, Sector V, Salt Lake City, Kolkata West Bengal- 700091.
CIN No: L65190GJ1994PLC021012, www.icicibank.com

The Authorised ICICI Bank Officer under the Securitisation, Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of the powers conferred under section 13(12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002, issued Demand Notices to the borrower(s) mentioned below, to repay the amount mentioned in the Notice within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said Notice.

Having failed to repay the amount, the Notice is issued to the borrower and the public in general that the undersigned has taken symbolic possession of the property described below, by exercising powers conferred on him/her under Section 13(4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the said rules on the below-mentioned dates. The borrower in particular and the public in general are hereby cautioned not to deal with the property. Any dealings with the property will be subject to charges of ICICI Bank Limited.

| Sr. No. | Name of the Borrower(s)/ Loan Account Number | Description of Property/ Date of Symbolic Possession | Date of Demand Notice/ Amount in Demand Notice (Rs.) | Name of Branch |
|---------|---|---|--|-------------------|
| 1. | Manish Kumar Pandey/ Gunjan Pandey/ Amit Kumar Pandey/ Mig- 1- 2873, Industrial Area Near Kalbari Housing Board le Bhilai, Durg District Durg Chhattisgarh Bhilai - 490026/ LBRP00005788220 | Flat Bearing No. 1507, 15th Floor, Tower/ Block A, Type 2, Residential Group Housing Complex Named "Aggarwal Heights", Khasra No. 962, NH-58, Raj Nagar Extension, Village Noor Nagar, Pargana Loni, Tehsil And District Ghaziabad, U.P. Admeasuring An Area of Super Area 1275 Sq. Ft. I.E. 118.44 Sq. Mtr. And Covered Area 894 Sq. Ft. I.E. 83.13 Sq. Mtr. Together With Right To Use The Reserved one Car Parking Space No. 63, 1st Basement In The Complex, Along With Undivided And Impartibly Proportionate Share In The Land/ Date of Symbolic 14.02.2025 | September 25, 2024 Rs. 30,00,107.04/- | Bhilai/ Ghaziabad |
| 2. | Meha Tiwari/ Prince Kumar/ Kingston 27 Krishna Grand City Near Kohka Bhilai Bhowla Takah Pura Basti Chhattisgarh Bhilai - 440023/ LBLLI00004330698 | Plot No. 14, 3rd Floor, Block-G/4, Phase-II, Chouhan Housing Company Khasra No. 308, P.H. No. 15, R.N.M., Durg- 01, Municipal Corporation Ward No. 2 Smriti Nagar Ward, Part-2 Junwani, Mouza Junwani, Chouhan Town, Tehsil and District Durg, Chhattisgarh. Admeasuring An Area of 670 Sq.ft./ 62.27 Sq.mtr./ Date of Symbolic 14.02.2025 | September 23, 2024 Rs. 15,43,016.40/- | Durg/ Patna |

The above-mentioned borrowers(s)/guarantors(s) is/are hereby issued a 30 day Notice to repay the amount, else the mortgaged properties will be sold after 30 days from the date of publishing this Notice, as per the provisions under Rules 8 and 9 of Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002.

Date: February 19, 2025
Place: Durg & Bhilai
Sincerely Authorised Signatory For ICICI Bank Ltd.

'Mission Laxmi' for women's health awareness



blood haemoglobin, sugar level checkup, pap smear, and other health checkups to the women.

The initiative aims to spread awareness about the health of girls and women.

The Department of Health and Services and Bhilai Steel Plant, the flagship unit of the public sector SAIL, jointly organised the camp.

कार्यालय अधीक्षण अनिर्यता, लोक निर्माण विभाग, (वि. / या.) मंडल, बिलासपुर (छ.ग.)

ई-प्रोक्वोरमेंट निविदा सूचना Portal: <http://eproc.cgstate.gov.in>

नि.आ.सु. दिनांक 14/02/2025 तथा Online Bid Submission की अंतिम तिथि 22/02/2025

Physical Submission Last Date 27/02/2025

ऑनलाईन निविदा तृतीय आमंत्रण

| क्र. | नि.आ.सु. क्रमांक | ऑनलाईन टेण्डर नंबर | कार्य का नाम | लागत (लाख में) |
|------|------------------|--------------------|---|----------------|
| 1 | 84 | 165028 | Providing necessary Electrification work for Installation of DVOR at Bilasa Devi Kewat Airport, Chakarbhatha Bilasapur (C.G.) | 103.48 |

निविदा में नाम लेने की प्रक्रिया एवं निविदा के संबंध में विस्तृत जानकारी विभाग के उपरोक्त वेबसाई में देखे जा सकते है।

अधीक्षण अनिर्यता
लो.नि.वि., (वि./या.) मंडल
बिलासपुर (छ.ग.)

G- 242505511/5

IDFC FIRST Bank Limited
(erstwhile Capital First Limited and amalgamated with IDFC Bank Limited)
CIN : L65110TN2014PLC097792
Registered Office: KRM Towers, 8th Floor, Harrington Road, Chetpet, Chennai-600031. TEL: +91 44 4564 4000 | FAX: +91 44 4564 4022.

PUBLIC NOTICE
GOLD AUCTION CUM INVITATION NOTICE

The Below mentioned borrower has been issued notices to pay the outstanding amount towards the credit facility against Gold ornaments availed by him from IDFC FIRST Bank Limited. Since the borrower has failed to repay the dues under the facility. We are constrained to conduct an auction of the pledged Gold ornaments on 27/02/2025. In the event any surplus amount is realized from this auction, the same will be returned to the concerned borrower and if there is any deficit post the auction, the balance amount shall be recovered from the borrower through appropriate legal proceedings. IDFC FIRST Bank has the authority to remove the following account from the auction without prior intimation. Further IDFC FIRST Bank reserves the right to change the Auction Date without any prior notice.

| Loan Account Number | Customer Name | Branch Name |
|---------------------|---------------|-----------------|
| 132045578 | Premial Sahu | Sarangarh Rural |
| 132057387 | Mithlesh Sahu | Sarangarh Rural |
| 134308495 | Reshma Rubi | Kalghora Rural |

Auction will be conducted online through <https://egold.auctiontiger.net/http://gold.samil.in> on 27-Feb-25 from 12:00pm to 3:00pm. By way of this publication the concerned borrower are hereby given final notice and last opportunity to pay the facility recalled amount, with all interest and charges before the schedule auction date failing which the jewellery will be auctioned. Please note that, if the auction does not get completed on the same day due to time limit the bank will re auction the pledged gold ornaments within next 15 days on the same terms and conditions. If the customer is deceased all the conditions pertaining to auction will be applicable to his legal heirs.

Date : 19.02.2025
Place : CHHATTISGARH

Although every possible care and caution has been taken to avoid errors or omissions, this publication is being sold on the condition and understanding that information given in this publication is merely for reference and must not be taken as having authority of or binding in any way on the writers, editors, publishers, and printers and sellers who do not owe any responsibility for any damage or loss to any person, a purchaser of this publication or not for the result of any action taken on the basis of this work. All disputes are subject to the exclusive jurisdiction of competent court and forums in Delhi/New Delhi only. Readers are advised and requested to verify and seek appropriate advice to satisfy themselves about the veracity of any kind of advertisement before responding to any contents published in this newspaper. The printer, publisher, editor and any employee of the Pioneer Group will not be held responsible for any kind of claim made by the advertisers of the products & services and shall not be made responsible for any kind of loss, consequences and further product-related damages on such advertisements.

India, Qatar to double trade to USD 28 Billion

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

India and Qatar on Tuesday agreed to double bilateral trade to USD 28 Billion over the next five years and announced elevation of their relationship to the level of strategic partnership as Prime Minister Narendra Modi held talks with Amir Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al-Thani. The two sides also signed two agreements - one on establishing strategic partnership and another on Revised Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement and signed five memoranda of understanding to strengthen economic partnership, step up ties in areas such as management of archives, and cooperation in youth affairs and sports.

"The strategic partnership agreement actually elevates the present state of bilateral relationship to a strategic level. What we are looking at is deepening cooperation in fields of trade, energy security, as well as in regional and international fora," Arun Kumar Chatterjee, Secretary, Ministry of External Affairs, told reporters here. He said Modi and the Qatari



Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Amir of Qatar Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al Thani shake hands before a meeting at Hyderabad House, in New Delhi, Tuesday. Photos by: Ranjan Dimri/The Pioneer

Amir also decided to set a target to double bilateral trade from the current USD 14 billion to USD 28 Billion over the next five years. Last year, during Modi's visit to

Qatar, India had signed a USD 78 billion deal to extend LNG imports from the Gulf nation by another 20 years till 2048 at rates lower than the then prevailing prices.

Modi and the Amir held wide-ranging talks with focus on trade, investments, technology, energy and people-to-people ties, further cementing the "deep and traditional relation-

ship" between the two countries. They also exchanged views on "regional and global issues" of mutual interest, the Ministry of External Affairs said.

Earlier in the day, the Amir of Qatar was accorded a ceremonial guard of honour at the Rashtrapati Bhavan as President Droupadi Murmu welcomed the visiting leader. Modi was also present on the occasion.

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 relations, have continued to strengthen, the MEA earlier said.

The Amir of Qatar arrived here on Monday evening, his visit coming almost a year after Modi had visited the Gulf nation in February 2024.

Extending a rare gesture of hospitality, Modi received the Amir at the Delhi airport on Monday evening. He welcomed him with a warm handshake and hug, displaying the bonhomie between the two leaders.

Gyanesh Kumar to take over as 26th CEC on Wednesday

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Gyanesh Kumar, who as a Senior Union Home Ministry official played a key role in the government's move to abrogate provisions of Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir and setting up the Ram temple trust, will assume the office of the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) on Wednesday.

Kumar retired as Secretary in the Cooperation ministry in January 2024 and was appointed as an election commissioner in March 2024. He will become the 26th CEC, a day after incumbent Rajiv Kumar demitted office on Tuesday evening.

Kumar along with fellow election commissioner Sukhbir Singh Sandhu was appointed on the same day and was part of the Commission when the 2024 Lok Sabha polls were held. He is the first CEC to be appointed under a new law on the appointment of the members of the Election Commission (EC). His term will run till January 26, 2029, days



Newly appointed Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar with his wife poses for picture at the Election Commission's office, in New Delhi

before the EC is expected to announce the schedule of the next Lok Sabha election.

According to law, CEC and ECs demit office on attaining the age of 65 years or completing six years in the poll panel, whichever is earlier. Gyanesh Kumar will turn 65 on January 27, 2029.

During his tenure as the CEC, Kumar will oversee the Bihar Assembly polls later this year, and the Kerala and Puducherry Assembly polls in 2026. Similarly, he will oversee the assembly polls in Tamil Nadu and West Bengal, which are also due in 2026. Besides the vari-

ous assembly polls, he will also oversee the elections for President and Vice-President in 2027.

Kumar played a key role in implementing decisions following the abrogation of Article 370 of the Constitution in Jammu and Kashmir during his stint in the Union home ministry.

During his tenure in the ministry, he had also played a key role in setting up the Ram Temple trust post the Supreme Court verdict. He is also learnt to have closely monitored the SC hearings on Ram temple on a regular basis.

SC grants bail to Christian Michel James in Augusta Westland case

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Tuesday granted bail to alleged middleman Christian Michel James deported to India six years ago from Dubai in the controversial ₹3,600 Crore Augusta Westland helicopter purchase case being probed by the CBI. A bench of Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta observed James was in custody for the past six years while the investigation in the matter was still underway. James, however, cannot walk out of jail as he faces a related money laundering case by ED and his bail plea is pending in the Delhi High Court. "Petitioner was extradited in 2018 and has been in custody for more than 6 years now. According to CBI despite filing two chargesheets and a supplementary chargesheet, the investigation is still ongoing.

We are inclined to grant bail on such terms and conditions as determined by the trial court. The CBI will make appropriate request to the trial court for imposing necessary conditions," said the bench.

The top court said James would be released on bail, subject to terms and conditions decided by the trial court. The counsel for the CBI sought time saying the additional Solicitor General was unavailable for arguments. When the bench showed its inclination to grant bail, the CBI's lawyer said the plea was filed only in terms of seeking bail on medical grounds.

The court subsequently questioned the delay in the investigation and the trial in the case. It said given the speed, the trial would not conclude in 25 years. Advocates Aljo K Joseph and Vishnu Shankar, representing James, referred

to his six-year long incarceration.

The chopper purchase scam relates to the irregularities following the purchase of 12 VVIP helicopters from chopper design and manufacturing company Augusta Westland. James moved the apex court challenging the Delhi High Court's September 25, 2024 order refusing him bail in the case. British national James was extradited from Dubai in December, 2018, and arrested subsequently.

He is one among three alleged middlemen in the case. Guido Haschke and Carlo Gerosa are the other two.

The CBI chargesheet alleged an estimated loss of 398.21 million euros (about ₹2,666 Crore) to the exchequer due to the deal signed on February 8, 2010, for the supply of VVIP choppers worth 556.262 Million Euros.

UN report highlights alarming data gaps in Asia-Pacific

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Data gaps persist and leave some of the most vulnerable populations invisible in official statistics, limiting policymakers' ability to address their needs effectively across Asia and the Pacific, according to a new UN report.

The report also highlighted that how efforts from surveying hundreds of nomadic tribal households across Rajasthan to health-monitoring mobile applications in Indonesia are transforming sustainable development in the region. The new report by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) released on Tuesday demonstrated that by amplifying the voices of under-represented communities, these solutions are not only making policies more inclusive but also making sustainable development monitoring more representative across Asia and the Pacific.

However, the Asia and the Pacific SDG Progress Report 2025 also stressed that urgent action is still needed in order to achieve the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030.

"Data gaps persist and leave some of the most vulnerable populations invisible in official statistics, limiting policymakers' ability to address their needs effectively," underscored United Nations Under-Secretary-General and ESCAP Executive Secretary Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana. She added, "Constrained resources to modernize statistical systems pose additional hurdles. Without urgent action to accelerate progress, many of the Goals will remain out of reach."

The report said across Asia and the Pacific, communities are pioneering innovative solutions to bridge critical data gaps, ensuring that marginalized populations are no longer invisible in policymaking. "From surveying hundreds of

nomadic tribal households across Rajasthan State in India to health-monitoring mobile applications in Indonesia, these efforts are transforming sustainable development in the region," the report said.

The report said in India, the Centre for Social Equity and Inclusion conducted a household survey of 400 nomadic tribal households across eight locations in Rajasthan, with strong collaboration and support from community-based organizations and volunteers. The aim was to assess the development challenges of these tribal households and map community access to social protection.

The initiative highlighted the power of community-level information for localizing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). "Additionally, it strengthened community volunteers' capacity to collect and analyse data, enabling them to identify local challenges and advocate for solutions through meaningful

dialogues," the report said.

The report highlighted several SDG targets where Asia and the Pacific leads globally such as reducing income poverty (Goal 1), addressing under-nourishment (Goal 2), supporting small-scale industries (Goal 9), reducing hazardous waste (Goal 12), mitigating land degradation (Goal 15), and combating human trafficking and intentional homicide (Goal 16).

Despite these strides, slow progress or setbacks in critical goals such as quality education (Goal 4), decent work and economic growth (Goal 8), and responsible consumption and production (Goal 12) threaten regional efforts to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Rising fossil fuel subsidies, low literacy and numeracy rates, and unsustainable production patterns further compound these challenges, the report said. Meanwhile, environmental degradation, increasing vul-

nerability to natural disasters, and persistent greenhouse gas emissions are exacerbating setbacks on climate action (Goal 13), life below water (Goal 14) and life on land (Goal 15).

The report further found that development benefits often bypass vulnerable groups, with intersecting factors like age, gender, education, location and wealth exacerbating inequalities.

"Poverty and education level are the two most significant factors contributing to inequality of opportunity. Poorer households in rural areas with lower levels of education are the most disadvantaged in accessing basic services such as water, sanitation and clean energy," the report said.

To bridge these gaps, ESCAP called for innovative and inclusive data collection and analysis. Nuanced and granular data will provide policymakers a clearer understanding of the realities of specific population groups especially those most at risk of being left behind.

CENJOWS unveils publications on information warfare and Russia-Ukraine conflict



Centre for Joint Warfare Studies releases two critical publications on Contemporary Security Challenges, New Delhi. PIB

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Centre for Joint Warfare Studies (CENJOWS), under the Headquarters Integrated Defence Staff (HQ IDS), Ministry of Defence, in a significant step towards advancing strategic thought and policy discourse, unveiled two critical publications here on Tuesday.

Chief of Integrated Defence Staff & Chairman CENJOWS Lt General J P Mathew launched the February 2025 issue of the flagship journal Synergy, themed 'Information Warfare Impacting Joint Warfighting' and a monograph titled 'Russia-Ukraine War: Navigating the Ramifications for Europe and India'.

The specially curated edition of Synergy - February 2025, the peer-reviewed journal widely recognized for its in-depth analyses and thought provoking discussions, provides a comprehensive perspective on contemporary security dynamics and future-oriented strategies.

It examines the role of Information Warfare in Joint Warfighting in modern conflicts, including cyber, psychological, and electronic warfare. It explores Technological Disruption, assessing AI, cyber tools and digital deception in shaping the future of warfare and evaluates Strategic & National Security Impact and

India's challenges, particularly in response to adversarial IW tactics.

It further discusses Operational Convergence while exploring the integration of IW within Command, Control, Communications, Computers, Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (C4ISR) systems to enhance joint force effectiveness.

The monograph, titled 'Russia-Ukraine War: Navigating the Ramifications for Europe and India', provides an in-depth analysis of the geopolitical, economic and security implications of the ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict.

It assesses the war's impact on European stability, Indo-Russian relations and India's strategic positioning in a rapidly evolving global order. The study explores key aspects such as geopolitical realignments, energy security challenges, India's diplomatic balance, NATO's Indo-Pacific expansion, EU-India collaboration and long-term global security implications.

With the release of these two significant publications, CENJOWS reaffirms its commitment to fostering intellectual engagement on contemporary strategic issues. Both the monograph and Synergy journal are now available, serving as essential resources for the policymakers, military professionals, researchers and academic institutions.

Amit Shah reviews new criminal laws in J and K

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Tuesday here reviewed the status of the implementation of the new criminal laws in Jammu and Kashmir in the presence of Chief Minister Omar Abdullah and Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha.

Abdullah attended the meeting though law and order is directly handled by the Central government since the erstwhile state was bifurcated into the union territories of Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh in 2019. Besides Abdullah and Sinha, top officials of the Central government and Jammu and Kashmir government attended the meeting at North Block, officials said.

The Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita and the Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam replaced the colonial era Indian Penal Code, the Code of Criminal



Amit Shah reviews status of the implementation of new criminal laws in Jammu and Kashmir in the presence of CM Omar Abdullah and LG Manoj Sinha, New Delhi. PTI

Procedure and the Indian Evidence Act of 1872, respectively. The new laws came into effect from July 1 last year.

The home minister has already reviewed the status of the implementation of the new criminal laws in several states, including Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Uttarakhand, Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat. Abdullah said the three new criminal laws have been "by and large" implemented successfully in the

Union Territory and it was important that the citizens are made aware about the provisions of the new Acts. He was speaking to reporters outside the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) office after participating in a review meeting of the three laws that was chaired by Union Home Minister Amit Shah. "The meeting discussed the shortcomings and the areas to work upon for the smooth implementation of the three

laws in Jammu and Kashmir," Abdullah said. The home minister (Shah) said in the meeting that so far a similar exercise has been completed for 11 states and UTs, he added. "In case of Jammu and Kashmir, so far, the implementation of the new laws has been by and large successful except a few instances. These issues will be addressed," Abdullah said.

The chief minister added that while the implementation of the new laws was "not the responsibility" of the elected government, but it was important that people were made aware about their contents and proceedings as these are new laws. We will have to make efforts for making people aware about these three criminal laws, be it colleges, universities or other places, he said.

Abdullah said there was no discussion on the law and order issue in the UT, adding that this done when he met Shah at the Parliament recently.

PM Modi's PPC 2025: Toppers share success secrets

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Not stressing about volume of syllabus, prioritisation of topics and revision are among the tips shared by toppers of various exams during the last episode of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's annual Pariksha Pe Charcha broadcast on Tuesday.

From topper of NDA to UPSC, alumni of previous editions of Pariksha Pe Charcha shared their experience during a special session of PPC - an annual event in which Prime Minister Modi interacts with students appearing for the board examinations. In a shift from the traditional town hall format, Modi preferred a more informal setting this time and took students to Delhi's iconic Sunder Nursery for his annual interaction.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi interacts with students on different aspects of stress-free exams under Pariksha Pe Charcha programme, New Delhi. PTI

Eminent personalities such as Bollywood actress Deepika Padukone and Bhumi Pednekar, actor Vikrant Massey and spiritual leader Sadhguru have also shared their experiences and knowledge on key aspects of life and learning in different episodes of 'Pariksha Pe Charcha'. Chidvilas Reddy, a student of IIT

Bombay, said "there cannot be any fixed formula, what works for everyone is personalised preparation". Armanpreet Singh, who was topper of the National Defence Academy (NDA) entrance exam last year, said one should not be bothered about the volume of syllabus.

"We usually have a habit of counting the number of pages of the chapter before we begin reading or learning it. This impacts our psychology. I believe one should not be bothered about the volume at first and should divide everything into parts. Prioritise the topics and revise," he added. Nutrition and health experts Shonali Sabherwal, Rujuta Diwekar and Revant Himatsingka, YouTuber Gaurav Chaudhary popularly known as 'TechGuruji' and Radhika Gupta, MD and CEO, Edelweiss Mutual Fund, are among the other guests who have been part of the programme so far.

'Pariksha Pe Charcha' is an annual event in which Modi interacts with students appearing for the board examinations. During this, he also answers the students' queries related to exam stress and other issues.

India eyes greener future with shift to renewable energy

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Union Housing and Urban Affairs minister Manohar Lal on Tuesday said transitioning from thermal to renewable energy, utilising solar rooftops, and implementing regenerative braking in metros exemplify the shift toward a greener future.

CII Indian Green Building Council (CII IGBC), in partnership with the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC), inaugurated the 5th international conference on Green Metro Systems - The Future of Urban Mobility.

Addressing the conference, the minister said, "As humanity progresses, our innovations often clash with nature, bringing both advancement and risk. The rise in global temperatures beyond 1.5°C has become a cause for global concern, prompting nations to unite under agreements like the Paris Accord." India, too, has committed to achieving net-zero emissions by 2070, aligning its growth with sustainability.

Urbanisation and industrialisation have increased pollution, but initiatives such as the Delhi Metro have significantly reduced environmental impact, demonstrating that thoughtful infrastructure can drive progress while protecting nature, the minister said. Energy efficiency and clean power are the need of the hour. Transitioning from thermal to renewable energy, utilising solar rooftops, and implementing regenerative braking in metros exemplify the shift toward a greener future.

Technological advancements, like vertical solar panels and energy-efficient LED systems, pave the way for sustainable urban living. Furthermore, responsible consumption - whether in

air-conditioning usage or minimising wastage - can have a profound impact on energy conservation, he said.

"When metro started in Delhi, it has saved the national capital. Imagine, if the metro had not been there, Delhi would not have been able to develop this type of mobility system today. Around 70 lakh people are travelling daily in the metro," he said.

The minister also noted that the next thing is that the industrial revolution depends on power. Pollution also occurs in the generation of power because the traditional method is thermal, following which hydro also came. More thermal use will lead to pollution and global warming, he stated. Then the renewable energy came and how the responsibility the Delhi Metro has taken to contribute into the transfer of renewable energy through solar or wind is highly commendable, the minister said.

"At least the power requirement for our metro should come from renewable energy. We do not have to take any fossil power, and if we do this then we will make a huge contribution," he said.

According to a statement, Indian metro rail corporations are contributing to the green building movement by offering energy-efficient, low-emission public transportation thereby reducing urban pollution and traffic congestion. Many metro stations, throughout India, are designed with energy-efficient technologies and use solar power systems which help reduce energy consumption.

The DMRC is a pioneer in integrating solar power which helps meet a significant portion of its needs, it said.

Prayagraj airport handles over 100 flights daily amid Mahakumbh surge

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

Prayagraj Airport has undergone a remarkable transformation, handling over 100 flights daily—a sevenfold increase from its previous 16 flights per day before Mahakumbh-2025.

This surge in air traffic has resulted in new records for the airport, with February 16 marking the highest single-day footfall in its history, as it managed 20,297 passengers. This broke the previous record set on February 15, when the airport handled the same number of flights but with 19,822 passengers, according to airport officials.

The spike in air traffic is attributed to the massive influx of pilgrims arriving for the grand religious gathering. Official data reveals that on February 16, 10,152 passengers arrived on 60 flights, while 10,145 departed on another 60 flights. On February 15, 10,300 passengers landed, and 9,522 passengers took off.



Devotees arrive at Sangam amid a rush during the ongoing Mahakumbh Mela 2025, in Prayagraj PTI

Since its inauguration by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on December 16, 2018, and the launch of flight operations in January 2019, the airport has rapidly expanded its capacity. Between February 1 and 16, 2025, the airport handled 214,593 passengers across 1,288

flights, averaging 13,412 passengers daily and 81 flights per day. On February 13, the airport set a record of 16,310 passengers on 96 flights, before surpassing it with 20,297 passengers on February 16. On January 13, the opening day of Mahakumbh-2025, the airport

managed 33 flights carrying 4,252 passengers, and by January 28, traffic had nearly doubled to 8,378 passengers on 56 flights. From January 13 to February 16, the airport accommodated 312,536 passengers on 1,974 flights, averaging 8,929 passengers and 57

flights daily. To meet the surge in demand, Prayagraj Airport has undergone significant infrastructure upgrades. The terminal area was expanded from 6,700 square meters to 25,500 square meters, allowing the airport to handle 1,080 passengers during peak hours.

A new terminal building was added to accommodate an additional 1,620 passengers. Connectivity has also improved, with flights now linking Prayagraj to 17 cities, up from just eight in December 2024. In January 2025, more than 60 new flights were introduced, significantly improving accessibility. Parking capacity was tripled from 200 to 600 vehicles, and check-in counters expanded from 8 to 42.

Passenger convenience has been a top priority, with the airport now offering upgraded lounges, a childcare room, and more boarding bridges-up from 2 to 6. Food and beverage options have expanded, including the addition of the budget-friendly UDAN Yatri Cafe.

Devotees' count exceeds 55 Crore in Mahakumbh

PNS ■ MAHAKUMBH NAGAR

The 'Mahakumbh 2025,' held in Teerthraj Prayagraj since January 13, has scripted history with over 55 Crore devotees taking a holy dip in the Triveni Sangam, marking the largest participation in any religious, cultural, or social event. Half of India's 110 Crore Sanatan followers have immersed themselves, and this number is expected to surpass 60 Crore by the final bathing ritual on February 26. This remarkable turnout reflects the meticulous planning of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath-led Uttar Pradesh government, showcasing the grandeur of India's ancient tradition.

India, a land of religious diversity, is home to people from various faiths, with the largest group being followers of Sanatan Dharma. According to the World Population Review, Pew Research, India's population is approximately 143 Crore (1.43 Billion), with 110 Crore (1.10 Billion) followers of

Sanatan Dharma. In this context, the number of bathers at the Triveni Sangam represents 50 per cent of India's Sanatan followers. Compared to India's total population, over 38 per cent of the country's people have participated in the holy dip. On a global scale, according to Pew Research 2024, an estimated 120 Crore (1.2 Billion) people worldwide follow Sanatan Dharma, meaning that over 45 per cent of Sanatanis worldwide have immersed themselves in the Sangam.

The sacred confluence of Maa Ganga, Maa Yamuna, and the invisible Maa Saraswati has witnessed a remarkable surge in the number of saints, devotees, Kalpvasis, bathers, and householders, all immersing themselves in faith and devotion. This historic turnout has surpassed Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's expectations. Ahead of Mahakumbh, CM Yogi had predicted that this grand and divine event would break records in the number

of bathers, forecasting an initial count of 45 Crore devotees. His prediction proved accurate as early as February 11.

By February 14, the number had exceeded 50 Crore and reached an astounding 55 Crore. With nine days remaining in the Mahakumbh and one significant bathing festival yet to occur, the number of bathers is anticipated to surpass 60 Crore.

Breaking down the numbers, the highest turnout occurred on Mauni Amavasya, with nearly eight crore devotees participating in the holy dip. On Makar Sankranti, around 3.5 Crore devotees bathed during the Amrit Snan.

Additionally, over two crore devotees bathed on February 1 and January 30, while 1.7 Crore participated in Paus Purnima.

On Basant Panchami, 2.57 Crore devotees took the sacred dip in the Triveni Sangam, and more than two crore devotees followed suit on the Magh Purnima bathing festival.

UP Budget session starts amid Opposition uproar

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ LUCKNOW

The Uttar Pradesh Assembly's budget session commenced on Monday with high drama as the Samajwadi Party (SP) launched a scathing attack on the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) over alleged financial irregularities related to Mahakumbh-2025. SP leader Shivpal Singh Yadav accused the government of exploiting religious sentiments and misusing public funds in the name of the grand event.

Yadav questioned the BJP's claims regarding Mahakumbh, stating that the assertion of it occurring after 144 years has no basis in Hindu scriptures. "The BJP is deceiving people under the garb of Sanatan Dharma while actually manipulating their religious faith for political gains," he alleged.

Opposition Disrupts Governor's Address The first day of the budget session saw heated exchanges,



Samajwadi Party leaders protest during the UP Assembly budget session, in Lucknow PTI

with opposition members staging protests and disrupting Governor Anandiben Patel's address. Amidst loud sloganeering and chants of "Governor, go back," the assembly was thrown into chaos. The

ruling BJP condemned the opposition's behavior, calling it disrespectful and against democratic norms. Uttar Pradesh Finance Minister Suresh Khanna criticised the opposition's conduct, stating,

"Instead of constructive debate, the opposition is only interested in creating disorder. Their negative approach to every initiative of the government exposes their political desperation."

Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya also lashed out at the SP, accusing it of running away from real discussions. "The Governor's address highlights the government's achievements, but the SP is only interested in disruption. They thrive on anarchy rather than responsible politics," he said.

With tensions running high, the budget session is expected to be a battleground between the ruling BJP and the opposition, especially on key issues like governance, public expenditure, and the Mahakumbh's financial management. The coming days are likely to witness more confrontations as both sides dig in their heels ahead of crucial budgetary discussions.

Mahakumbh turned into 'mrityu kumbh': Mamata

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Tuesday termed Maha Kumbh as 'Mrityu Kumbh (Kumbh of death)' and slammed the Narendra Modi Government for tolerating humiliation of Indian immigrants who were deported back to India in chains.

Speaking in the State Assembly Banerjee alleged how the BJP's efforts to use religion to earn money had backfired.

Banerjee said, "Incidents like stampedes may happen in such big events but the question is whether the deaths could have been avoided with better planning. They only went about blindly publicising the event without caring for the common people. Only VVIPs' interests were taken care of. Maha Kumbh has turned into Mrityu Kumbh."

Alleging that the Uttar Pradesh Government hid facts about the actual number of deaths she said "thousands of dead



West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee speaks during session of the state Legislative Assembly, in Kolkata PTI

bodies were disposed of in Ganga" and "the bodies that were sent back to the respective States did not even have their post mortem conducted. There was no death certificates issued."

"I respect Maha Kumbh, I respect the holy Ganga Maa. But there is no planning.

Arrangements were made for the rich only. Tents were sold for as high as ₹1 Lakh whereas the poor people were made to walk for miles and fend for themselves. The Railways too would not take adequate measures considering the publicity that had been generated." Banerjee's Tuesday's diatribe

was a culminating point of ongoing war of words between the State BJP leadership including Opposition Leader Suwendu Adhikari and the TMC.

Banerjee attacked the BJP for creating division among the people by using religion. "I too am a Brahmin. I too perform Pujas daily, but I don't carry my religion to the market and sell it,"

Banerjee said backing her policy to back minorities.

"The Muslims constitute 30 to 33 per cent of the State's population. Don't they deserve good education and a better quality of life if my Government ensures that where is the problem and why shall I be branded as a member of the Muslim League," Banerjee said accusing the BJP of maintaining secret ties with the Muslim League.

"Do I divulge the stories of your secret parleys with the Muslim League for the sake of dividing people and winning votes," Banerjee asked.

Mamata is anti-Hindu CM: BJP

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

The Bengal BJP on Tuesday hit out at the Chief Minister for alleging that Mahakumbh had turned into 'Mrityu Kumbh'.

Calling Mamata Banerjee a "Hindu Virodhi" or anti-Hindu Chief Minister, the BJP MLAs who earlier staged a walkout from the State Assembly to protest against the suspension of four of their colleagues including Opposition Leader Suwendu Adhikari for 30 days, said the people would not forgive Banerjee for insulting the Hindu religion.

Adhikari who was staging a sit in demonstration outside the State Assembly wearing saffron turbans said "she has called the religious congregation on which crores of Hindus have faith a Mrityu Kumbh. The people will not tolerate such an insult to Hinduism."

Alleging that he and four other MLAs were suspended from the Assembly for raising the issue of disruption of Saraswati Puja in Bengal early this month Adhikari



BJP leader Suwendu Adhikari with party leader Agnimitra Paul addresses outside West Bengal Legislative Assembly PTI

said during Banerjee's rule anti-India activities had increased in the State.

"In the past several months Bangladeshis, Rohingya terrorists have been arrested by the Assam Police and Jammu and Kashmir Police which is a prove of how Bengal is becoming a safe haven for them. There at about 50-55 assembly constituencies and 30-35 police stations where the demography has changed completely changed, and Mamata Banerjee is directly responsible

for this," Adhikari said. The recent decibel level BJP-Trinamool Congress showdown is expected to rise in the coming months in view of the approaching Bengal Assembly elections next year. The saffron outfit has vowed to dislodge the Mamata Banerjee Government in 2026 State elections.

BJP IT Cell chief Amit Malaviya too attacked Banerjee for showing a disdainful behaviour for Hinduism by calling the Maha Kumbh 'Mrityu Kumbh.'

Siddaramaiah targets illegal residential layouts

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Tuesday instructed officials to put an end to the illegal residential layouts in Karnataka by issuing B-Khata to properties as a one-time settlement.

Siddaramaiah also directed them to complete the process within three months.

In residential areas in Karnataka, people get A-Khata for the layouts approved by the competent authorities such as Bengaluru Development Authority (BDA) or Urban Development Authorities. The properties on layouts without approval get B-Khata as they are illegal. This move will give relief to lakhs of property owners across the state and generate huge revenue for the government, a municipal officer said. Chairing a meeting with the officials of the Urban Development Department and Deputy Commissioners of the districts through video conference, the chief minister said the menace of illegal layouts should end once and for all.

"We will end this (illegal layout menace) by giving B-Khata once and for all. This is only one-time measure. You have been given only three months. Conduct a campaign and complete it within this time," Siddaramaiah was quoted in a statement issued by his office. The CM said the government will put an end to the unauthorised settlements which are there in all the cities, towns, municipal limits and villages.

"There should be no room for unauthorised settlements in the state from now on. We have started a drive to put an end to unauthorised settlements through the law. The officials should clearly understand and start their work," Siddaramaiah said in the meeting. He told the officers that the state is not getting revenue from unauthorised layouts.

"People are not getting civic amenities and local bodies are also losing income. All these disadvantages need to be put to an end," the chief minister said. The government will not compromise on this anymore, he said, and warned that the

administration will not tolerate if the officials compromise.

"If unauthorised settlements raise their heads again, the District Collector, Chief Officer, and Urban Planning Officers will be held accountable. We will take action against them without hesitation," the chief minister said in the meeting. He also asked the officials to drive away middlemen and brokers immediately.

Siddaramaiah also told the officials that they should clearly understand the government's vision behind enacting laws to curb illegal layouts. "Illegal layouts and settlements on revenue (agriculture) land should not raise their head again in the state. Those who have sites and built houses in unauthorised and revenue settlements should not be troubled."

"You have to give a one-time solution to facilitate the poor and middle class. Give everyone B-Khata within three months and end it. Start giving B-Khata from today itself. Let there be no confusion," the CM said at the meeting.

Efforts underway to boost connectivity between Delhi and Gurugram

STAFF REPORTER ■ GURUGRAM

In an effort to enhance connectivity between Delhi and Gurugram, discussions are underway to review ongoing development projects, improve road infrastructure, and address coordination issues among local authorities.

A meeting was held under the chairmanship of DS Dhesi, Principal Advisor, Urban Development, Government of Haryana in the Gurugram Metropolitan Development Authority (GMDA) office on Tuesday.

The meeting was attended by Chief Executive Officer GMDA, Shyamal Misra, Deputy Commissioner Gurugram, Ajay Kumar, DCP Traffic Viender Vij, Administrator HSVP Vaishali Singh, and senior officers of GMDA.

Improvement of connectivity between Delhi and Gurugram

and decongestion of the National Highway-48 were among the key matters discussed in the meeting.

The Principal Advisor outlined that both short term, and long-term remedial solutions must be explored by all concerned departments to facilitate improved connectivity and reduce traffic congestion for commuters traversing between the two cities.

Development of grade separators, widening of existing road infra and creation of alternative routes may be planned to channelise the existing traffic flow as well as to cater to the growing traffic demands in the future.

Strategic planning on key entry points on NH-8 from various parts of Gurugram along with critical sections such as Dhaura Kuan to Mahipalpur, Mahipalpur to Rajokri flyover and Delhi Border to Iffco Chowk, near Ambiance Mall among others is to be undertaken.

Telangana CM calls for unified efforts against cybercrime

PTI ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy on Tuesday said that the entire country should work as a unified entity, ensuring coordination among police officers from different states to tackle cybercrime.

Speaking at a cybersecurity conclave organised by the state police here, he said cybercrimes can happen anytime and from anywhere posing challenges to police officials in identifying the offenders, determining where they carried out the offence and bringing them to book. "Amid such challenges, the police have the responsibility of

preventing crime. When it comes to policing, we cannot move forward with policies and efforts confined to a particular state. The whole country should work as a single unit to combat cybercrime, and coordination is very much needed," he said. The spread of fake news on social media, as well as economic offences, needs to be checked, Reddy said.

Appreciating the state police officials for organising the conclave to promote understanding and coordination across the country, he expressed confidence that Telangana would serve as a role model for the nation in controlling cybercrime.

The Telangana government aims to be the number one state in cyber safety in the country, he said.

An estimated ₹22,812 Crore was stolen by cybercriminals in the country last year, posing a threat to both the economy and citizens, Reddy said. The Chief Minister said the state government is committed to working with experts and IT firms and allocating all necessary resources to build an ecosystem for cybersecurity solutions.

Telangana is one of the few states with a fully operational cybersecurity bureau and a dedicated cybercrime helpline to protect citizens, Reddy said.

Assam's Cachar imposes night curfew along Indo-Bangladesh border

PTI ■ SILCHAR

Assam's Cachar district administration on Tuesday clamped night curfew along the Indo-Bangladesh border to prevent the movement of extremist elements and smuggling of cattle and commodities, according to an official release.

Cachar District Magistrate Mridul Yadav has issued an order imposing strict restrictions along the India-Bangladesh border to maintain public order and curb illegal activities, the statement said. "The order, issued under Section 163 of BNSS, aims to prevent potential law and order disturbances arising from the

movement of extremist elements and unauthorised transportation of commodities and cattle across the border," it added.

The district magistrate highlighted the urgent need for preventive measures to tackle the apprehended threats. He emphasised that swift action is crucial to prevent unlawful activities, which could disrupt peace and security in the region. The order imposes specific restrictions effective immediately and will remain in force for two months unless otherwise directed, the release said. According to the directive, a night curfew has been implemented, prohibiting any move-

ment within a one-kilometre belt along the India-Bangladesh border in Cachar district between sunset and sunrise. This measure aims to curtail illegal cross-border activities and ensure heightened security during vulnerable hours, it added. Additionally, a strict ban has been imposed on any movement in the river Surma and on its high banks within the Indian territory of Cachar during the same hours.

The order also restricts fishing activities in the river, with exceptions only for local residents who obtain prior permission from the circle officer of Katigorah along with authorisation from the lessee.

Chhattisgarh CM slams Sam Pitroda's China comment

PTI ■ RAIPUR

Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai on Tuesday targeted the Congress over its leader Sam Pitroda's reported comment about China, saying it was evident that the opposition party stood with separatists and enemies of the country. Pitroda, chairman of the Indian Overseas Congress, was reported to have said that he did not understand the threat India faces from China, and it was often blown out of proportion. While the Congress distanced itself from his statement, Sai asked if the party would expel the leader.

"The Congress's hand' (a reference to its electoral symbol) is with separatists and enemies of

the country.

Pitroda, the head of the overseas wing of the party, has probably been appointed to strengthen the hands of the enemies of the country. He earlier insulted Indians with his racist remarks, and now he is repeatedly spreading false propaganda about India on various platforms and plotting to weaken the country, which is the Congress's undeclared policy," the chief minister said in a statement. He further claimed that it was the Congress's pre-meditated policy to call Pitroda's statements as his personal views after he speaks. "First appease the country's enemies by having your leaders make statements, and then call them personal remarks," he said.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

New CEC takes over

Gyanesh Kumar has been appointed as the next Chief Election Commissioner by the PM-led selection committee amid criticism

The senior Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar has been appointed as the next Chief Election Commissioner (CEC). The decision was made by the Prime Minister-led selection committee, which also named Haryana Chief Secretary Vivek Joshi as an Election Commissioner. However, the appointment has sparked controversy, with the Congress party questioning the process and alleging a lack of transparency. For decades, the Government held the power to appoint the Chief Election Commissioner and Election Commissioners. However, in 2023, the Supreme Court ruled that appointments should be made by a panel comprising the Prime Minister, the Chief Justice of India (CJI) and the Leader of the Opposition (LoP). Despite this ruling, the new CEC and Other ECs (Appointment, Conditions of Service and Term of Office) Act, 2023, replaced the CJI with a cabinet minister, a change that has been challenged in court. Gyanesh Kumar, is a seasoned bureaucrat and was appointed as an Election Commissioner in



March 2023. He has a tenure extending until January 26, 2029, meaning he will oversee critical elections, including the 2029 general elections. His selection follows the convention of appointing the senior-most Election Commissioner to the role of CEC. Gyanesh Kumar replaces Rajiv Kumar, whose term concluded recently.

The Congress party, led by Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi, has strongly opposed the appointment process. Gandhi submitted a dissent note during the selection committee meeting, urging the Government to defer the decision until the Supreme Court rules on the validity of the selection panel's composition.

Congress leaders Abhishek Manu Singhvi and Ajay Maken have argued that proceeding with the appointment while the court is hearing a challenge to the new selection law undermines democratic principles. The government's decision to exclude the CJI from the selection panel and desperation to elect the CEC before the judgement indeed creates an impression that the Government wants to have its way in the election of Chief Election Commissioner. Ensuring transparency and balance in selecting election officials is crucial to maintaining a fair democratic process. Meanwhile, Vivek Joshi, a 1989 batch IAS officer, is set to serve as an Election Commissioner until February 2030. The Supreme Court has yet to issue a final verdict on the legality of the new selection process. The outcome of this legal battle could shape the future of India's electoral governance for years to come. To put things in perspective, the Election Commission plays a crucial role in the government machinery during elections and can significantly impact their outcomes. However, it is often influenced by the government through the appointment of favorable officials. It was, in fact, TN Seshan who, as Chief Election Commissioner, challenged government control and brought a sense of independence to the Commission.

PICTALK



A squirrel enjoys palash flowers, in Nadia

Bangladesh wipes out history, shuns India at its own peril

With opposition forces emboldened, Bangladesh appears to be at a turning point, grappling with a shifting political landscape and growing internal discord



ASHOK K MEHTA

As a Mukti Jodha (freedom fighter - that's what Bangladeshis call Indian Army personnel who fought the Liberation War), I'm appalled at the recent turn of events, the mayhem in Dhaka and many parts of Bangladesh following Sheikh Hasina's virtual address to her party supporters from somewhere near Delhi which provided the pretext for the students of the protest movement and parties opposed to Awami League to set ablaze 32 Dhanmondi residence of Mujibur Rehman and a museum in his name.

Perhaps nothing 'physical' remains of Mujib's legacy even as Hasina said: "History cannot be wiped out". Mahfuz Alam, one of the student advisors to Mohammad Yunus, noted that symbols of fascism were being dismantled. Surprisingly BNP Secretary General Faqruul Aslam Alamgir protested the disorder and violence at a meeting with Yunus where he sought early elections. Later, he asked India to hand over Hasina and her accomplices to the government in Dhaka for trial.

After Mujib's assassination in 1975, Hasina and her sister Rehana were provided refuge in India; history repeated itself in 2024. I was invited in November 2023, two months before the elections, to speak at the Liberation War Museum on the role of Chancellor Willy Brandt of Germany. One of the trustees of the museum, Dr Mofidul Hoque, took me around the museum. There was a section completely devoted to the political movement against Rawalpindi led by Sheikh Mujib called Story of Liberation Under a Genocide. The accent of the display depicted the liberation war fought by Bengali Mukti Jodhas with India in a support role. But it did have a gallery on the training of Mukti



decades here. In an interview with The Hindustan Times, Lisa Curtis, a Trump 1.0 White House NSC chief of South and Central Asia, has dismissed any US role in Hasina's ouster. Last week, PM Modi raised concerns about Bangladesh with President Trump who denied any role of US Deep State in it. But for India, there are lessons from events in Bangladesh that the establishment is silent about because there was non-partisan support for Hasina and Awami League with the country's liberation linked to Mujib and India.

After Mujib's assassination in 1975, Hasina and her sister Rehana were provided refuge in India; history repeated itself in 2024. I was invited in November 2023, two months before the elections, to speak at the Liberation War Museum on the role of Chancellor Willy Brandt of Germany. One of the trustees of the museum, Dr Mofidul Hoque, took me around the museum. There was a section completely devoted to the political movement against Rawalpindi led by Sheikh Mujib called Story of Liberation Under a Genocide. The accent of the display depicted the liberation war fought by Bengali Mukti Jodhas with India in a support role. But it did have a gallery on the training of Mukti



AFTER MUJIB'S ASSASSINATION IN 1975, HASINA AND HER SISTER REHANA WERE PROVIDED REFUGE IN INDIA; HISTORY REPEATED ITSELF IN 2024

Bahini by the Indian Army. During my five-day visit, the BNP was out of the streets every other day coupling with garment factory workers and their unions demanding higher wages. A virtual war was being fought on the streets with the dominant Awami League counter-protestors unleashed.

Most people I spoke to said if there was a free and fair election BNP would win. This was one view I received even from our High Commission. While people were angry with India for supporting Hasina, the media was scared of the government. Despite the negative vibes of the Hasina regime, Delhi was reluctant to abandon her. I wonder what inputs Indian intelligence agencies had provided. They likely failed to read the mood of the people which led to a students' revolt.

One other truth and for me, the most significant was that the goodwill dividend of India's support to the liberation war and attainment of nationhood has dissipated - to put it crudely, the use-by date was long over. The 1970 military vintage soldier had disappeared nearly two decades ago from all three armed forces - India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. In any case, very few units from East Pakistan Rifles and still fewer Bengalis

in the Pakistan Army were deployed in East Pakistan. The war effort was predominantly India with Mukti Bahini in support; that was the ground reality. As far as the Liberation War is concerned, Bangladesh had changed the narrative (history) as was evident from the Liberation War Museum. For India though, it was an iconic, once-in-a-thousand-year victory (over arch-enemy Pakistan) which became a landmark event for the Indian political and military leadership to celebrate and commemorate.

Yunus's Law Advisor, Arif Nazrul has said: "India was only an ally in the 1971 war victory, nothing more", a sentiment that was endorsed by the office of the interim government. Hasina's second spell of refuge in India is a matter of immense resentment in Bangladesh, but Delhi will not let down a friend and ally. India has opened its doors to several leaders fleeing from Nepal, Afghanistan, Myanmar and Maldives. But for housing Hasina, there will be costs for India.

(The writer, a retired Major General, was Commander, IPKF South, Sri Lanka, and founder member of the Defence Planning Staff, currently the Integrated Defence Staff. The views expressed are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

KHELO INDIA WINTER GAMES POSTPONED

Madam — Climate change has finally made its presence felt by disrupting the 'Khelo India' to be held in Gulmarg. The second and final stage of the Khelo India Winter Games 2025, scheduled to be held in Gulmarg, Jammu and Kashmir from Saturday, has been postponed due to insufficient snowfall. The revised schedule will be announced when the weather conditions are favourable for the competitions. But now it does not seem that this will happen because now the spring season is going to enter the country. This is the second consecutive year that the event has been rescheduled due to insufficient snowfall. Last year, the Games had to be postponed till February after there was no rain in January.

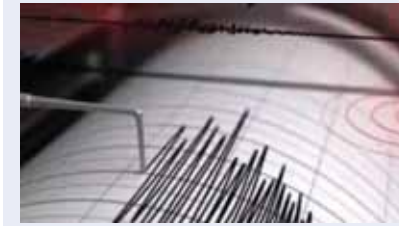
The lack of snowfall in many areas is mainly due to climate change, as rising temperatures lead to more precipitation in the form of rain rather than snow, leading to a decrease in snow piles and snow cover, especially in mountainous areas. This phenomenon is often called "snow drought." It is not just India that is being affected by climate; it is a global problem. The whole world is grappling with it. I think the way temperatures are rising and the problem of forest fires, not only in developing countries but also in developed countries, are making people feel helpless. It is quite possible that after the next few years, it will be difficult to even host the Winter Olympic Games. In the future, sports like ice hockey and ice skating will disappear into the pages of history.

Jang Bahadur Singh | Jamshedpur

SC QUESTIONS GOVERNOR'S ACTIONS

Madam — The Supreme Court, while reserving its judgment on the writ petition filed by the Tamil Nadu Government, stated in unambiguous terms that Governor Ravindra Narayana Ravi's action of transferring the nine bills to the President of India after their re-enactment and re-submission was not in accordance with the provisions in the Constitution. The court noted that Governor Ravi had

Earthquake jolts Delhi



Residents of Delhi and its adjoining areas woke up to strong tremors caused by an earthquake of magnitude 4.0 on Monday morning. According to the National Centre of Seismology, the quake hit at a depth of about 5 km. Videos showed the ground and buildings shaking, forcing people to rush out of their homes. There have been no reports of casualties or damage to properties, but many residents claimed

that the tremors were so strong that it felt like a bridge was collapsing. However, the quake itself was not of a high-intensity magnitude. The gravity of the situation soon gave way to humour as social media users began sharing their reactions to the unexpected jolt. Memes and jokes flooded various platforms, with many poking fun at the situation while still conveying their fear and disbelief. While the suddenness of the earthquake understandably caused concern among residents, the quick wit and resilience of the people of Delhi-NCR were on full display as they found ways to cope with the unexpected turn of events. Like Mumbai rains, the Delhi tremor gave a tough time to people there, but it was business as usual once the tremor settled.

Aarohi Gupta | Ujjain

INDUSTRY STATUS FOR TOURISM

Madam — The Kerala government is planning to grant industry status to its tourism sector and cleared the way for the long-pending demand of the state tourism and hospitality sector of a specific area. Granting industry status to that specific area will encourage investment and development in that sector. Although it has been estimated that the Kerala tourism sector is providing direct or indirect employment to 25 lakh people since 2018, rapid urbanisation, infrastructural development, and natural calamities and catastrophes could possibly lead to an all-time low. The step initiated by the government authority for turning Kerala tourism into an industry-specific area could benefit the mass audience and also help with better employment opportunities in the near future.

Dimple Wadhawan | Kanpur Nagar

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

Cracking CUET: A step-by-step guide to smart preparation

By understanding the exam format, setting clear goals, and following an organised study schedule, students can cover the syllabus while boosting confidence

Preparing for the Common University Entrance Test (CUET) can feel overwhelming, especially when juggling schoolwork and other responsibilities. However, CUET has transformed the university admissions process and a well-structured preparation plan can help you cover the syllabus effectively while boosting your confidence. By following a strategic approach over a few months, you can significantly enhance your chances of success.

Step 1: Understand the CUET Exam Structure

Before diving into preparation, familiarise yourself with the exam format. CUET typically consists of Language, Domain-Specific Subjects, and a General Test. It is essential to obtain the official syllabus for each section and review it thoroughly. Understanding the types of questions, including multiple-choice and short-answer formats, is crucial. Be mindful of the marking scheme, particularly any negative marking. Step 2: Assess Your Readiness: Start by evaluating your current knowledge and preparedness. Ask your-



self whether you have covered the syllabus for all sections, how confident you feel about scoring well on a scale of 1 to 5, and which section you find most challenging. Step 3: Set Clear Goals Define your objectives based on your preferred university and course. Research the CUET score requirements for institutions like Delhi University, Banaras Hindu University and JNU. Having a clear goal will keep you motivated and focused throughout your preparation journey. Step 4: Allocate Study Time Using insights from your self-assessment, create a balanced study plan. If you are strong in certain subjects, spend less time on them but focus on regular revision. Dedicate more time to weaker subjects to better understand concepts and solve practice ques-

tions. For example, if the General Test is particularly challenging, allocate 1.5-2 hours daily to this section while spending an hour on Language or Domain-Specific Subjects.

Step 5: Weekly Study Schedule A well-structured timetable ensures consistency. A practical approach is to focus on one major subject per day from Monday to Friday. Saturday can be dedicated to taking mock tests and analysing performance, while Sunday should be reserved for reviewing the week's progress, revising difficult topics, and taking time to relax and recharge. Using time-blocking techniques by dividing the day into study, practice, and relaxation slots can be highly effective.

Step 6: Right Study Resources Relying on quality study materials is essential. NCERT textbooks provide conceptual clarity, while CUET-specific guides and reference books offer targeted preparation. Online platforms that provide mock tests and video lectures can be valuable resources. Practicing with previous years' question papers helps in identifying

important topics and understanding question trends.

Step 7: Regular Mock Tests Mock tests play a crucial role in CUET preparation. Aim to take at least one full-length test per week and gradually increase the frequency as the exam approaches.

Step 8: Exam Logistics Since CUET is a computer-based test, familiarising yourself with the technical requirements is necessary. Marking significant dates on a calendar will help in avoiding last-minute surprises.

Step 9: Maintain a Balance Avoiding burnout is vital for effective preparation. Incorporate short breaks into your study routine and engage in activities like exercise or meditation to stay refreshed. Ensuring you get seven to eight hours of sleep daily will help in maintaining focus and energy levels.

Step 10: Stay Positive Consistency is the key to achieving success in CUET. Sticking to your study plan while remaining adaptable to changes will be beneficial. (The writer is Managing Partner, FinTram Global LLP; views are personal)



PANKAJ DHINGRA



FIRST COLUMN

THE SELECTIVE NARRATIVES THAT SHAPE OUR LEGACY

History is often told from the perspective of the victors, shaping collective memory in ways that serve those in power



A P S MALHOTRA

It is a well-established fact that History, often, is written from the perspective of the victor, making it a one-dimensional testimony of what transpired. Thus, while for the British Imperial power, the tumultuous events of 1857 were an unsuccessful mutiny by sepoys from across the subcontinent, for us, it is the celebrated 1st War of Independence. Before being put down with unprecedented vengeance and ferocity, it ignited a spark of 'freedom' which continued to inspire generations to come, although, in the process, they sowed venomous seeds of communal discord, deftly using their devious policy of divide and rule, which continue to rile us to this day.

Not surprisingly, the events instilled such fear in the minds of our forefathers that it was several decades before any credible stirrings for a fight to overthrow the yoke of imperialism were felt. To take this forward, while Bhagat Singh & his young comrades might have been treated as terrorists/ militants/ extremists by the British, their cohorts and courts, we extol them as valiant freedom fighters and martyrs, so much so, that more than a century after Bhagat Singh sacrificed his life for the liberation of the motherland, we are witnessing a massive surge in his following, especially in the youth.

It is not difficult to gauge this- there is a proliferation of his photographs - on the rear of cabs and auto-rickshaws, trucks and buses, emblazoned on T-shirts, and so on. Given all this, what startled me, and raised my hackles was Rajmohan Gandhi's book, Punjab: A History from Aurangzeb to Mountbatten.

Otherwise, a well-researched and thoughtfully written book, his treat-



ment of the life and times of Bhagat Singh is rather disappointing - in a tome of more than 400 pages, there are just a few lines-a cursory mention of Bhagat Singh and his comrades. Sadly, even in these lines, they are not feted as freedom fighters, but rather disparagingly, as delinquent and misguided youth, militant in their approach, hellbent on derailing the course of the freedom struggle. Well, while all of us have the liberty or freedom to form our opinion, in a broader sense, it needs to be noted that sensitivities of a significant mass of our population don't get hurt. Because, if the Butcher of Amritsar became a celebrated hero among a section of his countrymen, hailed as "the man who saved India" and a beneficiary of a fund of over ₹26,000, then, we need serious introspection as to how we portray our martyrs for the generations to come, because, as I repeatedly quote the words of George Santayana- "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it."

The way history is written shapes how future generations perceive their past. The events of 1857 and Bhagat Singh's sacrifices remain crucial in our national consciousness, inspiring countless individuals. Yet, the selective representation of these figures in historical narratives raises concerns. When colonial figures like Dyer are glorified, while our martyrs are downplayed or misrepresented, it calls for reflection. As a society, we must ensure that our heroes are remembered with the respect they deserve. After all, history is not just about the past—it is a guide for the future, reminding us never to forget our hard-fought struggles.

(The author is a freelance writer; views are personal)



K S TOMAR

mented INDIA alliance, which was evident in Haryana and Delhi, provides the BJP with an additional advantage. The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), which has maintained a strong presence in West Bengal for decades, is expected to play a pivotal role in BJP's bid to oust Mamata in the upcoming assembly elections. **Modi's Appeal:** BJP's Trump

Card Prime Minister Narendra Modi remains the BJP's strongest electoral force. His leadership, credibility, and mass appeal, especially among the middle and lower-income groups, were decisive in Delhi's outcome. Welfare schemes like free ration under the PM Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana directly strengthened BJP's voter base. Modi's ability to project governance stability ensured that BJP's campaign resonated powerfully across the capital.

Modi's credibility as a vote magnet and his guarantee to implement manifesto promises worked like magic for the BJP, which continues to heavily rely on him even for state elections. In his characteristic style, Modi remarked, "Congress has achieved a dou-

ble hat-trick of defeats with zero seats," predicting its further decline. Meanwhile, he celebrated BJP's string of victories in Haryana, Maharashtra, and Delhi, reinforcing his status as the party's ultimate campaigner. **Decoding JBP's Triumph in Delhi:** The Modi Factor Several key factors contributed to BJP's victory in Delhi, with Modi playing a central role. His strong stance on national security, Hindutva, and governance stability shaped the electoral landscape, particularly among urban and middle-class voters.

Modi's National Security & Hindutva Image As the national capital, Delhi is heavily influenced by nationalistic narratives. Modi's firm policies on Pakistan, terrorism,



and Hindutva solidified BJP's core voter base. By framing the election as Modi vs. Kejriwal rather than a contest over local governance, BJP ensured that Modi's persona resonated strongly with voters.

PM's Welfare Schemes vs. AAP's Freebies While AAP is known for its populist freebies, the Modi

government strategically countered this with large-scale welfare initiatives such as PM Awas Yojana (housing for the poor), Ujjwala Yojana (free LPG connections), and Ayushman Bharat (health insurance). By shifting the narrative from Kejriwal's localized welfare model to Modi's broader national schemes, the BJP successfully attracted lower-income and migrant voters.

A masterstroke was Modi's assurance that AAP's welfare schemes would not be discontinued but rather enhanced, promising to elevate Delhi into a world-class city. This neutralized Kejriwal's traditional advantage and reassured voters. BJP also aggressively targeted AAP over corruption allegations, particu-

larly the liquor scam, altering voter perception. Modi's leadership was positioned as a guarantee of cleaner governance, contrasting sharply with AAP's tainted image. **Impact of BJP's Victories in Other States:** BJP's recent wins in Haryana, Maharashtra, and other key states created a momentum effect, reinforcing voter confidence in Delhi. Haryana's proximity made its results particularly influential, given the shared demographics.

The party's national winning streak also boosted cadre morale, creating a perception of electoral invincibility, which further weakened AAP's positioning as an alternative force. **Why AAP Lost:** AAP's defeat was not solely due to BJP's strategic campaign

but also its political miscalculations. Kejriwal underestimated Congress's relevance, assuming it was a non-factor. This resulted in AAP's defeat in 14 assembly segments where the victory margin was lower than the votes secured by Congress candidates. AAP had previously employed a similar strategy in Haryana, splitting Congress's votes and aiding BJP's gains. However, this tactic backfired in Delhi, as the ignored Congress vote share ended up damaging AAP more than BJP. One of the biggest takeaways from AAP's crushing defeat is the blow to Arvind Kejriwal's national ambitions.

(The writer is a senior political analyst and strategic affairs columnist; views are personal)

Balancing growth with fiscal discipline



UTTAM GUPTA

Key measures, including tax reliefs and incentives for private sector, reflect a balanced approach to making India a developed economy by 2047



A theme that reverberates in the Union Budget for FY 2025-26 presented by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on February 1, 2025, is 'sustaining the momentum of high economic growth alongside sticking to fiscal consolidation'. During FY 2024-25, the GDP growth (gross domestic product) is estimated at 6.4 per cent which is more or less close to the 6.5 per cent - 7 per cent projected in the Economic Survey (ES) for 2023-24 presented by Sitharaman in the Parliament on February 1, 2024. For FY 2025-26, according to the Economic Survey presented by her on February 1, 2025, the 'GDP is projected to expand between 6.3 per cent - 6.8 per cent. On top of a growth of 8 per cent plus for three consecutive years beginning FY 2021-22 and 6.4 per cent during FY 2024-25, this is a fairly impressive number in sync with the overarching goal of making India a 'developed economy' by 2047. As for fiscal deficit or FD (excess of total expenditure over total receipts), in her interim budget presented on February 1, 2024, she had set a target of 5.1 per cent of the nominal GDP (NGDP). Subsequently, in the full budget for FY 2024-25 presented on July 23, 2024, she revised it downward to 4.9 per cent of the GDP taking into account the extra cushion of Rs 130,000 crore in the dividend transferred by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to the Central Government from its operations during the FY 2023-24 (the actual dividend transfer was Rs 210,000 crore against a provision of Rs 80,000 crore made in the interim budget).

Going by the revised estimate (RE) presented by the FM on February 1, 2025, the FD for FY 2024-25 has turned out to be even lower at 4.8 per cent of the NGDP. Even as the total revenue expenditure at Rs 3698,000 crore is only marginally lower than the budget estimate (BE) of Rs 3709,401 crore, the RE for capital expenditure is about Rs 1018,000 crore - a significant Rs 93,000 crore less than the BE of Rs 1111,111 crore. Indeed, this is a major reason behind a reduction of one percentage point in the FD over the BE. In the budget for FY 2025-26, the FM has provided for a total expendi-



THE GOVERNMENT'S EFFORTS NEED TO BE COMPLEMENTED BY THE OWNERS OF BUSINESSES. THEY SHOULD GO FOR BETTER DISTRIBUTION OF INCOME THROUGH MEASURES SUCH AS KEEPING PRICES LOW, INCREASING SALARIES AT THE LOWER RUNGS, REINVESTING PROFITS FOR GROWTH ETC

ture of Rs 5065,000 crore which is a significant increase of 7.4 per cent over the RE for FY 2024-25 at Rs 4716,000 crore.

This includes capital expenditure of Rs 1121,000 crore, the remaining Rs 3944,000 crore being the provision for revenue expenditure. Sitharaman has received flak for going slow on investment. This is unjustified and out of sync with the underlying facts. We need to compare the budget provision with RE for FY 2024-25. On this basis, the provision of Rs 1121,000 crore is 10.1 per cent higher than the actual capital expenditure during 2024-25.

That apart, the position about the government's capital spending has to be viewed in totality. In her Budget for FY 2019-20, Sitharaman had laid a roadmap for catapulting the Indian economy to US \$5 trillion by 2024-25. In sync with this target, she had projected an investment requirement of over Rs 100,00,000 crore to build the infrastructure over five years. Of this, 39 per cent or Rs 39,00,000 crore was to come from the Centre and states each and the balance was Rs 22,00,000 crore from the private sector. The Centre's actual capital expenditure was for 2020-21: Rs 439,000 crore; 2021-22: Rs 554,000 crore; 2022-23: Rs 750,000 crore; 2023-24: Rs 1000,961 crore and Rs 1018,000 crore for 2024-25.

Over five years, the total comes to Rs 3761,000 crore which is more or less close to the amount the Centre intended to contribute. Continuing with the above trend, a substantial allocation of Rs 1121,000 crore for 2025-26 shows the determination of the government to maintain the momentum of investment in building roads, highways, expressways, waterways, ports, airports, railways, irrigation projects, hospitals, schools, technical and research institutions and

so on in symphony with strengthening the foundations of the economy for a VIKSIT BHARAT by 2047.

But, investment by the central government alone won't be enough to give the intended boost to the economy. The States and private sector also need to do their bit. The Centre has been helping the former to boost their capital spend. During 2022-23, it provided them with 50-year Rs 100,000 crore interest-free loans. During 2023-24, such transfers were Rs 130,000 crore. For FY 2024-25, the transfers were kept at Rs 150,000 crore though the states didn't fully utilize the amount.

For FY 2025-26 also, the budget allocation is kept at Rs 150,000 crore. To promote investment in the private sector, the Centre has given a host of incentives to industries and businesses. Amongst others, these included a reduction in the corporate tax rate to 15 per cent for new manufacturing enterprises. In 2024-25, the tax rate on foreign firms was reduced from 40 percent to 35 percent. But, the private sector has complained of 'demand constraint'. Team Modi has addressed this as well. In the budget for FY 2024-25, Sitharaman altered tax slabs under the New Income Tax (IT) regime besides increasing the standard deduction by Rs 25,000.

This resulted in a relief of around Rs 17,500 in personal income tax or PIT. In the budget for FY 2025-26, she has given a bonanza by announcing that a person earning Rs 1200,000 per annum need not pay any tax (taking into account the standard deduction of Rs 75,000/- now, the threshold comes to Rs 1275,000). Besides, she has altered the tax slabs to give relief even to persons earning more. Thus, a person earning Rs 2400,000 per annum will pay Rs

110,000 less. Consequent to these changes, the taxpayers will gain Rs 100,000 crore annually.

These savings will be distributed amongst a total of 7 crore persons who won't have to pay any tax. This will give a big boost to demand. However, this by itself won't give the required fillip. The government's efforts need to be complemented by the owners of businesses. They should go for better distribution of income through measures such as keeping prices low, increasing salaries at the lower rungs, reinvesting profits for growth etc.

Coming to FD, apart from lower capital expenditure (than BE), the contribution of buoyant tax collections in containing it at 4.8 per cent of the NGDP during FY 2024-25, can't be brushed aside. The RE of gross tax revenue (GTR) during the year at Rs 3850,000 crore is higher than the BE of Rs 3840,000 crore which itself was 14.6 per cent higher than GTR of Rs 3350,000 crore during 2023-24. For 2025-26, FM has kept the FD target at 4.4 per cent. To achieve it, she has set the GTR collections at still higher Rs 4270,000 crore.

This despite lower tax rates shows that the government's efforts at broadening the tax base and ensuring tax compliance are working. In an interview, Sitharaman cited capital expenditure of 4.3 per cent as being more or less close to FD of 4.4 per cent. From a fiscal consolidation angle, this is a good sign as borrowings are used only for building assets. However, the government needs to go beyond by generating a 'revenue surplus' so that borrowings even for building capital assets can be cut. This is necessary as 'interest payments' alone account for over 25 per cent of total spending by the Centre.

(The writer is a policy analyst; views expressed are personal)

BJP sets its sights on West Bengal and Bihar after Delhi triumph

The Aam Aadmi Party's collapse in Delhi and the cracks within the INDIA bloc have emboldened the BJP to win Bengal and Bihar

Buoyed by its sweeping success in Delhi, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has now turned its focus towards the crucial state elections in West Bengal in 2026, where it aims to dethrone Mamata Banerjee. What once seemed like an uphill battle is now a tangible possibility for the party. Emboldened by the Aam Aadmi Party's (AAP) debacle in Delhi, BJP leaders are proclaiming, "Delhi ki jeet hamari ho gayi, ab 2026 main Bengal ki baari hai" (We have won Delhi; now it's Bengal's turn in 2026).

Bihar, too, is set to witness an intense electoral showdown. With recent victories boosting the party's confidence, BJP and its allies plan to enter the battle with renewed aggression to retain power. The frag

ment of the life and times of Bhagat Singh is rather disappointing - in a tome of more than 400 pages, there are just a few lines-a cursory mention of Bhagat Singh and his comrades. Sadly, even in these lines, they are not feted as freedom fighters, but rather disparagingly, as delinquent and misguided youth, militant in their approach, hellbent on derailing the course of the freedom struggle. Well, while all of us have the liberty or freedom to form our opinion, in a broader sense, it needs to be noted that sensitivities of a significant mass of our population don't get hurt. Because, if the Butcher of Amritsar became a celebrated hero among a section of his countrymen, hailed as "the man who saved India" and a beneficiary of a fund of over ₹26,000, then, we need serious introspection as to how we portray our martyrs for the generations to come, because, as I repeatedly quote the words of George Santayana- "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it."

Delta jet flips upside down on snowy Toronto runway

All 80 passengers aboard survive

PTI ■ TORONTO

A Delta Air Lines jet flipped on its roof while landing Monday at Toronto's Pearson Airport, but all 80 people on board survived and those hurt had relatively minor injuries, the airport's chief executive said.

Snow blown by winds gusting to 40 mph (65 kph) swirled when the flight from Minneapolis carrying 76 passengers and four crew attempted to land at around 2:15 pm. Communications between the tower and pilot were normal on approach and it's not clear what went so drastically wrong when the plane touched down.

Peter Carlson, a passenger travelling to Toronto for a paramedics conference, said the landing was "very forceful." "All the sudden everything just kind of went sideways and then next thing I know it's kind of a blink and I'm upside down still strapped in," he told CBC News. Canadian authorities held two brief news conferences but provided no details on the crash. Video posted to social media showed the aftermath with the

Mitsubishi CRJ-900LR overturned, the fuselage seemingly intact and firefighters dousing what was left of the fire as passengers climbed out and walked across the tarmac.

"We are very grateful there was no loss of life and relatively minor injuries," Deborah Flint, CEO of Greater Toronto Airports Authority, told reporters.

Delta CEO Ed Bastian said in a statement that "the hearts of the entire global Delta family are with those affected."

Toronto Pearson Fire Chief Todd Aitken said 18 passengers were taken to the hospital. Earlier in the day, Ornge air ambulance said it was transporting one pediatric patient to Toronto's SickKids hospital and two injured adults to other hospitals in the city.

Emergency personnel reached the plane within a few minutes and Aitken said the response "went as planned." He said "the runway was dry and there was no cross-wind conditions."

The crash was the fourth major aviation accident in North America in the past three weeks. A commercial jetliner and an

Army helicopter collided near Reagan National Airport in Washington, DC, on January 29, killing 67 people.

A medical transportation plane crashed in Philadelphia on January 31, killing the six people on board and another person on the ground. And on February 6, 10 people were killed in a plane crash in Alaska.

The last major crash at Pearson was on August 2, 2005, when an Airbus A340 landing from Paris skidded off the runway and burst into flames amid stormy weather. All 309 passengers and crew aboard Air France Flight 358 survived the crash.

On Monday, Pearson was experiencing blowing snow and winds of 32 mph (51 kph) gusting to 40 mph (65 kph), according to the Meteorological Service of Canada. The temperature was about 16.5 degrees Fahrenheit (minus 8.6 degrees Celsius). The Delta flight was cleared to land at about 2:10 pm. Audio recordings show the control tower warned the pilots of a possible air flow "bump" on the approach.

"It sounds to me like a controller trying to be helpful, meaning

the wind is going to give you a bumpy ride coming down, that you're going to be up and down through the glide path," said John Cox, CEO of aviation safety consulting firm Safety Operating Systems in St. Petersburg, Florida.

"So it was windy. But the airplanes are designed and certified to handle that," Cox said. "The pilots are trained and experienced to handle that."

The plane came to a rest at the intersection of Runways 23 and 15L, not far from the start of the runway. Just after the crash, tower controllers spoke with the crew of a medical helicopter that had just left Pearson and was returning to help.

"Just so you're aware, there's people outside walking around the aircraft there," a controller said.

"Yeah, we've got it. The aircraft is upside down and burning," the medical helicopter pilot responded.

Carlson was among those outside the aircraft. He said when he took off his seat belt he crashed onto the ceiling, which had become the floor. He smelled gas, saw aviation fuel



A Delta Air Lines plane heading from Minneapolis to Toronto crashed at Toronto's Pearson Airport.

PTI

cascading down the cabin windows and knew he needed to get out but said his fatherly intuition and paramedic skills kicked in. He looked for those he could help.

Carlson and another man assisted a mother and her young son out of the plane and then Carlson dropped onto the tarmac. Snow was blowing and it "felt like I was stepping onto tundra."

"I didn't care how cold it was, didn't care how far I had to walk, how long I had to stand — all of us just wanted to be out of the

aircraft," he said.

Cox, who flew for US Air for 25 years and has worked on US National Transportation Safety Board investigations, said the CRJ-900 aircraft is a proven aircraft that's been in service for decades and does a good job of handling inclement weather.

He said it's unusual for a plane to end up on its roof.

"We've seen a couple of cases of takeoffs where airplanes have ended up inverted, but it's pretty rare," Cox said.

Among the questions that need to be answered, Cox said, is why

the crashed plane was missing its right wing.

"If one wing is missing, it's going to have a tendency to roll over," he said. "Those are going to be central questions as to what happened to the wing and the flight data recorder and cockpit voice recorder. They will be found, if not today, tomorrow, and the Transportation Safety Board of Canada will read them out and they will have a very good understanding of what actually occurred here."

The US Federal Aviation Administration said in a state-

ment that the Transportation Safety Board of Canada would head up the investigation and provide any updates. The NTSB in the US said it was sending a team to assist in the Canadian investigation.

Endeavor Air, based in Minneapolis, is a subsidiary of Delta Air Lines and the world's largest operator of CRJ-900 aircraft. The airline operates 130 regional jets on 700 daily flights to over 126 cities in the US, Canada and the Caribbean, according to the company's website.

Top Russian, US officials meet for talks on Ukraine war without Kyiv

PTI ■ RIYADH

Senior officials from Russia and the US met in Saudi Arabia on Tuesday to begin talks on improving ties and negotiating an end to the war in Ukraine.

Delegations led by US Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov met at the Diriyah Palace in Riyadh. The meeting marks another pivotal step by the Trump administration to reverse US policy on isolating Russia and is meant to pave the way for a meeting between US President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Trump earlier this month upended US policy toward Ukraine and Russia by saying he and Putin had agreed to begin negotiations on ending the war.

Ukrainian officials aren't taking part in the meeting, and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy

said Monday that his country won't accept the outcome if Kyiv doesn't take part.

Rubio was accompanied by US national security adviser Mike Waltz and Special Envoy Steve Witkoff, while Lavrov sat next to the Kremlin's foreign affairs adviser, Yuri Ushakov. Saudi Foreign Minister Faisal bin Farhan and national security adviser Mueaed al Alban joined Rubio, Lavrov and others for the start of the meeting but were expected to leave early in the talks. Ushakov said Monday the talks would be "purely bilateral" and would not include Ukrainian officials.

The talks mark a significant expansion of US-Russian contacts nearly three years into a war that has seen ties fall to the lowest level in decades.

Lavrov and then-US Secretary of State Antony Blinken talked briefly on the sidelines of a G-20 meeting in India nearly two years ago, and

in the fall of 2022, US and Russian spymasters met in Turkey amid Washington's concerns that Moscow could resort to nuclear weapons amid battlefield setbacks.

The recent US diplomatic blitz on the war has sent Kyiv and key allies scrambling to ensure a seat at the table amid concerns that Washington and Moscow could press ahead with a deal that won't be favourable to them.

France called an emergency meeting of European Union countries and the UK on Monday to decide how to respond.

French President Emmanuel Macron on Tuesday said he spoke by phone to Donald Trump and Volodymyr Zelenskyy following the meeting.

"We seek a strong and lasting peace in Ukraine," Macron wrote on X. "To achieve this, Russia must end its aggression, and this must be accompanied by strong and credible security

guarantees for the Ukrainians," he said and vowed to "work on this together with all Europeans, Americans, and Ukrainians."

Ahead of the talks, Kirill Dmitriev, the head of the Russian Direct Investment Fund who the Kremlin said might join the talks, underscored the importance of the meeting in comments to The Associated Press. "Good US-Russia relations are very important for the whole world. Only jointly can Russia and the US address lots of world problems, and resolve for global conflicts and offer solutions," Dmitriev, who said he and his team would focus on economic issues at the talks, told AP.

The Saudi-owned satellite channel Al Arabiya, citing the Russian delegation, described Moscow's priority as "real normalisation with Washington".

Diriyah Palace sits across the street from Riyadh's Diplomatic Quarter. It's also just next to the Ritz Carlton

hotel, which became famous in 2017 after de facto leader Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman detained other princes and the country's elite there as part of what the royal court called a crackdown on corruption, that also sidelined any potential challenge to his taking control of the kingdom.

Hosting the talks is a major step toward a goal Prince Mohammed has pursued throughout the war — putting the kingdom in the middle of diplomatic negotiations. It has helped in prisoner negotiations and hosted Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy for an Arab League summit in the kingdom in 2023. Zelenskyy will likely travel to Saudi Arabia later this week.

For Prince Mohammed, once described as a "pariah" by former President Joe Biden over the 2018 killing of Washington Post journalist Jamal Khashoggi, hosting such talks burnish the otherwise-tar-

nished image the West has for him.

Ahead of the summit, the Saudi daily newspaper Okaz described the moment as the "world's eye on Riyadh".

Writing in the London-based but Saudi-owned newspaper Asharq Al Awsat, journalist Mishari al-Dhaidi described the summit as "a major step on the international political chess arena, revealing the status of Saudi Arabia and its positive influence for the benefit of the people all the people", he wrote.

The neighbouring United Arab Emirates, the prince also has maintained close relations to Russia throughout its war on Ukraine, both through the OPEC+ oil cartel and diplomatically as well.

Hosting the summit also balances the harsh criticism recently levied by the kingdom's tightly controlled media at President Donald Trump over his repeated comments that he wants the US to "own" the Gaza

Strip, which has been devastated by the Israeli military offensive there since the October 7, 2023, Hamas attack. The Palestinians want Gaza and the West Bank for a future state, something backed by the wider Arab world and nearly all of the international community.

Meanwhile, Russia continued to pummel Ukraine with drones, according to Kyiv's military. The Ukrainian air force said Russian troops launched a barrage of 176 drones at Ukraine overnight, most of which were destroyed or disabled by jamming.

One Russian drone struck a residential building in Dolynska in Kirovohrad region, injuring a mother and her two children and prompting an evacuation of 38 apartments, the regional administration reported. Four more residential buildings were damaged by drone debris in the Cherkasy region of Ukraine, according to local officials.

Hamas says it will free 6 Israeli hostages on Saturday, four bodies before then

PTI ■ CAIRO

Top Hamas leader says the militant group will release six living Israeli hostages on Saturday and the bodies of four hostages on Thursday, including the remains of the Bibas family that has become symbols of Israeli suffering in the war.

The fate of Shiri Bibas and her two young sons, Ariel and Kir, reflected the feeling of helplessness as dozens of hostages remain in Gaza after Hamas' October 7, 2023, attack. Israel has said it is extremely concerned about their condition but has not confirmed their deaths.

Hamas leader Khalil al-Hayya, in prerecorded remarks on Tuesday, did not elaborate beyond saying that the "Bibas family" would be included in the handover of four bodies. The six to be released on

Saturday are the last living hostages to be freed under the first phase of the ceasefire in Gaza. Three hostages had been expected to be freed on Saturday. It was not clear why Hamas changed the plan.

The warring sides have yet to negotiate the second and more difficult phase, in which Hamas would release dozens more hostages in exchange for a lasting ceasefire and an Israeli withdrawal.

The hostage releases have come in exchange for hundreds of Palestinian prisoners held by Israel.

The ceasefire that began in mid-January has paused the deadliest fighting ever between Israel and Hamas, surged aid into devastated Gaza and allowed hundreds of thousands of Palestinians to return to their homes as Israeli forces withdrew from much of the territory.

Villagers in southern Lebanon prepare to return home

PTI ■ DEIR MIMAS (LEBANON)

Israeli forces withdrew from border villages in southern Lebanon on Tuesday, under a deadline spelled out in a US-brokered ceasefire agreement that ended the latest Israel-Hezbollah war. Lebanese soldiers moved into the areas from where the Israeli troops pulled out and began clearing roadblocks set up by Israeli forces and checking for unexploded ordnance. They blocked the main road leading to the villages, preventing anyone from entering while the military was looking for any explosives left behind.

Most of the villages waited by the roadside for permission to go and check on their homes.

Egypt developing plan to rebuild Gaza

PTI ■ CAIRO

Egypt is developing a plan to rebuild Gaza without forcing Palestinians out of the strip in a counter to President Donald Trump's proposal to depopulate the territory so the US can take it over.

Egypt's state-run Al-Ahram newspaper said the proposal calls for establishing "secure areas" within Gaza where Palestinians can live initially while Egyptian and international construction firms remove and rehabilitate the strip's infrastructure.

Egyptian officials have been discussing the plan with European diplomats as well as with Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the UAE, according to two Egyptian officials and Arab and Western diplomats. They are also discussing ways to fund the reconstruction, including an international conference on Gaza reconstruction, said one of the Egyptian officials and an Arab diplomat. The officials and diplomats

spoke on condition of anonymity because the proposal is still being negotiated.

The proposal comes after an international uproar over Trump's call for the removal of Gaza's population of some two million Palestinians. Trump said the US would take over the Gaza Strip and rebuild it into a "Riviera of the Middle East", though Palestinians would not be allowed back.

Palestinians have widely said they will not leave their homeland, while Egypt, Jordan — backed by Saudi Arabia — have refused Trump's calls for them to take in Gaza's population. Rights groups have widely said the plan amounts to forced expulsion, a potential war crime. European countries have also largely denounced Trump's plan.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has praised the idea and says Israel is preparing to implement it.

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, who was in Saudi Arabia

on Monday in a tour of the region, has said the US was up to hearing alternative proposals.

Egypt's Al-Ahram newspaper said the proposal is designed to "refute American President Trump's logic" and counter "any other visions or plans that aim to change the geographic and demographic structure of Gaza Strip".

Gaza is nearing a critical juncture with the first phase of a ceasefire due to run out in early March. Israel and Hamas must still negotiate a second phase meant to bring a release of all remaining hostages held by the militants, a full Israeli withdrawal from Gaza and a long-term halt to the war.

Any reconstruction plan will be impossible to implement without a deal on the second phase, including an agreement on who will govern Gaza in the long term.

Israel demands the elimination of Hamas as a political or military force in the territory, and

international donors are unlikely to contribute to any rebuilding if Hamas is in charge.

Central in Egypt's proposal is the establishment of a Palestinian administration that is not aligned with either Hamas or the Palestinian Authority to run the strip and oversee the reconstruction efforts, according to the two Egyptian officials involved in the efforts.

It also calls for a Palestinian police force mainly made up of former Palestinian Authority policemen who remained in Gaza after Hamas took over the enclave in 2007, with reinforcement from Egyptian- and Western-trained forces.

Asked about the possibility of deploying an Arab force in Gaza, one Egyptian official and the Arab diplomat said Arab countries would only agree if there were a "clear path" for the establishment of an independent Palestinian state.

Israeli Prime Minister

Benjamin Netanyahu has rejected any Palestinian state as well as any role for Hamas or the Western-backed Palestinian Authority in governing Gaza, though he has not put forward any clear alternative.

Hamas has said it is willing to give up power in Gaza. Hamas spokesman Abdul Latif al-Qanou told AP on Sunday that the group has accepted either a Palestinian unity government without Hamas' participation or a committee of technocrats to run the territory. The Palestinian Authority, which governs pockets of the West Bank, has so far opposed any plans for Gaza that exclude it.

The Western diplomat said France and Germany have backed the idea of Arab countries developing a counterproposal to Trump's plan, and that Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi discussed his government's efforts with the French president in a phone call earlier this month.



People take part in the 'No Kings Day' protest on Presidents Day in Washington, in support of federal workers and against recent actions by President Donald Trump and Elon Musk, by the Capitol in Washington. The protest was organised by the 50501 Movement, which stands for 50 Protests 50 States 1 Movement.

Elon Musk's DOGE seeks access to taxpayer data at IRS

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

Elon Musk's Department of Government Efficiency is seeking access to troves of sensitive taxpayer data at the IRS, two people familiar with the inner workings of the plan who were not authorised to discuss the matter publicly told AP on Monday.

If successful, Musk and his group would have access to millions of tightly controlled files that include taxpayer information, bank records and other sensitive records. The people who spoke to the AP and requested anonymity said DOGE is specifically seeking to access the IRS' Integrated Data Retrieval System, which enables employees "to have instantaneous visual access to certain taxpayer accounts", according to the IRS website.

Advocates fear that the potential unlawful release of taxpayer records could be used to maliciously target Americans,

violate their privacy and create other ramifications.

Harrison Fields, a White House spokesman, said in an emailed statement that "waste, fraud, and abuse have been deeply entrenched in our broken system for far too long. It takes direct access to the system to identify and fix it."

"DOGE will continue to shine a light on the fraud they uncover as the American people deserve to know what their government has been spending their hard-earned tax dollars on," he said.

Democratic lawmakers are trying to fight against DOGE plans to access IRS data. Senators Ron Wyden, D-Ore, and Elizabeth Warren, D-Mass, sent a letter to acting IRS Commissioner Douglas O'Donnell, demanding copies of any memos that would grant IRS system access to Musk or DOGE. The senators are also seeking justifications for DOGE efforts to inspect tax returns and

private bank records.

Along with fears that DOGE access to taxpayer data may not be legal, "we are also extremely concerned that DOGE personnel meddling with IRS systems in the middle of tax filing season could, inadvertently or otherwise, cause breakdowns that may delay the issuance of tax refunds indefinitely", the letter reads.

"Any delay in refunds could be financially devastating to millions of Americans who plan their budgets around timely refunds every spring." January 27 was the official start date of the 2025 tax season, and the IRS expects more than 140 million tax returns to be filed by the April 15 deadline.

The Washington Post on Sunday first reported on DOGE's plans to access taxpayer data.

The news comes as the IRS plans to lay off thousands of probationary workers

in the middle of tax season, according to two sources familiar with the agency's plans who were unauthorised to discuss them publicly. Cuts could happen as soon as this week.

Previously, IRS employees involved in the 2025 tax season were told they will not be allowed to accept a buyout offer from the Trump administration until after the taxpayer filing deadline, according to a letter sent recently to IRS employees.

Additionally, attorneys general from 14 states challenged the authority of DOGE to access sensitive government data housed at Treasury and exercise "virtually unchecked power" in a lawsuit. The lawsuit, filed in federal court in Washington, says the actions taken by Musk at the helm of DOGE can only be taken by a nominated and Senate-confirmed official. It cites constitutional provisions that delineate the powers of Congress and the president.

Costa Rica agrees to accept Indian migrants from US

PTI ■ SAN JOSE
Costa Rica has agreed to serve as a "bridge" to repatriate illegal immigrants in the US, including from India and Central Asia, according to an official release on Tuesday. The first group of 200 migrants will arrive at the Juan Santamaria International Airport on a commercial flight on Wednesday, accord-

ing to a statement by Costa Rican President Rodrigo Chaves Robles' office. "The Government of Costa Rica agreed to collaborate with the United States in the repatriation of 200 illegal immigrants to their country. These are people originating from countries in central Asia and India," said the statement. The release did not say how many of them are from India. "Costa Rica will serve as

a bridge for them to reach their countries of origin," it said. These immigrants will be transferred to a temporary migrant care facility in the Central American nation before repatriation to their countries of origin. The US-funded repatriation is being supervised by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), which will oversee the migrants' care during their stay in the coun-

try, according to the statement. This comes days after Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the US, where he met President Donald Trump to discuss key bilateral issues, including immigration. Three batches comprising a total of 332 Indians have already been sent back to India amid an intensified crackdown by the Trump administration against illegal immigrants.

4 paramilitary personnel killed in Pak; convoy attack toll rises

PTI ■ PESHAWAR
Four paramilitary personnel were killed and five others injured when unknown militants attacked their squad in Pakistan's violence-hit Kurram, where an aid convoy was also targeted. According to security officials, the militants ambushed the paramilitary Kurram Militia squad in Lower Kurram's Ochit area late on Monday, where an aid convoy carrying essential supplies was ambushed earlier in the day. The injured and dead were shifted to a hospital, where the condition of one injured was stated to be critical. The military, which typically issues statements in such situations, has yet to comment. The attack on the aid convoy in sectarian violence-hit Kurram district in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province killed a truck driver and injured 15 others. Late last night, another injured succumbed to injuries, taking the toll to two, according to officials. The convoy, which was travelling from Thall to Kurram, was attacked at multiple locations along the route, prompting officials to turn the convoy of 64 vehicles back to Hangu as a precautionary measure. It is the latest in a series of violent incidents in Kurram, which has been a hotbed of violence for decades, with deep-seated tribal and sectarian conflicts often resulting in bloodshed and prolonged blockades. The latest wave of violence erupted in November 2023, when two police-escorted convoys were ambushed, killing at least 40 people.

Senior Afghan Taliban officials in Japan for talks

PTI ■ TOKYO
Japanese officials said senior Afghan Taliban officials were in Japan for talks, as part of Tokyo's efforts to help Afghanistan build a more inclusive political system and protect human rights. It's their first known diplomatic trip outside the Central Asia-Middle East region since the Taliban seized control of Afghanistan in 2021. The unidentified Taliban senior officials were invited by grant-making organization Nippon Zaidan and were also set to talk with Japanese Foreign Ministry officials, Chief Cabinet

Secretary Yoshimasa Hayashi told reporters Monday. The Taliban officials were invited to help them better understand the need "to have a broad perspective toward their future nation building and to widely accept humanitarian assistance from the international community for vulnerable people, Nippon Zaidan said in a statement. It declined to give details of the visitors and their schedule. Japan does not formally recognize the Taliban as Afghanistan's official government. Hayashi noted the visit was initiated by a private organization but complements the Japanese

government's effort to work with the international community to call on the Taliban to make policy changes that protect human rights. Restrictions the Taliban impose on women and girls are a major hurdle to the Taliban being recognised as the official government of Afghanistan. The trip was initially revealed by Latif Nazari, the Taliban's deputy economy minister, who posted on the X platform that a "high-level delegation" was heading to Japan and that the Taliban seek dignified engagement with the world as an active member of the international community.

Chinese navy helicopter flies too close to Philippine patrol plane

PTI ■ OVER THE SCARBOROUGH SHOAL (SOUTH CHINA SEA)
A Chinese navy helicopter flew within 10 feet (3 metres) of a Philippine patrol plane on Tuesday in a disputed area of the South China Sea, as the Filipino pilot warned by radio: "You are flying too close, you are very dangerous." The helicopter was attempting to force a Cessna Caravan turbo-prop plane belonging to the Philippine Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources out of what China claims is its airspace over the hotly disputed Scarborough Shoal off the northwestern Philippines. An Associated Press journalist and other invited foreign media representatives on the plane witnessed the tense 30-minute standoff as the Philippine plane pressed on with its low-altitude patrol around Scarborough with the Chinese navy helicopter hovering close above it or flying to its left in cloudy weather. "You are flying too close, you are very dangerous and endangering the lives of our crew and

passengers," the Philippine pilot told the Chinese navy helicopter by radio at one point. "Keep away and distance your aircraft from us, you are violating the safety standard set by FAA and ICAO." The pilot was referring to the standard distance between aircraft required by the US Federal Aviation Administration and the International Civil Aviation Organisation to prevent air disasters. The Philippine Coast Guard and the Bureau of Fisheries said in a statement that they remain "committed to asserting our sovereignty, sovereign rights and maritime jurisdiction in the West Philippine Sea, despite the aggressive and escalatory actions of China." They referred to the Philippine name for the stretch of waters in the South China Sea closer to the Philippines' western coast. Chinese officials did not immediately comment on the incident, but in past encounters they have steadfastly asserted China's sovereign rights over the Scarborough and sur-

rounding waters and warned that its forces would protect the country's territorial interests at all costs. Tuesday's encounter, which is expected to be protested by the Philippine government, is the latest flashpoint in a decades-long territorial standoff in one of the world's busiest trade routes, which involves China, the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan. Confrontations on the high seas have spiked between Chinese and Philippine coast guards in the last two years at Scarborough, a traditional fishing area, and the Second Thomas Shoal, where a grounded Philippine navy ship has served as a territorial outpost since 1999 but has since been closely watched by Chinese coast guard, navy and suspected militia ships. China deployed its coast guard, navy and suspected militia ships around Scarborough after a tense standoff with Philippine ships in 2012. The following year, the Philippines brought its disputes with China to international arbitration.

Rajapaksa's son indicted

PTI ■ COLOMBO
Namal Rajapaksa, the eldest son of former president and prime minister Mahinda Rajapaksa, was on Tuesday indicted and released on bail by the High Court here for an alleged misappropriation out of an Indian investment prior to 2015. Leader of the Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP), Namal Rajapaksa is the only member of the Rajapaksa family now a serving member of parliament. The Rajapaksa says they are being targeted on a political witch hunt. The case is to be next heard on March 27. Namal Rajapaksa was arrested in June 2016 for allegedly misusing Sri Lankan Rupees 70 million from the Krishi Hotel project to develop the game of rugby in the island nation. He had been a Sri Lanka international rugby player.

Iran accuses detained British couple of spying

PTI ■ TEHRAN
Iranian authorities have accused a British couple detained in the country since January of spying, state media reported Tuesday. Mizanonline.ir, a news website affiliated with the country's judiciary, cited Asghar Jahangir, a spokesman for the judiciary as saying that the Revolutionary Guard's intelligence forces incarcerated the couple, a man and a woman, while in the southern

Iran accuses detained British couple of spying

city of Kerman at the time. They are accused of spying and having links to intelligence agencies of "hostile countries" and collecting information from several Iranian provinces, according to Jahangir who didn't provide further details. The report didn't name the couple, however, a family statement released Saturday through the UK Foreign Office identified them as Craig and Lindsay Foreman, saying their situation was distressing and causing "significant

concern." The two were reportedly travelling around the world on motorbikes when they were detained in January, British media, citing social media posts, reported that they had crossed into Iran from Armenia on December 30 and were planning to enter Pakistan next. The British ambassador to Iran, Hugo Shorter, met the two in Kerman on Wednesday in the presence of officials from Iran's justice department and the governor's office.

PUBLIC NOTICE
General public is hereby informed that Mr. Karan Babu Gupta is the owner of Residential Property No. 121 area measuring 250 Sq. Mtrs. in Block-C, Situated at Sector-108, Noida, District Gautam Budh Nagar (U.P.), by virtue of Transfer Deed cum Sale Deed dated 03.02.2025. Vide Doc. No. 1132 and same financed & mortgaged by my client i.e. Axis Finance the Original Allotment Letter, Lease Deed, Agreement to Sell, Possession Certificate, Will, pertaining to the aforesaid property have been lost and complaint LR No.252666/2025, was registered on 13.02.2025 with DRI Plot. Any person(s) found in possession of aforesaid original documents, then kindly contact the undersigned along with original property document, within 7 days from date of this notice on below address, failing which the claim as per aforesaid original document shall be treated as null and void in respect of the subject property. **Raghav Tiwari, Advocate** Ch. 830, Patiala House Courts, New Delhi - 110001. Mob. :- 91-9879183226

किच्छा शुगर कम्पनी लिमिटेड, किच्छा जलपट्ट-ऊरम सिंह नगर (उत्तराखण्ड)
जलपट्ट-ऊरम सिंह नगर (उत्तराखण्ड)
Mob. No. 8392923226, 8392923229 Email: purchase@kiccha@gmail.com
ई-निविदा सूचना (E-Tender) दिनांक 17/02/2025
उत्तराखण्ड अधिगम प्राप्ति (प्रोक्वोरमेंट) निम्नवाली 2017 में निहित प्राधिकरणों के अन्तर्गत मिल में होने वाले विभिन्न कार्य एवं श्रेणी कार्य को 04 बंधु हेतु ठेके पर रिजे जाने के लिए दो निविदा प्रणाली (Two Bid System) के अन्तर्गत ई-निविदाये **www.uktenders.gov.in** पर आमंत्रित की जाती है। **www.uktenders.gov.in** पर आमंत्रित निविदा ही मान्य होगी, अन्य माध्यम से प्राप्त निविदा स्वीकार्य नहीं होगी। आवेदनकर्ता होने पर नोबोलेटिओन **L-1/H-1** (प्रारम्भ चक्रवर्त/न्यूनतम) दर दाता से किया जायेगा। **L-1/H-1** से दरो को सम्बन्ध में सहमति न होने पर आम निविदादाताओं से वार्ता की जा सकती है। निविदा सूचना मिल की वेबसाइट **www.kicchaugar.com** पर भी उपलब्ध है। **अधिशारी निदेशक**

In The Court of: **Sh. Ravinder Singh-1, Judge**, Family Court-02, East District Karkardooma Courts, Delhi, Court No. 45. For Service Of The Court Notice To The General Public Through Publication. **GP-08/2024 N.D.O.H. 02/04/2025 Kawal Preet Kaur** **Jaswinder Singh & Ors. Court Notice** To, The State (Govt. of NCT of Delhi), Secretary, Child & Welfare Department, 7th Floor, M.S.O. Building, I.T.O., New Delhi. Whereas in the above noted petition, the applicant/petitioner has applied for custody of the minor child Jagmeet Kaur under Section 7.25 of Guardianship & Wards Act, 1890. Whereas the above noted petition has been filed for hearing on **02.04.2025 at 10 O'Clock** in the forenoon and the publication notice is hereby given to all concerned general public to file their objection. Given under my hand and seal of the court on this **17.02.2025**. **Judge, Family Court-02, East District Karkardooma Courts, D., Delhi.**

PUBLIC NOTICE
This is to inform to all concern that Smt. Renu Jain W/o Sh. T.K. Jain R/o H-7, Phase-1, Ashok Vihar Delhi-52, who is the original allottee of Residential Plot No. C-189, Sector-20, Noida (U.P.) had sold the said Plot on General Power of Attorney basis to the following person(s) GPA was executed on in favour of Sh. Sunil Kumar S/o Sh. J.C. Aggarwal R/o E-155, Preet Vihar, New Delhi-92, which is registered at Delhi on dated 05.04.1999. The agreement to sell was not registered or not executed. So it is informed to all concern that the said Plot No. C-189, Sector-20, Noida (U.P.) is going to be transferred in favour of Jitendra Kumar S/o Rishpal Singh & Santandhar Nagar S/o Ajay Pal Singh R/o C-180, Sector-20, Noida (U.P.) if any one has/have any objection he/she may file his/hisr objection along with the sufficient proof in the Residential Plot Department of the Noida Authority within 15 days from the date of publication of this notice. **Jitendra Kumar**

PUBLIC NOTICE
NOTICE is hereby given that **Ms. Manjuman Khurana s/o Late Desh Raj Khurana** (hereinafter referred to as the said Debtor/Borrower) is the owner in possession of Second Floor/Upper roof rights of Plot Bearing No. 22, in Block-A, Known as A-1/72, area measuring 100 Sq. Yards, Situated at Deyanand Colony, Lajpat Nagar-II, New Delhi (hereinafter referred to as "said property") by virtue of Conveyance Deed dated 04.03.1997 regd. as Doc. No. 4617 which has been misplaced, Requisitioning Deed dated 11.06.2019 regd. as Doc. No. 3059 read with Partition Deed dated 25.05.2019 regd. as Document No. 3395. The Borrower will create mortgage in respect of the said property in favour of our clients Lata Capital Limited, F12 1st Floor, Dasmesh Nivas, Preet Vihar, Vikas Marg, New Delhi-110092. Any person, body, individual, institution having any claim and/or objection in respect of the said property by way of sale, exchange, lease, lien, mortgage, charge, encumbrance, gift, trust, easement, maintenance, inheritance, testamentary disposition or otherwise or having in their custody any title documents pertaining to the said property shall communicate the same to the undersigned at our address within 10 days from the publication of this notice with documentary evidence in support thereof, failing which the claim, of such person shall be considered to have been waived and/or abandoned. Any objections raised after the completion of the 10 days shall not be binding upon the said property or purchaser. **Mr. Akhil Gupta (Advocate)** Khatian & Khatian A-38, Kalasa Colony New Delhi-110048, Tel. + 114974545/99

PUBLIC NOTICE
NOTICE is hereby given that **Veena Jindal** claims to be owner and in possession of **Prop No. 1056, Sector-38, Gurugram, Haryana** (herein after called the said property) by virtue of Transfer Deed dated 04.04.2024, Doc. No. 116 R/Sale Deed dated 21.04.2023, Doc. No. 1145 and as per Veena Jindal the Original of Allotment Letter, Re-Allotment Letters, Conveyance Deed dated 19.09.2009 and Sale Deed dated 15.01.2010 are lost & said Veena Jindal has agreed to create a mortgage in favour of our clients **IDFC First Bank Ltd, ITO Branch**, any person/s is in possession of the lost documents or having any claim against the said Property, or any part thereof, by way of sale, exchange, mortgage (equitable/registered or otherwise), gift, trust, inheritance, lien or otherwise howsoever, are hereby intimated to notify the same in writing to us with supporting documentary evidence at the address mentioned below within **7days** from the date hereof, failing which the claim or claims, if any, of such person or persons will be considered to have been waived and/or abandoned and our client shall proceed with the disbursement of loan and subsequent creation of mortgage in respect thereof. **Vishal Diwan (Advocate)** For Diwan and Company LLP Advocates and Solicitors House No.2 (LGF), NRI Complex, N.D-19, Mohli No. 9818399999

PUBLIC NOTICE
This is to inform the general public that Mr. Manan Taneja has executed an Agreement to Sell dated 08.05.2024 in respect of Laburnum Developers LLP in favor of Plot No. B-04, admeasuring 182.99 sq. yds., situated at Ace Palm Floors, Sector 89-90, Gurugram, Haryana. The general public is hereby advised not to enter into any transaction concerning the said property with any person other than Laburnum Developers LLP, as any such dealings shall be at their own risk and cost. Any person having any claim, right, title, interest, or objection in respect of the said property is hereby requested to inform the undersigned within 7 days from the date of publication of this notice, failing which the transaction shall be deemed to be free from all claims, and no objections shall be entertained thereafter. For any queries or claims, please contact: **Laburnum Developers LLP** GF-19, Ninex City Mall, Sohna Road, Sector-49, Gurugram, Haryana 122018. laburnumdevelopers@gmail.com Date: 16.02.2025 Place: Gurugram (Haryana)

Baba Farid University of Health Sciences, Faridkot
Ph. 01639-256232-256236
ADVT. No. BFU-25/06
Vacancies
Online applications are invited w.e.f. 21-02-2025 to 13-03-2025 from eligible candidates through University website www.bfuhsc.ac.in for the recruitment to the posts of **Junior Engineer-10, Pharmacy Officer-20** on regular basis under of Baba Farid University of Health Sciences, Faridkot. For Application form, fee, specially visit detail of posts, category wise distribution and other terms & condition, visit University website: www.bfuhsc.ac.in Sd/- **REGISTRAR**
00/12/367/2023/41763 Dated CHD :- 2/18/2025

Baba Farid University of Health Sciences, Faridkot
Ph. 01639-256232-256236
ADVT. No. BFU-25/05
Vacancies
Online applications are invited w.e.f. 21-02-2025 to 13-03-2025 from eligible candidates through University website www.bfuhsc.ac.in for the recruitment to the posts of **Medical Physicist-06** on regular basis under of Baba Farid University of Health Sciences, Faridkot. For Application form, fee, specially visit detail of posts, category wise distribution and other terms & condition, visit University website: www.bfuhsc.ac.in Sd/- **REGISTRAR**
00/12/366/2023/41762 Dated CHD :- 2/18/2025

MANIBHAVNAM HOME FINANCE INDIA PRIVATE LIMITED
POSSESSION NOTICE (Appendix IV) Rule 8(1)
Whereas the Authorized officer of Manibhavnam Home Finance India Pvt. Ltd., a (hereinafter referred to as "MBHF"), MBHF, which has duly been Authorised by the Central Government, vide a notification dated 17.06.2021, to be treated as a Financial Institution, for the purposes of the "The Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 (54 Of 2002) (hereinafter referred to as "Act") and in exercise of the powers conferred under Section 13(2) of the Act read with Rule 5 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rule, 2002 issued a Demand Notice to the following borrowers and co-borrowers to repay the amount mentioned in the notice within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice. The borrower/Guarantor having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrower and the public in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him under sub-section (4) of Section 13 of the Act read with Rule 8 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 as per under mentioned Date. The borrower in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of "MBHF" and interest other charges thereon. The attention of the Borrower is invited to provisions of sub-section (8) of section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured asset.
Name & Address of Borrower/Co-Borrower :- 1. ANKITA CHOUDHARY W/O- ANAND KUMAR, R/O - H. No. 78-B, NYAY KHAND-11, INDIRAPURAM, GHAZIABAD, UTTAR PRADESH-201014. 2. ANAND KUMAR, S/O- SHAILENDRA KUMAR SINGH, R/O- H. No. 78-B, NYAY KHAND-11, INDIRAPURAM, GHAZIABAD, UTTAR PRADESH-201014. ALSO AT: AIRPLAZA RETAILS HOLDINGS PVT. LTD., KHASRA No. 580, OLD RAILWAY ROAD DADRI, G. B. NAGAR, UTTAR PRADESH-203207
Demand Notice Dated :- 02-Sep-2024, Date of Possession :- 14.02.2025 Amount of Demand Notice: Rs. 13,29,084/- as on 20-Aug-2024
Details of Property :- ALL THAT THE PIECE OF PARCEL OF PROPERTY H.NO. K-1178-C, THIRD FLOOR (E.W.S.) WITHOUT ROOF RIGHTS, NYAY KHAND -11, INDIRAPURAM, GHAZIABAD, UTTAR PRADESH (COVERED AREA OF 19,505 SQ. MTRS.) THE SAID PLOT IN WHICH THE SAID FLD IS CONSTRUCTED:- EAST: FLAT NO. 77C, WEST: FLAT NO. 75C, NORTH: FLAT NO. 79C / PASSAGE, SOUTH : PROPERTY OTHER
Date :- 14.02.2025, Place: Ghaziabad Authorised Officer, Manibhavnam Home Finance India Pvt. Ltd.

FORM NO. 5 DRT/LKO DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL 600/1, University Road, Hanuman Setu Temple, Lucknow -226007 (Area of Jurisdiction- Part of Uttar Pradesh) SUMMONS FOR FILING REPLY & APPEARANCE BY PUBLICATION O.A. No. 793/2022 (Summons to defendant under Section 19(4), of the Recovery of Debts due to Banks and Financial Institutions Act, 1993 read with Rules 12 and 13 of the Debts Recovery Tribunal (Procedure Rules, 1993) O.A. NO.793/2022 ICICI Bank Ltd. ...Applicant Versus Mr. Rana Singh & Others ...Defendants To, Defendants: 1) Mr. Rana Singh, S/o Shri. Shambhu Nath Singh, Resident of H. No.946, Sector-9, H.I.G Duplex Vasundhara, Ghaziabad-201014 (U.P.), ALSO Unit No. KBo-07-1402, Kensington Boulevard, Paypee Greens, Sector-128, Noida-201307 (U.P.) 2) Mrs. Neelam Singh, W/o Mr. Rana Singh, Resident of H. No. 946, Sector-9, H.I.G Duplex Vasundhara, Ghaziabad-201014 (U.P.), ALSO Unit No. KBA-07-1402, Kensington Boulevard, Paypee Greens, Sector-128, Noida-201307 (U.P.) In the above noted application, you are required to file reply in paper book form in Two sets along with documents and affidavits (if any) personally or through your duly authorized agent or legal practitioner in this Tribunal, after serving copy of the same on the applicant or his counsel / duly authorized agent after publication of the summons, and thereafter to appear before the Tribunal on 09/07/2025 at 10:30 A.M. failing which the application shall be heard and decided in your absence. Registrar Debts Recovery Tribunal Lucknow

PUBLICATION FORM NO. 1 DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL 600/1, University Road, Hanuman Setu Mandir, Lucknow (Area of Jurisdiction, Part of Uttar Pradesh)
DRC No. 456 Of 2024 Notice under Rule-2 of the Ind Schedule of Income Tax Act 1961, read with Section 29 of The Recovery of Debts and Bankruptcy Act, 1993 ICICI BANK LTD. DEEPTI PRADHAN & OTHERS To, 1/ Ms/ Supertech Limited, Office- Supertech House, B-28, 29, Sector 58, Noida - 201307 UP Through its Authorized Signatory A. This is to notify a sum of Rs. 28,42,241 (Rupees Twenty Eight Lakh Forty Two Thousand Two Hundred Forty One Only) along with the interest @ 12% per annum with monthly rests in the aforesaid loan account from the date of filing of the original application i.e. 18.01.2023 till its realization with its cost from the certificate debtor nos. 1 to 3, as per certificate bearing no. 456 of 2024 dated 08.04.2024 in O.A. No. 456 of 2023 passed against you by Hon'ble DRT Lucknow. B. You are hereby directed to pay the sum within 15 days of receipt of this notice, failing which the recovery shall be made in accordance with the Recovery of Debts and Bankruptcy Act - 1993. C. You are hereby ordered that declare on affidavit the particulars of assets on or before 21/04/2025. D. You are hereby ordered to appear before the undersigned on 21/04/2025 at 11 A.M. E. In addition to the sum aforesaid, you will also be liable to pay the following:-
Application fees Rs.69,000/-
Advocate fees Rs.NIL
Publication charges Rs.NIL
Miscellaneous expenses Rs.NIL
Total Cost Rs.69,000/-
Given under my hand and seal at Lucknow on 16/01/2025. Recovery Officer - II Debts Recovery Tribunal, Lucknow

Chief Engineer, Uttarakhand Rural Roads Development Agency,
First Floor, Directorate of Panchayatiraj, Opp-T Park, Sahasthradhara Road, Dehradun
Ref. No. : I/152298/2025 Dated : 18-02-2025
PRADHAN MANTRI GRAM SADAK YOJANA (PMGSY) e-Procurement Notice- 21(P-III)/2024-25
The Chief Engineer, URRDA on behalf of Governor of Uttarakhand invites the item rate bids in electronic tendering system for construction of works under Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana in the Districts of **Uttarkashi** for **01** number of packages with estimated cost totaling to **Rs. 6.14 Crore** including their maintenance for five years from the eligible contractors (Class-A and above) registered with PWD/CPWD or equivalent*.
Date of release of Invitation for Bids through e-procurement: **20-02-2025.**
Availability of Bid Documents and mode of submission: The bid documents are available online and should be submitted online in www.pmgstendersuk.gov.in. The bidder would be required to register in the web-site which is free of cost. For submission of the bids, the bidder is required to have Digital Signature Certificate (DSC) from one of the authorized Certifying Authorities. The bidders are required to submit original affidavit regarding correctness of information furnished with bid document as per provisions of Clause 4.4 B (ii) of ITB with CONCERNED CIRCLE OFFICES, mentioned in SBD on a date not later than three working days after the opening of technical qualification part of the bid, either by registered post or by hand, failing which the bids shall be declared non-responsive. No physical documents will be accepted after the closing date and time of submission of bids.
Last Date/Time for receipt of bids through e-procurement: **06-03-2025 01:00 PM.**
For further details please log on to www.pmgstendersuk.gov.in
Chief Engineer, URRDA, Dehradun.
* Non Registered bidders may submit bids, however, the successful bidders must get registered in appropriate class with appropriate authorities before signing the contract.
Note : For e-Procurement for any sort of queries 0135-2608125 number will be contacted 10:00 AM to 05:00 PM.

THE PIONEER CLASSIFIEDS
CHANGE OF NAME

DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL DELHI BUILDING PARKING STREET NEW DELHI-110001
Notice under section 19(4) of the Recovery of Debts to Bank and Financial Institutions Act 1993 read with rule 12 & 13 of the Debts Recovery Tribunal (Procedure Rules, 1993) in the matter of **TANU 06/2023 DATED 07.08.2024 PUNJAB NATIONAL BANK..Applicant MIS DASHMESH ENTERPRISES & ANR. Defendants** To, Defendant, **H. S. DASHMESH ENTERPRISES E-225, 2ND FLOOR, DDA COLONY KHAYALA NEAR PARK DISTRICT NEW DELHI-110028** Whereas the above-named applicant has instituted a case for recovery of Rs.12,53,432.19/- (Rupees Twelve Lakh Eighty Three Thousand Four Hundred Thirty Two and Nineteen Paise Only) against you and whereas it has been shown to the satisfaction of the Tribunal that it is not possible to serve you in ordinary way. Therefore, this notice is given by advertisement directing you to make appearance in the Tribunal on 21.02.2025 at 10.30 A.M. Take notice that in case of your failure to appear on the above-mentioned day before this Tribunal, the case will be heard and decided in your absence. All the matters will be taken up through Video Conferencing and/or for that purpose. All the matters will be taken up through Video Conferencing and/or for that purpose. (i) All the Advocates/Litigants shall download the "Cisco Webex" application/software (ii) Meeting ID and "Password" for the next date of hearing qua cases to be taken by "Registrar/Recovery Officer-II" and Recovery Officer-II shall be available one day prior to the next date at DRT Official Portal i.e. <https://drt.gov.in> under the Public Notice Head. (iii) In any exigency qua that, the Advocates/Litigants can contact the concerned official at Ph. No. 011-2374847. Given under my hand and seal of the Tribunal on this 07th day of August, 2024

E AUCTION NOTICE
DAMAGED APPROX. 575 NOS. OF SPV SUAL MODULE AND APPROX. 15,000 KG OF GI STRUCTURE FOR MOUNTING SOLAR MODULES
Interested Buyers are invited to participate in the e-Auction for the disposal of 'Damaged Approx. 575 NOS. OF SPV Solar Module and Approx. 15,000 Kg of GI Structure for Mounting Solar Modules' on "Per UOM" Basis. The subject saleables will be sold on "As is Where is". Whatever there is "and "No Complaint" Basis and belongs to M/s. Premier Engros Limited. The subject materials can be inspected at C/o M/s. Shiv Nadar University, Dadri, Greater Noida - 201314 (UP) between 19-02-25 to 27-02-25 between 10 AM to 5 PM. Kindly contact Mr. Vikas Rana at 9711110316 for inspection.
E-Auction will be held on 28-02-25
Kindly contact Mr. Atul Halarnkar at 7738164069 to obtain the form containing terms & conditions of e-Auction or download from website <https://www.sealthedea.co.in/>
Auctioneers: Seal The Deal having registered office at 148, Pocket C2, Sector 5, Rohini, Delhi - 110085.
Last date of Submission of form & EMD Demand Draft is 27-02-25.

PUBLICATION FORM NO. 1 DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL 600/1, University Road, Hanuman Setu Mandir, Lucknow (Area of Jurisdiction, Part of Uttar Pradesh) DRC NO.-892 OF 2024
Notice under Rule-2 of the Ind Schedule of Income Tax Act 1961, read with Section 29 of The Recovery of Debts and Bankruptcy Act, 1993 ICICI BANK LTD V/S KIRAN KUMAR ARYA AND OTHERS To, (1) Kiran Kumar Arya S/o- Shri Chand Ramesh Arya R/o-K-603, Aditya Mega City, Near Nathu Sweets Indrapuram, Ghaziabad-201010. (2) Sapna Pawar. P/O- Shri Chand Ramesh Arya R/o-K-603, Aditya Mega City, Near Nathu Sweets Indrapuram, Ghaziabad-201010. (3) M/s Future Shelters Private Limited Corporate office of Plot No.9, Sector-75, Noida-201301. Through its Authorized Signatory A. This is to notify a sum of Rs.26,34,005.23 (Rupees Twenty Six Lakhs Thirty Four Thousand Five And Twenty Three Paise Only) along with pendentelite @ 12% and future interest per annum with monthly rests from the date of filing of the original application i.e. 12.01.2023 till loan fully liquidated jointly and severally with its costs succeeds in its realization from the certificate debtor nos. 1, 2 and 3 as per Certificate Bearing No. 892 of 2024 dated- 19.01.2024 in O.A. No. - 98 of 2023 passed against you by Hon'ble DRT, Lucknow. B. You are hereby directed to pay the sum within 15 days of receipt of this notice, failing which the recovery shall be made in accordance with the Recovery of Debts and Bankruptcy Act - 1993. C. You are hereby ordered that declare on affidavit the particulars of assets on or before 21/04/2025. D. You are hereby ordered to appear before the undersigned on 21/04/2025 at 11 A.M. E. In addition to the sum aforesaid, you will also be liable to pay the following:-
Application fees Rs. 30,000/-
Advocate fees Rs. NIL
Publication charges Rs. NIL
Miscellaneous expenses Rs. NIL
Total Cost Rs. 30,000/-
Given under my hand and seal at Lucknow on 16/01/2025. Recovery Officer - II Debts Recovery Tribunal, Lucknow

PUBLICATION FORM NO. 1 DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL 600/1, University Road, Hanuman Setu Mandir, Lucknow (Area of Jurisdiction, Part of Uttar Pradesh) DRC NO. 1386 OF 2023
Notice under Rule-2 of the Ind Schedule of Income Tax Act 1961, read with Section 29 of The Recovery of Debts and Bankruptcy Act, 1993 ICICI BANK LTD V/S VIDYA DHAR NAIK AND OTHERS To, (1) Mr. Vidya Dhar Naik S/o Shri Bhogil Lal Naik, R/o-1-2003 SPS Residency Vaibhav Khand, Near Sampar Hall, Indrapuram, Ghaziabad- 201010. (2) Mrs. Purnima Naik W/o- Mr. Vidya Dhar Naik, R/o-1-2003 SPS Residency Vaibhav Khand, Near Sampar Hall, Indrapuram, Ghaziabad-201010. (3) M/s Kindle Developers Private Limited Registered office at - B-9, 2nd Floor, Model Town II, New Delhi-110009. Corporate office at- 102, 1st Floor, Star House, Sector-4, Noida- 201301. Through its Authorized Signatory. A. This is to notify a sum of Rs. 65,67,536/- (Rupees Sixty Five Lakh Sixty Seven Thousand Five Hundred Thirty Six Only) with interest @ 8% per annum with simple monthly rests from the date of filing of the original application i.e. 03.07.2019 till loan fully liquidated jointly and severally with its costs succeeds in its realization from the certificate debtor nos. 1, 2 and 3 as per Certificate Bearing No. 1386 of 2023 dated 17.09.2023 in O.A. No. 1047 of 2019 passed against you by Hon'ble DRT, Lucknow. B. You are hereby directed to pay the sum within 15 days of receipt of this notice, failing which the recovery shall be made in accordance with the Recovery of Debts and Bankruptcy Act - 1993. C. You are hereby ordered that declare on affidavit the particulars of assets on or before 21/04/2025. D. You are hereby ordered to appear before the undersigned on 21/04/2025 at 11 A.M. E. In addition to the sum aforesaid, you will also be liable to pay the following:-
Application fees Rs.69,000/-
Advocate fees Rs.NIL
Publication charges Rs.NIL
Miscellaneous expenses Rs.NIL
Total Cost Rs.69,000/-
Given under my hand and seal at Lucknow on 16/01/2025. Recovery Officer - II Debts Recovery Tribunal, Lucknow

कार्यालय नगर पालिक निगम, (यांत्रिकी शाखा), भोपाल
क्रमांक.776/चौ.वि./25 भोपाल, दिनांक 18.02.2025
निविदा आमंत्रण सूचना
निम्न कार्य हेतु म.प्र. लोक निर्माण विभाग में पंजीकृत ठेकेदारों से ऑनलाईन निविदा आमंत्रित की जाती है। विस्तृत विवरण website <https://www.mptenders.gov.in> पर है।
क्र. निविदा क्र. कार्य का संक्षिप्त विवरण अनुमानित लागत (रु. में) निविदा क्रय करने का अंतिम तिनांक समय
01 2025_UAD_402947-1 CONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT WORK OF GOVERNMENT HIGHER SECONDARY SCHOOL SEMRA WARD 38 ZONE 09P 2,51,46,843/- 18-MAR-2025 05:30 PM
02 2025_UAD_402945-1 CONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT WORK GOVERNMENT MIDDLE SCHOOL AT DWARKA NAGAR WARD 37 ZONE 09 2,49,85,105/- 18-MAR-2025 05:30 PM
नोट :- संशोधन केवल वेबसाईट पर ही देखे जा सकते, समाचार पत्रों में प्रकाशित नहीं होंगे।
Executive Engineer Municipal Corporation Bhopal District Bhopal
दि.क्र. 1332/024/025

कार्यालय नगर पालिक निगम, (यांत्रिकी शाखा), भोपाल
क्रमांक.776/चौ.वि./25 भोपाल, दिनांक 18.02.2025
निविदा आमंत्रण सूचना
निम्न कार्य हेतु म.प्र. लोक निर्माण विभाग में पंजीकृत ठेकेदारों से ऑनलाईन निविदा आमंत्रित की जाती है। विस्तृत विवरण website <https://www.mptenders.gov.in> पर है।
क्र. निविदा क्र. कार्य का संक्षिप्त विवरण अनुमानित लागत (रु. में) निविदा क्रय करने का अंतिम तिनांक समय
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02 2025_UAD_402945-1 CONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT WORK GOVERNMENT MIDDLE SCHOOL AT DWARKA NAGAR WARD 37 ZONE 09 2,49,85,105/- 18-MAR-2025 05:30 PM
नोट :- संशोधन केवल वेबसाईट पर ही देखे जा सकते, समाचार पत्रों में प्रकाशित नहीं होंगे।
Executive Engineer Municipal Corporation Bhopal District Bhopal
दि.क्र. 1332/024/025

कार्यालय नगर पालिक निगम, (यांत्रिकी शाखा), भोपाल
क्रमांक.776/चौ.वि./25 भोपाल, दिनांक

Tesla starts recruitment in India

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

American electric carmaker Tesla has opened recruitments for various roles in India, including business operations analyst and customer support specialist, in what could be a precursor for the company's entry into the country.

As per the job postings on the company's website, the posts are for the 'Mumbai Suburban' area.

These roles include service advisor, parts advisor, service technician, service manager, sales and customer support, store manager, sales and customer support, business operations analyst, customer support supervisor, customer support specialist, delivery operations specialist, order operations specialist, inside sales advisor, and consumer engagement manager.

A mailed query to confirm if the recruitments are part of the company's plans to enter the Indian market and the possible timeline for starting sales in India remained



Prime Minister Narendra Modi during a meeting with SpaceX CEO Elon Musk at the Blair House, in Washington PTI

unanswered. The hiring by Tesla in India comes close after the recent meeting of company founder and American tech billionaire Elon Musk with India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi

during the latter's recent United States (US) visit. Tesla's possible entry into the Indian market has been keenly awaited. Last April, company founder and American tech billionaire Elon Musk had

postponed his proposed visit to India at the last minute citing "very heavy Tesla obligations" but the proposed visit had raised expectations of Musk announcing plans for the way forward for selling

Tesla electric cars in India at the earliest. His planned visit to India came weeks after the government announced a new electric vehicle policy under which import duty concessions will be given to companies setting up manufacturing units in the country with a minimum investment of \$500 Million, a move aimed at attracting major global players like Tesla. An advisor representing Tesla - The Asia Group (TAG) had even attended a stakeholders' meeting on the new EV policy along with those from Vietnam's EV maker VinFast and all the major manufacturers in India, including Maruti Suzuki, Hyundai, Tata, Mahindra, Kia, Skoda Auto Volkswagen India, Renault, Mercedes-Benz, BMW and Audi.

Musk had said in 2022 that Tesla, which was earlier seeking a reduction in import duties to sell its vehicles in India, would not manufacture its products unless it is allowed to first sell and service its cars in the country.

Economy expected to grow 6.4 per cent in Q3: ICRA

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Investment Information and Credit Rating Agency (ICRA) on Tuesday projected India's GDP to grow 6.4 per cent in the December quarter on account of enhanced government spending amid uneven consumption. The Indian economy grew at 6.7 per cent in April-June, but it slowed to a seven-quarter low of 5.4 per cent in September quarter on sluggish government capital expenditure due to general elections and weak consumption demand. ICRA Chief Economist Aditi Nayar said India's economic performance in Q3 FY2025 benefitted from a sharp ramp-up in aggregate government spending (Centre and state) on capital and revenue expenditure, high growth in services exports, a turnaround in merchandise exports, healthy output of

major kharif crops etc, which would have buffered rural sentiment. Some consumer-focused sectors saw a pick-up during the festive season, even as urban consumer sentiment dipped slightly, and other sectors such as mining and electricity saw an improvement after weather-related challenges in the previous quarter. "Overall, while we expect the pace of GDP and the GVA expansion to rise in Q3 FY2025 relative to the seven-quarter low prints for the previous quarter, marking an upturn, the performance may remain inferior to the NSO's initial estimates for Q1 FY2025," Nayar said. The National Statistical Office (NSO) will release the October-December growth estimates on February 28. It will also release the second advance estimates of GDP for the current fiscal. In the first advance estimates

released in January, NSO projected GDP growth at a four-year low pace of 6.4 per cent in the current fiscal. The RBI expects growth to be 6.6 per cent. ICRA has projected the economy to grow at 6.4 per cent in Q3 from 5.4 per cent in Q2, benefitting from enhanced government spending amid uneven consumption, it said in a statement. India's investment activity improved in Q3, as reflected in the uptick in the YoY growth in several investment-related indicators vis-a-vis Q2, the rating agency said. This includes capital and infrastructure goods' output, cement production, engineering goods' exports, and capital spending of the Centre and state governments. The YoY expansion in the government's capex surged to a six-quarter high of 47.7 per cent in Q3 from 10.3 per cent in the previous quarter.

Reliance Group enters renewable energy manufacturing

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Reliance Infrastructure (RInfra) is entering into the renewable energy (RE) equipment manufacturing space to increase its business portfolio, industry sources said.

The Reliance Group company has already appointed Ivan Saha as Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Renewable Manufacturing, and Mushtaque Hussain as Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Battery Manufacturing, they said. "RInfra is making strategic entry into the renewable energy manufacturing industry," sources said. The company would set up an integrated solar manufacturing unit with the objective to boost the production of solar panels and components in India, promoting self-sufficiency in clean energy. Solar manufacturing will be led by Saha, who comes with over 30 years of experience in semiconductors and solar technology and device design. He has served organisations like Vikram Solar and

ReNew Power. Its integrated battery manufacturing unit will focus on developing advanced energy storage solutions for grid applications and electric mobility. Hussain, who would lead this business, brings over 25 years of expertise in the automotive, renewable energy, consumer electronics, and power tools sectors. He has held key leadership roles in major organisations such as Reliance Industries Ltd (RIL) and Tesla. RInfra is an infrastructure player that operates in the business of metro rails, toll roads and power distribution. With the company's entry into solar equipment and battery manufacturing business, the Reliance Group aims to cover the entire spectrum of renewable energy value chain, enabling the group to offer end-to-end solutions - from renewable energy equipment manufacturing to solar power generation. This move complements the efforts of Reliance Power,

focused on renewable energy generation, further strengthening the group's overall presence in the sector. Reliance Power, another Reliance Group company, had already announced expansion plans in renewable energy generation space. Its subsidiary Reliance NU Energies Private Limited appointed Mayank Bansal as CEO and Rakesh Swaroop as COO. Another Reliance Power subsidiary Reliance Nu Suntech Private Ltd recently secured a 930 Mw solar energy project with a battery energy storage system (BESS) from the Solar Energy Corporation Of India (SECI) through an e-reverse auction. The project, which is the largest single-location integrated solar power and BESS Project in Asia, includes a minimum storage capacity of 465 MW/1,860 Mwh, charged by solar power. The company is also developing 1,270 MW of renewable energy projects in Bhutan.

India, US aim for \$500 Billion trade in 6-8 months: Goyal

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India and the United States (US) are committed to increasing bilateral trade to \$500 Billion and negotiating a "strong" trade agreement within the next six-eight months, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said on Tuesday. During the recent visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Washington, India and the US announced to more than double the two-way commerce to \$500 Billion by 2030 and negotiate the first tranche of a mutually beneficial, multi-sector bilateral trade agreement (BTA) by fall of 2025. Goyal said once his US counterpart takes charge, both countries will discuss the contours of the pact. "In the next six-eight months, by establishing a strong trade agreement, we are committed to increasing trade to \$500 Billion," Goyal said on the sidelines of CII's India-Qatar Business Forum meet. He added businesses of both the countries are excited about the



Union Minister Piyush Goyal addresses during the India-Qatar Joint Business Forum PTI

agreement. When asked if the pact would have chapters related to goods, services and investments, he said, "My counterpart has not yet confirmed in the US. After the (confirmation), we will do talks and then only we can decide the way forward". Normally in a free trade agreement, two trading partners either eliminate or significantly reduce customs duties on the maximum number of goods traded

between them. Besides, they ease norms to promote trade in services and boost investments. During the first term of US President Donald Trump, the two countries had discussed a mini-trade deal, but it was shelved by the Joe Biden administration as they were not in favour of such pacts. In 2023, the US and India bilateral trade in goods and services stood at \$190.08 Billion (\$123.89 Billion in goods and \$66.19 Billion in services trade).

IPO-bound NSE's valuation jumps 200 per cent

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The IPO-bound NSE's valuation jumped 201 per cent in 2024 to ₹4.7 Lakh Crore, a report said on Tuesday. The largest India equity bourse, which is reported to have restarted its listing process by applying for a no-objection from markets regulator, Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI), is already the 10th-most valuable private company in the country, as per the 2024 Burgundy Private Hurun India 500 list of listed as well as unlisted companies. The valuation was pegged at ₹3.12 Lakh Crore, as per a September 2024 report. Another media report said the company, which also runs the world's largest derivatives exchange, aims to sell 10 per cent of holding in the IPO. The overall revenues jumped 28 per cent to ₹16,352 Crore in FY24, and the post-tax profit surged 51 per cent to ₹8,306 Crore. The stock bourse had moved on the listing plans after getting some clarity on allegations of not allowing

equitable access to its members. Hurun said it has travelled across the country and spoken with industry experts, journalists, bankers and accessed publicly available data sources while arriving at the valuation for private or unlisted companies. The list of companies is led by Mukesh Ambani-led Reliance Industries with a ₹17.5 Lakh Crore valuation, while Tata Consultancy Services came second at ₹16.1 Lakh Crore with a 30 per cent growth. Billionaire Gautam Adani's flagship Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone was valued at ₹2,73,530 Crore as on December 13, which was used as the cut-off date for the list. The Adani Group, which includes nine listed companies, was valued at ₹13.40 Lakh Crore, while the Ambani-led Reliance Group's overall valuation was pegged at ₹19.71 Lakh Crore. The salt-to-software Tata Sons led among the industrial groups in valuation, with a 37 per cent jump in valuation to Rs 32.27 Lakh Crore.

India's Defence industry poised for massive expansion

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The defence industry in India is at the "cusp of a massive expansion", Defence Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh has said even as he suggested that public-private-partnership would be "critical" in making the country a hub for advanced manufacturing in the sector. In his address at a defence conclave here late Monday evening, he also said the intention of the government is to build a "technologically advanced" and "combat-ready force" that can effectively address the "complexities of modern warfare". The event was hosted by Axis Bank to bring together different stakeholders, including government officials, industry members, financial institutions, among others under one roof. Singh said the conclave fosters collaboration among different stakeholders from

the defence industry ecosystem, including those who would finance them. Creating a unified platform for discussions on 'Atmanirbhar Bharat', empowering the defence ecosystem is a "critical issue" right now, he added. "It is an ongoing effort which we sort of need to continue to focus on. It is also in line with our priorities of modernising and reforming the defence ecosystem in our quest for 'Atmanirbharta' or strategic self-reliance," the defence secretary said. He recalled that Ministry of Defence recently declared 2025 as the "year of reforms", saying the objective is to make systems and procedures more efficient, streamlined in order to deliver timely outcomes. "The intention is to build a technologically advanced and combat-ready force that can effectively address the complexities of modern

warfare," he said. In his address, Singh emphasised about working together with different stakeholders to create a robust defence ecosystem. Relaxation in the FDI policies and industrial licensing procedures are other elements that will propel the growth in the Indian domestic defence industry, he said. "Our exports have increased to ₹21,000 Crore, almost a 30 times jump in the last ten years. It is very obvious that the defence industry in India is at the cusp of a massive expansion," the defence secretary said. The current industrial ecosystem of India, which comprises various defence PSUs, licensed companies and MSMEs are the "pillars of this expanding industrial base", he added. "Our focus has to be on reducing industry barriers for new players and new

technologies. So that our defence industrial ecosystem becomes adaptive, agile, and capable of responding quickly to the changing nature of warfare, as we have seen in recent geopolitical conflicts," he said. Citing the defence budget figures, Singh said, it was ₹6.21 Lakh Crore that will go up by 9.5 per cent to 6.81 Lakh Crore in 2025-26. And we should be spending over the next decade, something between \$20-25 Billion, perhaps even USD 30 billion per annum, "as per our modernisation initiatives", he added. Earlier in his address, the top official in the ministry underlined that an industrial ecosystem is being envisioned where "incubency advantage would not prevail over the ability of start-ups of agile private sector entrepreneurs," to bring into the ecosystem and to bring in disruptive technologies.

Rupee falls eight paise against USD

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Rupee depreciated eight paise to close at 86.96 (provisional) against US dollar weighed down by sustained foreign fund outflows and an uptick in the US Dollar index. Forex traders said there is a negative bias for the USD and INR pair as foreign investors continue to sell domestic equities and the RBI support is tapering off slowly. At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 86.94 and touched the high of 86.91 against the greenback during intraday. It also touched the low of 86.98 before ending the session at 86.96 (provisional) against the dollar, logging a loss of 8 paise from its previous close. On Monday, the rupee depreciated 17 paise to close at 86.88 against the US dollar. Traders said disappointing trade deficit data from the domestic markets too

pressurised the rupee. India's exports declined for the third month in a row in January, falling by 2.38 per cent year-on-year to \$36.43 Billion, while the trade deficit widened to \$22.99 Billion in the month. Imports rose by 10.28 per cent year-on-year to \$59.42 Billion in January due to an increase in gold shipments, according to the Commerce Ministry data. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was at 106.95, higher by 0.35 per cent. Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, was quoted 0.77 per cent higher at \$75.80 per barrel in futures trade. In the domestic equity market, the 30-share BSE Sensex declined 29.47 points, or 0.04 per cent, to settle at 75,967.39, while the Nifty fell 14.20 points, or 0.06 per cent, to 22,945.30 points. Foreign Institutional

Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth ₹3,937.83 Crore in the capital markets on net basis on Monday, according to exchange data. "We expect the rupee to trade with negative bias amid weak domestic equities and a recovery in the US dollar. FII outflows may also weigh on the rupee. However, any further intervention by the RBI may support the rupee at lower levels. "Traders may take cues from speeches by the Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) members," Choudhary said, adding that "the USD-INR spot price is expected to trade in a range of 86.75 to 87.20." On the global front, Chinese President Xi Jinping on Monday asked business leaders to unleash their talents in a rare meeting with billionaires including Jack Ma, founder of e-commerce giant Alibaba, in a bid to shore up sagging business confidence and reverse economic slowdown.

NTPC pays interim dividend of ₹2,424 Crore

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

State-owned NTPC on Tuesday said it has paid an additional ₹2,424 Crore of interim dividend to its shareholders in the financial year ending March 2025. "This is in addition to the first interim dividend of ₹2,424 Crore paid in November 2024, NTPC said in a statement. The ₹2,424 Crore dividend paid on February 18 is 25 per cent of the paid-up equity share capital of the company. The total dividend paid by the company during the ongoing fiscal has reached ₹8,000 Crore, which includes the final dividend of ₹3,152 Crore for the financial year 2023-24 paid in September 2024.

Markets end slightly lower as foreign fund outflow persists

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty ended marginally lower on Tuesday as uninterrupted foreign fund outflows and lower-than-expected corporate earnings continued to hit investors' sentiment. After a day's breather, the 30-share BSE benchmark Sensex ended 29.47 points or 0.04 per cent lower at 75,967.39. Intraday, it dropped 465.85 points or 0.61 per cent to 75,531.01. The NSE Nifty dipped 14.20 points or 0.06 per cent to settle at 22,945.30. "On Tuesday, the Indian blue-chip equity indices, Sensex and Nifty-50, closed with a slight decline, primarily due to a slowdown in earnings and concerns over ongoing foreign selling, which affected market

sentiment," Ameya Ranadive, Chartered Market Technician, CFTe, Sr Technical Analyst, StoxBox, said. From the Sensex pack, IndusInd Bank, Mahindra & Mahindra, UltraTech Cement, Hindustan Unilever, Sun Pharma, Tata Consultancy Services, ITC and Asian Paints were among the biggest laggards. NTPC, Zomato, Tech Mahindra, Power Grid, Kotak Mahindra Bank and HCL Tech were among the gainers. The BSE smallcap gauge dropped 1.71 per cent and midcap index declined 0.19 per cent. Among BSE sectoral indices, industrials dropped 1.51 per cent, consumer durables (1.19 per cent), telecommunication (1.06 per cent), capital goods (0.91 per cent), auto (0.65 per

cent) and consumer discretionary (0.55 per cent). BSE utilities climbed 1.03 per cent, BSE Focused IT (0.86 per cent), oil and gas (0.70 per cent) and energy (0.38 per cent). As many as 2,918 stocks declined while 1,032 advanced and 114 remained unchanged on the BSE. "The domestic market has experienced both profit-taking and bottom-fishing amid persistent concerns over FII outflows and pressure on the INR. Small and midcap stocks continue to lag due to apprehensions about premium valuations. Meanwhile, India's trade deficit has widened beyond expectations, driven by rising imports due to depreciating domestic currency and surging commodity prices,"

Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services, said. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth ₹3,937.83 Crore on Monday, according to exchange data. In Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo and Hong Kong settled in the positive territory while Shanghai ended lower. European markets were quoting mostly lower. US markets were closed on Monday in observance of 'President's Day'. Global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 0.73 per cent to \$75.77 a barrel. The Sensex climbed 57.65 points or 0.08 per cent to settle at 75,996.86 on Monday, ending an eight-day losing run. The Nifty rebounded 30.25 points or 0.13 per cent to 22,959.50.

Unemployment rate dips to 6.4 per cent

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The unemployment rate for people aged 15 years and above in urban areas dipped to 6.4 per cent in the October-December quarter, according to the National Sample Survey Survey (NSSO). Joblessness, or unemployment rate, is defined as the percentage of unemployed people in the labour force. The unemployment rate in the December quarter of FY24 was 6.5 per cent. However, the rate stayed flat when compared sequentially. In the preceding July-September quarter of FY25, the rate of unemployment for people aged 15 years and above in urban areas was at

the same level of 6.4 per cent, the 25th Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) showed. The unemployment rate among females (aged 15 years and above) in urban areas declined to 8.1 per cent in October-December 2024 from 8.6 per cent in the same quarter a year ago. The rate was 8.4 per cent in July-September, 2024. Among males, the unemployment rate in urban areas remained flat at 5.8 per cent in October-December 2024 as compared to the rate of the same quarter a year ago. The rate was 5.7 per cent in July-September, 2024. Labour force participation rate in Current Weekly Status (CWS) in urban areas for people aged 15 years and above increased to 50.4 per

cent in October-December from 49.9 per cent in the same quarter a year ago. The rate was 50.4 per cent in the July-September 2024. Labour force refers to the part of the population, which supplies or offers to supply labour for pursuing economic activities for the production of goods and services and, therefore, includes both employed and unemployed persons. The NSSO had launched PLFS in April 2017. On the basis of PLFS, a quarterly bulletin is brought out giving estimates of labour force indicators namely unemployment rate, worker population ratio (WPR), labour force participation rate (LFPR), distribution of workers by broad status in

employment and industry of work in CWS. The estimates of unemployed persons in CWS give an average picture of unemployment in a short span of seven days during the survey period. In the CWS approach, a person is considered unemployed if he/she did not work even for one hour on any day during the week but sought or was available for work at least for one hour on any day during the period. Labour force, according to CWS, is the number of persons either employed or unemployed on average in a week preceding the date of the survey. LFPR is defined as the percentage of the population in the labour force.

Zelezny's tweaks will take me to 90m mark soon: Neeraj

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Two-time Olympic medal-winning javelin throw star Neeraj Chopra has revealed that his new coach Jan Zelezny has figured out mistakes in his technique and would now make some adjustments to his throwing routine to achieve the 90m mark that the Indian star is pursuing for a while.

The 26-year-old, while speaking to India Today, also opened up about his hush-hush wedding to former tennis player Himani Mor last month, saying that their relationship was a casual friendship at first "but slowly we fell in love".

Chopra has been trying hard to hit the 90m mark. His personal best stands at 89.94m which was achieved in 2022. His season begins in May with the Diamond League and would mark the competitive start of his partnership with Zelezny, a former Olympic and world champion who also holds the

world record (98.48m). "I believe a 90+ throw is happening soon. He (Jan Zelezny) has made some technical adjustments in my game," said Chopra.

"He (Zelezny) feels that his tweaks would help me. I've been able to understand what he expects from me. One of the mistakes that he told me about was how I was throwing very low even in Paris and that I was leaning towards the left.

"If I am able to incorporate those changes, I think I will get a lot better," he added. But the Panipat-lad insisted that the milestone is still not as important as winning medals for the country.

"I want to do it myself. But, going to a competition and winning a medal against people who have previously thrown 90 meters is even more important. There's no point in throwing 90 meters and not winning.

"What if everyone throws 90+ there and despite throwing 90, you don't win? I want to throw more than 90



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consulted a doctor recommended by Zelezny in Prague.

"Groin injury has been an issue for a long time. I wasn't able to give 100 percent in my technique because of my injury. I went to Zelezny's doctor in Prague, and he suggested some exercises. I am working on that, so hopefully it helps, and I am able to give my 100 percent," he said.

We slowly fell in love

Opening about his marriage that stunned everyone, Chopra said both he and Mor wanted it to be an intimate affair and that's why they chose a town near Solan.

"I knew her. She also comes from a family with a sports background, and so do we. Her father and mother were kabaddi players. Her brothers were boxers and wrestlers," Chopra said.

"She herself was a tennis player, but after picking up injuries, she focused more on her studies," he added. Shedding light on how their relationship developed over a period of time, Chopra said being athletes, they could connect easily.

"Because our families had a sports background, we had the opportunity to meet. Our conversations began like that -- just two athletes talking. It was casual at first, but slowly, we fell in love," he said.

Their wedding pictures, which Chopra shared on social media a couple of days after the ceremony, took the internet by storm.

Although only family members were invited for the nuptials, Chopra said most of his close circle of friends was aware that he was tying the knot and he would soon be planning a celebration with those who couldn't be a part of the function.

"...Families and friends knew. I wanted to return to training because the season was about to start. I thought it would only be possible after the season. Inviting everyone would have taken time," he explained.



I have not resigned, will complete tenure, says Mary Kom

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Olympian Shiva Keshavan, London Olympics bronze-winning shooter Gagan Narang, rower Bajrang Lal, fencer Bhavani Devi, former women's hockey captain Rani Rampal, and Tokyo Olympics silver-winning weightlifter Mirabai Chanu.

"I don't know why it is that every time I raise my voice for something, it is misunderstood like this? Lot of my fellow athletes speak their mind on so many issues but nobody gets misunderstood," Mary Kom said.

"I was put up in a bad hotel when I went for the National Games closing ceremony despite the fact that a better hotel was available. If others could be accommodated, why not me? That was the only question I asked," she insisted.

"Next thing I know, people are saying I have resigned. Where is the resignation? Has anyone seen it?" she asked.

Asked if she has had a word with IOA President P T Usha on this matter, Mary Kom said, "I haven't been able to connect with her because my phone was misplaced. But I will speak to her, I have good communication with her."

One of the most decorated Indian athletes, Mary Kom has been on the athletes forum of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) in the past and has a fairly good experience of the administrative side of sports.

Parth Rekhade puts Vidarbha in firm control against Mumbai

PTI ■ NAGPUR

Left-arm spinner Parth Rekhade struck thrice in an over as Mumbai slipped to a precarious 188 for 7 in reply to Vidarbha's first innings total of 383, trailing by 195 runs at stumps on Day Two of their Ranji Trophy semifinal here on Tuesday.

Mumbai opener Akash Anand was battling at one end, unbeaten on 67, with the last recognised batter, Tanush Kotian, on 5 not out at the other, as their title defence came under intense pressure from a disciplined and persistent Vidarbha side on their home ground at the VCA Stadium here.

Mumbai were steady at 113 for two at one stage but Rekhade, playing only his second First-Class match, ripped open the Ranji champions' batting lineup, first with an innocuous delivery which claimed the prized scalp of Ajinkya Rahane in the 41st over. Rahane's defensive prod had the ball rolling back to his stumps and knock off the bats, ending his stay for a 24-ball 18 which also had an outside edge flying between the wicketkeeper and the first slip.

Two deliveries later, Suryakumar Yadav (0) then paid a heavy price for a hard-headed frontfoot prod as an inside edge was sharply collected by Danish Malewar at silly point over his head.

Another couple of deliveries later, Shivam Dube (0), who had claimed 5/49 in Vidarbha's first innings, was also caught for a two-ball duck like his India T20I teammate Suryakumar as Mumbai slipped from 113/2 to 113/5.

It soon became 118/6 for the Rahane-led side, losing four wickets for a mere five runs, when Shams Mulani was trapped leg-before by Harsh Dubey for his first wicket.

Anand then forged a crucial 60-run stand with Shardul Thakur but their partnership did not last long.

Thakur, who has persistently come to Mumbai's rescue with the bat this season, did produce a fightback but could not push on for a big knock, perishing for a 41-ball 37 with four fours and a six with his knock having all the elements of his trademark counterattack.

He was bounced out by Yash Thakur (2), who had cleaned up Siddhesh Lad (35) for a vital breakthrough earlier in the day to break his stubborn second-wicket partnership with Anand.



Mumbai had begun rather shakily in reply to Vidarbha's first innings total when opener Ayush Mhatre played one in the air early on to find Malewar at cover, following which the pair of Lad and Anand had done well to see off the threat from the new ball there on.

On his part, wicketkeeper-batter Anand batted extremely well, reaching a solid 67 off 171 balls, including six fours -- most of them coming on the off-side.

But once again it was Vidarbha who walked away with the bragging rights after another dominant show, having earlier added 75 runs to their overnight total of 308 for five.

Rathod brought up his fifty shortly after play resumed on the second day but like his teammates, could not push on and fell for 54 off 113 balls with seven fours.

Brief scores: Vidarbha 383 in 107.5 overs (Dhruv Shorey 74, Danish Malewar 79, Yash Rathod 54; Shivam Dube 5/49, Shams Mulani 2/62) lead Mumbai 188/7 in 59 overs (Akash Anand 67*; Yash Thakur 2/56, Parth Rekhade 3/16) by 195 runs.

Mumbai City FC meet Hyderabad FC

PTI ■ HYDERABAD

Mumbai City FC will look to continue their promising form away from home when they take on hosts Hyderabad FC in their Indian Super League match here on Wednesday.

Mumbai City FC are currently positioned at the sixth place in the points table. They have 31 points to their name from 20 games, on the back of two victories and draws each in their previous five matches.

Hyderabad FC are at the penultimate spot, with 16 points from 20 encounters on the back of four wins and draws each -- with two of those victories coming in their last four games.

The Islanders have been doing well on the road in the current campaign, winning four and drawing thrice in their last seven away matches.

A victory in this fixture would propel them to their maiden league double over Hyderabad FC, which would make Mumbai City FC the team with the most league doubles (13) over different opponents in the ISL. However, Mumbai City FC faced a 1-3 setback to FC Goa in their last match, at Home. Still, under Petr Kratky, Mumbai City FC have not yet faced consecutive losses and they will look to sustain that record with a positive outcome in the forthcoming match.

Contrastingly, Hyderabad FC have been on an encouraging run at home, winning their last two matches there -- by 3-2 against Jamshedpur FC and 3-1 vs Mohammedan SC.

A third straight home win will equal the feat that they sealed in October-November 2022, when all triumphs had come with a 1-0 scoreline. In the last match between these two sides on November 30, 2024, Mumbai City FC had edged past by a slender 1-0 margin.

Hyderabad FC have been found on the back-foot defensively, giving away nine headed goals in 2024-25, which is the joint-highest in the competition. The team has kept the least clean sheets (2) in the ISL 2024-25, conceding the most goals (41) amongst all 13 teams.

Ramhlunchhanga won possession four times in the final third against Odisha FC in their last game, the joint-highest by any player in a single game this season. He has won possession 17 times in the final third this term, the most by any Indian player.

Alcaraz beats Cilic in straight sets to advance at Qatar Open

PTI ■ DOHA

Top-seeded Carlos Alcaraz overcame Croatian veteran Marin Cilic 6-4, 6-4 to reach the round of 16 at the Qatar Open.

The 36-year-old Cilic, the 2014 U.S. Open champion who has fallen to No. 192 in the rankings, was on Monday playing his first match of the season after recovering from a long-term knee injury.

The Croatian led 4-3 and 0-40 on Alcaraz's serve in the second set, but the Spanish four-time major winner managed to recover and then broke in the next game.

"I am just really happy that I stayed calm at that moment, breathing, going through my routines, making good points," Alcaraz said.

"That's why I was able to win in two sets." Alcaraz will play either Zhang Zhizhen of China or Italy's Luca Nardi next.

Earlier, seventh-seeded Grigor Dimitrov lost 6-4, 6-4 to Jiri Lehecka.

Also on Monday, eighth-seeded Jack Draper beat Alexei Popyrin 6-2, 7-6 (4) to set up a meeting with another Australian, Christopher O'Connell.

Several other top players will play their first matches on Tuesday.

Second-seeded Alex de Minaur will face Roman Safiullin. Novak Djokovic, who had to pull out of his Australian Open semifinal with a hamstring injury, will take on Matteo Berrettini.



Alcaraz returned to the top of the Spanish league on goal difference after Robert Lewandowski's first-half penalty secured a 1-0 win over Rayo Vallecano.

The Catalan club on Monday took advantage of weekend slip-ups by Real Madrid and Atlético Madrid to move onto 51 points, the same as Madrid and a point clear of Atlético.

Madrid drew 1-1 at Osasuna on Saturday and Atletico was held by the same score at home by Celta Vigo.

Barcelona took the lead after 27 minutes when Pathe Ciss brought down Inigo Martinez in the box, and a penalty was awarded after a video review. Lewandowski sent the keeper the wrong way from the spot. Both sides had chances to score after that.

Augusto Batalla saved well from Lamine Yamal, who was playing the 100th game of his career, while at the other end Jorge De Frutos had the ball in the net for Rayo only to see it ruled out for offside.

Barcelona 1-0 win over Rayo Vallecano

PTI ■ BARCELONA

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Tennis players have lost faith in doping agencies: Novak Djokovic

PTI ■ DOHA

Novak Djokovic says a majority of tennis players have lost faith in the anti-doping authorities following Jannik Sinner's three-month ban, and there's a widespread feeling that "favoritism" is being shown to the sport's biggest stars.

The 24-time major winner called on the World Anti-Doping Agency and the International Tennis Integrity Agency to overhaul their processes for dealing with doping cases "because the system and the structure obviously doesn't work."

"Right now there is a lack of trust generally from the tennis players, both male and female, toward WADA and ITIA and the whole process," Djokovic said at the Qatar

Open.

Top-ranked Sinner reached a deal with WADA on Saturday to accept a ban that will have him back playing in time for the French Open in May without having to miss a single Grand Slam tournament. That came after the International Tennis Integrity Agency had decided not to suspend Sinner for what it judged was accidental contamination by a banned anabolic steroid last March.

The short ban for Sinner came after five-time Grand Slam champion Iga Swiatek accepted a one-month suspension in November after testing positive for a banned substance that she said was accidentally consumed because of a contaminated



nonprescription medication. Both bans are much shorter than what other athletes in tennis and in other sports have normally received in similar cases.

"It's not a good image for our sport, that's for sure," Djokovic, the long-time No. 1 in men's tennis, said.

"There's a majority of the players that I've talked to in the locker room, not just in the last few days, but also last few months, that are not happy with the way this whole process (for Sinner) has been handled.

"A majority of the players don't feel that it's fair. A majority of the players feel like there is favoritism happening. It appears that you can almost affect the outcome if you are a top player, if you have access to

the top lawyers and whatnot." Sinner had been scheduled to play in Qatar before accepting the ban.

The handling of Sinner's case had already raised questions about double standards, and when the ban was announced it was widely criticized by other players. The positive tests weren't publicly revealed until August because Sinner successfully appealed against being provisionally banned from playing. He then won the U.S. Open in September and the Australian Open in January.

Sinner's explanation for the positive test was that trace amounts of Clotestebol in his doping sample was due to a massage from a trainer who used the substance after cutting his own finger, which WADA accepted.

Djokovic said he didn't question Sinner's and Swiatek's innocence but that he and other players are frustrated about the inconsistent handling of doping cases.

He pointed to the case of former women's No. 1 Simona Halep -- who was given a four-year ban by the ITIA in 2022 after a positive test before it was later reduced to nine months -- and British player Tara Moore, who was suspended in May 2022 while an investigation lasted 18 months before an independent tribunal determined that her positive test for a banned substance was caused by contaminated meat.

"Right now it's a ripe time for us to really address the system, because the system and the structure obviously doesn't work, it's obvious," Djokovic said.

"So, I hope that in the ... Near future that the governing bodies are going to come together of our tours and the tennis ecosystem and try to find a more effective way to deal with these processes.

India will feel Bumrah's absence very strongly: Dhawan

PTI ■ DUBAI

India will feel Jasprit Bumrah's absence "very strongly" in the Champions Trophy but they still have a great chance to win the tournament considering their recent form and a host of match-winners at their disposal, reckons former opener Shikhar Dhawan.

While the event starts in Pakistan on Wednesday, India start their campaign a day later with a match against neighbours Bangladesh at the Dubai International Cricket Stadium.

Pace spearhead Bumrah was ruled out of the tournament due to a lower back injury, having taken the maximum load during India's five-match Test series against Australia. "My concern is they are going to miss Jasprit Bumrah, there is no doubt he will be a big absence and I think they will feel it very strongly," Dhawan wrote in an ICC column published on Tuesday.

"For me, he is the best bowler in the world, and his accuracy is hard to replicate. He is also a very calm character and that is crucial in a huge ICC event like this."

Dhawan is, however, backing Shubman Gill and Harshit Rana to sizzle in the tournament.

"At the same time, Harshit Rana has



come into the side and I think that is really exciting - keep an eye on him, I think he could have a breakout tournament.

"I like his attitude, he is a go-getter and he is not afraid of anything. He accepts challenges and we have seen in the England series that he is in

form. I am sure he will look to seize this opportunity and, if he does, he could provide a real X-factor for India."

Going by recent form and team strength, Dhawan found it hard to look beyond India when the discussion turned to title contenders.

"There are a lot of reasons to be optimistic for India. They have a very balanced side, especially with the bat - there is a nice blend of experience and youth. Shubman Gill, in particular, is so consistent and he has a big role to play. I think he will have a great tournament.

"Rohit Sharma has found form, Virat Kohli is there; they are a top side and will take some stopping."

Dhawan is also not ruling out teams such as South Africa, New Zealand, Australia and hosts Pakistan, to whom India lost in the title clash in the last edition in the UK.

"I really like South Africa in this tournament as well. They have played consistent cricket and have everything you need to win such a huge tournament - experience, strength-in-depth and X-factor players like Kagiso Rabada.

"I also like Pakistan, they will be hard to beat in home conditions, and also New Zealand - who are just always there or thereabouts.

"Australia have struggled in their series with Sri Lanka but they some great batters; Travis Head is in great form, and I'm really excited to see Steve Smith."

Dhawan is one of the most successful batters in the tournament's history having scored 701 runs in 10 innings at an average of 77.88. He hit three centuries in the tournament, with his best being 125 against Sri Lanka in 2017.

"The ICC Champions Trophy means a great deal to me. We won in 2013 and then reached the final in 2017, and both times I finished as leading run-scorer," he added.



WPL: Delhi Capitals, UP Warriorz eye improved batting effort

PTI ■ VADODARA

Delhi Capitals and UP Warriorz will be aiming for an improved batting effort on Wednesday after floundering in their previous Women's Premier League matches.

Their clash is also the last match here at the Kotambi Stadium before the WPL action shifts to Bengaluru from February 21.

The Capitals are yet to match the pre-tournament favourite billing with performances. Their batting has failed to fire in two matches, even in their victory over the Mumbai Indians.

They made heavy weather of the chase of a 165-run target before winning by two wickets, and folded for 141 against the Royal Challengers Bengaluru on Monday during the eight-wicket defeat.

The trouble starts from the top as skipper Meg Lanning has not been able to produce a big knock yet. It has seemed that international retirement has taken a toll on the Australian.

There have been occasional fireworks by Shafali Varma, Jemimah Rodrigues or Sarah Bryce, but they have not been able to convert into a substantial innings.

Their bowling has been in much better shape with veteran Shikha Pandey leading from the front, but she needs some more support from others, particularly from fellow pacer Arundhati Reddy.

The UP outfit too is in a similar place. Grace Harris and Tahlia McGrath, their middle-order powerhouses, looked uneasy against spin

and the Capitals have a capable bunch in Minnu Mani, Jess Jonassen and Radha Yadav.

The Warriorz have invested heavily in skipper Deepti Sharma, young wicketkeeper batter Uma Chhetri and openers Vrinda Dinesh and Kiran Navgire. It's not often that a WPL team fills their top four with Indian players, and the quartet will have to repay the faith of the management sooner than later.

The absence of an injured Alyssa Healy has reduced the firepower in their top order. They would also expect leg-spinner Alana King to make an impression against Delhi, as the Aussie spinner, who bowled that extraordinary Shane Warne-esque delivery in the Women's Ashes, was quite expensive against Gujarat.

Teams (from):
UP Warriorz: Deepti Sharma (captain), Alana King, Gouher Sultana, Saima Thakor, Grace Harris, Shweta Sehrawat, Anjali Sarvani, Kiran Navgire, Sophie Ecclestone, Arushi Goel, Kranti Goud, Tahlia McGrath, Chamari Athapaththu, Poonam Khemnar, Uma Chetry, Rajeshwari Gayakwad, Vrinda Dinesh.

Delhi Capitals: Meg Lanning (captain), Harleen Deol, Prakashika Naik, Beth Mooney, Kashvee Gautam, Priya Mishra, Bharti Fulmali, Laura Wolvaardt, Sayali Satghare, Danielle Gibson, Mannat Kashyap, Shabnam Shakil, Dayalan Hemalatha, Meghna Singh, Simran Shaikh, Deandra Dottin, Phoebe Litchfield, Tanuja Kanwar.



Best leaders that I know have always empowered colleagues: Cummins

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Leadership is all about having faith in the strengths of colleagues, believes Australia's talismanic captain Pat Cummins, who is busy promoting his new book after being forced out of the Champions Trophy due to an ankle injury.

The 31-year-old, who has 503 international wickets across formats with 294 in Tests alone, donned the hat of an interviewer to speak to 11 achievers-cum-leaders from around the world for his new book "Tested: The remarkable power of resolve" published by Harper Collins.

Asked about his idea of leadership and to what extent should the captain assert his authority, Cummins told PTI: "The best leaders I've played under always made me feel empowered, brought the best out of myself and made me feel a sense of freedom. I think it's important to lean into the individual strengths of each team member rather than trying to make everyone

assimilate," the pacer further stated.

While he has a handsome USD two million-plus contract with IPL franchise Sunrisers Hyderabad, whom he captained last year in the cash-rich league, the traditional format remains his No.1 priority.

This despite the fact that more and more cricketers are veering towards a freelance career in T20 leagues.

"I love Test cricket so much so its always been an easy decision to keep that as my number one priority. Especially in Australia, we are lucky to have Test cricket so well-supported."

Cummins also spoke about the respect he has for his fellow speed merchants Indian talisman Jasprit Bumrah and Kagiso Rabada of South Africa. "Those two guys (Bumrah and Rabada) are bowlers I enjoy watching and admire. They have been taking wickets consistently for many years and we've had some wonderful contests."

Talking about the book, Cummins also revealed the process he followed while deciding the list of interviewees for his new book. "I started with a list of people I knew and admired and whose life stories exemplified resilience, leadership and the power of resolve," he said.

Delighted to see ICC Champions Trophy in Pakistan, says Wasim

PTI ■ KARACHI

Former captain Wasim Bari is glad to see the return of a global cricketing event to Pakistan through the ICC Champions Trophy, and hopes that the nightmarish days after the militant attack on Sri Lankan team in 2009 are forgotten forever.

Pakistan could not host international cricket for 10 years after that gruesome day, and were forced to play their home matches in the UAE.

Bari was serving as the Director in the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) under the Chairmanship of late Ejaz Butt when the attack took place on March 3 near the Liberty roundabout close to the Gaddafi stadium.

"It was the worst day in my life when news came through of what had happened. Everyone was numb and most of us in our offices realised



immediately this was going to put Pakistan cricket back by a few years," Bari said.

Bari said there was disbelief followed by sorrow when the governments of both the nations and the ICC got involved, and later a chartered flight was arranged to send the Lankan team back home. Six policemen and two others were killed in the attack and several were injured including Pakistani umpire Ahsan Raza, who later had to undergo a life-saving operation.

Bari recalled that when pictures of the bullet-ridden bus and vans carrying the match officials and umpires in blood stained shirts went viral, it became obvious that Pakistan's hopes of staging the Champions Trophy or even the 2011 World Cup matches had vanished.

Without putting blame on anyone, Bari said: "It should never have happened and the result was Pakistan cricket couldn't properly grow for the next 10 years, as all teams

refused to play in Pakistan for security reasons."

Bari said he is delighted to see the ICC Champions Trophy being held in Pakistan now and multiple teams landing in the country.

"To see England, Australian, South African, New Zealand and Afghanistan teams in Karachi and Lahore means so much to all Pakistani cricketers, board officials and the fans," he said.

The 75-year-old said it was a tribute to the singleminded effort of all the stakeholders involved in Pakistan cricket. "I think it is also a time to pay tribute to the resilience of Pakistan cricket while hosting the Champions Trophy, after all that has happened in the last 10 years."

Bari said Pakistan have some very good players, who are capable of helping the team defend the Champions Trophy title.

Champions Trophy set to start amid debate on relevance of 50-over cricket

PTI ■ DUBAI/KARACHI

Intrigue, uncertainty, backstage drama. The ICC Champions Trophy has seen it all even before the curtains go up on the tournament and it would only get more stirring over the next three weeks, starting with the opening clash between Pakistan and New Zealand in Karachi.

Eight teams will vie for a trophy, often talked up as tougher to win than the World Cup, and also to script a new chapter in their own cricketing story. While India will fight it out in Dubai, others will be primarily based in Pakistan, which would get to host its first ICC event since the 1996 World Cup.

Several barriers had to be hurdled over to cobble this tournament together after eight years. The tournament is also crucial amid the raging debate on the relevance of ODI cricket, which is struggling to find its space amid the rage for T20 cricket and the devotion for Test format.

Perhaps, no other cricketing event in the recent past has been harried so much by long-standing geopolitical tensions, stubbornness by administrative boards of two important participants, and the nail-biting anxiety over the readiness of venues in the main hosting nation. The chaos has been an endearing throwback to the 90s when cricket in the sub-continent resembled a hastily organised party.

But all these pre-tournament jitters will be forgotten once the teams enter the field, and the first of them will be Pakistan and New Zealand. If anyone needs a reminder, then Pakistan had won the last edition of the Champions Trophy in 2017.

The opening match in itself is a curious clash -- a talented-yet-volatile Pakistan unsure of its own destiny against a team for which order is everything. But the blue riband match of the tournament will be on February 23 when India take on Pakistan, ushering in

customary waves of nostalgia, emotions, political grandstanding, and the social media battle.

That marquee showdown will be in Dubai as India remained steadfast in its refusal to set foot on Pakistani soil owing to security concerns.

Last dance of Kohli, Rohit? But beyond such team equations, certain individual players would want this tournament to be a memorable one. On top of the list are India's batting talismans Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma. They have been magnificent servants of the game over the last decade and half.

Few in modern era were able to match their achievements and aura. But now, these two titans have reached the last lap of a long race, and would want to bow out in a blaze of glory. It's tough to imagine Kohli and Rohit being part of India's ODI set-up after the Champions Trophy irrespective of the outcome. It might even impact their

future in Test cricket, as a lukewarm outing here might force the selectors to mull over their role ahead of India's tour to England in June.

Similarly, a failure to win the Champions Trophy will bring the role of head coach Gautam Gambhir under scrutiny. Gambhir might have received a temporary relief after India's domination over England in the recent home series, but not it wouldn't be enough to brush under the carpet, India's recent travails against New Zealand and Australia.

But a global trophy will certainly give him a much better ground to stand. From a team perspective, India will be eager to wrest their first ICC trophy in the 50-over format after their triumph in the 2013 Champions Trophy under the enigmatic Mahendra Singh Dhoni. It will be a perfect parting gift to Kohli and Rohit and a welcome carpet to some young names such as Shubman Gill who are set to take India into the future.

Jaspal Rana will continue as my coach: Manu Bhaker

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Eying glory in next World Championship, double Olympic medallist shooter Manu Bhaker said Jaspal Rana will continue to be her "coach" despite the Dronacharya awardee being roped in as the High Performance trainer for pistol discipline by the National Rifle Association of India (NRAI).

Rana, a four-time Asian Games gold medallist, had a very bitter and public fallout with Manu before the Tokyo Olympics but they reconciled before last year's Paris Games, where the latter made history by bagging two bronze medals.

"Honestly, I only have to say one thing that he (Rana) is my coach all I know and he is very good at what he does. He is very, very talented and he has been a great coach for me."

"All I know and all I can say is that he is my coach. Of course, he can be anyone else's coach as well but for me he is my coach," Manu said after winning the BBC Sportswomen of the Year 2024 award at a glittering function here on Monday night.


Under Rana's personal guidance, Manu, who was struggling after the Tokyo Games, made a remarkable comeback and became the first Indian to win two medals in a single edition of the Olympics since Independence.

She won bronze medals in 10m air pistol and 10m air pistol mixed team events in Paris to create history. Talking about her future plans, Manu said: "We will be going for World Cups in April, and then we have some domestic competitions in June."

"It will be followed by another World Cup in Munich. Then we will have the World Championships, probably in late October or



November. My target is the World Championships. I want to peak at the right time for the World Championships," she added. The season-ending World Championships will be held in Cairo, Egypt, from November 6-16.



GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF MICRO, SMALL & MEDIUM ENTERPRISES
OFFICE OF DEVELOPMENT COMMISSIONER (MSME), NEW DELHI

Notice Inviting Expression of Interest (Eoi)
for Empanelment of Implementing Agencies for FY 2025-26

Office of the Development Commissioner (MSME) invites applications from eligible Implementing Agencies (IAs) for their empanelment to organize training programs under the Entrepreneurship and Skill Development Programme (ESDP) for FY 2025-26, as per the scheme guidelines (can be downloaded from the portal <https://dcmsme.gov.in/ESDP-Guidelines-new-01-04-2022.pdf>).

The Entrepreneurship and Skill Development Programme (ESDP) aims to promote self-employment and entrepreneurship by providing technical and managerial training. It focuses on skill enhancement, capacity building for MSMEs, fostering innovation, and generating employment. The programme ensures inclusive growth, targeting youth, women, and disadvantaged groups to drive economic development through technical upskilling and business innovation.

Eligibility Criteria for Empanelment

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- Adequate infrastructure and resources to conduct high-quality training.
- Willingness to adopt digital platforms for monitoring and evaluation.

Who Can Apply

Institutions: IITs, IIMs, NITs, Technology Centers (TCs), Tool Rooms, Central Autonomous body under the Ministry of Education (MoE) Government of India, and Institutes from Central and State Government departments and organizations etc.

How to Apply

Interested organizations can submit their application in the prescribed format (can be downloaded from the official website at www.dcmsme.gov.in) along with supporting documents through email to esdp.div@dcmsme.gov.in, latest by **20th March, 2025**. Applicants must include detailed proposals specifying the geographical coverage of the training programs and the areas of specialization for advanced courses. Furthermore, the distribution of the ESDP programmes to the Implementing Agencies will be based on the mandate to ensure a balanced distribution and maintain the prescribed ratio of various scheme components.

For More Details, Visit: www.dcmsme.gov.in or contact the following address:

Joint Director (ESDP) O/o DC (MSME),
Room No.731, A-Wing, 7th Floor, Nirman Bhawan, Maulana Azad Road,
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