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WORLD 8
LITHUANIAN PREZ BACKS TRUMP'S NATO DEFENCE SPENDING GOAL

RASHTRAPATI BHAVAN SLAMS THE CONGRESS

President Droupadi Murmu addresses the joint sitting of both Houses of Parliament on the first day of the Budget Session in New Delhi PTI

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

In an unprecedented move, the Rashtrapati Bhawan on Friday reacted strongly over the Congress leaders' comments on President Droupadi Murmu's address to the joint session of the Parliament terming the remarks are "in poor taste, unfortunate and entirely avoidable".

The Rashtrapati Bhavan which has never responded to such political remarks, in a statement said such comments hurt the dignity of the high office and therefore are "unacceptable".

Soon after the President concluded her address to the joint sitting of both the Houses, Congress leaders Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra were seen discussing the speech. "The poor lady, the President, was getting very tired by the end...She could hardly speak poor thing," Sonia was heard saying in a video doing the rounds on social media.

The President's office said it believes that "it might be the case that these leaders were not acquainted with the idiom and discourse in Indian languages such as Hindi, and thus formed a wrong impression". In any case, such comments are in poor taste, unfortunate and entirely avoidable, the statement said.

"These leaders have said that the President was getting very tired by the end and she could hardly speak. Rashtrapati Bhavan would like to clarify that nothing could be farther from the truth. The President was not tired at any point. Indeed, she has believed that speaking up for the marginalised communities, for women and farmers, as she was doing during the course of her address, can never be tiring," the statement said.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi too launched a scathing attack on the Congress, accusing its "shahi parivar" of insulting President Droupadi Murmu, who hails from a tribal background. In a direct response to Congress leaders' purported remarks on Murmu, Modi, at a public meeting in the national Capital said, "These Congress people think they are the masters of the country. The arrogance of the Congress royal family has once again been exposed."

Indian economy defies global slowdown

PROF. **GAURAV** VALLABH
GUEST REPORTER

With Sanskriti (culture) and Pragati (progress) moving in tandem, India stands on the brink of an economic transformation-one that is propelling the nation towards becoming the world's third-largest economy. Driven by the guiding principles of Reform, Perform, and Transform, the government has laid a robust foundation for economic expansion through bold policy measures, strategic interventions, and a commitment to inclusive growth.

At the heart of this transformative journey is the Economic Survey 2024-25, which, despite global economic turbulence, presents a confident yet pragmatic assessment of India's economic trajectory. While economies worldwide grapple with geopolitical uncertainties, supply chain disruptions, and inflationary pressures, India continues to defy global headwinds, reaffirming its status as one of the fastest-growing major economies.

The data speaks volumes. India's GDP expanded by an impressive 6.4 per cent in FY25, driven by a resurgence in rural demand, a boom in infrastructure investment, and a stellar performance by the services sector. Key economic contributors such as agriculture (3.8 per cent) and industry (6.2 per cent) outperformed their historical averages (FY15-FY24), indicating broad-based growth momentum. The Indian economy is projected to expand at a rate of 6.3 per cent to 6.8 per cent in the financial year 2025-26 (FY26) Private Final Consumption Expenditure (PFCE)-a cornerstone of aggregate demand-is projected to grow at 7.3 per cent, underscoring robust household spending, particularly in rural areas. A strong rebound in consumption has been evident in rising sales of two-wheelers, three-wheelers, and tractors, signalling increased purchasing power and consumer confidence. A resurgent manufacturing sector is a cornerstone of India's economic revival, as reflected in its Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI), which has consistently remained in the expansionary zone. In December 2024, the PMI surpassed long-term averages, fueled by strong order books, rising exports, and resilient domestic demand.

Business sentiment remains overwhelmingly positive, with firms anticipating higher production, improved order inflows, and greater capacity utilisation in the coming quarters. The Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme has played a pivotal role in attracting private investments, reinforcing India's position as a global manufacturing powerhouse. Investment remains the backbone of India's economic expansion. According to the RBI's latest

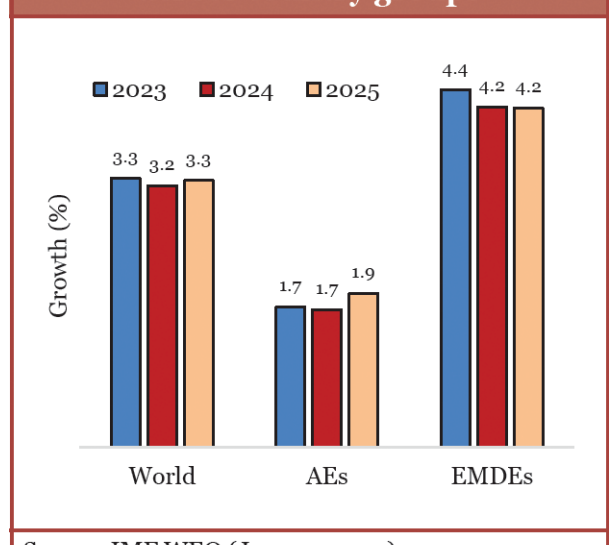
ECONOMIC SURVEY 2025

report, private investment commitments surged from ₹1.6 Lakh Crore in FY24 to ₹2.45 Lakh Crore in FY25. The public sector, particularly in infrastructure development, has been a critical catalyst, with General Government Capital Formation (GFCF) growing at 13.1 per cent, outpacing overall investment growth between 2019 and 2023.

The government's commitment to high-quality capital expenditure is evident, with capital spending now constituting 21.4 per cent of total expenditure, up from 13 per cent in FY21. Additionally, the National Monetisation Pipeline (NMP) has unlocked ₹3.86 Lakh Crore worth of private capital across key infrastructure sectors, enhancing long-term growth potential. Infrastructure development remains a cornerstone of India's growth strategy, with a paradigm shift from a project-based approach to a corridor-based one. The National Highway Network has expanded from 91,287 km in 2014 to 1.46 lakh km in 2024. Airport infrastructure investments exceeded ₹91,000 Crore (FY20-FY25) to modernise key hubs and expand air traffic capacity. Port efficiency has surged, with operational capacity growing from 3 MTPA in FY24 to 21 MTPA in FY25. Renewable energy has seen remarkable progress, with installed capacity reaching 456.7 GW as of November 2024, of which 47 per cent comes from renewables. Meanwhile, the Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) has transformed rural water accessibility, with tap water connections rising from 17 per cent in 2019 to 79.1 per cent in 2024.

Despite external headwinds, India's services exports continue to offset a widening merchandise trade deficit. In response to shifting global policies, India is expanding its trade footprint into high-value sectors such as biotechnology, semiconductors, and quantum computing. Strategic partnerships in space, AI, and telecommunications further bolster India's positioning as a leader in advanced technology industries. India has made remarkable strides in research and development (R and D), with patent filings more than doubling since 2014-15 and patent grants increasing seventeen-fold. However, Gross Expenditure on R and D (GERD) remains at 0.64 per cent of GDP, significantly lower than global counterparts like China, Japan, and the US, where business-funded R and D exceeds 70 per cent. Strengthening industry-academia collaboration and fostering innovation-led entrepreneurship remain key imperatives for the next phase of economic transformation.

Chart I.2: Steady growth outlook across country groups



Source: IMF WEO (January 2025)
Note: AEs- Advanced Economies, EMDEs- Emerging market and developing economies

Modi takes a pot shot at the Opposition

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■ NEW DELHI

In a jibe at the Congress and other Opposition parties, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday came out with a tongue-in-cheek comment by mentioning that it could be perhaps the first time ever since he took over as PM in 2014 that there has been no attempt from abroad to destabilise our legislative functions before the start of a Parliament session.

"This is the first session I am seeing in the last 10 years in which there has been no attempt to stoke a fire from any foreign corner," the prime minister said briefing the media before the start of the Budget session.

The PM also took a swipe at Opposition parties, saying that there were people abroad ready to do mischief before every session since 2014 and there was also no dearth of those here who would fuel such attempts.

Modi was referring to the protests by Opposition parties, including the Congress in previous Parliament sessions over revelations made by now-disbanded US-based short seller Hindenburg Research on alleged stock manipulation and tax evasion by the Gautam Adani group.

With Modi-led NDA's third term to bring in its first full-fledged budget on Saturday, the PM said he prayed that Goddess Lakshmi, who is associated with wealth, will bless the poor and middle class. He expressed confidence that this Budget session will infuse new confidence and energy in attaining the goal of 'Viksit Bharat' by 2047.

The prime minister also hinted new initiatives for the poor and middle class as well as women, he also said a mechanism has been designed for the participation of younger Parliamentarians in further nurturing the 'Viksit Bharat'. "Especially for young MPs, it is a golden opportunity, because the more awareness and participation... In the House today, the more fruits of a developed India they will see before their eyes. And therefore, this is a priceless opportunity for the young MPs," Modi said.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi addresses the media on the first day of the Budget Session of Parliament PTI

Ahead of the tabling of the Economic Survey, the PM said his government has been working in mission mode in its third term for an all-round development and asserted that innovation, inclusion and investment have shaped its economic agenda. Modi also shared that several historic bills will be taken up during the Session and will become laws after comprehensive debate to strengthen the country.

"Particularly, important decisions will be taken during the Session to empower women to ensure they get equal rights and any sectarian or faith-based discrimination is removed," he said. Modi also expressed confidence that every MP, especially the young ones, will contribute to the agenda of 'Viksit Bharat' during the session.

Stressing on the mantra of 'Reform, Perform and Transform', Modi said fast-paced development has to be achieved and the maximum emphasis is on reform. He said the state and Central governments have to perform together and one can see transformation through public participation.

Kejriwal accuses CM Saini of conspiracy to poison Yamuna

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

In a startling revelation, Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) supremo Arvind Kejriwal on Friday accused Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini of hatching a "conspiracy" to "influence" and force half of Delhi's population to thirst due to the "poisonous" Yamuna water to defame his party ahead of the Assembly polls on February 5 by sending highly-polluted waters to the national Capital. In his six-page written reply addressed to the chief election commissioner (CEC), AAP chief raised serious allegations against Saini and said the Haryana Chief Minister orchestrated a 'conspiracy' to influence the Delhi assembly election. He demanded that a criminal case should be filed against Saini regarding the 'poisonous' Yamuna issue.

In the response to the Commission's second notice, Kejriwal clarified that his earlier statements, which referenced the Yamuna being "poisoned," were made in the context of the rising ammonia levels in the water and were not intended to suggest any malicious intent outside of this environmental crisis. Warning that water could be used as a weapon to win elections if the EC fails to act, he said he was shocked that the poll body did not pass any order for the Haryana Chief Minister but chose to "hound" him.

DELHI DECIDES

AAP national convener Arvind Kejriwal with Punjab CM Bhagwant Mann and AAP MP Sanjay Singh before leaving to meet Election Commissioners, in New Delhi PTI

Eight AAP MLAs resign before polls

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

In a major setback to the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), eight MLAs have resigned, ahead of the coming Delhi Assembly polls on February 5. The MLAs who resigned are Naresh Yadav (Mehrauli), Rohit Kumar (Trilokpuri), Rajesh Rishi (Janakpuri), Madan Lal (Kasturba Nagar), Girish Soni (Madipur), Pawan Sharma (Adarsh Nagar), and Bhawna Goud (Palam). Sources said these MLAs were disgruntled after being denied tickets for the February 5 polls and were touch with other parties. BS Joon (Bijwasan) was the first AAP MLA who gave his papers. Most of the MLAs shared their resignation letters on social media and slammed AAP over corruption and other issues.

Reacting to the development, South Delhi BJP MP Ramvir Singh Bidhuri said the ship of Aam Aadmi Party is sinking, that is why seven MLAs have resigned from the party.

Poonch encounter: two terrorist killed

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

Alert troops of the Indian army neutralised two heavily armed Pakistani terrorists in the fierce gunfight along the line of control in the Khari Karmara area of Poonch early Friday morning. This is the first major incident of terrorist-related violence in the last two years in the Khari Karmara area of Poonch.

According to local reports, the movement of a group of heavily armed Pakistani infiltrators was detected by the troops late Thursday evening while they (Pakistani infiltrators) were attempting to sneak inside the Indian territory taking advantage of the raging forest fires in the forward area.

The security forces in the region were already conducting massive combing and search operations based on local intelligence inputs about the suspected movement of terrorists in the upper reaches of Rajouri and Poonch.

In a post on X, the Nagrota-based White Knight Corps also confirmed the terrorist movement was detected last night at the Line of Control in the Poonch Sector.

"The terrorist movement was detected last night at the Line of Control in the Poonch sector. Alert troops swiftly engaged the infiltrating terrorists, triggering an intense and heavy firefight. The anti-terrorist operation continued through the night, leading to the neutralisation of two terrorists. The search of the area thus far has resulted in the recovery of several weapons and war-like stores", White Knight Corps posted on X.

Ahead of polls and lucrative offers, Delhi students split on AAP and BJP

SANYA PANDEY ■ NEW DELHI

With Assembly polls inching closer, several students of Delhi University and other higher educational institutions, residing in North Campus, have opined that the ruling Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) has failed on various fronts in the last 10 years and there should BJP's "double-engine" government for better development and welfare of the people of national capital.

Though these students' are hoping for change in power in Delhi, some still have reposed their faith on AAP asserting that in the run-up to the Assembly elections, the BJP and Congress announced galore of "freebies", while the ruling dispensation has already delivered what it had promised in last polls.

They were also of the opinion that Delhi would witness a fierce contest between the AAP and BJP. The Congress, which has announced "five guarantees" including Rs 2,500 per month to every woman under the 'Pyari Didi Yojana', and eyeing to return to power highlighting the works done by the previous Sheila Dikshit-led government in Capital, did not find a mention.

Navya Malhotra, a first-time voter, highlighted various issues including pollution and sanitation, which she has claimed the AAP government has totally failed to address in the last 10 years. She said the BJP should be given a chance this election.

Talking to the Pioneer, the 18-year-old said, "I feel this time BJP should come to power in Delhi. The AAP has been saying that they were not able to do the work for the people because Arvind Kejriwal and his team members were put behind bars and Delhi doesn't have statehood. But, 10 years is a very long period. They didn't do much."

"Kejriwal had talked about the slum areas, especially JJ colony, that he will take care of such places. But, he failed to take any appropriate steps for waste management. It has become such a big problem. He hasn't taken care of this," she said.

Referring to pollution, Navya said," The AAP government has completely failed. Because of pollution, students' we were not able to go to schools, colleges. Our time was wasted. So it is definitely important to give a chance to the BJP. Some people are following Narendra Modi because he is saving Hindutva, while some people are following him, because genuinely they cannot see any better party than BJP."

DELHI DECIDES

File photo: Ranjan Dimri/The Pioneer

Referring to BJP's manifesto, she said, "In the BJP's manifesto, they are giving those things that Kejriwal has offered to people. But there are also different things like giving Rs 2,1000 to pregnant women, so the rural/lower sections will get monetary help. Kejriwal had also talked about monetary help, but overall development didn't work out quite well."

Mentioning the law and order situation, Navya said, "As a first time female voter, I feel safety in Delhi is a prominent issue, because I still can't freely roam out of my house at night. Even if I go downstairs I have to be quite vigilant. The AAP has installed cameras. Are they functional ? Women safety is very prime. Delhi which has been given the title of 'rape capital', if that can be changed by a 'double-engine' government BJP, then why not 'Har Har Modi'. "

Notably, the law and order of Delhi comes under the Union Home Ministry.

She also accused the incumbent AAP MLA from Timarpur Dilip Pandey for not doing enough to mitigate the issues concerning the people of the constituency and said the BJP should be given a chance.

The AAP this time has fielded turncoat Surinder Pal Singh (Bitto), BJP Surya Prakash and Congress Lokendra Chaudhary.

Perfecting the Pose: A Model's Guide to Elevating Every Outfit

BY RACHNA TIWARI

In fashion, a model's pose is more than just movement—it's the key to bringing a designer's vision to life. The right posture and pose can highlight a garment's finest details and amplify its charm. On the other hand, a poorly chosen stance can diminish the impact of even the most stunning outfit. For professional models and aspiring talents alike, mastering poses tailored to specific outfits is vital, particularly when working with intricate styles like Indian traditional wear.

Every piece of clothing is designed with a story in mind. From the flow of a sari's pallu to the structured flare of a lehenga, each detail is intentional. Western gowns often call for elegance and fluidity, while tailored suits exude confidence. Indian outfits like saris, lehengas, and anarkalis, with their rich fabrics and intricate embellishments, require a more nuanced approach. For instance, a sari's pallu can be a statement piece. A slight tilt of the shoulder or an elongated arm can emphasize its flow and embellishments. On the other hand, a lehenga requires dynamic yet graceful movements to showcase its flare and craftsmanship.

Practicing Poses for Different Outfits

To truly do justice to any outfit, a model must first understand its structure and design. Familiarize yourself with the garment's weight, key features, and how it moves with the body. Identifying focal points, such as an embroidered neckline or a heavily adorned hem, helps determine which angles and poses will highlight these elements. For example, standing tall with a gentle arch can showcase an anarkali's volume, while a slight diagonal lean can accentuate the elegant drape of a sari.

* **Understand the Outfit:.**
* **Pose with Intent:**
* **Mirror Practice:**
* **Video Recordings:**
* **Engage with Props:**

Practice is the foundation of perfect posing. Trying on the outfit and experimenting in front of a mirror allows you to test different angles and study how the fabric flows. Recording practice sessions offers valuable insights, helping you refine movements and identify flattering poses. Many Indian outfits pair with accessories like dupattas or statement jewelry, which can be skillfully incorporated into poses to add layers of visual interest.

Certain poses work exceptionally well with Indian wear. For a sari, an over-the-shoulder look, combined with a gentle waist twist, highlights the pallu's intricate design. With a lehenga, holding the hemline while spinning captures the garment's movement, while placing hands on the hips frames the waist. Anarkalis look stunning when a model stands with one foot slightly forward, gently lifting the hem to reveal the border's detail. Relaxed yet elegant poses, such as sitting cross-legged or leaning against a surface, complement kurta sets and create a modern, approachable vibe.

Final Thoughts

Posing is an art that combines creativity and discipline. By understanding the unique character of each outfit and refining your movements, you can elevate your modeling craft. Whether showcasing a richly embroidered lehenga or a minimalist kurta, each pose is an opportunity to tell a story that honors the designer's vision and captivates the audience.

WITH A CAREER SPANNING ELEVEN YEARS, THE WRITER HAS SOLIDIFIED HER EXPERTISE IN HR, ENTREPRENEURSHIP, INNOVATION ECOSYSTEM DEVELOPMENT AND FASHION. SHE IS A FASHION COACH, PRINT AND RAMP MODEL WHO WAS ALSO FEATURED IN VOGUE AND GLADRAGS MAGAZINES.

YOUNG TALENT ARSHI BHARTI MAKES OTT DEBUT WITH 'DIL TU JAAN TU'

PARVINDER BHATIA : JAMSHEDPUR

Jamshedpur-born actress Arshi Bharti, who has now settled in Mumbai, has taken a significant leap in her acting career with her debut in the web series Dil Tu Jaan Tu. The series, streaming on the Reelies App, follows a vertical format, making it unique in the digital entertainment space. The first nine episodes have already been released, with the remaining episodes set to premiere in the coming weeks.

Arshi plays the role of Anika in the series, a character deeply in love with Rocky, played by Adnaan Shaikh. However, Rocky has feelings for Pari, portrayed by Angel Rai, creating a gripping love triangle. Speaking about her experience, Arshi expressed excitement about transitioning to the OTT platform. "After proving my talent on the big screen, I am thrilled to explore the world of digital entertainment. OTT platforms are challenging yet incredibly rewarding, offering actors a chance to experiment with their craft," she shared.

Arshi is also doing a web series. It is a period drama where she is playing the role of a soldier. It's a YouTube series under Balaji Productions.

Arshi's journey into the entertainment industry has been one of dedication and perseverance. She completed her tenth grade from Sacred Heart Convent School and pursued her higher secondary education at JH Tarapore School in Jamshedpur. With dreams of making a mark in the film industry, she moved to Mumbai and enrolled at Whistling Woods International, a prestigious institute specializing in film, media, and arts.

Although she initially studied media, her passion for acting led her to explore theatre. She recalls being inspired by her interaction with renowned TV journalist Barkha Dutt, who encouraged her to strive for greatness. "Meeting Barkha Dutt was a turning point for me. She inspired me to work hard and make a name for myself. The journey wasn't easy, especially coming from a non-filmy background. But I believed in my dreams and persevered through multiple auditions," she reminisced.

Arshi's journey was fraught with challenges, from standing in long audition queues to competing with aspiring actors who had strong industry connections. Despite the odds, she remained undeterred and ultimately secured a role in Dil Tu Jaan Tu.

To refine her acting skills, Arshi also pursued a diploma in acting from the Kishore Namit Kapoor Acting Institute. "During my training, I had a moment of realization—I was meant to be in front of the camera. My journey to Mumbai wasn't as smooth as I had imagined, but it was worth every struggle. After completing my acting course, I actively participated in numerous auditions, each one bringing me closer to my dream," she added.

Arshi credits her parents, Rajesh Bharti, an astrologer, and Sunita Bharti, a regional singer, for their unwavering support. "My family has been my biggest pillar of strength. Their encouragement has been instrumental in my journey, and I hope to continue making them proud," she said.

WITH DIL TU JAAN TU MARKING HER SUCCESSFUL DEBUT ON THE OTT PLATFORM, ARSHI BHARTI IS LOOKING FORWARD TO EXPLORING MORE OPPORTUNITIES IN ACTING. HER STORY IS AN INSPIRING EXAMPLE OF PASSION, PERSEVERANCE, AND THE DETERMINATION TO TURN DREAMS INTO REALITY. FANS EAGERLY AWAIT HER NEXT VENTURE AS SHE CONTINUES TO SHINE IN THE ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRY.

Annual Sports Day 'Udaan 2024-25' at SBPS

PNS : RANCHI

Sarala Birla Public School, Ranchi hosted the Annual Sports Day, Udaan 2024-25 bringing together students and teachers for a fun-filled day of athletic competitions and excitement.

The event, held at the school's ground, saw enthusiastic participation from students and teachers. The day commenced with a welcome song followed by a spectacular Chau dance performance, a semi-classical dance form blending martial art, folk tradition, and story-telling. The dance was a dedication to Bhagwan Birsa Munda on his 150th year of birth anniversary. The dance narrated Birsa Munda's life's story and his patriotic fervour. The competitions included track and field events, such as 100m race, relay race, hurdle race, and slow cycling race.

The Chief Guest of the event was Prof. C. Jeganathan, Vice Chancellor, Sarala Birla University. Other dignitaries who graced the occasion were Prof. (Dr.) Vijay Kumar Singh, Registrar, Sarala Birla University, Ranchi, Samarjit Jana, Principal, JVM Shyamali, Niraj Kumar Sinha, Principal, Firayalal Public School, Ranchi.

The highlight of the event was the Jumbled March, where students from each house proudly displayed their school spirit and unity. The winners of the various events were awarded medals and certificates. Yajurved was declared as the Best house of the event.

Principal, Paramjit Kaur, inaugurated the event, emphasizing the importance of sports in promoting physical fitness, teamwork, and discipline. She added that Sports Day is an integral part of our school's calendar, and we're thrilled to see our students showcase their talents and sportsmanship.

In his closing remarks, the Chief Guest praised the students for their impressive performances and encouraged them to continue pursuing their passion for sports.

Private schools hit back at profit-making allegations

PNS : JAMSHEDPUR

The Association of Jharkhand Unaided Private Educational Institutions (AJUPEI) has strongly refuted allegations of profiteering, particularly concerning the sale of books at private English medium schools. In an official press release, AJUPEI President B. Chandrashekhar emphasized that these schools have been dedicated to providing quality, value-based education, producing successful professionals across various fields.

The controversy arose as schools were accused of forcing parents to buy textbooks at 20% above the Maximum Retail Price (MRP). AJUPEI, however, argued that the schools were merely facilitating convenience by offering a one-stop solution for parents, rather than engaging in any undue profit-making. Despite this, schools are now being targeted for allegedly compelling parents to purchase books from pre-designated sellers.

Adding to the dispute, the Education Department has issued notices instructing schools to stop book sales on their premises. In response, many schools have ceased selling books to avoid legal complications, although parents reportedly found it convenient and continued to get books at standard market prices. AJUPEI claims that no official complaints were filed by parents and that the primary sources of these allegations are individuals with vested interests, rather than parents or education officials. It also referenced a Delhi High Court ruling (dated June 21, 2018), which permits schools to sell books at MRP within school premises.

AJUPEI also highlighted a severe financial strain on private institutions due to recent government policies. The state government has increased the minimum wages by 35% since April 2024, significantly raising operational costs. Additionally, inflation drives up school expenses by 8% to 10% annually, including an average salary increment of 8% to 10% for teachers. Despite this, the government has capped school fee hikes at 10% every two years, making it increasingly difficult for schools to sustain quality education.

Under the Right to Education (RTE) Act, private schools are mandated to reserve 25% of their seats for underprivileged students from BPL families. While the government initially promised reimbursement equal to per-child expenditure in government schools or the regular school fee (whichever is lower), the reality has been starkly different. The state has only reimbursed Rs. 425 per child, whereas the actual school fees average around Rs. 2000. Since 2022, the government has ceased these reimbursements altogether, leaving private schools to bear the financial burden.

AJUPEI likened this lack of funding to an indirect 25% tax on private institutions, despite their exemption from taxation. The association criticized the state for failing to honor its financial commitments while simultaneously restricting fee increases, pushing schools toward an impending financial crisis.

AJUPEI warns that, at this rate, private schools may soon struggle to differentiate themselves from government institutions due to financial constraints. This, in turn, could stifle innovation and excellence, hindering the ability to produce future scientists, entrepreneurs, and global leaders. The association urged stakeholders, including parents and policymakers, to recognize the pressing challenges and support reforms that ensure the sustainability of private education in Jharkhand.

'Phulwari'—DPS Bokaro's green initiative for sustainability

PNS : BOKARO

Promoting environmental awareness, DPS Bokaro organized 'Phulwari—Nurturing Nature', an exhibition-cum-competition, in its Primary and Senior Wings today. The event, themed 'Rustic Radiance' and 'Reduce, Reuse, Recycle', encouraged students to embrace sustainability and appreciate nature's beauty.

Kundan Kumar, Chief General Manager, Town Administration, Bokaro Steel Plant, inaugurated the exhibition with Dr. A. S. Gangwar, Principal, DPS Bokaro, by planting Bay Rum and Cinnamon saplings. Kumar highlighted the urgency of afforestation amid urbanization, urging collective responsibility for environmental conservation.

Over 2,000 plant species were displayed, including seasonal flowers, medicinal plants, and vegetables. Judges evaluated entries across categories, while the 'Best out of Waste' segment showcased creative reuse of materials.

ICMCS-2025 conference on Sustainable Resource Utilization

PNS : JAMSHEDPUR

The National Conference on Innovations in Coal & Mineral Characterization for Sustainable Resource Utilization (ICMCS-2025), organized by CSIR-National Metallurgical Laboratory (CSIR-NML) in Jamshedpur, successfully concluded on January 31, 2025, at Kolkata. The event saw the participation of approximately 100 delegates from 30 renowned institutions across India, including IITs, GSI, universities, CSIR, BARC, and Tata Steel. The conference provided a platform for presenting research findings on the sustainable utilization of coal, ores, and minerals, with a particular focus on the preparation of Certified Reference Material (CRM) as part of the Make in India initiative, aimed at reducing import reliance.

The conference enabled researchers, scientists, PhD scholars, and industry professionals to exchange ideas and contribute toward the vision of "Vikashit Bharat" by 2047. During the valedictory session, Monika Sahu conducted the proceedings, with delegates expressing their appreciation for Dr. Sandip Ghosh Chowdhury, Director of CSIR-NML, and Sanchita Chakravarty, Chairperson of ICMCS-2025, for organizing a successful event. The importance and benefits of such conferences in driving innovation and collaboration in the field were emphasized.

Awards were presented to the winners in both the oral presentation and poster presentation categories. The winners of the oral presentations were: P. Kumar – IIT Kharagpur, Susmit M. Nimje – Tata Steel, and Munmun Maji – CSIR-CIMFR Bharat.

The winners of the poster presentations were: Kanishk Kumar Karan – AcSIR, CIMFR, Jamshedpur, Kundan Kumar – AcSIR NML, Jamshedpur, Neelu Priya Tirky – Ranchi University.

The conference concluded with a vote of thanks by Dr. Rajen Kundu, Convener of ICMCS-2025, who highlighted the success of the event and expressed gratitude for the collaborative efforts that made the conference a valuable knowledge-sharing platform.

XITE hosts session focused on LGBTQ+ Awareness

PNS : JAMSHEDPUR

XITE Gamharia (Autonomous) has taken a progressive step in fostering inclusivity by hosting a Gender Sensitisation session titled "Understanding Third Gender". The event, organized with the support of the Anti-Sexual Harassment Cell, aimed to raise awareness about the challenges faced by the LGBTQ+ community, promote understanding, and encourage a culture of respect for diversity.

The session was graced by an impressive lineup of speakers, including Shadvi Amarjeet Singh Sakhi (Founder & Secretary), Mahant Himanshi Padhan, Arpit Pandey (President, The Humsafar Trust, Mumbai), and other notable personalities like Mr. Nilofar and Mr. Anshu Goyal. Their diverse expertise in LGBTQ+ issues helped provide valuable insights into topics ranging from understanding gender binaries to the creation of inclusive, safe environments for all individuals.

In partnership with The Humsafar Trust, India's first community-based organization dedicated to the health and human rights of LGBTQ+ communities, and Utthan CBO, which advocates for the rights of third-gender individuals, the session was designed to broaden attendees' perspectives on gender inclusivity.

The session was attended by a range of prominent figures, including Dr. (Fr.) Mukti Clarence, S.J., Vice Principal, and faculty members such as Assist. Prof. Sushmita Chowdhury Sen, Assist. Prof. Dr. Swati Singh, Assist. Prof. Reetika Singh, Assist. Prof. Anjali Jha, and Assist. Prof. Nidhi Kumari. Ashish Singh, Head of Branding & Communication, was also present, further highlighting the commitment of the institution to a diverse, inclusive environment.

Seminar on 'Understanding Third Gender Rights' organised by ULC

AVINASH ANJAN: HAZARIBAG

University Law College, Vinoba Bhave University, successfully organized a seminar on "Understanding Third Gender Rights", bringing together legal experts, academicians, activists, and policymakers to discuss the challenges and legal frameworks surrounding transgender rights in India. The program was graced by Chief Guest Dr. Pawan Kumar Poddar, Hon'ble Vice-Chancellor, Vinoba Bhave University, who emphasized the importance of legal education in fostering gender inclusivity and social justice. He highlighted the need for a more progressive approach to gender identity within academic and legal institutions. Distinguished speakers included Dr. Sadik Rajak, Registrar, Vinoba Bhave University, and Dr. Vikas Kumar, Dean of Student Welfare, who shared insights on the evolving legal landscape and the role of educational institutions in promoting gender sensitivity. Dr. Mithilesh Kumar Singh, Proctor, and Financial Advisor Shri Akhilesh Kumar also addressed the gathering, stressing the significance of policy implementation and institutional support for the transgender community. The seminar featured notable speakers from the legal and activist communities, including Shri Gaurav Khurana, Secretary, District Legal Services Authority, who discussed legal aid provisions for transgender individuals, and transgender activists Amarjeet (Utthan CBO) and Nilofer (Humsafar Trust), who shared personal experiences and the socio-legal challenges faced by the community. Advocate Anshu Goyal (Humsafar Trust) provided legal insights on the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019, and its practical implications. The event began with a welcome address by Dr. Rashmi Pradhan, Principal In-Charge, University Law College, who set the stage for an engaging discussion on transgender rights and legal recognition. The program was moderated by Bharat Kumar Mishra, ensuring a structured and interactive dialogue. The session concluded with a vote of thanks delivered by Urmila Doctor, acknowledging the contributions of all dignitaries and participants. The seminar saw enthusiastic participation from several police personnel from the Jharkhand Police Training Academy, highlighting the growing awareness and sensitivity within law enforcement toward gender and human rights issues. dditionally, a large number of students attended the program, engaging in discussions and gaining valuable insights into the legal and social aspects of transgender rights.The seminar was a significant step in creating awareness and fostering an inclusive legal discourse on transgender rights. It reinforced the commitment of Vinoba Bhave University to promoting social justice, equality, and the empowerment of marginalized communities.

Farewell Ceremony held for retiring employees of BSL

PNS : BOKARO

Bokaro Steel Plant (BSL) bid farewell to its retiring employees in a ceremony held at the Main Auditorium of the Gyanarjan and Vikas Department on January 31st, 2025. The event honored the service of 13 executives and 77 non-executives who retired from the company this month. The ceremony was graced by the presence of Executive Director (Human Resources), Rajshree Banerjee, and BGH in-charge, Dr. B.B. Karunamay, as the chief guests. The event commenced with a welcome address by Dr. Nanda Priyadarshini, Assistant General Manager (Human Resources), who provided information about the final settlement process and related matters. Dr. Priyadarshini also presented a brief overview of each retiree's career at BSL. Banerjee and Dr. Karunamay lauded the retirees for their dedicated service and wished them a happy and fulfilling life after retirement. They presented the retirees with certificates of service and gifts as a token of appreciation.

The ceremony concluded with a meet-and-greet session where the retiring employees and their families interacted with the dignitaries. Banerjee, Dr. Karunamay, and Director-in-Charge, Birendra Kumar Tiwari, personally met the retirees and extended their best wishes for their future endeavors.

The event was hosted by Dr. Nanda Priyadarshini, who also delivered the vote of thanks.

CM fiat to identify, give special treatment to GBS patients in State

PNS : RANCHI

Chief Minister Hemant Soren today reviewed the preparations being made for the prevention of Guillain-Barre Syndrome (GBS) disease infection and arrangements for the treatment of identified patients with the officials of the Health Department. Minister of Health, Medical Education and Family Welfare Department Dr. Irfan Ansari was connected online in the meeting. In the meeting, senior officials of the Health Department apprised the CM of information related to the side effects, symptoms and prevention of GBS disease.

Additional Chief Secretary to the Chief Minister Avinash Kumar, Additional Chief Secretary of Health, Medical Education and Family Welfare Department Ajay Kumar Singh, Director RIMS Prof. (Dr.) Raj Kumar, Campaign Director of National Health Mission Abu Imran and Deputy Commissioners and Civil Surgeons of all the districts were present through virtual medium.

In the course of review, Soren directed the officials to make special arrangements to identify patients suffering from GBS disease and to make proper treatment for them in hospitals. He directed the officials to do extensive publicity in the state to avoid GBS infection. The CM said that there is a need to make the general public aware to prevent Guillain-Barre syndrome. This disease spreads by consuming contaminated water and raw food. It should be ensured that no confusion arises among the people about this disease. This disease does not spread from one person to another like corona infection, there is no need to panic too much about this disease, spread this message among the people. Awareness is the best way to avoid this disease.

Chief Minister Hemant Soren holds a meeting with officials in Ranchi on Friday. PNS

The CM directed the officials to make arrangements for the examination of the people coming to Jharkhand from those areas, states or places where more patients of Guillain-Barre syndrome disease have been found. He said that a free center for Guillain-Barre syndrome test should be set up at some place in the city.

Soren told the officials to keep a strong arrangement of beds, medicines, medical oxygen etc. in all the hospitals to deal with Guillain-Barre Syndrome (GBS) disease. He said that if any case related to this disease is found, refer it to RIMS immediately. Keep the transport system alert to bring suspected patients to RIMS so that quality treatment can be provided to the patient on time. The Chief Minister directed the civil surgeons of all the districts to keep a close eye on the news, activities and updates related to this disease so that preparations for the threat of the disease can be made in time. Also ensure that no one faces any problem in the treatment of the disease.

During the review, RIMS Director Prof. (Dr.) Rajkumar shared detailed information about how to identify the patient of Guillain-Barre Syndrome (GBS) disease and their proper treatment through virtual medium to the civil surgeons of all the districts, and also said that the guidelines for prevention of this disease should be made available to all the civil surgeons and the concerned soon. He said that RIMS is fully prepared for the quality treatment of this disease, if any suspicious case is found, you should immediately refer the patient to RIMS. RIMS is in high alert mode regarding JBS. The RIMS Director said that everyone in their respective areas should make the general public as aware as possible to prevent this disease.

More than 4 lakh people to get PMAY houses in State

PNS : RANCHI

The Central government is going to give houses to more than 4 lakh homeless families of Jharkhand. Under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY) of the Central Government, each beneficiary will get assistance of Rs 1.20 lakh. With this, they will be able to build their own permanent house.

Earlier, the Central Government had approved housing for 1.13 lakh homeless people, but now this number has been increased to 4,19,947. This is a relief news for those people who neither got the benefit of PMAY nor got a house under the Abua Housing Scheme of the Jharkhand Government.

The Jharkhand Government had to work hard to get this scheme approved. Earlier, due to many pending houses in the state and errors in the list, the Central Government had refused to give new approval. In view of this situation, the Jharkhand Government started the Abua Housing Scheme, under which assistance of Rs 2 lakh is being given to each beneficiary. A 3 room house is being built with this.

Under PMAY, each beneficiary will be given Rs 1.20 lakh. The house will be built in 269 square feet, which will have 2 rooms, a kitchen and a veranda. The labour work will be done under MGNREGA. Toilet construction will also be done through convergence of MGNREGA.

5-yr-old girl suffering from GBS diseases in city

PNS : RANCHI

A five and a half year old girl suffering from Guillain-Barre Syndrome (GBS) disease has been admitted to a private hospital in Ranchi. The girl has been kept on ventilator support.

The Doctor who is treating the girl said that there is no need to panic about this disease, but caution and timely treatment is the only way to prevent it.

Child specialist Dr Rajesh, who is treating the girl suffering from GBS, said that about eight days ago a couple brought this girl, then the condition of the girl was very serious and she was not able to move. "There was also difficulty in breathing but the girl was given ventilator support by giving IVIG and methyl prednisolone medicine. At present, the condition of the girl is stable. Now she is opening her eyes. The condition of the girl is better than before, but she is not able to recover," he added.

Doctor Rajesh told that this is not a rare disease. "GBS is an autoimmune neurological disorder. The immune system attacks the nerves of its own body. Due to this, the patient has trouble walking and breathing. This is a danger to children and the elderly," he added.

The Doctor said that when the girl was brought, the severity of the disease was estimated by looking at the symptoms. He said that at that time he had informed the Civil Surgeon of Ranchi as well as a representative of WHO present in Lucknow.

Dr Rajesh told that if any child or elderly person complains of difficulty in walking and weakness, then immediately go to the doctor because this disease attacks the nerves very fast, so timely treatment is necessary.

GBS is a disease whose exact cause is not known at present. However, it usually occurs after infection. In this, the immune system of the body mistakenly attacks the nerves. It can also damage the nervous system. Its first symptom is tingling in the hands and feet. These sensations can spread rapidly and in severe cases can lead to paralysis. There is no cure for it yet but treating the symptoms can speed up the patient's recovery. GBS is believed to occur when the immunity power is low.

A patient infected with GBS has diarrhea, stomach pain, fever and vomiting. This disease can also be caused by contaminated water or food.

AAY beneficiaries will be able to geo-tag their houses themselves

PNS: RANCHI

On the instructions of Rural Development Minister Deepika Pandey Singh, the department has prepared the "Beneficiary Level Geo Tag App" as a unique initiative to give timely installment amount to the beneficiaries in the housing construction work under Abua Awas Yojana. Through this app, the beneficiaries will be able to geo-tag their under-construction houses themselves as per the progress of housing construction.

The Minister said that many things come to the fore during the work related to giving housing to the beneficiaries. Therefore, the app has been prepared with the aim of making transparency in the processes related to paying installment amount to the beneficiaries on time. The far-reaching results of which will be seen. This will also stop the irregularities in the distribution of installments to the beneficiaries.

According to the department, a provision has been made to release the assistance amount of Rs 2,00,000.00 to the approved beneficiaries in four installments against the target allocated under the Abua Housing Scheme. Rural Development Secretary K

Srinivasan has written a letter to all the Deputy Commissioners and Deputy Development Commissioners and directed them to take the help of the Village Organization (VO) formed and operated by JSLPS to provide assistance in housing construction to the beneficiaries of Abua Housing Scheme at the Gram Panchayat level to bring progress in the implementation of the scheme.

The Secretary has clearly said that transparency should be brought in the payment of installments of the assistance amount given to the beneficiaries under any circumstances. For this, beneficiaries in each Panchayat of the block should be divided into groups of four each and other important instructions include payment of pending installments to the beneficiaries on Wednesday of any one week of the month.

MGNREGA Commissioner cum Nodal Officer, Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Rural) Mrityunjay Kumar Baranwal has written a letter to all Deputy Commissioners, Deputy Development Commissioners and directed them to take immediate action in this direction by making this app available to the beneficiaries as soon as possible. Beneficiaries can download this app from Google Play Store or Abua Awas Yojana portal and install it on their mobile. Beneficiaries will receive OTP in the mobile while installing it. To geo-tag through the app, it will be mandatory for all beneficiaries to update their mobile number in the block login. The geo-tag done by the beneficiaries themselves in the app will be verified by the Panchayat Sevak within 7 days. The Panchayat Servant can approve or reject the said GeoTag (with reasons).

State BJP condemn Sonia's remarks against Prez

PNS : RANCHI

The state BJP has reacted strongly to the statement made by Sonia Gandhi regarding Her Excellency President Draupadi Murmu.

BJP State President Babulal Marandi said that Sonia Gandhi calling the Her Excellency President, who is adorning the highest post in the country and the daughter of the tribal society, a 'poor lady' is not only highly condemnable, but also exposes her feudal mentality.

He asked, "Sonia ji, why do you hate the tribals so much? Does the Gandhi family consider high constitutional posts to be their birthright?"

"If you cannot respect the tribals, then at least respect the dignity of the post of President?" he questioned. Former Chief Minister Arjun Munda said that the way Congress has commented against President Draupadi Murmu today is absolutely indecent. On one hand, Congress keeps asking for votes from the people with the Constitution, and on the other hand, it is insulting a woman from the tribal society sitting on the highest constitutional post in the country. This is the real character of Congress.

Former Chief Minister Champai Soren said that this is the thinking of the Congress about a tribal woman sitting on the highest constitutional post of the country. This is an insult to the tribal society. Along with this, it is an insult to all women.

This is the character of Congressmen who sometimes remove the tribal religion code, sometimes fire on the protesting tribals. This is their truth. He said that these people can never digest that a tribal woman has reached the highest post in the country. After seven and a half decades of independence, this honour was possible only during the tenure of the Central Government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

He said that the entire country including the tribal society is proud of President Draupadi Murmu. This insult to her will not be tolerated.

Improve driving licenses granting process: Minister

PNS : RANCHI

Transport Minister Deepak Birua said that MVIs should be careful in giving fitness and all the processes of granting driving licenses should also be followed properly so that road accidents are reduced.

Birua was speaking as the Chief Guest in the National Seminar Road Safety 2025 program organized by the Transport Department in Ranchi on Friday.

The Minister said that due to not following the process of granting driving licenses properly, many people sit on the driving seat but do not know and understand the technical things of driving, due to which they become victims of road accidents, so road accidents and driving related things will now be included in the syllabus of the students so that in future our children will be able to drive safely and better in the coming time by assimilating important things related to driving. "For this, we will talk to Chief Minister Hemant Soren. If people make road safety things a habit, then accidents will be reduced," he added.

Birua said that the way MVIs give fitness certificates without thinking or without checking or for other reasons should not happen. "This invites accidents and is a big reason for road accidents. There are many flaws on which the department should pay attention. So that road accidents in Jharkhand can be reduced," he added.

Transport Minister Deepak Birua lighting the lamp during the inaugural ceremony of the National Seminar Road Safety-2025, program organized by the Transport Department at a city based hotel in Ranchi on Friday. PNS

The Minister said that there is a need to spread more awareness about road safety. "It should be worked on under collective responsibility. If we look at the efforts being made in the field of road safety, then according to the statistics, the number of deaths in road accidents is high and the number of injured is low. So, the health department, engineering cell and other sectors definitely need to pay a lot of attention to this. We will try to discuss road safety related issues in the way it will be discussed today," he added.

Biruah also said that the department should adopt new methods on the important suggestions and opinions of experts and make the rules of road safety meaningful. The government will assimilate the suggestions of all of you and do better work. So that extensive work can be done on road safety, he added.

On the occasion, the Departmental Secretary Krishnanand Jha said that the rescue part should never be ignored in a road accident. "Along with a road accident, pay attention to whether the ambulance and trauma center are ready or not. If the overturned vehicle has to be cut with a gas cutter etc., then how to get the related material immediately. So that people's lives can be saved. There is a need to pay attention to these," he added.

Jha said that people face problems due to high charges of lawyers in making insurance claims. "There is a need to work together with DLSA or JHALSA on this. So that the victim's family can get relief soon in the hour of grief. The secretary said that many times people also get into accidents due to the absence of signals on the roadside. And road accidents are avoided by saying that it is due to speed. But in this, the engineer needs to pay special attention. Which signal should be installed where on the road," he added. Expressing concern under road safety, he said that it is an irony that data is not captured regarding any kind of road accident, big or small, and attention needs to be paid to this.

Medics toil to save PVTG women at MMCH

DALTONGANJ : A team of doctors and nurses are all out for the medical care of a woman of the particularly vulnerable tribal group Korwa. Medical superintendent Dr Dharmendra Kumar said the Korwa woman identified as Sharda has a two month pregnancy and is having acute complaints about bleeding. Dr Dharmendra said the MMCH has arranged two units of A+ group of blood all without replacement. The patient is under constant observation of the doctors and nurses. He said our team is determined to make her round here as for the moment our team is not in favour of referring this particularly vulnerable primitive tribal woman to the RIMS Ranchi.

ISDG impresses visitors at Kisan Mela

ISDG Research Foundation participated in the Central Kisan Mela organised by Ramakrishna Mission this year as it was attended by more than 10,000 visitors, especially tribal farmers, social organizations, and agriculture related institutions like IFFCO, ICICI Foundation, and Krishi Vigyan Kendra. The chief guest on the first day was Nisha Oraon (Director, Panchayati Raj, Government of Jharkhand) while on the second day was Kumar Tarachand (Director, Department of Agriculture, Government of Jharkhand). ISDG presented its initiatives to promote production and consumption of biofortified crops in Jharkhand and informed about the ongoing efforts in collaboration with Harvest Plus and JSLPS. Three crops were displayed—calcium enriched finger millet (ragi), iron enriched pearl millet (bajra) and zinc enriched wheat and in collaboration with Azam Amba, traditional dishes made from these were demonstrated and taste tested.

CCL bids farewell to retired employees

A grand "Samman Samaroh" was organized on Friday at the headquarters of Central Coalfields Limited (CCL), in which 13 employees working at the headquarters were bidden farewell out of 168 employees retiring in January 2025. CMD Nilendu Kumar Singh, Director (Personnel) Harsh Nath Mishra, CVO Pankaj Kumar, General Managers of various departments, officers, employees and families of retired employees were present at the ceremony. Meanwhile, CCL Jan Arogya Kendra organized a free blood pressure and diabetes health check-up camp at Adarsh Vrudhashram in Piska Nagari, Ranchi. In the ashram, specialist doctors examined 40 elderly people and gave medical advice. Especially hemoglobin, blood sugar, ECG, hypertension were checked free of cost in the ashram.

Divisional OLIC meeting at RRD

The first quarterly meeting of the Divisional Official Language Implementation Committee, Ranchi for the year 2025 was held at Ranchi Railway Division Office on Friday under the chairmanship of DRM cum Chairman, DOLIC, Jasmeet Singh Bindra. In this meeting, through a power point presentation, the Official Language Department showed the details of the work done in Hindi by all the departments on the division and the use of official language in daily work and the work done by the Official Language Department. On this occasion, the 24th issue of the news magazine Ranchi Rail Darpan of Official Language Department was released. The meeting was conducted and vote of thanks was given by Senior Official Language Officer, Sunil Kumar Sinha. On this occasion, CMS Dr. Raju Tirkey, Sr DME Balram Prasad Sahu, Sr DPO Raja and other officers and employees were present.

Speculations rife as Sita Soren likely to rejoin JMM

PNS : RANCHI

The political temperature of the State is likely to heat up once again as former JMM MLA from Jama Sita Soren, who quit JMM ahead of Lok Sabha election last year joining BJP is once again going to make Ghar Wapsi. Sita Soren, the eldest daughter-in-law of JMM patriarch Shibu Soren and sister-in law of Chief Minister Hemant Soren before the Lok Sabha elections 2024, had joined the BJP. After this, she also contested the assembly elections on a BJP ticket but had to face defeat. In such a situation, there was a discussion in the political corridors that now maybe she will join JMM again.

JMM Foundation Day is to be organized in Dumka on 2 February. Grand preparations are being made at Gandhi Maidan in Dumka. Party's working president cum CM Hemant Soren is going to attend it. This time the foundation day is very special because last year at this time Hemant Soren could not attend due to being in jail. Meanwhile, media persons have had a direct conversation with Sita Soren on the discussion about Sita Soren's return to JMM. The mystery of the return has deepened further with her answer.

Sita Soren was asked, "Are you going to return to JMM?" In response, she said that "I am reaching Dumka on 1 February. I am, where I am now. Time tells everything. Let the one who wants to discuss, discuss. We leave everything at the right time. There is a constant coming and going. Circumstances make us do everything. Right now, I have to go to Dumka to attend programmes related to Saraswati Puja.'

Sita Soren was asked if she was coming to the JMM program organized at Gandhi Maidan on February 2. In response, Sita Soren said that "the house is mine, I can't deny it. Everything is mine. It was built by me." She even said that "today everything is the same as it was yesterday." She was asked if this discussion should be dismissed. In response, she said that "let it be a matter of discussion for now. Right now, I will work for the organization where I am. Leave everything at the right time."

When JMM MLA from Dumka and Sita Soren's brother-in-law Basant Soren was questioned about the discussion of Sita Soren's return, he bluntly said, "this discussion has reached your ears, it has not reached my ears yet." Regarding the foundation day program, he said that the workers are very enthusiastic and excited. Last year there was no working president. Due to this, we could not celebrate the foundation day properly last year. But this time everyone is excited.

Just before the Lok Sabha elections, Guruji's elder daughter-in-law Sita Soren joined BJP. The party also made her a candidate from Dumka. However, she lost the election to JMM's Nalin Soren. After this, in the assembly elections, BJP fielded her against Congress leader Irfan from Jamtara. But here too Sita was disappointed. Now there is talk of her returning to JMM again.

President highlights government's success in social and economical reforms

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

President Droupadi Murmu on Friday here said the pace of work has tripled in the third term of her government which has worked with strong determination to lift the economy out of the state of "policy paralysis".

Addressing both the Houses of Parliament assembled together in the Lok Sabha chamber, she said the nation was witnessing major decisions and policies being implemented at an extraordinary speed, with the highest priority given to the poor, the middle class, the youth, women, and farmers.

"My government is infusing new energy through unprecedented achievements in this Amrit Kaal of India's development journey. The pace of work has tripled in this third term," President Murmu said in her 60-minute speech, peppered with occasional protests from the opposition benches.

In an address to the two Houses at the beginning of the first session of Parliament every year, the president outlines the vision of the government and this is considered a policy statement. The address also outlines the views of the government on key issues and also gives out a broad roadmap for the future.

At the outset, President Murmu condoled the deaths of pilgrims at the Kumbh congregation at Prayagraj on Mauni Amavasya on Wednesday when millions of faithful had gathered from all over the country to bathe at the confluence of the Ganga, Yamuna and the mythical Saraswati. She also paid tributes to former prime minister Manmohan Singh, who passed away recently.

President Murmu listed out the achievements of the government including building houses for three crore additional families, welfare of tribals, issuing property cards for the rural folks, building rural roads and extending the health insurance scheme to six crore citizens above the age of 70 years.

"The government has also made swift progress on critical issues like 'One Nation-One Election' and the 'Waqf Act Amendment'," she said.

The President said India was setting an example for the world by emerging as a pillar of economic, social, and political stability in an environment of global instability. She said the world has placed its "trust" in

India's "strength, policy, and intent". In this context, President Murmu especially mentioned key groupings such as Quad, BRICS, Shanghai Cooperation Organisation and G20.

The President said the government has taken "historic" initiatives to ensure defence of India's borders and internal security and "highly encouraging results" were seen in achieving self-reliance, especially in the defence sector. She lauded the Indian Space Research Organisation for launching 100 missions from the spaceport at Sriharikota and asserted that the day was not far when an Indian citizen will travel to space aboard the indigenously developed Gaganyaan spacecraft.

"My government has worked with strong determination to lift the economy out of a state of policy paralysis. Despite global concerns such as the COVID-19 pandemic, its aftermath, and war-related uncertainties, the Indian economy has demonstrated remarkable stability and resilience, proving its strength," she said. The President said the government has also implemented several significant measures to promote Ease of Doing Business and introduced the GST system with the spirit of 'One Nation, One Tax' which has been benefiting all states across the country.

Noting that development is truly meaningful when its benefits reach the person standing at the last rung of society, the President said initiatives like the construction of 12 crore toilets under the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, 10 crore free LPG connections under the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana, ration for 80 crore needy citizens, the Saubhagya Yojana, and the Jal Jeevan Mission have given poor the confidence that they can live with dignity.

"When poor people are provided with a dignified life, it instills a sense of empowerment that helps them fight poverty. Due to such efforts, 25 crore people have overcome poverty and are moving forward in life. They have formed a Neo Middle Class, a group that is infusing new energy into India's growth journey," she said. President Murmu said digital fraud, cybercrime and emerging technologies such as deep fakes pose challenges to India's social, economic, and national security.

She asserted that the government has consistently worked on policies of multi-dimensional and inclusive development.

"Therefore, while emphasising on physical infrastructure, equal efforts have also been made by my government for a social infrastructure revolution," she said. Noting that the government in the past ten years has written new chapters of progress, one of which is the golden milestone of India's digital revolution, the President said today, India has emerged as a major global player in the field of digital technology.

"The launch of 5G services in India, alongside other leading nations, stands as a significant milestone in this journey. India's UPI technology has also impressed many developed countries. More than 50 per cent of the world's real-time digital transactions now take place in India. "My government has utilised digital technology as a tool for social justice and equality. Digital payments are no longer confined to select individuals or classes. Today, even the smallest shopkeeper in India benefits from this facility," the President said.

She said there is conducive environment for development in Jammu and Kashmir after the abrogation of Article 370. The President noted that the Lok Sabha and assembly elections were conducted in a peaceful manner in Jammu and Kashmir and the people deserve commendation for this achievement. The President said the Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla rail link project has been completed, connecting the nation from Kashmir to Kanyakumari through railway line.

"Under this ambitious project, the Chenab Bridge has been constructed, which is the highest railway bridge in the world," she said.

Murmu said India's first rail cable-stayed bridge, the Anji Bridge, has been completed and the work on the Shinkun La tunnel was also progressing successfully.

"Upon completion in the near future, it will be the world's highest tunnel, ensuring year-round connectivity between Ladakh and Himachal Pradesh," she said.

Economic Survey moots easing of regulations in health, education sectors

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

The Economic Survey 2024-25 on Friday mooted withdrawal of regulations or making compliance voluntary with disclosure where the market can do an effective job in the areas of health and education.

Pitching for "trust-based regulation", the survey said that tight regulations increase compliance and supervision burden on the already stretched state capacity.

Trust-based regulation backed up by transparency and disclosure on the part of the regulated deserves a chance, said the pre-Budget document while noting that regulatory institutions need to evolve to focus on allowing outcomes to happen without being fixated on inputs.

"The government's focus on rural infrastructure, housing, and livelihoods reflects a comprehensive 'welfare for all' approach," it noted.

By improving rural connectivity, sanitation, housing, access to drinking water, and social inclusion, alongside supporting microfinance, SHGs (self-help groups), and localisation of SDGs (sustainable development goals), these initiatives ensure inclusive development.

Together, they uplift rural communities, bridging gaps in equity and quality of life, the survey said.

It pointed out that regulatory institutions in the areas of health and education must constantly balance the needs of the society and that of the ease of provision of such services by the providers.

"Where the market can do an effective job, regulations can either be withdrawn or compliance made voluntary with disclosure. Tight regulations increase the compliance and supervision burden on state capacity that is already stretched. This gives rise to unfulfilled expectations on the part of the public," the survey said.

Therefore, it added, "For India to receive the demographic dividend in full in the coming years, regulatory institutions need to evolve to focus on allowing outcomes to happen without being fixated on inputs."

The survey further said, "Trust-based regulation backed up by transparency and disclosure on the part of the regulated deserves a chance."

Regulators must develop their assessment parameters and report on their own effectiveness transparently, it said, adding, "There is no better way to demand right behaviour than to set an example."

While the education and health system has made significant progress through various initiatives aimed at achieving national goals, the survey said, "There is a critical need to enhance the delivery mechanisms".

By rethinking and improving these systems and integrating innovation and technologies, one can ensure that benefits effectively reach the last mile and are fully realised by those who need them most, it added.

The survey noted that the Indian economy's growth story emphasises a welfare-enhancement approach by the government, focusing on empowering all citizens and ensuring the efficient delivery of welfare measures.

The government's initiatives aim to provide opportunities for everyone, enabling them to achieve their professional and personal goals, it said, adding that "with the focus on education, health, skilling, and innovation, with improved social and economic infrastructure, the aim is to achieve welfare for all".

BJP spent ₹1,737.68 Crore for 2024 Lok Sabha polls

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

The Bharatiya Janata Party spent ₹1,737.68 crore for the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, according to the expenditure report submitted by the party to the Election Commission of India.

Of the total amount, ₹884.45 crore was spent on general party propaganda, while ₹853.23 crore was allocated for candidate-related expenses.

Around ₹611.50 crore was spent on media advertisements that included advertisements in print and electronic media, bulk SMS campaigns, and promotional content across cable, websites, and TV channels.

The party also spent ₹55.75 crore on publicity materials such as posters, banners, hoardings, and flags to bolster its election outreach.

Additionally, the BJP's expenditure on public meetings, processions, and rallies - including arrangements for stages, audio setups, barricades, and vehicles - stood at ₹19.84 crore.

Campaign-related travel expenses formed another significant portion of the party's budget.

The travel expenditure of star campaigners authorised by the party's central headquarters amounted to ₹168.92 crore, while ₹2.53 crore was spent on the travel of other party leaders.

The BJP, which secured a third consecutive term in the general elections, heavily relied on mass outreach and publicity campaigns, as evident from its spending patterns.

Additionally, the gross receipts from the date of announcement of state elections to the date of their completion were Arunachal Pradesh ₹5,552.57 crore, Sikkim ₹5,552.41 crore and Odisha ₹5,555.65 crore.

VP calls for constructive debate in Parliament

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar on Friday underscored the need for constructive debate and dialogue in Parliament, saying the era of disruption should end and make way for meaningful discussions. His remarks came ahead of the Budget session of Parliament.

While addressing the 33rd Foundation Day of the National Commission for Women (NCW), he said what the country truly needs is an opposition that is both constructive and cooperative.

"There will now be more debate, dialogue, discussion, deliberation, and not disturbance or disruption in this Parliament," the Rajya Sabha chairman said, highlighting the importance of a cooperative opposition.

Reflecting on women's empowerment, he lauded the recent reservation for women in legislatures, calling it a landmark achievement. "Now we have reservation for women to the extent of one-third," he said, adding the country is witnessing an affirmative ecosystem that supports women's aspirations. However, he cautioned that with increased aspirations come greater challenges, requiring regulation of energy and

direction.

The vice president stressed that India's progress is incomplete without the active contribution of women. "I have no doubt that without the contribution of half of humanity, neither the planet can be happy nor the nation can progress," he asserted.

On the role of the NCW, Dhankhar urged the Commission to focus on information dissemination and constructive persuasion rather than sensationalism. "Strength is never in the exercise of power but in the realisation of limitations. Your limitations define your power," he said, advising the Commission to set a new trend where creating headlines through coercive mechanisms should be the last priority.

He also called on the media to exercise sensitivity, cautioning that it is easy for journalists to create sensational narratives.

Dhankhar praised Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman for setting a record in budget presentations and serving as a beacon for aspiring women leaders.

"From development of women, we are marching into women-led development," he said, adding this concept is not new to India but deeply embedded in its civilisation.

The vice president acknowledged that subtle discrimination against women, especially in work places and politics, remains a significant challenge.

He urged the NCW to draft a national plan to address these issues, emphasising that men's inclination to dominate women must come to an end.

"This dominance is psychologically depressing for women, and we must create a system where fiscal rewards compensate them adequately," he said.

Stressing the need for authentic gender equality, Dhankhar remarked that policy-making requires a thought process shaped by experience.

He asserted that India's journey towards becoming a developed nation will be powered by its women adding India's rapid growth has made it the most aspirational nation in the world.

"When you are aspirational, 'ye dil maange' more," he said.

SC orders EC to preserve video clips of polling

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday directed the Election Commission of India to preserve video clips of the polling during the pendency of the pleas against the decision to increase the maximum number of voters per polling station from 1,200 to 1,500.

A bench comprising Chief Justice Sanjiv Khanna and Justice Sanjay Kumar passed the order the counsel for the Election Commission of India (ECI) sought time to respond to the PIL filed by one Indu Prakash Singh.

Singh has challenged the panel's communications in August 2024 for increasing the number of voters per polling stations in each constituency.

"The counsel appearing for respondent number 1 prays for further time to file affidavit. Let the affidavit be filed within three weeks from today. We deem it appropriate to direct respondent no 1 to maintain the CCTV recordings as they were doing earlier," the bench said.

The top court on January 15 sought responses from the Centre and the poll panel on Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh's plea against the recent amendments, including no public access to CCTV, to the 1961 election rules. Singh said the decision to increase the number of voters per polling booth was arbitrary and not based on any data.

On October 24, the top court refused to issue any notice to the poll panel but allowed the petitioner to serve the copy to the standing counsel of the ECI so that its stand on the issue is known.

The petitioner contended the poll panel's decision would impact the voters during the ensuing assembly elections in Maharashtra, Bihar and Delhi.

Singh said elections were normally held for 11 hours and it took about 60 to 90 seconds to cast a vote, and therefore 660 to 490 persons could cast their vote in a day at one polling station with one EVM.

Considering the average voting percentage to be 65.70 per cent, it was perceivable that a polling station prepared to accept 1,000 electors saw around 650 turn up.

Singh's petition said there were booths where the elector turnout was in the range of 85-90 per cent.

"In such a situation, about 20 per cent of voters will either end up standing in the queue beyond the voting hours or due to long waiting times, will abandon exercising their right to vote. Neither is acceptable in a progressive republic or a democracy," it added.

SC refuses to entertain PIL against special treatment for VIPs in temples

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday refused to entertain a PIL against the practice of charging an additional fee for "VIP darshan" and according of "preferential, selective and special treatment" to a certain class of people in temples.

A bench comprising Chief Justice Sanjiv Khanna and Justice Sanjay Kumar said it was for the society and temple management to decide the issue and the court cannot pass any direction.

"While we may be of the opinion that no special treatment should be given but this court cannot issue directions. We do not think it is a fit case to exercise jurisdiction under Article 32 of the Constitution.

However, we clarify that dismissal of the petition will not bar the appropriate authorities from taking appropriate action as required," the bench said.

Advocate Akash Vashishtha, representing the petitioner, argued there is some Standard Operating Procedure required as there are 12 Jyotirlingas and this completely arbitrary practice of "VIP darshan".

The top court was hearing a plea filed by Vijay Kishor Goswami, 'sevait' at Shri Radha Madan Mohan Temple in Vrindavan, on the issue.

The plea said the practice violated the principles of equality enshrined in Articles 14 and 21 of the Constitution, as it discriminated against devotees unable to afford the fee.

The petition also raised several concerns about the additional fee charged for an expedited access to temple deities.

The plea said charging fee ranging between Rs 400 and Rs 500 for the special darshan privileges created a divide between the affluent devotees and those who were unable to afford such charges, particularly disadvantaged women, persons with disabilities, and senior citizens.

It said that despite representations made to the home ministry, only a directive was issued to Andhra Pradesh, while other states like Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, and Madhya Pradesh remained unaddressed.

The plea, therefore, sought a direction to declare the levying of the additional fee violative of the constitutional rights of equality and religious freedom.

It sought directions to ensure equal treatment for all devotees in temple premises and framing of standard operating procedures by the Centre to ensure equitable access to temples.

The plea further sought setting up of a national board to oversee the management and administration of temples nationwide.

PM Modi's US visit on the horizon to strengthen strategic partnership

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

India and the US are working on an early visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to the US, Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said here on Friday. Modi and US President Donald Trump held a telephonic conversation on January 27. This was their first phone conversation since the American leader's inauguration last week.

"The two sides are working on an early visit of Prime Minister Modi to the US to further deepen India-US Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership," MEA Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said. "Specific dates for the visit would be announced at the appropriate time," he said.

He also said India is working with US authorities for early extradition of Mumbai terror accused Tahawwur Rana. On January 21, the US supreme court rejected Rana's review petition paving way for his extradition to India.

"We are now working with the US side on procedural issues for early extradition to India of the accused in the Mumbai terror attack," Jaiswal said.

He said three Indian nationals have gone missing in Iran and India has taken the issue with Tehran strongly. "The matter has been raised with the Iranian embassy in Delhi and with the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Tehran," Jaiswal said.

SC rejects plea for 'Urs' at razed shrine over Gir Somnath demolitions

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday rejected a plea seeking to hold "Urs" festival between February 1 and February 3 at a dargah (Muslim shrine) razed in Gujarat's Gir Somnath district during a demolition drive.

A bench of Justices B R Gavai and Augustine George Masih observed the submissions of solicitor general Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Gujarat authorities that unauthorised constructions, including temples on the land belonging to the government, were demolished.

Mehta said no activities, including Hindu religious rituals, were allowed on the land in question which was encroached upon earlier. The bench observed Mehta's contention that the land belonged to the government and unauthorised constructions, including the temples, were demolished. The applicant's counsel said "Urs" festival was held at the site of the razed dargah for many years but authorities on January 30 denied permission.

"If at all they (authorities) are saying they are having an apprehension that there will be some law and order problem, I will suggest one thing... 20 people will go for some time, they will perform the rituals and come out," the applicant's counsel said.

It was a structure made before 1299 AD, added the counsel.

"Is there a structure now?" asked the bench. The counsel said it was demolished and argued it was a protected monument.

Mehta said the demolition drive applied to all religions.

"Whatever was unauthorised, is demolished. This is undisputedly a government land," he said.

While the bench told the applicant's counsel that authorities had demolished temples too, it told Mehta no religious functions at the site should be allowed by the authorities. While rejecting the application, the bench said the prayer couldn't be granted without hearing the main matter.

When the bench told Mehta that it had recorded his statement that no religious rituals would be permitted there, the law officer referred to an order passed by the top court in the main matter.

He said his statement was recorded that the land would remain under the control of the government. On January 27, the top court said it would hear after three weeks the pleas, including a contempt petition against the Gujarat authorities for allegedly demolishing residential and religious structures in Gir Somnath district without its prior nod.

On September 28 last year, a demolition drive was carried out to reportedly clear encroachments on public lands near Gujarat's Somnath temple.

In its affidavit filed in the apex court, the Gujarat government justified its demolition action, saying it was an ongoing drive for removing encroachments on public land.

Ganga Aarti suspended in Varanasi till February 5 amid huge devotee surge

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■
MAHAKUMBH NAGAR

The Ganga Seva Nidhi management has announced that the daily Ganga Aarti at Dashashwamedh Ghat will remain closed to the general public until February 5 due to an overwhelming influx of devotees.

The move comes as lakhs of pilgrims continue to pour into the holy city, causing logistical and safety concerns.

"In the past few days, the footfall has been extraordinary, making it difficult to manage the crowd at Dashashwamedh Ghat during Aarti. To ensure the safety of devotees and maintain order, we have decided to restrict public entry temporarily," said Vishwajeet Tripathi, an official of Ganga Seva Nidhi.

Similar appeals have been made by committees organising Ganga Aarti at Sheetla Ghat and Assi Ghat, urging people to cooperate with authorities.

The massive influx of visitors has created challenges for local residents, many of whom are struggling with traffic congestion, overcrowded markets, and restricted movement in the ghats area.

"We understand the religious sentiments, but the sheer number of people has made it difficult for us to even step out of our homes. Roads are choked, public transport is unreliable, and prices of essentials have gone up due to high demand," said Anil Pandey, a resident of Godowlia.

Local shopkeepers, however, have reported a surge in sales, especially in shops selling religious items, food, and souvenirs. "This is the busiest we have seen the city in recent years. While it brings business, it also creates challenges," said Ramesh Gupta, a shop owner near Kashi Vishwanath temple.

Many pilgrims, who traveled long distances to experience the Ganga Aarti, have expressed disappointment at the closure."I came all the way from Maharashtra with my family just to witness the Aarti. It's unfortunate that we won't be able to see it this time. Watching the Ganga Aarti on TV is nothing compared to being here in person," said Sunita Patil, a devotee from Mumbai.Another pilgrim, Rajesh Kumar from Bihar, who had planned his visit months in advance, said, "We were not aware of the closure before arriving. This is a once-in-a-lifetime experience, and missing it is heartbreaking."

Authorities have assured that online streaming of the Ganga Aarti will continue, allowing devotees worldwide to witness the spiritual spectacle.

Record-breaking footfall at Vindhyachal and Ayodhya

The impact of the Maha Kumbh in Prayagraj has been felt across major religious sites in Uttar Pradesh, with pilgrim numbers surging in Vindhyachal Dham and Ayodhya. On the first day of Gupt Navratri, more than 10 lakh devotees thronged Maa Vindhyavasini temple, breaking all previous records. "We have never seen such a crowd before, and managing such a large number of devotees is a challenge," said a senior temple official.

Similarly, Ayodhya, which has been witnessing an unprecedented rush of devotees since the Pran Pratistha of Ram Lalla at the newly built Ram Janmabhoomi temple, saw over 25 lakh visitors in a single day.

Kinnar Akhada row: Mamta Kulkarni, Laxmi Narayan Tripathi expelled

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■
MAHAKUMBH NAGAR

A fresh controversy has erupted within the Kinnar Akhada, as its founder, Rishi Ajay Das, has expelled Bollywood actress Mamta Kulkarni and Acharya Mahamandaleshwar Laxmi Narayan Tripathi.

The decision, announced on January 30, 2025, comes in response to Kulkarni's controversial appointment as Mahamandaleshwar, a move that has sparked dissent within the religious order. Das, in an official statement, accused Tripathi of overstepping his authority by inducting Kulkarni without approval.

"As the founder of Kinnar Akhada, I am relieving Acharya Mahamandaleshwar Laxmi Narayan Tripathi from his position, effective immediately. His appointment was intended to promote religious activities and uplift the transgender community, but he has strayed from these responsibilities," the statement read. The rift appears to stem from a 2019 agreement between Tripathi and Juna Akhada, which Ajay Das claims was made without his knowledge or consent, rendering it legally invalid.

He further criticised Tripathi for granting Kulkarni the prestigious title of Mahamandaleshwar despite her alleged criminal history, questioning the ethical implications of the decision.

"This is a matter of religious integrity. By appointing someone with a controversial past, what kind of guru are we presenting to Sanatan Dharma?" Ajay Das asked, emphasising that the move was both unethical and a violation of the Akhada's principles.

The expulsions have triggered a backlash, with Mahant Ravindra Puri, president of the Akhil Bharatiya Akhada Parishad, challenging the legitimacy of Ajay Das's authority. "Who is he to expel Laxmi Narayan Tripathi?" Puri questioned, asserting that both Tripathi and Kulkarni remain integral to the Akhada and will participate in the upcoming Amrit Snan.

The controversy initially surfaced during the Maha Kumbh, when Tripathi publicly announced Kulkarni's elevation to Mahamandaleshwar.

The actress, once a prominent face in Bollywood during the 1990s, had distanced herself from the industry for years before resurfacing in a spiritual role. However, her appointment has drawn criticism from several quarters. Transgender Kathavachak Jagatguru Himangi Sakhi Maa previously raised objections, citing Kulkarni's alleged criminal background.

Government should provide medical care to affected: Akhilesh Yadav

PTI ■ LUCKNOW

Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav on Friday asked the Uttar Pradesh government to provide medical care, food and clothes to devotees affected at the Maha Kumbh.

The former Uttar Pradesh chief minister's remark comes as at least 30 people were killed and 60 injured in a pre-dawn stampede at the Sangam area of the Maha Kumbh early Wednesday as millions of pilgrims jostled for space to take a holy dip on the occasion of one of the most auspicious days of 'Mauni Amavasya'.

Giving suggestions to the state government regarding the arrangements at the Maha Kumbh, Yadav in a post on X said, "Appeal should be made to open dhabas at various places day and night for food and water and organise bhandaras."

"Arrangements should be made to transport medical and paramedical staff from across the state to the people trapped in remote areas through two-wheelers of volunteers," he added in the same post.

Yadav said, "Supply of petrol and diesel should be ensured to the vehicles trapped for miles around the Maha Kumbh and across the state. Medicine shops should be allowed to remain open day and night." The former chief minister demanded that "people should be given clothes and blankets".

"Where thousands of crores of rupees are being spent on publicity and to suppress the news of the accident, why is the government shying away from spending a few crores for the victims?" he asked.

Two more pilgrims from Bengal died in Kumbh stampede

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Two more people from West Bengal have died in the stampede at the Maha Kumbh in Uttar Pradesh's Prayagraj, their family members said, taking the toll of fatalities from the eastern state to four.

Amiya Saha (28) from Baisnabnagar area of Malda district and 35-year-old Binod Ruidas from Jamuria in Paschim Bardhaman were also among the 30 pilgrims who died in the pre-dawn stampede in Sangam area of the Maha Kumbh, their family members said.

On Thursday, the family of two women - Basanti Poddar from the city's Golf Green area and Urmila Bhuniya from Salboni in Paschim Medinipur district - had claimed that they succumbed to injuries suffered during the rush for taking a holy dip at the mega religious gathering on the occasion of 'Mauni Amavasya' on Wednesday.

Talking to reporters on Friday, Saha's father alleged that his son, a primary school teacher, was injured in the stampede and left untreated at a Uttar Pradesh hospital for some time. He later died, but the Uttar Pradesh administration "did not issue a death certificate" while releasing the body, which delayed the post-mortem examination, his father claimed.

Ruidas' brother said he died after suffering injuries while waiting for his turn for a holy dip on Wednesday.

His body was brought back on Friday morning.

Ruidas' brother also alleged that the Uttar Pradesh government did not issue a "proper" death certificate.

Meanwhile, the family members of nine pilgrims from the state claimed that they were still missing after the stampede, which also injured 60 people.

Judicial probe panel reaches Prayagraj

PTI ■ PRAYAGRAJ

A three-member judicial commission set up by the Uttar Pradesh government to probe the Maha Kumbh stampede reached Prayagraj on Friday, an official said.

The panel is headed by Harsh Kumar, a retired judge of the Allahabad High Court, and comprises former director general of police (DGP) V K Gupta and retired IAS officer D K Singh."The commission is holding meetings with officials concerned here. We may also visit the incident spot later in the day," an official said.

The panel was formed in the wake of an early Wednesday stampede that killed 30 devotees at Sangam Nose where they had gone for a dip on the occasion of Mauni Amavasya.

The commission has a month to wrap up its investigation but will try to expedite it, Kumar, the panel head, said on Thursday.

According to police, the stampede broke out as the crowd jumped barricades, crushing those waiting for their turn on the other side.

Prayagraj locals provide meals, shelter for pilgrims

PTI ■ PRAYAGRAJ

Residents of Prayagraj have thrown their doors open to the hundreds of stranded and hungry after a massive surge in number of pilgrims arriving for the Maha Kumbh sent the city infra groaning under its weight.

While the administration grapples with the crowd after the deadly stampede on Mauni Amavasya, the city's residents, businesses, and students have risen to the occasion, providing food, shelter, and transport help to the countless devotees arriving for a holy dip at the Triveni Sangam.

Dr Anjali Kesari, a local, summed up the sentiment: "In Allahabad, we don't see the Maha Kumbh pilgrims as outsiders, we are hosts and they are our guests."

She shared how her neighbourhood in Chowk, close to the railway station, banded together to serve food to weary pilgrims.

"Yesterday alone, we distributed tea that took 80 litres of milk into its preparation along with snacks, while others prepared meals like tehri and dal-chawal for the pilgrims," she said.

Many locals have cleared up spaces outside their homes for visitors to rest at night.

"For us, Kumbh is not just a religious fair; it is a confluence of humanity," Dr Kesari said.

City hotels are not far behind in lending a pro bono hand to the weary.

Alok Singh, who runs Hotel Vitthal in Civil Lines, has converted his 100-bed dormitory into a free rest stop for pilgrims.

"After taking a holy dip, many devotees are exhausted when they return to Civil Lines and head towards the railway station. It is a part of Prayagraj's culture to help others, and this is our way of contributing," he said.

Singh said he otherwise charges ₹12,000 to ₹25,000 per night for a room.

Dr Mrityunjay Parmar, an english department assistant professor, said that in the aftermath of the stampede, Allahabad University opened its campus and hostels to returning pilgrims before they undertook their journey.

"We have several hostels like Shatabdi Boys' Hostel, KPUC, PC Banerjee, and Sir Sundarlal Hostel, where students are actively assisting pilgrims," he said.

Women students from Mahadevi Verma Hostel and Kalpana Chawla Hostel are also contributing, either individually or in groups, Parmar added.

Apart from accommodation, the university campus has been designated as a holding area for Kumbh, where officials and students are working together to arrange meals for pilgrims.

Students from Allahabad University's law faculty have also been actively assisting the pilgrims.

Abhinav Mishra, a final-year BA LLB student, said he and his classmates have been distributing tea, biscuits, and snacks to devotees. Some have even been offering free motorbike rides to reduce the burden of long walks.

"Our faculty is near Bank Road, which many pilgrims pass through on their way to Prayagraj station. Seeing their struggles, we felt compelled to help," Mishra said.

Mishra, who is also the National Executive member of the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad, said that the student organisation has been running medical camps for the pilgrims free of cost.

In the old city area, Yadgar-e-Husaini Inter College, a Muslim Minority Institution established in 1942 near GT Road, opened its doors for the pilgrims to take a rest. The college is close to the bus stand and the Civil Lines Railway Station.

"It was an emergency after the stampede. College management, including manager Gohar Kazmi and lecturer Raza Abbas, immediately took the decision. We arranged for the stay, snacks, water for pilgrims with access to washrooms also," Hasan Naqvi, whose grandfather was among the founders of the college, said.

He said the college was gearing up for a sprucing up of facilities in the coming days, particularly on special bathing days when the influx is massive, like providing 'khichdi' along with snacks.

Public outrage as cop caught mixing ash in food for feast

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■
PRAYAGRAJ

A video showing a police officer allegedly mixing ash into food at a bhandara (community feast) during the Maha Kumbh Mela has sparked outrage, leading to his suspension on Thursday.

The clip, which surfaced on social media, shows the officer adding ash to food being prepared over a stove.

Reacting swiftly, the authorities suspended Soraon Station House Officer (SHO) Brijesh Kumar Tiwari.

"This is unacceptable. We come here for faith and devotion, and such actions are a betrayal of trust," said Ramprasad Gupta, a pilgrim from Madhya Pradesh who witnessed the incident.

The video was widely shared, with one user tagging the DCP Ganga Nagar's account on social media platform X and demanding strict action.

The official handle of DCP Ganga Nagar responded: "Taking cognizance of the matter, the Deputy Commissioner of Police (Ganga Nagar) has suspended the Soraon SHO based on a report from ACP Soraon. Departmental proceedings are underway."

Political leaders also weighed in, with Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav sharing the video and condemning the act.

"It is unfortunate that the good efforts of those arranging food and water for devotees at the Maha Kumbh are being sabotaged due to political animosity. The public should take notice!" he posted.

Many devotees expressed their anger, calling for stricter measures to prevent such incidents.

"We are here to seek blessings, not to be humiliated like this. The police should be protecting us, not disrespecting our faith," said Anita Verma, a visitor from Varanasi.

With millions of pilgrims gathering in Prayagraj for the Maha Kumbh, several organisations have set up bhandaras to provide free meals to devotees. "Such incidents shake our faith, but we won't let them ruin the spirit of service," said Rahul Tiwari, a volunteer at one of the community kitchens.

The incident has ignited a debate over discipline in the police force and the need for greater vigilance during the religious congregation.

Naxalites carrying ₹32 lakh bounty surrender

PTI ■ KANKER

Seven Naxalites, including three women, involved in several attacks on security forces and carrying collective cash rewards of ₹32 Lakh surrendered in Kanker district of Chhattisgarh on Friday, a police official said.

The cadres turned themselves in before senior police and Border Security Force (BSF) officials here citing disappointment with the "hollow" and "inhuman" Maoist ideology and tribals' exploitation by senior Naxalites, Kanker Senior Superintendent of Police Indira Kalyan Elesela said.

Of those surrendered, Mamta alias Shanta alias Vasanna Battulai (60), Dinesh Matttami (20) and Aaytu Ram Potai (27) were carrying a reward of ₹8 lakh each for their capture, he said.

Mamta, a resident of Karimnagar district in neighbouring Telangana, was active as a divisional committee member and headed the 'Krantikari Adivasi Mahila Sangthan' (KAMS), a frontal wing of the outlawed organisation, in the north Bastar division of Maoists, he said.

Between 1996 and 2024, she was involved in 26 Naxal incidents, including the 2015 IED (improvised explosive device) blast in the Koyalibeda area in Kanker district during panchayat polls wherein two jawans were killed and the 2018 Mahla ambush that killed two BSF personnel, he said.

While Mattami was active as a member of the military company number 10 of Maoists, Potai was a member of military company number five, he said.

Another surrendered cadre, Jamuna alias Neera Netam (50), was active as a member of the Partapur area committee.

Jamuna was also involved in many Naxal attacks, including the ambush in Bhuski-Michgaon village in 2007 in which five policemen were killed and 18 others injured, Elesela said, adding that she carried a reward of ₹5 lakh.

Three others, Itwarin Padda (25), a member of Partapur LGS (local guerilla squad), Sanjay Nareti (23) of the Panidobir/Rowghat LOS (local organisation squad), and Sagnu Ram Anchla (24) Panidobir LOS member, carried a reward of ₹1 Lakh each, the SSP added. All the surrendered Naxalites were provided assistance of ₹25,000 each and will be further rehabilitated as per the government's policy, he added. Last year, 792 Naxalites had surrendered in the Bastar region, comprising seven districts including Kanker.

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PAPER WITH PASSION

The Chinese challenge

China's rapid advancements—evident in breakthroughs like DeepSeek—are challenging US superiority like never before

For decades, the United States has been the undisputed global leader in cutting-edge technology, from artificial intelligence (AI) and quantum computing to defence innovations and space exploration. However, China's rapid advancements in these fields, fueled by a mix of state-driven initiatives, talent acquisition, and aggressive R&D investments, are now posing a serious challenge to the US supremacy. The emergence of DeepSeek, a Chinese AI model rivaling OpenAI's GPT-4, is just one example of how Beijing is closing the technological gap. China's ambitions extend far beyond AI. It has made remarkable strides in many areas. It is a direct result of China's 'vision 2025' which is translating into reality. China has developed the Jiuzhang quantum computer, which demonstrated computational speeds exponentially faster than classical supercomputers. Meanwhile, the US remains engaged in its own quantum pursuit through companies like Google and IBM, but China's government-backed approach provides an edge in long-term planning. From hypersonic missiles that can evade US missile defence systems to AI-driven warfare capabilities, China's military modernisation is shifting global power dynamics.

Despite US sanctions aimed at crippling China's semiconductor industry, Beijing has made breakthroughs, notably with Huawei's 7nm Kirin chip, defying expectations. The US remains dependent on Taiwan's TSMC, but China's relentless pursuit of self-reliance is narrowing this gap. Even in space tech, China is surging ahead. China's Tiangong space station, its Mars and lunar exploration programs, and its ambitions in satellite-based internet rival those of NASA and SpaceX. This places China on an equal footing with the US in space dominance. However, Washington is not sitting idle in the face of this challenge. The US has adopted a multi-pronged strategy. It has stepped up its effort to contain China. The Biden administration had imposed restrictions on Chinese firms like Huawei and AI chip exports to limit their technological growth. The US is deepening ties with the European Union, Japan, and India to counterbalance China's rise in emerging tech. Initiatives like the CHIPS Act and QUAD alliances are designed to limit Beijing's access to critical tech. Besides, companies like OpenAI, Google, and IBM are receiving government backing to maintain an edge over Chinese AI firms. In this tech war India, though lagging, is trying to cope albeit at a slow pace. While it has growing ties with the US, it also maintains strategic independence. India too is investing heavily in AI startups and quantum computing research. With the government's Semicon India initiative, India aims to become a global semiconductor hub, attracting investments from Intel, TSMC, and others. Indeed, India is emerging as a significant player in the global tech landscape. As this race unfolds, the global order in technology will be reshaped in ways that will define the 21st century.

PICTALK

A folk artist at the 'Jaipur Literature Festival' (JLF), in Jaipur PTI

India's aviation sector needs a take off

SANTHOSH **MATHEW**

India's aviation sector is at a crossroads, grappling with an acute shortage of airports despite its vast population and growing economy

Have you ever wondered just how many airports exist in the United States? Take a wild guess. The number is staggering—nearly 19,000! That's right. With a population of around 330 million, America has built an extensive network of airports, ensuring seamless connectivity across the country. Now, compare this to India, a nation with three times the population, yet managing with only around 500 airports. Even more striking, out of these, just 29 are classified as international airports. This glaring disparity is more than just a number—it is a reflection of India's challenges in aviation infrastructure and the pressing need for expansion.

Let's take an even closer look by comparing West Bengal to the United Kingdom. Both regions have a similar population, yet their aviation networks couldn't be more different. The UK boasts around 150 airports, while West Bengal has just three passenger airports—Kolkata, Bagdogra, and Andal. This difference is not just a matter of convenience; it highlights lost economic opportunities and underscores the urgent requirement for infrastructure development. In nations like the US and the UK, air travel is an everyday convenience—affordable, efficient, and integral to daily life.

It allows people to skip traffic, save time, and stimulate economic growth. Meanwhile, in India, air travel is still seen as a luxury, accessible only to a privileged few.India's aviation network is wholly insufficient for its growing demand. With only 29 international airports and about 500 total airports, the infrastructure is struggling to keep pace with the needs of domestic and international travelers. Airports in major cities such as Delhi, Mumbai, and Bengaluru are perpetually overcrowded, leading to delays, congestion, and inefficiency.

In contrast, vast portions of the country, especially smaller towns and rural areas, remain disconnected, relying on outdated modes of transportation like railways and highways. The Airports Authority of India (AAI) currently manages around 150 airports, but when compared to the United States' 5,000 civilian airports, this number falls dramatically short. The gap becomes even more concerning when considering that India's population is three times that of the US. Clearly, India needs a massive expansion in its aviation infrastructure, and it needs it urgently.

The consequences of this limited aviation network are significant—reduced regional connectivity, hindered tourism, and slower economic growth. India must take decisive steps to address this issue. A bold vision for the future should include constructing at least 1,500 new airports in the coming years.

By ensuring that an airport is within 100 kilometers of every major population center, India can unlock the economic potential of its smaller towns and rural areas.The advantages of a well-developed air travel network are crystal clear. Air travel is not just the fastest mode of transportation; it is also the safest and most efficient. In a country where roads and railways are often congested and prone to delays, a robust aviation network can alleviate pressure on existing transport systems, making movement across the country more seamless.

The economic benefits are also immense. A surge in the number of airports would create thousands of jobs, attract investment, and boost regional economies. Improved air connectivity would enhance business operations, enable easier travel for tourists, and offer the general population a practical alternative to time-consuming road and rail journeys. Of course, developing new airports requires significant investment and time, but India has the potential to explore innovative solutions. One such approach is the conversion of highways into emergency runways—a model successfully implemented in the United States. This concept could be adapted for India, where strategically modifying highways to accommodate small aircraft could provide crucial air connectivity to remote regions without the high costs associated with building entirely new airports. Implementing such a strategy in states like West Bengal, could be a game-changer.

> IN A COUNTRY AS VAST AND POPULOUS AS INDIA, AIR TRAVEL MUST BECOME A FUNDAMENTAL NECESSITY, AVAILABLE TO PEOPLE ACROSS ALL ECONOMIC BACKGROUNDS. EXPANDING THE AVIATION NETWORK WOULD MAKE FLIGHTS MORE AFFORDABLE AND PRACTICAL FOR A LARGER SEGMENT OF THE POPULATION

These adapted road-runways could serve as cost-effective alternatives for enhancing air connectivity, benefiting both everyday commuters and emergency responders in times of crisis, such as natural disasters.

Across the Western world, air travel has evolved into an indispensable part of daily life. It is widely accessible, efficient, and affordable.

In India, however, flying is still perceived as a luxury, something beyond the reach of the average citizen.

This perception needs to change. In a country as vast and populous as India, air travel must become a fundamental necessity, available to people across all economic backgrounds. Expanding the aviation network would make flights more affordable and practical for a larger segment of the population.

India stands at a crucial juncture in its aviation journey. The country's rapid economic growth and massive population necessitate an equally rapid expansion of its air travel infrastructure. Government initiatives such as the UDAN scheme, which aims to enhance regional air connectivity, are a step in the right direction, but much more needs to be done. The goal should be to develop at least 1,500 new airports in the near future, ensuring that every region, particularly underserved areas like West Bengal, is well-connected.

Exploring innovative ideas like highway-runways, making air travel more affordable, and significantly increasing the number of airstrips are all essential steps toward closing India's aviation gap. The need for a robust aviation infrastructure is urgent, and the time to act is now.

(The writer is an associate professor; views are personal)

A 90-hour workweek: Path to success or recipe for burnout

MADHVI **PANDEY**

S N Subrahmanyan CMD Larsen and Toubro, has sparked intense debate with his proposal for a 90-hour workweek, drawing sharp criticism

SN Subrahmanyan, CMD of Larsen and Toubro, recently ignited a heated debate while expressing his regret over not being able to call employees to work even on Sundays. He also suggested a 90-hour work week—a figure that surpasses even the 70-hour work week advocated by Infosys founder NR Narayana Murthy. His comment assumes added significance when there is already a renewed debate in India on work pressure after the death of 26-year-old Ernst & Young employee, Anna Sebastian Perayil. And call it a quirk of fate, or merely incidental, L&T has now eaten a humble pie after its bid for a tender to build six submarines was shot down by the Ministry of Defence. Subrahmanyan's comment has been singularly dismissed by several corporate chiefs, including Anand Mahindra, Chairman, of Mahindra Group; Sanjiv Puri, CMD, ITC Limited; Harsh Vardhan Goenka, the current chairman of RPG Enterprises; Nalin Negi, BharatPe CEO; Rajiv Bajaj, Managing Director of Bajaj Auto; and even Sanjeev Sanyal, Economist Member of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Economic Advisory Council. The circular issued by the Ministry of Labour and Employment of India, the Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, 2020, strictly says that no worker shall be required or allowed to work, in any establishment or class of establishments for more than eight hours in a day or forty-eight hours in a week.

As per the International Labour Organisation (ILO) as of January 11, 2024, the average weekly working hours per employed person across 10 of the world's largest economies is in: the United States, 38 hours per week; in China, 46.1 hours per week; Germany, 34.2 hours per week; Japan 36.6 hours per week; India 46.7 hours per week; United Kingdom, 35.9 hours per week; France, 35.9 hours per week; Brazil, 39 hours per week; Italy, 36.3 hours per week; Canada, 32.1 hours per week. However, India ranks 13th among the world's most overworked countries. With 46.7 average working hours per week, India faces a persistent culture of extended work schedules. The World Health Organisation also highlights excessive work as a major public health concern linked to occupational diseases.

According to the International Labour Organisation's data, Luxembourg enjoys the highest productivity with $166.1k in terms of GDP per hour worked, with an average working week schedule of 35.6 hours. Ireland stands second with $139.1k GDP per hour worked with an average work-week schedule of 35.6 hours.

Whereas India has a labour productivity of $10.7k GDP per hour worked with an average work-week schedule of 46.7 hours.The latest report, by Mc Kinsey Health Institute says that investing in employee health can substantially increase economic returns.

Research by the Institute in collaboration with the World Economic Forum indicates that enhanced employee health and well-being could generate up to $11.7 trillion in global economic value.

(The writer is a journalist and news anchor and writes oncorporate affairs, finance; views expressed are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

INDIA'S AI MISSION

Madam — This refers to the news report, "India prepares to take on ChatGPT, Deepseek" (January 31). The sensational launch of the Chinese start-up DeepSeek's AI system known as R1 has left the West dumbstruck. DeepSeek's claim that it developed R1 at 50 times the cheaper cost than OpenAI's ChatGPT with matching performance created mayhem in financial markets on January 30 as the Nasdaq witnessed its biggest wipeout in history.

Nvidia, the leading AI chip maker, was hit the worst as its stock price plunged 17 per cent. After American President Donald Trump termed DeepSeek a "wake-up call" for the US and urged US companies to stay competitive, fierce competition in the AI market is imminent. Amid these eye-opening developments, India has planned to build its world-class foundational models within less than one year under its ambitious India AI Mission. This shows India's global aspirations to become a frontrunner in the AI industry. In the last few years, India has resolved to develop advanced technologies indigenously and shed its dependency on other countries. India is aggressively developing its semiconductor industry to boost self-reliance, economic growth, and technological leadership under initiatives like the India Semiconductor Mission and PLI scheme.

Manoj Parashar | *Ghaziabad*

FOCUS ON ECONOMIC REVIVAL

Madam— Apropos, "Indian economy on fast lane," The Pioneer, January 30. With signs of a slowdown in the economy getting more pronounced, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman who will be presenting the Union Budget today. The budget must not only address the weary private investment scenario in the country but also address the consumption slowdown. The economic growth is slowing, with GDP likely to grow at less than 7 per cent for at least the next three years, including the current one. The anaemic growth of the economy has already led to moderation in consumption a trend that has been on the show for a couple of years. The central bank has consciously put a leash on consumption-related lending as it sees it as an area of concern. With inflation continuing to remain high, the RBI has been holding interest rates at higher levels, further discouraging borrowers from taking loans for discretionary consumption.

All these factors have weighed down on corporate India, which has been slow in announcing new projects and investments. This shows in lower private investment numbers. As a result, the economy is now facing a vicious cycle, which the budget can break. In this backdrop, the government will have to loosen its purse strings a bit, let the people have more money in their hands, and give some more sops to corporations to prod them into investing. How it achieves these goals would depend on how the government sees the current situation.

N Sadhasiva Reddy | *Bengaluru*

ISRO'S 100th rocket launch: Yet another milestone

ISRO has added yet another feather to its cap with its 100th launch of GSLV, its most trusted workhorse rocket, from Sriharikota in 46 years and is planning to launch another hundred of them in the next five years. GSLV is capable of launching satellites for both geosynchronous orbit (when it appears motionless from a point on the equator-primarily used for weather and communication and is placed at a very high altitude of about 42,000 km) and sun-synchronous orbit (when the satellite is passing over the same location at the same local time-used for imaging, weather forecasting, spying, and global observation at low altitudes of about 700 km, capable of capturing high-resolution images as a result).

This launch has put India in a much better situation to be self-reliant in its technology, giving a boost to its economy, defence, and spatial dominance in the near future. The ISRO scientists need to be applauded for their time-bound achievements and speed through their hard work and dedication.

R S Narula | *Patiala*

MIDAIR CRASH IN AMERICA KILLS 67

Madam —An American Airlines flight with 67 people aboard, including 4 crew members, collided with an Army helicopter while landing at Ronald Reagan National Airport near Washington DC in the nearby Potomac River. The US has the safest airspace in the world. The diversion of the air jet to land on a smaller runway just before landing may be a cause.

Also, the Army helicopter did not go up and down in the air over the river. The midair collision of the flight and the Army helicopter is more surprising in this digital age. The accident was preventable, and Trump blaming Obama and Biden's policies for the mishap is unacceptable.

N R Ramachandran | *Chennai*

Send your feedback to:
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FIRST COLUMN

A DIVINE CONVERGENCE OF LOVE AND LIBERATION

The Kumbh Mela has been a beacon for seekers, drawing masters and devotees alike

JAGATGURU SAI MAA **LAKSHMI DEVI**

For centuries, great masters have been drawn to the Kumbh Mela, captivated by its spiritual magnetism. What is it that pulls us here? It is the profound energy of devotion, the irresistible force of divine love. Love itself is a magnet, and those who live in devotion radiate this magnetic power, naturally attracting others to them. Nowhere else on Earth do millions—crores upon crores—gather in unwavering dedication, chanting the name of the Divine, immersed in sadhana day and night. They come to bathe in this sacred energy and carry it forth into their lives, spreading its radiance wherever they go.

This Maha Kumbh is unlike any before it, offering an unprecedented caliber of cosmic energy. It is a spiritual phenomenon of global significance, where the highest frequencies of Source energy descend upon humanity. The grace of enlightenment is being bestowed, and the awakening of souls is unfolding.

Here, the sublime state of Soruba Samadhi will begin—a transformation that elevates both consciousness and matter itself. Cellular structures are being regenerated, linking human DNA to the divine imprint, connecting us to the immortal essence within.There is nothing quite like the experience of Kumbh. Imagine millions of souls gathering in one place, each radiating spiritual energy, creating an immense vortex of power. In this sacred space, we transcend our human identities and recognise ourselves as Atmas—pure souls

united in a grand cosmic dance. This collective energy is a force of love, light, and enlightenment, dissolving karmic burdens and opening the path to a majestic, divine life.

Though the present age presents its challenges, those who remain steadfast on the spiritual path will undergo profound transformation. The portals of the cosmos are open, offering liberation and awakening. The world we see is but an illusion—a play of maya—where all is transient except our love for the Divine. This love is our dharma, our ultimate purpose. The body, the mind, and the material world constantly change, but the eternal truth, Sathya, remains unchanged. We are that truth—Sat-Chit-Ananda, Tat Twam Asi—and our sadhana is to awaken to and embody this realization.

At the Kumbh, in the embrace of Mata Ganga, we surrender and transform. The sacred waters purify us, activating the divine blueprint within. In this powerful vortex, we align with the highest expressions of Sanatana Dharma, experiencing profound spiritual elevation. This year, the influx of divine light is immense, inviting us to merge with its boundless brilliance and bliss. The ancient traditions of Moksha and enlightenment are more alive than ever. This is a time for purification, for letting go of attachments and the illusion of mortality. Sanatana Dharma, founded on selfless service, was exemplified by Adi Shankaracharya, who taught the wisdom of oneness.

Dharma—the eternal law—sustains creation itself. Regardless of the many religious paths, all stem from this universal truth. We have lived Dharma through countless lifetimes, whether we remember it or not. Kumbh Mela is a powerful catalyst for spiritual growth, drawing seekers from all over the world. Even those from lands where devotion is rare undergo profound shifts, their minds finding peace and their hearts blossoming. Here, millions chant together, and divine forces work to elevate collective consciousness. This is a time of great spiritual revolution, heralding the dawn of Sathya Yuga.Open your heart. Receive the blessings of your soul. Step into your truth and embrace the new age that is upon us.

(The writer is a spiritual guru; views are personal)

From OpenAI to DeepSeek: The fight for supremacy

NILANTHA **ILANGAMUWA**

With China rapidly closing the AI gap and geopolitical tensions shifting from military might to algorithmic dominance, the world is entering a digital cold war

Imagine a computer's hard drive containing a replica of your brain, connected to a high-speed internet. Your biological brain may become irrelevant when the machine not only possesses your mind but also gains control over everything you identify as 'who you are'. This is what General Artificial Intelligence (AGI) truly represents – the vast, unexplored frontier we are hurtling towards. The year begins not only with the most unpredictable politician in America reclaiming the Oval Office but also with an AI race that, once dominated by American startups, is now being swiftly overtaken by China at a significantly lower cost. We have crossed the Rubicon, heading towards an unknown destination; the consequences remain uncertain, and no one can predict what lies ahead.

The AI arms race, gaining unprecedented velocity, is propelling us into an era where the very foundations of intelligence, humanity, and civilisation are being deconstructed at an astonishing pace. Humanity, having long contended with the challenge of technology reshaping its self-perception, is now facing an existential dilemma unlike any before. The revolutions of Copernicus, which dethroned Earth from its presumed centrality in the cosmos, and Darwin, whose theory questioned humanity's divine distinction from the animal kingdom, fundamentally redefined our place in the universe. But neither of these paradigm shifts eroded the core of what it meant to be human. Artificial intelligence, however, threatens to do precisely that. AGI poses a question so starkly profound that it demands our full intellectual engagement: What happens when the very attribute we have long considered uniquely human—the capacity to reason, to create, to understand—becomes replicable, scalable, and infinitely more efficient, to the point where machines not only rival but surpass our cognitive limitations?

What becomes of the human essence when faced with entities capable of thinking faster, learning more swiftly, and ultimately transcending us in once inconceivable ways? This week, the new race in AI has surged ahead, with China unveiling the results of its years of intensive experimentation. The release of Qwen 2.5, followed by DeepSeek—an inexpensive yet formidable competitor to models like GPT-4 from OpenAI—has upended the established order. This shift is not merely a matter of technological rivalry; it signifies a profound realignment in global power, where the currency of influence is no longer military might or economic clout, but data control, computational resources, and technological ingenuity.

> AI, IN ITS MOST ADVANCED FORMS, BECOMES A REFLECTION OF OUR INTELLECTUAL FRAMEWORK—YET ONE THAT OPERATES FASTER, MORE EFFICIENTLY, AND WITH AN ABILITY TO LEARN THAT FAR EXCEEDS HUMAN POTENTIAL

The new cold war is not one of armaments but of algorithms and information—an intellectual race whose stakes extend far beyond economic primacy to the very survival of human civilisation itself.As AI advances, it forces us to confront deeply uncomfortable truths about our nature. For millennia, humanity has positioned itself at the apex of intelligence on Earth, a secret of being a superspecies. Yet what occurs when our very creations—machines—begin to outshine us in those same domains? When we no longer retain exclusive dominion over intelligence, how does this fundamentally alter our sense of identity?

Are we, like the alchemists of antiquity, on the verge of realising that we no longer control our fate, but have given birth to entities that might one day supplant us? The very nature of intelligence itself is now irreversibly in question. Cognitive architectures, once the exclusive province of the human brain, are now being mirrored and surpassed by machines. AI, in its most advanced forms, becomes a reflection of our intellectual framework—yet one that operates faster, more efficiently, and with an ability to learn that far exceeds human potential. This is not merely an augmentation of human capabilities; it heralds the dawn of a new epoch, where human and machine cognition converge, indistinguishable and perhaps inseparable. As we approach this unnerving future, we must ask ourselves whether we are philosophically, politically, and socially prepared to co-exist with entities that may one day rival or eclipse us.

Will we, as a species, embrace co-evolution, finding a new equilibrium in our relationship with machines, or will we cling to the false myth of human exceptionalism, attempting to subjugate or destroy the very creations we have birthed?

The decisions we make now will echo far beyond our survival, influencing the very nature of intelligence and the future trajectory of all life on Earth. The geopolitical ramifications of this technological revolution are as profound as its existential implications. Powerful nations with vast resources for research, development, and energy will continue to dominate the future, while smaller countries may face unprecedented crises, including crises concerning their own identity.

As AI becomes embedded in the infrastructure of global politics, we are entering an era of digital empires—systems of control as potent as any traditional nation-state, commanding not only information but the very nature of human interaction. In this new digital cold war, the battle is not merely for technological supremacy, but for control over the global political system itself. Is the rise of AI an essential leap forward in humanity's evolution, or does it signal the twilight of human relevance?

Some may argue that AI is a necessary tool, a portal that helps protect us from the danger of total annihilation. Others, however, may see it as a harbinger of obsolescence, a point of no return when our creations ascend to power and render us irrelevant. However, there is a subtler, more philosophical interpretation of this transformative shift: Perhaps the advent of AGI is not our fall from grace, but the birth of a new chapter in human evolution—one where we transcend the biological constraints that have long defined us. Like our ancestors who tamed fire and invented the wheel, we may soon wield AI as a tool that propels us to new heights. The fusion of human and artificial intelligence could lead to a post-human condition—not one of extinction, but of surpassing the boundaries of our biological form and entering a phase of hybridised existence. This, of course, depends on our ability to confront the ethical and political structures that accompany the rise of AGI.

The true challenge is not whether we will create machines that surpass us in intelligence, but whether we have the wisdom to ensure they remain our allies rather than adversaries. We must learn to co-exist with these new intelligences, integrating them into our societies in ways that enhance, rather than diminish, our humanity. This is the existential challenge of our time—one that will determine whether the era of artificial intelligence will culminate in annihilation or transcendence.

Ultimately, the measure of our humanity will not lie in our ability to create machines that rival us in intelligence, but in our capacity to retain those qualities that define us: empathy, creativity, and the willingness to evolve in response to monumental change. If we can meet this challenge, the future—however uncertain—will hold at least the promise of our fragile humanity. If not, we may find ourselves consigned to the dustbin of history, supplanted by the very entities we have created. Are we prepared to face the unknown abyss, or will we cower in fear, clinging to the comforting illusions of the past? The future, it seems, is no longer entirely within our grasp—but perhaps this is precisely the kind of leap forward we need to ensure our survival.

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

Elevating CSR in India: From compliance to impact-driven transformation

While many corporations are genuinely committed to social welfare, issues like fund misallocation, tokenism and unethical practices threaten the integrity of CSR

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in India has significantly progressed over the past decade. Introduced as a legal mandate in 2013, CSR has evolved from a mere compliance obligation to a fundamental requirement, with organisations across various industries incorporating social welfare into their core operations. However, as we continue into 2025 and beyond, there is an urgent need to elevate the current CSR practices-ensuring they are effective, accountable, and transparent. While many companies have shown a sincere commitment to social impact, others have unfortunately fallen into the vicious traps of misallocation of funds, tokenism, and questionable practices like kickbacks and paybacks. Additionally, the emergence of corporations establishing their NGOs presents a mixed picture; while some are genuinely committed to their missions, many operate as "skeleton NGOs," where staff often demand kickbacks and the intended social welfare purpose gets lost.

A New and Enhanced Era for CSR Compliance

Compliance remains an important aspect of effective CSR. However, it is not just about meeting the mandatory spending requirement but also about ensuring that every rupee spent reaches where it was originally intended—directly benefiting those in need. While many corporations have dutifully allocated the mandated 2 per cent of

GEETANJALI **CHOPRA**

their profits towards social welfare, there is still a need for a more robust system to ensure regular oversight and real-time monitoring of fund utilisation and project outcomes. With stronger and more transparent laws, we can ensure that funds reach the intended beneficiaries, fostering trust between the government, corporations, and communities alike.

Ensuring Integrity in CSR: Addressing Kickbacks and Paybacks One of the biggest challenges facing CSR today is the lack of trust caused by unethical practices. Often, when intermediaries or implementing agencies misappropriate resources for personal gain, the integrity of CSR initiatives is compromised. To address this issue, it is vital to introduce strict anti-corruption policies and establish independent monitoring mechanisms.

When corporations know they are being monitored or supervised, they will think twice before engaging in malpractice.

Ensuring integrity is not just about preventing financial losses; it is about preserving the trust of communities that often

rely on CSR for a better future.

Impact-Driven CSR

CSR should move beyond compliance; it needs to be impact-driven. The focus should shift from merely fulfilling legal obligations to measuring the difference being made on the ground. Strengthening accountability will ensure CSR is not reduced to a token gesture but becomes a genuine agent of transformation. Moreover, corporations should also embrace innovation in their CSR approaches. Whether it is by using technology to improve healthcare access in rural areas, providing quality education through digital platforms, or addressing climate change with green initiatives, one must think beyond traditional models and adopt solutions that leave a lasting impact.

The Role of Stakeholders

Accountability is not just the sole responsibility of corporations; other stakeholders—governments, NGOs, and civil society—also have an essential role to play in shaping the future of CSR. The government must act as an active regulator, ensuring companies adhere to guidelines while incentivising innovation and collaboration. On the other hand, NGOs, as implementation partners, must continue to bring grassroots expertise and ensure that every rupee spent makes a difference. Communities must also be empowered to hold corporations accountable. By involving local stakeholders in the planning and execution of projects, we can create a feedback loop that enhances transparency and boosts the on-the-ground impact of CSR initiatives.

The Way Forward

The ongoing changes to the CSR framework present a golden opportunity to usher in a new era of accountability and impact. This calls for a change that ensures CSR initiatives are not only executed with integrity but with genuine purpose. The government, too, must play its part by introducing reforms that incentivise genuine efforts while penalising any kind of malpractice.

If implemented correctly, this strengthened CSR framework can ensure that social welfare is not merely a checkbox for corporations but a collective mission to uplift the underserved. As stakeholders in this ecosystem—corporates, non-profits, government, and the public—we must all push for a transparent and impactful CSR environment. Only then will CSR in India live up to its promise of creating a better world for all.

(The writer is founder an d president, Wishes and Blessings NGO; views expressed are personal)

Lithuanian prez backs Trump's NATO defence spending goal

PTI ■ VILNIUS

Securing an end to the fighting in Ukraine must take place with Kyiv's full involvement and come with more defense spending by regional countries to avoid any future Russian aggression, according to Lithuania's president.

Gitanas Nauseda, the president of the Baltic coastal nation, told The Associated Press in an interview Thursday that a settlement negotiated without proper deterrent measures would allow Russia to consolidate its forces and prepare for further aggression in the region.

Nauseda said that even when a ceasefire is reached in Ukraine, "you cannot believe that the intentions of Russia will be just to stop and do nothing".

"They will use this break in order to consolidate, to strengthen the military capabilities and to strike again in the future," he told the AP in Vilnius. "And then the main question is, what will be the next target of Russia? Ukraine, maybe. Baltic countries, maybe."

Lithuania, which was occupied by the Soviet Union until 1990, is increasingly worried about the ongoing brutal war in Ukraine and the aggression of its neighbour Russia.

Its geographical position — bordering Russia's Kaliningrad exclave to the west and Moscow's proxy Belarus to the east — make it vulnerable to a potential broader conflict launched from the Kremlin even after an eventual end to the war, Nauseda said.

"You can never feel safe living in this part of the world, because we have this neighbor, and we will still have it after one hundred or two hundred years," Nauseda said of Russia. "You always have the threat from the East, and you must be aware and take all the necessary precautionary measures in order not to be attacked."

"This is not individual country-by-country conflict," he added. "This is a challenge of Putin towards NATO."

Unacceptable' if ceasefire plans exclude Kyiv The country recently became the first member of the NATO military alliance to commit to raising its defence spending to at least 5 per cent of its overall national economic output, as called for by US President Donald Trump.

A longtime critic of NATO countries that do not spend more on defence, Trump has threatened he would not defend alliance members that fail to meet defense spending goals. While some European countries have signalled upping their spending to Trump's desired 5 per cent of GDP would be an economic burden, other nations on the alliance's eastern flank, including Lithuania, have greeted the proposal as a necessity.

Before Trump took office earlier this month, questions over how he would engage with the war in Ukraine loomed over European countries as some speculated he would roll back the crucial military aid provided by the administration of President Joe Biden.

But after his inauguration, Trump threatened to impose sanctions and tariffs on Moscow, and urged Russian President Vladimir Putin to "settle now and stop this ridiculous war".

Nauseda said the new US administration must ensure that Kyiv is fully involved in negotiations to end the fighting, and that a resolution to the conflict should not be drawn up bilaterally between Moscow and Washington.

"It would be unacceptable if the peace would be set behind the doors and without the involvement of Ukraine," he said. "Ukraine paid a very high price in this war. Ukraine lost many human lives. Infrastructure, facilities and houses are destroyed. The Ukrainian people deserve the right to set the conditions of this peace."

"I think that President Donald Trump understands that: no peace negotiations without Ukraine," he added.

Another security concern facing Lithuania and the region is a series of events that have damaged undersea cables and gas pipelines in the Baltic Sea. At least 11 Baltic cables have been damaged since October 2023. Most recently, a fibre optic cable connecting Latvia and the Swedish island of Gotland reportedly ruptured on Sunday. NATO launched a new mission dubbed "Baltic Sentry" earlier this month to protect the underwater infrastructure vital to the economic well-being of the region. Although cable operators note that sub-sea cable damage is commonplace, the frequency and concentration of incidents in the Baltic have heightened suspicions that damage might have been deliberate.

To address those concerns, Nauseda said, "It is time for us to show some muscle."

"NATO and the EU should take more responsibility in surveying the Baltic Sea, bringing additional maritime capabilities to prevent such incidents in the future," he said. Some politicians in Lithuania have objected to the country raising its military expenditures, already among the highest relative to GDP in the 32-member NATO alliance. But Nauseda said Lithuania must show that it can be responsible for its own defence. "This is an absolutely clear priority for this country, as a frontline country, that we have to spend more," he said. "Of course, we can rely on the support of our allies in NATO. But it would be naive to expect that somebody will care about our security if there will be clear indications that we are not able to defend ourselves."

US Prez mum on pulling out troops from Syria

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

President Donald Trump is declining to say whether he intends to maintain current US troop levels in Syria. We'll make a determination on that," Trump told reporters on Thursday when asked if he intends to withdraw US troops deployed to Syria to fight the Islamic State group. "We're not involved in Syria. Syria's its own mess. They got enough messes over there. They don't need us involved with everything."

The US had said for years that there were about 900 troops in Syria, but the Pentagon acknowledged in December that US troop levels had surged to about 2,000.

There has long been friction between the US and Syria's neighbours - Turkiye and Iraq - about the ongoing presence of American forces in Syria and the need to keep them at a particular level. Israel meanwhile has urged the US to maintain a presence in the country.

Trump said just before rebels ousted Syrian leader Bashar Assad in December in that the US military should stay out of Syria.

Trump is also not giving up on the idea of Egypt and Jordan taking in Palestinians from the Gaza Strip, even as the leaders of both countries have flatly rejected the idea. "They're going to do it," Trump said in exchange with reporters on Thursday, when asked whether he could force Egypt and Jordan to take in Palestinians from the war-torn territory. "We do a lot for them and they're going to do it."Trump does have leverage to wield over Jordan and Egypt, two strategically important US allies that are heavily dependent on US aid.

Trump first floated the idea last week, saying he would urge the leaders of the two Arab countries to take in Gaza's now largely homeless population, so that "we just clean out that whole thing."

He added that resettling most of war-torn Gaza's population of 2.3 million could be temporary or long term.

Human rights groups have already accused Israel of ethnic cleansing, which United Nations experts define as a policy designed by one ethnic or religious group to remove the civilian population of another group from certain areas "by violent and terror-inspiring means."

US aid agency in upheaval during foreign assistance freeze

Washington (PTI): Trump administration changes have upended the US agency charged with providing humanitarian aid to countries overseas, with dozens of senior officials put on leave, thousands of contractors laid off, and a sweeping freeze imposed on billions of dollars in foreign assistance. Secretary of State Marco Rubio defended the pause on foreign assistance Thursday, saying "the US government is not a charity."

Aid organisations say the funding freeze — and deep confusion over what US-funded programmes must stop work as a result — has left them agonizing over whether they could continue operating programmes such as those providing round-the-clock nutritional support to extremely malnourished infants and children, knowing that closing the doors means that many of those children would die.

Current and former officials at the State Department and the US Agency for International Development say staffers were invited to submit requests to exempt certain programs from the foreign aid freeze, which President Donald Trump imposed Jan. 20 and

the State Department detailed how to execute on Jan. 24. Three days later, at least 56 senior career USAID staffers were abruptly placed on administrative leave.

Three officials said many of those put on leave were lawyers involved in determining what programmes might qualify for waivers, helping write proposals and submitting those waiver requests as they believed they had been invited to do. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity for fear of reprisal. A Trump administration directive that aid organizations interpret as a gag order has left them unwilling to speak publicly for fear of permanently losing US funding. In an internal memo Monday about the staffing changes, new acting USAID administrator Jason Gray said the agency had identified "several actions within USAID that appear to be designed to circumvent the President's Executive Orders and the mandate from the American people.""As a result, we have placed a number of USAID employees on administrative leave with full pay and benefits until further notice while we complete our analysis of these actions," Gray wrote.

A former senior USAID official said those put on leave had been helping aid organizations navigate the "confusing process" to seek waivers from the aid pause for specific life-saving projects, such as continuing clean water supplies for displaced people in war zones.

BRICS nations warned against replacing US dollar

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

President Donald Trump has once again warned that he will impose 100 per cent tariffs against BRICS nations if they attempt to replace the US dollar in international trade, telling them to go and find "another sucker nation."

BRICS is an intergovernmental organisation of ten countries —Russia, India, China, South Africa, Egypt, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Iran and the United Arab Emirates.

"The idea that the BRICS countries are trying to move away from the dollar, while we stand by and watch, is OVER," Trump said on Thursday in a post on Truth Social, a social media platform owned by him.

Trump said he wanted a commitment from these "seemingly hostile" countries that they would neither create a new BRICS currency nor back any other currency to replace the "mighty" US dollar.

President Donald Trump signs a document in the Oval Office at the White House, Thursday in Washington. AP/PTI

"Or they will face 100 per cent tariffs, and should expect to say goodbye to selling into the wonderful US economy," Trump said.

"They can go find another sucker nation.

There is no chance that BRICS will replace the US dollar in international trade, or anywhere else, and any country that tries should say hello to tariffs, and goodbye to America!" Trump threatened.

Although Trump has repeatedly criticised BRICS nations against any move to float their own currency, this is his strongest opposition to it so far.

In December too, Trump warned BRICS nations against such a move.

BRICS is an intergovernmental organisation of ten countries —Russia, India, China, South Africa, Egypt, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Iran and the United Arab Emirates.

BRICS, formed in 2009, is the only major international group of which the US is not a part.

Over the past few years, a few of its member countries, in particular Russia and China, are seeking to have an alternative to the US dollar or create BRICS currency.

India, an important pillar of BRICS, has said it was against de-dollarisation.

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar in December said India had never been for de-dollarisation and there was no proposal to have a BRICS currency.

Palestinians walk past a mosque destroyed by Israeli airstrikes in Nuseirat, Gaza Strip, Friday days after a ceasefire deal between Israel and Hamas came into effect. AP/PTI

Serbian student protesters march ahead of major blockade of Danube bridges

PTI ■ INDJIJA

A driver in Belgrade, rammed a car into a silent protest in the Serbian capital on Friday, slightly injuring one woman, the third such incident in weeks. The incident happened in downtown Belgrade during 15 minutes of silence observed daily throughout Serbia at noon when a canopy collapsed at a railway station in the northern town of Novi Sad on November 1. Video footage showed the woman, wearing a doctor's white coat, being thrown to the pavement. Pro-government thugs have repeatedly attacked the protesters, many of them students, twice ramming cars into demonstrations. Two people were seriously injured in the previous attacks. After spending a freezing night out in the open, hundreds of striking students on Friday resumed their 2-day anti-graft protest march from the capital, Belgrade, to the northern city of Novi Sad, where they plan to blockade three bridges over the River Danube this weekend. The bridge blockade is planned for Saturday to mark three months since the huge concrete construction at the railway station collapsed in Novi said on November 1, leaving 15 people dead. What started two months ago as a protest against suspected corruption in construction contracts has developed into the most serious challenge in years to the country's powerful populist leader, President Aleksandar Vucic.

Along the way to Novi Sad, the students were greeted by cheering citizens, honking their car horns or coming out of their homes with offers of refreshments and food.

When they reached the town of Indjija on Thursday, roughly halfway along their 80-kilometer (50-mile) route, they were welcomed with fireworks and cheers from residents.

Although most of them spent the night out in the open in a soccer field, the freezing temperatures did not dampen their desire for major changes in the corruption-ridden Balkan state.

Nevena Vecerinac, a student, said she hoped the protesters' demands that include the punishment of all those responsible for the rail station tragedy will be fulfilled.

"We will make it to Novi Sad," she said. "Yesterday's walk was easy. It's cold now, but we can make it. We all have the same goal.""We need support from all people. With this energy and mood I hope we can do it, otherwise there will be no brighter future," said Luka Arsenovic, another student marcher.

Many in Serbia believe that the collapse of the overhang at the train station was essentially caused by government corruption in a large infrastructure project with Chinese state companies. Critics believe graft led to a sloppy job during the reconstruction of the Novi Sad train station, poor oversight and disrespect of existing safety regulations.

Monthslong demonstrations have already forced the resignation of Serbia's prime minister Milos Vucevic this week, along with various concessions from authorities which were ignored by the protesters who say that is not enough.

Vucic and other officials have shifted from accusing the students of working with foreign powers to oust him, to offering concessions or issuing veiled threats.

Pro-government thugs have repeatedly attacked the students, twice ramming cars into protests.

Istanbul mayor testifies over legal probes against him

Istanbul (PTI): Police on Friday fired tear gas to disperse a group of protesters who clashed with officers outside an Istanbul courthouse while rallying in support of the city's mayor, who was called to give testimony in two new legal probes against him.

Ekrem Imamoglu, a potential future leader of Turkiye's main opposition Republican People's Party, or CHP, and a possible challenger to President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, testified before prosecutors for two hours.

The testimony was in connection with comments he made about a chief prosecutor and a court expert. Critics argue that these probes are part of an effort to remove Imamoglu from the political scene.

The politician has already been convicted of charges of insulting members of Turkey's Supreme Electoral Council and faces a political ban if his conviction in 2022 is upheld by a high court. He is also on trial on charges that he was involved in the alleged rigging of bids in a tender dating back to 2015.

Thousands of supporters gathered outside the Caglayan courthouse to protest the legal actions against Imamoglu. Tensions escalated when riot police blocked a CHP bus, which serves as a podium for politicians, from approaching the courthouse. The move led to clashes between the protesters and the police, who responded with tear gas. It was not clear if any arrests were made.

Imamoglu later addressed the crowds from the top of the bus at another location. "Today's issue is an issue of justice, an issue of seeking rights and justice," the mayor said. "Unfortunately, today's issue stems from a conspiracy that is being set up against Istanbul."

Imamoglu, 53, was first elected to lead Istanbul in March 2019.

His win was a historic blow to Erdogan's Justice and Development Party, which had controlled Istanbul for a quarter-century.

Sunita Williams sets record for total spacewalking time by woman

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

Indian-origin astronaut Sunita Williams has broken the record for total spacewalking time by a woman by logging 62 hours and 6 minutes of spacewalk.

Williams and her colleague Butch Wilmore, who have been stranded on the International Space Station (ISS) since June 2024, conducted a spacewalk on Thursday.

The duo ventured outside the ISS to remove degraded radio communications hardware and collect samples that may show whether microorganisms exist on the exterior of the orbiting laboratory.

The spacewalk began at 7:43 am Eastern Time (ET) and concluded at 1:09 pm ET, lasting 5 hours and 26 minutes.

It was the ninth spacewalk for Williams and the fifth for Wilmore.

"NASA astronaut Suni WIlliams just surpassed former astronaut Peggy Whitson's total spacewalking time of 60 hours and 21 minutes," NASA said in a post on X.

She surpassed Whitson's record for total spacewalking time by a female astronaut. Williams now has 62 hours and 6 minutes of total spacewalk time, fourth on NASA's all-time list, according to NASA.

In 2012, during a trip to the ISS, Williams became the first person to finish a triathlon in space, during which she simulated swimming using a weight-lifting machine and ran on a treadmill while strapped in by a harness so she wouldn't float away.

Williams, 59, and Wilmore went on what was meant to be an eight-day mission to the ISS aboard Boeing's Starliner in June 2024.

However, technical issues including helium leaks and thruster malfunctions meant that the Starliner was unsafe for their return.

NASA plans to bring them back to Earth in late March aboard a spaceship built by SpaceX, a rival company of Boeing.Despite these setbacks, the astronauts have continued their work aboard the ISS while awaiting a safe journey home.

Myanmar's military govt extends state of emergency by 6 months

PTI ■ BANGKOK

Myanmar's military government on Friday announced another six-month extension of its mandate to rule in preparation for elections it has said will be held this year, as the country enters its fifth year of crisis.

However, it did not announce an exact date for the polls.

The military declared a state of emergency on February 1, 2021, when it arrested the country's leader, Aung San Suu Kyi, and top officials from her government in an army takeover which reversed years of progress toward democracy after five decades of earlier military rule.

The takeover sparked an armed resistance movement, with powerful ethnic minority militias and people's defense forces that support Myanmar's main opposition now controlling large parts of the country.

The military government is currently facing its greatest challenge since taking power and is on the defensive in much of the country. However, it is still able to hold onto much of central Myanmar and big cities including the capital, Naypyidaw.

State-run MRTV television reported on Friday that the National Defence and Security Council decided unanimously to grant an extension of emergency rule after Senior Gen. Ming Aung Hlaing, the head of the military government, argued that more time was needed to restore stability to the country to hold national elections.

The council is nominally a constitutional administrative government body, but in practice is controlled by the military.\ Under the army-drafted 2008 Constitution, the military was able to rule the country under a state of emergency for one year, followed by two possible six-month extensions before holding elections. However, the extension on Friday is the seventh.

Tom Andrews, a special rapporteur with the UN Human Rights Office, said in a statement on Thursday that four years of military oppression, violence and incompetence have cast Myanmar into an abyss. The United Nations has estimated that more than 3.5 million people have been displaced by the conflict.

"Junta forces have slaughtered thousands of civilians, bombed and burned villages, and displaced millions of people. More

Russia claims capture of Ukraine village, advances on key city

Kyiv (PTI): Russia on Friday claimed it had captured another village in its relentless offensive in eastern Ukraine's Donetsk region and as it closes in on the critical Ukrainian logistics hub of Pokrovsk after almost three years of war. The Russian claim that its forces took Novovasylivka could not be independently confirmed, and Ukrainian officials made no immediate comment.

However, battlefield maps published early Friday by the Ukrainian General Staff suggested the village was at least partly under Russian control. A comparison with other maps of the area by The Associated Press indicated Novovasylivka is largely under Russian control.

Russian forces have been trying for months to capture the key Donetsk strongholds of Pokrovsk and nearby Chasiv Yar, fighting their way across farm fields and woodland and engulfing small rural settlements.The fall of Pokrovsk and Chasiv Yar could enable the Russian army to complete its hold on Donetsk and even set the stage for it to continue on into the neighbouring Dnipro region. The recent Russian push in the area has coincided with US President Donald Trump taking office and repeating his pledge to end the war soon. That has prompted both Moscow and Kyiv to pursue battlefield gains that might give them an edge at the bargaining table.

The village of Novovasylivka is located around 11 kilometers (7 miles) southwest of Pokrovsk. Ukrainian officials have said Russia is attempting a pincer movement to surround Pokrovsk.

Imran Khan's PTI rejects govt's offer to resume talks

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leadership rejected Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's offer to resume stalled talks with the government through a parliamentary panel to lower the country's political temperature.

Shehbaz addressed a cabinet meeting on Thursday and said the government was ready to form a parliamentary committee to advance talks with PTI after the Imran Khan-founded party quit negotiations over the non-formation of a judicial commission to probe the events of May 9, 2023, and November 26, 2024, according to Geo News.

The offer came after the PTI abruptly quit the talks after holding three meetings with the ruling parties' negotiation committee, maintaining the government failed to constitute judicial commissions within the seven-day deadline in line with its "charter of demands".

Speaking on the Geo News programme Capital Talk, PTI top leader and Leader of Opposition in the National Assembly Omar Ayub Khan said: "We reject Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's offer [to resume dialogue]".

Reiterating the party's demands, Ayub said the PTI formed a negotiation committee with sincerity to hold dialogue with the government. "Our demands were clear," he said, calling for the release of PTI's all "political prisoners".

In a statement, Senator Irfan Siddiqui, the government's negotiation committee spokesperson, said the PTI exhibited a non-democratic and non-political mentality by unilaterally withdrawing from the talks.

"PTI lost a good opportunity towards [fulfilment] of their demands," he added.

Although the opposition party "missed this train", they should benefit from the PM's latest offer, Siddiqui said.

Slamming the PTI for its agitational politics, the PML-N senator said that neither the opposition party achieved its objective via sit-ins and long marches in the past nor will it this time. Stressing the need for dialogue to defuse political tensions in the country, Siddiqui said the solution to every problem was serious and meaningful negotiations.

"The sooner PTI understands this, the better it will be for them," he added.

The much-hyped negotiations between the government and Imran Khan's PTI hit a snag last week after the opposition walked out of negotiations following instructions from the

EU warns Pak: Duty-free status tied to human rights progress

Islamabad (PTI): The European Union on Friday warned Pakistan that its status as a duty-free exporter to the bloc will continue to depend on the progress the country makes in addressing concerns about civil and labour rights, and freedom of speech.The warning came as Olof Skoog, the EU's special representative for human rights, wrapped up a weeklong visit to Islamabad. The visit was aimed at engaging "Pakistan on the most pressing human rights and labour rights issues and discussing Pakistan's plans to address them, including in view of the ongoing assessment under the+ trade scheme," the EU said in a statement.Pakistan's exports to Europe have doubled since 2014 when it was awarded the status of duty-free exporter under the EU's Generalised Scheme of Preferences Plus, or+, incentives for developing countries. However, the EU statement warned Pakistan that the trade benefits enjoyed by it "under+ depend on the progress made on addressing a list of issues, including on human rights, and tangible reforms remain essential." It said that the "EU welcomes the fact that Pakistan has become the largest beneficiary of+, with Pakistani businesses increasing their exports to the EU market by 108 per cent since the launch of the trade scheme in 2014." But, the statement said that "as we approach the midterm of the current monitoring cycle, we encourage Pakistan to continue on its reform path as it prepares for reapplication under the upcoming new+ regulation."The statement said that Skoog, during his meeting with Pakistani authorities, "highlighted areas of concern such as the application of blasphemy laws, women's rights, forced marriages and conversions, enforced disappearances, freedoms of expression, religion or belief, independence of the media, impunity for rights violations, due process and the right to a fair trial, civic space, and the death penalty." Though international community and human rights groups often express their concern over increasing government curbs on media, violation of human rights, the latest development came days after Pakistan's parliament passed a bill that critics argue is designed to suppress freedom of speech.The bill, which now has become a law after President Asif Ali Zardari's approval, grants the government extensive powers to impose heavy fines and incarcerate social media users for spreading disinformation.

PUBLIC NOTICE

General Public is hereby informed that my client Sh. Suraj Bhan S/o Lt. Sh Mothania R/o 63,Main Border Road,Bakargarh,Delhi-110073, Do hereby affirm and declare that he has evicted his son Sawan Kumar S/o Suraj Bhan from all his movable and immovable properties and disowned, dis-inherited, debarred and served all relations from his son namely Sh. Sawan Kumar, anyone dealing with them be doing so at their own risk and cost and Suraj Bhan will not be liable for the same.

Advocate : Rohit Kumar
Ch. No 637, WW Tis Hazari Court Delhi-54

PARADIP PORT AUTHORITY
e-TENDER CALL NOTICE
No. EM/PED-03/2025
No. EM/PED/TECH-03/2025/118 Date:28/01/2025

Name of the work - Management of Power Distribution System of Paradip Port Authority. Estimated Cost: **Rs.22,20,30,322/-** only excluding GST. Last date & time of submission of bid: **dt.19/02/2025 up to 18:00 Hrs.** Refer our Website for details **https://eprocure.gov.in/eprocure/app**

Sd/- Executive Engineer (E), PED-II
PPA/PR/60/2024-2025 dtd.31.01.2025

PUBLIC NOTICE

This is to inform the general public that Ashwani Sharma is the absolute owner of the Freehold Agricultural Land Measuring 1 Bigha And 4 Biswas, Bearing Khasra No.444/2 Min, Situated In The Revenue Estate Of Village Gadaipur, Tehsil Mehrauli, New Delhi. (hereinafter referred to as the "said property"). Ownership was acquired through a Sale Deed Dated 02.08.2018, which was duly registered with the office of Sub Registrar-VA DELHI., as doc no. 5326, Book 1, Vol No. 2416, Page 14 to 22 on 02.08.2018, as per the Owner's BonaFide Version, the original documents for the entire built-up property, including the 1. Original Regd. Sale Deed Dated 02.08.2018 Executed By Shri. Vishnu Kumar Aggarwal In Favour M/S Ajuni Developrs Private Limited, In Respect Of Agricultural Land Measuring 1 Bigha And 4 Biswas, Bearing Khasra No.444/2 Min, Situated In The Revenue Estate Of Village Gadaipur, Tehsil Mehrauli, New Delhi, Vide Registration No.5326 In Addl. Book No.I Volume No.2416 On Page 14 To 22 Dated 02.08.2018, With The Office Sub Registrar-Va Delhi. 2. Original Regd. Sale Deed Dated 09.06.2022 Executed By M/S Ajuni Developrs Private Limited In Favour Of 1. Mrs. Rukhsana Bilgrami (2.5% Undivided Share) 2. Shri. Nazar Luqman Bilgrami (48.75% Undivided Share) And 3. Mrs. Ghazala Kafeel (48.75% Undivided Share), In Respect Of Agricultural Land Measuring 1 Bigha And 4 Biswas, Bearing Khasra No.442/2 Min, Situated In The Revenue Estate Of Village Gadaipur, Tehsil Mehrauli, New Delhi, Vide Registration No.5592 In Addl. Book No.I Volume No.4702, On Page 120 To 132 Dated 09.06.2022, With The Office Sub Registrar-Va Delhi, as they have been lost/misplaced. A lost report regarding these documents has been filed with the Delhi Police Online Portal, vide L.R. NO. 2522599/2025 dated 23.01.2025. the owner has asserted that the said property is free from all encumbrances. and the owner intends to create a charge, VIZ mortgage. any person(s) or financial institution claiming any right or interest or having any objection regarding the said property based on the aforementioned lost documents is hereby requested to contact the afore mentioned Chamber: 231,Western Wing Tis Hazari Court, Delhi-110054, as well as the undersigned at the email address ranjanjha318@gmail.com within 15 days from the date of publication of this notice. failing which, any such claim shall be deemed null and void, and the title to the property shall be considered clear, marketable, free from defects or encumbrances, and open to creating an equitable mortgage.

Ranjan Kumar Jha (Advocate)
Chamber:231,Western Wing Tis Hazari Court Delhi-110054, Mobile : 9990647903

PUBLIC NOTICE

General public is hereby informed that I, Gulshan Kumar Arora, have filed an application in L&DO for substitution of the property No. 6/50-A. Moti Nagar, New Delhi-15 in my name, on the grounds of inheritance by virtue of a Will. If there are any objections/claims from the general public on this application, the same shall be communicated to L&DO with supporting documents through registered post or by visiting L&DO at Nirman Bhawan, New Delhi or through an email at ldo@nic.in, within 30 days of publication of this notice.

Name: Gulshan Kumar Arora
Address: The Sri Durga CGHS, (Plot No. 6A), Flat No. B-601, Sector-11, Dwarka, N Delhi. Phone: 9968302749

PUBLIC NOTICE

This is to inform the general public that Mrs. Neelam Verma, W/o Sh. Narayan Verma, R/o 49, Belle Meade Street, Grosse Pointe Shores, MI 48236-1552 (USA), through her sister-in-law and General Power of Attorney (GPA) holder, Mrs. Gita Johri, appointed vide GPA executed on 13th January 2025 in the USA and duly stamped by AIG Stamps, Gautam Buddha Nagar (U.P.) on 18.01.2025, has sold and is in the process of transferring Dwelling Unit No. 108, 1st Floor, Tower E, Amrapali Princely Estate, Sector-76, Noida, Gautam Buddha Nagar, U.P., having a super area of 1455 sq. ft. along with one covered car parking, to Mr. Manish Mathur and Mrs. Kokila Mathur, both residents of Flat No. A-507, Amrapali Princely Estate, Sector-76, Noida (U.P.) - 201301. It is further clarified that Mrs. Gita Johri is only acting as the GPA holder of Mrs. Neelam Verma, and there is no Agreement to Sell between Mrs. Neelam Verma and Mrs. Gita Johri. Since Mrs. Neelam Verma is elderly and unable to travel to India and hence she has authorized Mrs. Gita Johri to act in capacity of her GPA holder to Transfer and sell the property in favour of Mr. Manish Mathur and Mrs. Kokila Mathur. If any person has any claim, objection, or interest in the said property, they are requested to submit their objections along with documentary proof to the Group Housing Department of the Noida Authority within 30 days from the date of publication of this notice.

Manish Mathur and Kokila Mathur

E-AUCTION PROGRAMME FOR SALE OF RAILWAY SCRAP MATERIAL

E-Auction programme for sale of Railway Scrap materials under jurisdiction of Lumding Division, for the month of February/2025 is hereby scheduled as under:

SN	Month	Date Fixed
1	February/2025	05-02-2025, 12-02-2025, 19-02-2025, 26-02-2025

Interested bidders can participate in E-Auction programme through IREPS website **www.ireps.gov.in**

Sr. Divisional Material Manager, Lumding
NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY
Serving Customers With A Smile

PUBLIC NOTICE

M/S SARE Gurugram Private Limited
(CIN: U70109DL2006PTC152635)
Registered Office: 5th Flr, Wing A, Statesman House, 148, Barakhamba Road Connaught Place, New Delhi, India 110001
Email: roc@eka-dhoot.com

Whereas M/s SARE Gurugram Private Limited (hereinafter referred as "Company") is in the process of developing a phase known as **"Arise"** over an area measuring 78250.380 sq. mtr. in the Group Housing Colony situated at village Wazirpur & Mewka, Sector-92, Gurugram under License No 44 of 2009 and 68 of 2011 granted by Director, Town and Country Planning, Haryana and having RERA Registration No. 270 of 2017 dated 09.10.2017.

And Whereas the Company has applied for change in Bank Account from Yes Bank Limited to SBI Bank Limited and accordingly the company has obtained In-principal approval for change of bank accounts from Haryana Real Estate Regulatory Authority, Gurugram. Accordingly vide this public notice, the general public is hereby notified/informed that the following changes in bank accounts:

Particulars	Previous Bank Accounts	New Bank Accounts
Bank Name	Yes Bank Limited	SBI Bank Limited
IFSC Code	YESB0000420	SBIN0050933
Master Collection Account No.(100%)	042072500000022	43601474764
RERA Account No. (70%)	042072400000022	43549792854
Promoter Free Account No. (30%)	042063400001821	43601420162

M/s SARE Gurugram Private Limited
Date: 29.01.2025 **Place: Gurugram**

PUBLIC NOTICE

Kailash Nursing Home Pvt. Ltd., 49, South Patel Nagar, New Delhi-110008 hereby brings to the kind attention of all concerned that it is being planned to destroy old inpatient records pertaining to the period before **31st March 2015.** In case any person/patient relative thereof wants is see their treatment records, please contact Medical Records Department, within **30 days** from the date of notice.

Director Medical Services
KAILASH NURSING HOME PVT. LTD.
49, South Patel Nagar, New Delhi-11008

Public Notice

In The Pioneer Newspaper our publication was published on dated 31-01-2025 in Page No. 9/5 that the Objection was raised was mentioned as 7 Days Instead of 15 Days. Please read Any objections or concerns regarding this transaction should be raised within a period of 15 days from the date of this public notice Borrower Name as Ashish Verma who is purchasing and Mortgaging the Plot no. 198, area measuring 98 sq. yards., i.e., 81.93 sq. meters., (Two Floors Covered area 163.86 sq. ft.) out of Khasra no.511K, situated at Mohalla Nearby Shivnagari, Shahid Bhagat Singh Marg Railway Road in the village Dadri, Pargana & Tehsil Dadri, Distt. Gautam Budh Nagar, U.P. with Aditya Birla Housing Finance Limited.
Law Veritas: North (Advocates & Legal Consultants) at Office No. 11, 1st Floor, Building No. A-44/A, Sector-16, Noida, Uttar Pradesh-201301; Landline(s): +910120-3101683 / 4562809; e-mail: accounts@lvnorth.in

GOVERNMENT OF HARYANA TENDER NOTICE

SR. No.	NAME OF BOARD/CORP./AUTH	NAME OF WORK NOTICE TENDER	OPENING DATE CLOSING DATE (TIME)	AMOUNT / EMD (APPROX.) IN RUPEES	WEBSITE OF THE BOARD CORP./AUTH	NODAL OFFICER/CONTACT DETAILS/EMAIL
1	GURU JAMBHESHWAR UNIVERSITY HISAR	SUPPLY OF HOSIERY GOODS (UNIFORMS/PLAYING KIT)	03.02.2025 10.02.2025	8 LACS	https://www.gjust.ac.in	01662-263156 dosgjust@gmail.com

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION KINDLY VISIT : www.haryanaeprocurement.gov.in or www.etenders.hry.nic.in 13/2025/40/32194/I/27/7

PUBLIC NOTICE

My client **Smt. Manju** W/o Sh. Sanjay Nagar owner of a Residential House area measuring 322.52 sq. yards, i.e. 269.66 sq. mtrs. out of Khasra no.215, situated at Village Saini Paragana And Tehsil Dadri District Gautam Budh Nagar. Through Registered Gift Deed Dated 27.01.2025 executed by Sh. Sanjay Nagar S/o Sh. Veer Singh Nagar Vide Reg. no.4859 at SR-DADRI U.P. the above-mentioned property is going to be mortgage with Fed Bank Financial Services Limited If any person/bank/financial institution having any claim/right, lien, Any objection whatsoever in regard to the above property, should notified to the undersigned/Adv. Vishal Mehan, E-713, Karkardooma Court, Delhi-110092 along with documentary evidence under address through registered within 7 days from the date of publication of this notice failing which any claim, lien or objection shall be deemed to have been waived. **Adv. Vishal Mehan,** E-713, Karkardooma Court, Delhi-110092; Mobile Number 9811215181

PUBLIC NOTICE

मैं साधना कुमारी पति श्री आशुतोष कुमार, पता- I-Tawer Flat No. 369, 16th Park View, Gaur Yanuna City, Greaters Noida, Gautam Budh Nagar, U.P.-203201, सार्वजनिक सूचना दे रही हूं कि दिनांक 30/01/25 को ये अपने रिस्तेदार श्री नीरज कुमार झा Kh. No. 125/19, H.No. 3598, Gali No. 96, B-Block, Near Apex Public School, Sant Nagar, Burari, Delhi-110084 के यहाँ सपरिवार आई थी। यहाँ से मेरी गाड़ी कार Hyundai Crata SxTech, जिसका रजिस्ट्रेशन न. U.P. 16EN7828 है, घर के बाहर से चोरी हो गई है। इस बाबत मैंने FIR Burari थाने में आज दिनाँक 31/01/2025 को दर्ज करा दिया है, जिसका FIR No. 003057/2025, U/S BNS 305 (b) है। Daily Diary Entry No. 10A है।

PUBLIC NOTICE

It is to inform to the public at large Mrs. Sunita Dalal, Mr. Naresh Dalal, Mrs. Raj Rani & Mrs. Anita Dalal had acquired Plot No. 148, measuring 420 sq. mtrs. at Sector-39, Urban Estate, Gurugram, Haryana vide Sale Deed dt. 11.06.2019 executed by Mrs. Krishna Kohli and a Re-Allotment Letter dt. 26.06.2019 also issued by HSVP in favour of Mrs. Sunita Dalal, Mr. Naresh Dalal, Mrs. Raj Rani & Mrs. Anita Dalal w.r.t said property and Now Mrs. Sunita Dalal, Mr. Naresh Dalal, Mrs. Raj Rani & Mrs. Anita Dalal are the undisputed owners of the said property.

OR

Any person / firm / institution / company having any claim or right in respect of the said Property by way of inheritance, share, sale, agreement, lease, license, gift, possession, legal heirs, partners or encumbrance howsoever or otherwise is hereby required to intimate in writing to the undersigned within 07 days from the date of publication of this notice of his/her/their share or claim, if any, with all supporting documents at below mentioned address. After expiration of notice period, the claims, if any, of such person shall be treated null and void and also treated as waived and not binding on our client.
Ajay Kumar Giri (Advocate) H.No. 26/161, Basement, Vikram Vihar, Lajpat Nagar 4, New Delhi-110024

Public Notice

This is to inform the general public that Satish Kumar and Kant Kumar are the acquired the Property Bearing No. XVIII/436, area measuring 120 Sq. Yds., Situated at Kashmiri Bagh, Kishan Ganj Delhi. They are in possession through Will dated 09.01.2009 executed by Mrs. Kamla Devi in favour of Mr. Satish Kumar and Kant Kumar in respect of said Property.
Satish Kumar and Kant Kumar intends to transfer the ownership of said property by way of Sale Deed to **Mrs. Nisha and Mrs. Shakuntla.** Subsequently, **Mrs. Nisha and Mrs. Shakuntla** are in the process of mortgaging the said property with **SMFG India Home Finance Co. Ltd. (Formerly Fullerton India Home Finance Co. Ltd.).** Any objections or concerns regarding this transaction should be raised within a period of 07 days from the date of this public notice. Any objections submitted after the completion of this 07-day period will not be considered binding with respect to the said property or the interests of our client.
If anyone wishes to raise an objection, please do so within the stipulated 07-days period by contacting **Law Veritas: North (Advocates & Legal Consultants) at Office No. 11, 1st Floor, Building No. A-44/A, Sector-16, Noida, Uttar Pradesh-201301; Landline(s): +910120-3101683, e-mail: accounts@lvnorth.in**

PUBLIC NOTICE

Reg: Entire First floor, without roof rights, (the said floor), built on Eastern portion area measuring 110 sq. yds, (the said portion), Part of Property bearing No. C-93-A, total area measuring 220 sq. yds, out of Khasra Nos. 2047 & 2062, Situated in the area of Village Tihar Colony Known as Hari Nagar, Block-C, New Delhi.: Hereinafter referred to as "the said property"
Be it known to all that our clients, M/s Astute Business Solutions (hereinafter called the "Purchaser") intend to purchase the said floor from Mr. Sumit Bhatia (hereininafter called the "Seller"). In this connection, the seller has informed the purchaser that he is the sole and absolute owner of the said floor . The seller has further informed the purchaser that the said floor was owned by Mr.Kamal Bhatia and Mr. Sumit Bhatia vide Sale Deed registered as Document No. 7490, Book No. I, Volume No. 18586, Page No. 126-131, on 25.03.2011, (SRO-II). Mr.Kamal Bhatia expired and his half undivided share in the said floor was inherited by his legal heirs viz., Mrs. Sushma Bhatia, Mrs. Ekta Bhatia and Mr Sumit Bhatia. Later on, Mrs. Sushma Bhatia and Mrs. Ekta Bhatia relinquished their share in the said floor in favour of Mr. Sumit Bhatia. The said Relinquishment Deed is registered as Document No. No. 4585, Book No. I, Volume No. 2923, Page No. 190-194, on 21.02.2018. Thus, Mr.Sumit Bhatia became the sole and absolute owner of the said floor. The seller has also informed the purchaser that the said floor is not mortgaged anywhere and there is no charge or dispute or any litigation pending regarding the said floor.
Any person including Bank/s, Financial Institution/s. relative/s having any claim, right, title or any interest of any nature whatsoever into or upon the aforesaid floor is hereby called upon to make the same known, in writing, with documentary evidence, by Registered AD Post, to the undersigned at the address mentioned herein below within 07 days of publication of this notice and in the event of no response having been received to the notice, the title of the seller to the said floor shall be deemed to be clear of any charge or encumbrance of any nature whatsoever and any subsequent claim shall not bind our clients/Purchaser, in any manner whatsoever.
SHIVKANT ARORA, Advocate
M/s Intellective Law Offices
A-74, LGF,Defence Colony,
New Delhi -110024

PUBLIC NOTICE

Be it known to public at large that my client, Dr. Prateek Kumar Gupta S/o Mr. Subodh Kumar Gupta & Dr. (Mrs.) Anjeleena Kumar Gupta W/o Dr. Prateek Kumar Gupta R/O Property No.C-2/5, Block C-2, Situated at Safdarjang Development Area, New Delhi are sole & absolute owner/s of Property No.C-2/5, Block C-2, Situated at Safdarjang Development Area, New Delhi. That, Original Regd. Release Deed executed by Mr. Subodh Kumar Gupta in the name of (1) Dr. Prateek Kumar Gupta (2) Dr. (Mrs.) Anjeleena Kumar Gupta on 29/03/2016, duly Regd. as Document No. 1642, entered in Addl. Book No.1, Volume No.1354, on Pages 133/139 & Regd. on 29/03/2016, with the Office of Sub-Registrar V-A, Delhi, have been lost Burnt. Which are Chain documents of the said property and my clients have also Report for missing the said documents at Crime Branch, Police Station, New Delhi vide LR No.1617932/2019, dated 23/09/2019. The general public is hereby informed that PNB, Civil Lines, Roorkee, Uttarakhand, intending to create Equitable Mortgage on the above-mentioned property. If any person(s) or Authority having any claim against into or upon the said property by virtue of Sale, Agreement, contract, mortgage, lien, charge or otherwise, whatsoever nature is hereby required to notify the same within Seven days to bank, from the date of publication of this notice for any claim and/or objection, otherwise shall be considered as waived and abandoned and shall not be binding upon my client.

Branch: Punjab National Bank, Civil Lines, Roorkee, Uttarakhand. Phone No. 9458460083
Sh. Sanjeev Gupta, Advocate, Phone No.9811154597

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
COMMERCE & TRANSPORT DEPARTMENT
Expression of Interest
(Reference No. 922 Dt. 30.01.2025)
JJ-54

Expression of Interest from Maintenance, Repair, and Overhaul (MRO) operators to operate and maintain the hangar and associated facilities for MRO services at Biju Patnaik International Airport (BPIA), Bhubaneswar (Odisha)

Government of Odisha, Commerce & Transport Department invites Expression of Interest (EOI) for Maintenance, Repair, and Overhaul (MRO) operators to operate and maintain the hangar and associated facilities for MRO services at Biju Patnaik International Airport (BPIA), Bhubaneswar (Odisha)

Eligible and interested Bidders may download the Expression of Interest (EOI) document which contains the details of the requirement from the following website of Commerce and Transport Department and submit their offer,

https://ct.odisha.gov.in/tenders

The EOI should be submitted by email at **ctsec.or@nic.in** by 1500 hours on 17 February 2025.

Sd/-
Principal Secretary to Government, Commerce & Transport Department Government of Odisha

OIPR-38001/11/0018/2425

THE PIONEER CLASSIFIEDS

LOST & FOUND

Lost F Mec International Financial Services Ltd. share certificates with Folio No. 567, Certificate No. 00011250 and 00030578, Distinctive Numbers 1174901- 1175000 and 2058701- 2081300, No. of Securities 22700 in the name of Tarang Goyal. Finder may contact: 8860027269.
PD(1362)A

Lost F Mec International Financial Services Ltd. share certificates with Folio No. 566, Certificate No. 00011245 and 00030566, Distinctive Numbers 1174401-1174500 and 2033301- 2058700, No. of Securities 25500 in the name of Charu Goyal. Finder may contact: 8700346408.
PD(1363)A

Lost F Mec International Financial Services Ltd. share certificates with Folio No. 565, Certificate No. 00011235 and 00030577, Distinctive Numbers 1173401- 1173500 and 2008801- 2033300, No. of Securities 24600 in the name of Rajiv Kumar Goyal. Finder may contact: 9927242937.
PD(1364)A

Lost F Mec International Financial Services Ltd. share certificates with Folio No. 568, Certificate No. 00011260 and 00030576, Distinctive Numbers 1175901- 1176000 and 2081301- 2106300, No. of Securities 25100 in the name of Sajal Kumar Goel. Finder may contact: 9953294983.
PD(1365)A

CHANGE OF NAME

I, Naiman Lakra S/o- Jiwan Lakra, R/o- Vill- Kamati, PO-Tala, PS- Chanho, Dist-Ranchi, Jharkhand- 835214, declare that in my service document's my daughter's name & DOB is wrongly written as Ansheka Lakra – DOB 13/10/2018, whereas her correct name & DOB is - Anshika Lakra - **DOB 13/07/2019.**
PD(1366)C

It is for general information that I, NARESH KUMAR S/o MANGE RAM, R/o H No. 458 Jat Chowk, Nangloi, Delhi - 110041, do hereby declare that name of mine has been wrongly written as NARESH SHOKEEN, in my younger son's HEMANSH SHOKEEN education document and in any other document. The actual name of mine is NARESH KUMAR, which may be amended according.
PD(1367)C

It is for general information that I, RENU W/o NARESH KUMAR , R/o H, No. 458 Jat Chowk, Nangloi, Delhi - 110041, do hereby declare that name of mine has been wrongly written as RENU SHOKEEN, in my younger son's HEMANSH SHOKEEN education document and in any other document. The actual name of mine is RENU, which may be amended according.
PD(1368)C

Form No. INC-26
[Pursuant to rule 30 of the Companies (Incorporation) Rules, 2014]
BEFORE THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT (REGIONAL DIRECTOR, NORTHERN REGION)
MINISTRY OF CORPORATE AFFAIRS, DELHI
In the matter of sub-section (4) of Section 13 of Companies Act, 2013 and clause (a) of sub-rule (5) of rule 30 of the Companies (Incorporation) Rules, 2014
AND
In the matter of **Intouch Trading Private Limited** having its registered office at **95, New Lajpat Rai Market, 1st Floor, Chandni Chowk, North Delhi - 110006**
.... Petitioner
Notice is hereby given to the General Public that the company proposes to make application to the Central Government under section 13 of the Companies Act, 2013 seeking confirmation of alteration of the Memorandum of Association of the Company in terms of the special resolution passed at the Extra ordinary general meeting held on January 24, 2025 to enable the company to change its Registered office from **"National Capital Territory (NCT) of Delhi"** to **"State of Uttar Pradesh"**.
Any person whose interest is likely to be affected by the proposed change of the registered office of the company may deliver either on the MCA-21 portal (www.mca.gov.in) by filing investor complaint form or cause to be delivered or send by registered post of his/her objections supported by an affidavit stating the nature of his/her interest and grounds of opposition to the **Regional Director Northern Region** at the address **B-2 Wing, 2nd Floor, Paryavaran Bhawan, CGO Complex, New Delhi - 110003**, within fourteen days of the date of publication of this notice with a copy to the applicant company with a copy of the applicant company at its registered office at **95, New Lajpat Rai Market, 1st Floor, Chandni Chowk, North Delhi, Delhi, India 110006.**
For and on behalf of
INTOUCH TRADING PRIVATE LIMITED
Sd/-
Naveen Modi
Director
DIN: 02245942
Date: 31.01.2025
Place: Delhi

ENGINEERING WORKS IN LUMDING DIVISION

Tender Notice No. : LMG/Engg/10 of 2025 (Item No. 1 & 2); Dated: 23-01-2025; E-Tender are invited by the undersigned for the following work; **SN-1; Brief Description of Item :** Emergency traffic Restoration works such as land slide, sinkage, slope failure, Bank settlement during monsoon & other related works during pre/ post monsoon, construction & repairing/cleaning of catch water/ side drain & waterways & Track maintenance work at vulnerable location in Lumding-Chandranathpur Hill under the jurisdiction of ADEN/HGS for one year. **Tender Value:** ₹4,82,57,845.90/-; **Earnest Money**: ₹3,91,300/-; **SN-2; Brief Description of Item :** Emergency traffic Restoration works such as land slide, sinkage, slope failure, Bank settlement during monsoon & other related works during pre/ post monsoon, construction & repairing/cleaning of catch water/ side drain & waterways & Track maintenance work at vulnerable location in Lumding-Chandranathpur Hill under the jurisdiction of ADEN/III/Lumding for one year. **Tender Value:** ₹4,53,39,373.60/-; **Earnest Money**: ₹3,76,700/-; Date & time of **closing** of above tenders at **15:00** hrs. on **20-02-2025** and **opening** at **15:00** hrs. on **21-02-2025**. For complete information with the tender document of above e-tender will be available upto **15:00** hrs. on **20-02-2025** in website **http://www.ireps.gov.in**

DRM (W), Lumding
NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY
Serving Customers With A Smile

PUBLIC NOTICE

The Public at large is hereby notified on behalf of my client **Shri K.L Sabharwal** s/o **Late H.R. Sabharwal** resident of **702, Woodbury Towers, Eros Garden, Charmwood Village, Sector 39, Faridabad, Haryana** that my client do hereby disown and disinherit his elder son Shri Sudhir Sabharwal resident of **L1/15-A, DDA Flats, Kalkaji, New Delhi-110019** and younger son Shri Rajiv Sabharwal resident of Flat No.6 (S.F.S), South Park Apartment, Kalkaji, New Delhi-110019 and their legal heirs for their misconduct. They shall not inherit any of the properties of my client nor be entitled to any share in the moveable/ immovable properties or any other assets of my client and they shall further not be entitled to the probate of any will of my client. Now my client would have no concern with his two sons Shri **Sudhir Sabharwal** and Shri **Rajiv Sabharwal** in any manner. Any person dealing or transacting with aforesaid sons in any respect of my client shall be doing that at his/ her/their own risks, general public take note.

LAKHSHANA OBEROI (Advocate)
E. No. D/132/2004
M.: 9968972412

PUBLIC NOTICE

M/S SARE Gurugram Private Limited
(CIN: U70109DL2006PTC152635)
Registered Office: 5th Flr, Wing A, Statesman House, 148, Barakhamba Road Connaught Place, New Delhi, India 110001
Email: roc@eka-dhoot.com

Whereas M/s SARE Gurugram Private Limited (hereinafter referred as "Company") is in the process of developing a phase known as **"Altura"** over an area measuring 39211.42 sq. mtr. in the Group Housing Colony situated at village Wazirpur & Mewka, Sector-92, Gurugram under License No 44 of 2009 and 68 of 2011 granted by Director, Town and Country Planning, Haryana and having RERA Registration No. 262 of 2017 dated 03.10.2017.

And Whereas the Company has applied for change in Bank Account from Yes Bank Limited to SBI Bank Limited and accordingly the company has obtained In-principal approval for change of bank accounts from Haryana Real Estate Regulatory Authority, Gurugram. Accordingly vide this public notice, the general public is hereby notified/informed that the following changes in bank accounts:

Particulars	Previous Bank Accounts	New Bank Accounts
Bank Name	Yes Bank Limited	SBI Bank Limited
IFSC Code	YESB0000420	SBIN0050933
Master Collection Account No.(100%)	042072500000042	43599521238
RERA Account No. (70%)	042072400000032	43549553939
Promoter Free Account No. (30%)	042063400001891	43599555905

M/s SARE Gurugram Private Limited
Date: 29.01.2025 **Place: Gurugram**

verka
Har Din Da, Har Dil Da

THE PUNJAB STATE COOPERATIVE MILK PRODUCERS FEDERATION LTD.
SCO 153-155. SECTOR 34-A, CHANDIGARH-160022. EPABX NO. 0172-5041812,66
Notice Inviting Tender
www.verka.coop

e/Sealed tenders are hereby Invited for the purchase and supply of following items:-

Sr.No.	Name of Work/Item	Period/Tentative Qty
1.	For Verka Head Office, Chandigarh	
	a) **Trace Minerals for CFP**	Annual/
	i. Vitamin AD3	04 MT
	ii. Vitamin E-50	04 MT
	b) Drilling and installation of 1 No. new tubewell at Verka Patiala Dairy.	02 Months
2.	For Verka Bathinda Dairy	
	a) 80 ML paper cone sleeve with sugar rolled.	
	i. Strawberry	5 Lac
	ii. Black current	5 Lac
	iii. Caramel	5 Lac
	b) Lids for 80 ML ice cream cone.	
	i. Strawberry	5 Lac
	ii. Black current	5 Lac
	iii. Caramel	5 Lac
	c) Ice cream cones 40 ML for ice cream	
	i. Butter scotch	20 Lac
	ii. Chocolate	20 Lac
	d) Lids for 40 ML for ice cream cones	
	i. Butter scotch	20 Lac
	ii. Chocolate	20 Lac
	e) 125 ML IML cups for Ice cream	
	i. Cookies and Crumb	50000 No's
	ii. Muddy Chocolate	50000 No's
	iii. Almond Carnival	50000 No's
	iv. American Nut	50000 No's
	v. Afghan Dry Fruit	50000 No's
	vi. Kaju Anjir	50000 No's
	vii. Mango	20000 No's
	viii. Strawberry	20000 No's
	ix. Pink Guava	20000 No's
	x. Litchi	20000 No's
	f) Polyfilm for 60 ML bar and ice candy	
	i. Choco delight	2500 kg
	ii. Rabri kulfi	1000 kg
	iii. Mango bar	500 kg
	iv. Cola bar	500 kg
	v. Orange bar	1000 kg
	vi. Mango duet	1000 kg
	vii. Black current	500 kg
	viii. Rajbhog	2000 kg
	ix. Pista	2000 kg
	x. No Added Sugar	2000 kg
3.	For Verka Amritsar Dairy	
	a) Sealed tender for pest control services.	Job work for pest control services
	b) e- Tender for hiring of vehicles for supply of Milk and Milk Products i. Local Route-6.	One year with extension upto 1 year.
	c) Hiring of can route vehicles for lifting of milk from DCS to MCC capacity 1 ton to 2 ton.	01.03.2025 to 28.02.2027 /46 No's
	d) Supply of indonesian Steam Coal.	1500 MT
4.	For Verka Ludhiana Dairy Hiring of vehicles (Tampoo/Trucks)for supply of Verka Products/ Ghee/SMP etc. between Verka Ludhiana Dairy and other stations.	One year with extension upto 1 year.
5.	For Verka Faridkot Dairy **Hiring of :-**	
	a) Insulated road milk tanker for transportation of milk from MCC's to various milk plants in Punjab etc. on rate contract.	Cap.10000 kg-2 Cap.15000 kg-1
	b) Pick up or its equivalent vehicle for lifiting the milk from MPCS/DF to MCC at route 5 & 27.	02 No's
	c) Ice factory at sadiq (Cap.20000 ltr per day)	01 No.
6.	For Cattle Feed Plant Ghaina-ke-Banger Transportation of Verka Cattle Feed and mineral feed supplement to various stations in the state of Punjab.	Annual

NOTE:
1. For complete details regarding above tender (NIT), please visit our website i.e. www.verka.coop & e Tendering portal i.e. **eproc.punjab.gov.in.**
2. Corrigendum, if any, will be uploaded on website only.

Dy. General Manager (Purchase)
NA/12/27843/2023/41301 Dated CHD :- 1/31/2025

GDP to grow at 6.3 per cent to 6.8 per cent: Economic Survey

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India's economy is likely to grow at 6.3-6.8 per cent in 2025-26 on the back of strong macroeconomic fundamentals, though strategic and prudent policy management will be required to navigate global headwinds, said the Economic Survey on Friday.

The GDP growth rate is estimated to slip to 4-year low of 6.4 per cent in the current financial year ending March 2025, close to its decadal average.

The key pre-Budget document also emphasised that the country needs to grow at 8 per cent for up to two decades to become a developed nation or Viksit Bharat by 2047.

Also, to achieve this growth, the investment rate must rise to 35 per cent of GDP, up from the current 31 per cent, and develop the manufacturing sector further and invest in emerging technologies such as AI, robotics, and biotechnology.

"The fundamentals of the domestic economy remain robust, with a strong external account, calibrated fiscal consolidation and stable private consumption. On balance of these considerations, we expect that the growth in FY26 would be between 6.3 and 6.8 per cent," said the survey authored by a team lead by Chief Economic Advisor V Anantha Nageswaran.

Navigating global headwinds will require strategic and prudent policy management and reinforcing the domestic fundamentals, it added.

The survey noted that a steady growth trajectory shapes the global economic outlook for 2024, though regional patterns vary.

The near-term global growth is expected to be a shade lower than the trend level. The services sector continues to drive global expansion, with notable resilience in India.

Meanwhile, manufacturing is struggling in Europe, where structural weaknesses persist. Trade outlook also remains clouded in the next year, the survey added.

It further said inflationary pressures have been easing globally, though risks of synchronised price pressures linger due to potential geopolitical disruptions, such as tensions in the Middle East and the ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict.

"In brief, there are many upsides to domestic investment, output growth and disinflation in FY26. There are equally strong, prominently extraneous, downsides too," it said.

To realise the aspirations of Viksit Bharat by 2047, the survey stressed that it is important that the medium-term growth outlook of India be assessed in the context of emerging global realities of Geo-Economic Fragmentation (GEF), Chinese manufacturing prowess, and global dependency on China for energy transition efforts.

It also puts forth a way forward to reinvigorate the internal engines and domestic levers of growth by focusing on one central element of systemic deregulation, which will enable a paradigm of economic freedom to businesses of individuals and organisations to pursue legitimate economic activity with ease.

Need to scale up infra investment

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Investment in the infrastructure sector needs to be continuously scaled up over the next two decades to sustain a high growth rate while the government needs to come up with ways to increase private sector financing and tap new avenues to mobilise resources, the Economic Survey said on Friday.

"India needs a continued step-up of infrastructure investment over the next two decades to sustain a high rate of growth," said the Economic Survey 2024-25 tabled in Parliament.

In the first quarter of FY25, the constraints on new approvals and spending during the general elections, coupled with heavy monsoon in many regions, affected the progress of the infrastructure spending, said the latest survey.

However, the speed of capex picked up between July and November last year.

The capex in infrastructure sectors is likely to gain further momentum in the remaining months of the current fiscal. On an average, ministries related to infrastructure sectors utilised 60 per cent of the budgeted capex during April to November 2024.

The capacity addition in physical connectivity sectors stayed on course during FY25.

The capital expenditure of the Centre for the current fiscal has been budgeted at about 3.3 times the capex for FY20, the document said.

It further said that disaster-resilient urbanisation, public transport, preservation and upkeep of heritage sites, monuments and tourist destinations, as well as rural public infrastructure, including connectivity, call for greater attention.

"Our net zero commitments entail added stress on creating renewable energy capacities," it added.

Stating that there are binding budget constraints to the different tiers of government, it said private participation should speed up in many critical infrastructure sectors in many ways like programme and project planning, financing, construction, maintenance, monetisation and impact assessment.

"Our infrastructure programme supports a variety of PPP models like build-operate-transfer (toll and annuity), design-build-finance-operate-transfer, hybrid annuity model and toll-operate-transfer," it said.

The government has instituted many debottlenecking and facilitatory mechanisms like the National Infrastructure Pipeline, National Monetisation Pipeline and PM-Gati Sakti that have made progress.

Financial market regulators have introduced reforms to encourage private participation, it said, adding that still the uptake of private enterprise is limited in many core sectors.

The strategy to step up private participation needs coordinated action of all stakeholders involved like governments at different tiers, financial market players, project management experts and planners, and the private sector.

"Capacities to conceptualise projects, develop sector-specific innovative strategies for execution, and, develop high-expertise areas such as risk and revenue sharing, contract management, conflict resolution and project closure need to improve substantially," it said.

The efforts of the Centre need to be supplemented with wholehearted acceptance of the need for public-private partnerships in infrastructure across the country.

The survey further said that during the current fiscal so far, the progress in the expansion of the railway network stayed at levels comparable to the previous year, while the addition of rolling stock increased considerably. Between April and October last year, 17 new pairs of Vande Bharat trains were introduced to the network, and 228 coaches were produced.

Lack of climate finance may prompt developing countries to rework their climate targets

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The lack of financial support from developed countries to mitigate climate change in the Global South may prompt developing countries to "rework" their climate targets, India's Chief Economic Advisor V Anantha Nageswaran has said.

In the Economic Survey 2024-25 tabled in Parliament on Friday, Nageswaran said the new financial package agreed at the 2024 UN climate conference (COP29) in Azerbaijan to support climate action in the developing world "presents little optimism".

Countries are now required to submit their Nationally Determined Contributions or climate plans for the period between 2031 and 2035 by February 10 and Nageswaran said the "funding shortfall may lead to a reworking of the climate targets".

According to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), adopted in 1992, high-income industrialised nations, which have historically been responsible for most of the greenhouse gas emissions driving climate change, are required to provide finance, technology and capacity building support to developing and low-income economies to help them cope with a warming world.

These countries include the United States, the UK, Canada, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, and European Union member states such as Germany and France. The chief economic advisor said that domestic resources will be the key to climate action amid the lack of support from developed countries.

Therefore, resources for meeting development challenges may be affected, undermining progress toward sustainable development objectives and "compromising the integrity of international climate partnerships", he said.

Nageswaran said the small mobilisation target of USD 300 billion annually by 2035 is just a "fraction" of the estimated requirement of USD 5.1-6.8 trillion by 2030.

The new climate finance package is "out of sync" with the needs of the critical decade when action is required to keep the temperature goals of the Paris Agreement within reach, Nageswaran said.

It underscores the unwillingness of affluent developed nations to assume their equitable share of the responsibility to address emission reduction and mitigate climate change impacts on vulnerable populations in developing regions, he said.

With the developed countries also falling short of their NDCs by about 38 per cent, Nageswaran said their actions do not reflect the historical responsibility or the leadership in meeting their obligations.

In 2015, countries came together to limit global warming to "well below 2 degrees Celsius", aiming for 1.5 degrees Celsius.

Fast forward, the world has already heated up by 1.3 degrees Celsius since the pre-industrial era, largely due to burning fossil fuels.

To limit warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius, the UN's climate science body, IPCC, says emissions must peak by 2025 and drop 43 per cent by 2030 and 57 per cent by 2035.

But current policies point to a hotter future -- around 3 degrees Celsius warming by 2100. Even if every country fulfils its climate promises or NDCs, emissions would only shrink by a weak 5.9 per cent by 2030. Developed nations, the biggest historical polluters, are pushing developing countries to do more to meet the Paris Agreement goals.

Market correction in 2025: Economic Survey

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Sounding a note of caution on the elevated stock market valuation, the Economic Survey on Friday said any correction in the US markets could have a cascading effect in India, which has witnessed increased participation from young investors post-Covid.

Over the past few years, retail participation, especially from young investors, has significantly increased in the equity markets. Investor participation has grown from 4.9 crore in FY20 to 13.2 crore as of December 31, 2024.

"Elevated valuations and optimistic market sentiments in the US raise the likelihood of a meaningful market correction in 2025. Should such a correction occur, it could have a cascading effect on India, especially given the increased participation of young, relatively new retail investors.

"Many of these investors that have entered the market post-pandemic have never witnessed a significant and prolonged market correction. Hence, if one were to occur, its impact on sentiment and spending may be non-trivial," the Survey noted.

According to the survey, the rise in retail participation aligns with a steady decline in the five-year rolling beta between the Nifty 50 and the S&P 500 in the last four years, suggesting a reduced sensitivity of Indian markets to US market movements.

This decoupling is further evidenced by the increasing resilience of Indian markets during periods of FPI (Foreign Portfolio Investors) outflows.

For instance, in October 2024, despite FPI outflows of USD 11 billion, the Nifty 50 index was corrected by only 6.2 per cent, thanks to strong downside support provided by domestic institutional and individual investors.

In contrast, during the March 2020 pandemic-driven market sell-off, FPI outflows of USD 8 billion triggered a steep 23 per cent market decline.

"Even as the resilience demonstrated by the Indian market, supported by growing retail participation, is promising, the risks associated with a potential US market correction cannot be overlooked, given historical trends," the Economic Survey 2024-25 said.

Historical data suggests that the Indian equity market has been notably sensitive to movements in the US market. The Nifty 50 has historically shown a strong correlation with the S&P 500, with analysis of daily index returns between 2000 and 2024, revealing that in 22 instances when the S&P 500 corrected by more than 10 per cent, the Nifty 50 posted a negative return in all but one case, averaging a 10.7 per cent decline.

New strategic trade roadmap needed to enhance export

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Economic Survey on Friday called for a new strategic trade roadmap for India, along with measures to cut trade costs and enhance export competitiveness amid growing protectionism globally.

It said that much remains to be done to enhance trade competitiveness.

"Global trade dynamics have changed significantly in recent years, shifting from globalisation to rising trade protectionism, accompanied by increased uncertainty. This calls for a new strategic trade roadmap for India," the survey said.

It added that to remain competitive and enhance its participation in global supply chains, India must continue reducing trade costs and improving facilitation to boost export competitiveness.

"The good news is that doing so is entirely in our hands. On its part, the industry must continue to invest in quality," it said adding the country's external sector continued to display resilience amidst global headwinds of economic and trade policy uncertainties.

It emphasised the need to assess the global situation and develop a forward-looking strategic trade roadmap to deal with the evolving global trade dynamics, marked by gradual shifts towards greater protectionism.

"To strengthen its competitiveness and further integrate into global supply chains, the country can focus on reducing trade-related costs and enhancing export facilitation to create a more vibrant export sector. This proactive approach will help India continue to thrive in an ever-changing global market," the survey said.

As per estimates, India's share of global trade was over 2 per cent in 2023.

During the April-December period of this fiscal year, exports recorded a growth of 1.6 per cent to USD 321.71 billion and imports by 5.15 per cent to USD 532.48 billion.

Trade deficit -- the difference between imports and exports -- during April-December widened to USD 210.77 billion from USD 189.74 billion during the same period of the previous fiscal year.

It noted that disruptions in global trade due to the Red Sea crisis, the Russia-Ukraine war and the recent drought in the Panama Canal, allied with increased protectionist tendencies shown by many countries, have created uncertainties.

The number of non-tariff measures in sectors such as agriculture, manufacturing, and natural resources, that restrict international trade have also increased over the last few years.

The Economic Survey 2024-25 was tabled in the Parliament by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman.

On the steps being taken to increase exports, it said, India is in the process of negotiating a number of free trade agreements (FTAs) with countries and trading blocks.

India is actively working towards negotiating trade deals with top importers such as the EU and the UK.

Services exports from India too have shown a multi-sectoral presence in global exports, with notable contributions across several sectors.

The country's share in global services exports has more than doubled, reaching around 4.3 per cent in 2023 from 1.9 per cent in 2005.

Kerala has replicable model for localisation of SDG

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Localisation of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) ensures that rural development is in harmony with international goals, the Economic Survey released on Friday said, lauding Kerala for having a robust, community-based model that leverages its strong local governance institutions, and called it a "replicable model".

"The localisation of SDGs ensures that rural development is in harmony with international goals, focusing on essential services like housing, sanitation, water supply, and electrification. This strategy promotes inclusive growth and enhances the quality of life at the grassroots level," the Economic Survey said.

Kerala uses a "robust, community-based model that leverages its strong local governance institutions", the survey said.

"Awareness and community engagement efforts focus on educating local officials on the relevance of poverty alleviation and environmental resilience, which are led by state and national leaders," it said, adding that it is a replicable model for SDG localisation.

The report said Local Self Government Department, with technical support from the Kerala Institute for Local Administration (KILA), have developed comprehensive guidelines and processes to incorporate SDGs into local planning. They also train stakeholders in SDG-aligned development and data collection.

The state has a real-time SDG dashboard to monitor the panchayats and is able to use such localised data for decision-making and to provide insights on development indicators, the Survey highlighted.

SDG Coordination Centres (SDGCCs), which drive localisation efforts in states and UTs by governments in partnership with implementing agencies, are currently operational in 10 states/UTs -- Andhra Pradesh, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Karnataka, Nagaland, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, and Uttarakhand.

Eco Survey pitches for policy shift to cut cereal output, boost pulses, edible oils

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The pre-budget document for the 2024-25 fiscal has suggested policy reforms to discourage overproduction of cereals while boosting output of pulses and edible oils, which the country currently imports to meet domestic shortages.

The Economic Survey 2024-25, tabled in Parliament on Friday, stressed that India's agriculture sector has "significant untapped growth potential" despite various growth initiatives.

Farmers must be allowed to receive unimpeded price signals from the market, with separate mechanisms to protect vulnerable households, it added.

The document outlined three key policy shifts needed - establishing market mechanisms for price risk hedging, preventing excessive fertiliser use, and discouraging production of water and power-intensive crops that are already in surplus.

"These policy shifts will help lift agricultural productivity in the economy by boosting land and labour productivity in the sector," the survey said.

Stating that India faces a persistent deficit in the production of pulses and oilseeds, the document said the slower growth rate of oilseeds at 1.9 per cent raises concerns, especially considering India's heavy reliance on imports to satisfy domestic edible oil demands.

To address this, the document suggested focused research to develop climate-resilient crop varieties, enhancing yield and reducing crop damage. Efforts to expand the area under pulses in rice-fallow regions are likely to help.

It also called for the promotion of extension activities and training for farmers on the best practices, the use of high-yield and disease-resistant seed varieties, and targeted interventions to improve agricultural practices in the major growing regions for pulses and oilseeds.

It stressed the judicious use of fertilisers considering soil degradation, particularly the decline in organic carbon content, poses a significant challenge to Indian agriculture.

The agriculture sector growth averaged 5 per cent annually during FY17-FY23, showing resilience despite challenges.

In Q2 FY25, the sector grew 3.5 per cent, recovering from growth rates of 0.4-2.0 per cent in the previous four quarters.

The sector contributes approximately 16 per cent to GDP and supports about 46.1 per cent of the population, as per FY24 provisional estimates at current prices.

The document stated that a crucial factor influencing agricultural performance is the impact of weather conditions.

"Climate variability can present significant challenges; however, farmers with diverse income streams are better positioned to navigate these uncertainties," it said.

Allied activities like animal husbandry, fisheries or agroforestry, can enable the farmers to mitigate the risks effectively.

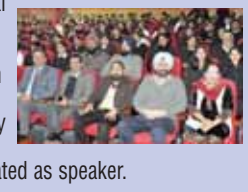
The document emphasised the growing importance of allied sectors like animal husbandry, dairying and fisheries for income diversification.

INBRIEF

ICICI OFFERED JOBS TO 13 GNDU MBA STUDENTS

AMRITSAR: Under the able leadership of Vice Chancellor Dr Karamjeet Singh, Directorate of Placement & Career Enhancement of Guru Nanak Dev University organised Campus Placement drive by ICICI Prudential Life Insurance company for MBA - Batch 2025 students of GNDU, Amritsar. A team of 2 senior members visited Guru Nanak Dev University to conduct the interviews of MBA students. The company selected 13 students at a pay package of Rs. 4.50 Lakhs per annum. These students will join their jobs after passing out their respective courses in June 2025.

WORKSHOP ON INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS HELD IN GURU NANAK DEV UNIVERSITY



AMRITSAR: A workshop on Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) and Technology Transfer was organised by Intellectual Property Rights Cell and office of Dean Students Welfare in which Dr Amaresh Panda, a seasoned Intellectual Property and Technology Transfer Professional from the Government of India participated as speaker.

SPECIAL LECTURE ON DIGITAL ARREST AND CYBER CRIMES

AMRITSAR: Senior Advocate Sh.Sandeep Gorsi, (Supreme Court of India, Punjab and Haryana High Court) delivered a special lecture on "DIGITAL ARREST AND CYBER CRIMES" organised by the Department of Laws, Guru Nanak Dev University on the current and relevant topic of immense value.

RETELLING CINEMA IN ART

Art and cinema connect deeply as *Bond to Bachchan* by Masha Art celebrates Bollywood's enduring legacy, **SAKSHI PRIYA**

When art and cinema meet, they don't just coexist, they create a vibrant and immersive experience that connects with audiences on a deep emotional level. The *Bond to Bachchan* exhibition, presented by Masha Art and curated by *Georgina Maddox*, is an exemplary showcase of this powerful union. Featuring 21 works by 15 artists, the exhibition explores the profound cultural impact of two cinematic legends, *James Bond* and *Amitabh Bachchan*.

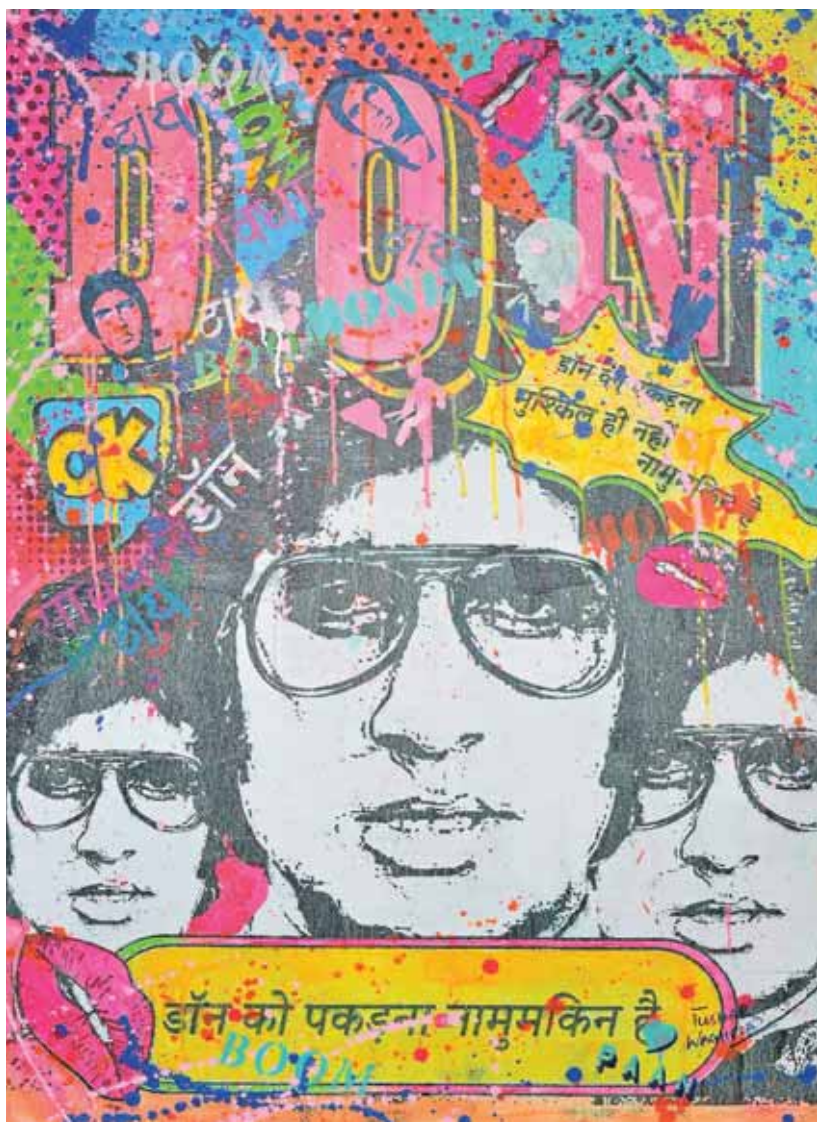
The exhibition is a tribute to the enduring influence of these cinematic icons. It celebrates how *Bond* and *Bachchan* not only shaped the landscape of global pop culture but also continue to inspire artists, going beyond generations and inspiring fresh perspectives in modern-day art.

The exhibition, which serves as a preview to Masha Art's upcoming India Art Fair showcase, features a captivating collection of paintings, sculptures and digital installations. Each artwork Probes into the personas and cinematic journeys of *Bond and Bachchan*, offering viewers a fresh and creative lens through which they can reimagine these iconic figures.

Samarth Mathur, Founder and Managing Director of Masha Art, explains that the exhibition is a monumental celebration of cinema's enduring influence on contemporary art. Each piece is a unique interpretation of the legacy of these figures, reflecting not just their roles on screen but also their emotional depth and the larger-than-life personas they have cultivated over decades.

One of the standout pieces of the exhibition is *Golden Era in Cinema* by *Shri Kumar Adhikari*. This stunning work merges Mughal miniature painting with the golden age of Indian cinema, particularly the 1960s and 1970s. Featuring iconic scenes from films like *Sholay* and *Mera Naam Joker*, the piece is a nostalgic tribute to Indian film history. *Adhikari's* signature technique, which incorporates intricate Mughal detailing, is brought to life with contemporary touches using acrylics, giving the piece a fresh, modern twist.

Ankur Rana's Smoke Up Bolly is another compelling painting featured in the exhibition. This piece is a tribute to the iconic Bollywood actress *Zeenat Aman,* widely regarded as one of the most powerful and enigmatic figures in the Indian film industry. *Rana's* artwork captures *Zeenat Aman* in all her glory, combining softness with boldness. The rising smoke in the painting symbolises the duality of her persona, embodying her magnetic presence and mysterious allure. *Rana's* depiction of *Aman* is a fitting homage to her legacy, highlighting her unique contribution to the world of cinema and fashion during the 1970s and 1980s. The fluidity of the smoke creates a visual link between the stark contrasts in her on-screen roles, from the femme fatale to the heartthrob.



Another thought-provoking piece in the exhibition is *Bridging Realms* by *Shovin Bhattacharjee*. This mixed media sculpture incorporates stainless steel, fibre, light, acrylic and aluminium that represents the confluence of art, cinema and spirituality. *Bhattacharjee* explores the power of cinema to outdoes cultural boundaries and act as a unifying force. The spherical shape of the sculpture symbolises the intersection of multiple worlds, representing the smooth connection between the entertainment industry and the transformative power of storytelling. The piece also honours the resilience of individual voices and celebrates the roles of women in cinema, particularly within the context of the *Bond and Bachchan* legacies. *Bhattacharjee's* work adds a layer of depth to the exhibition, drawing attention to how art, cinema and meditation all serve as vehicles for personal and societal change.

This exhibition truly remarkable is how deeply it engages viewers. People aren't just walking past the art, they are stopping, reflecting and appreciating each piece with immense care and attention. Some viewers stand in front of particular works for several minutes, lost in the intricate details and rich symbolism. The works are so powerful that they almost seem to leap off the canvas, evoking emotions that mirror the feelings one experiences while watching a film. The connection between art and cinema becomes almost tangible, as each piece encapsulates a moment from cinematic history, inviting viewers to reflect on how these moments have influenced their own lives.

The collection of artworks immerses the viewer in a conversation between art and cinema, offering fresh perspectives on iconic figures from Indian cinema. The artists' creative interpretations challenge traditional boundaries, making the exhibition a dynamic exploration of how cinema continues to inspire the visual arts.

In addition to the paintings and sculptures, *Bond to Bachchan* includes digital installations that merge visual storytelling with cutting-edge technology. These installations add another dimension to the exhibition, encouraging visitors to think critically about the role of technology in both cinema and contemporary art. The combination of traditional and digital mediums creates a layered experience, one that deepens our understanding of both art forms.

Bond to Bachchan a tribute to two cinematic icons and a celebration of the power of storytelling.Bond to Bachchan is an exhibition that should not be missed. It is a fascinating exploration of cinema's cultural impact and its enduring influence on contemporary art, offering a fresh and thought-provoking perspective on two of the world's most iconic cinematic figures.

PHOTOS : PANKAJ KUMAR

Moulding Ideas into Reality

By **SAKSHI PRIYA**

Art has a way of saying things that words sometimes can't, it touches something deep inside, speaking directly to our emotions and thoughts. Each piece tells a story and those stories invite us to connect, whether it's a feeling, a memory or a thought that stays with us long after we've walked away.

Saffronart presents *Alchemies of Form*, a showcase of monumental sculptures by *Krishen Khanna, Himmat Shah, Thota Vaikuntam, Dhananjay Singh, Phaneendra Nath Chaturvedi and Yashika Sugandh*, curated by *Uma Nair.* The exhibit transforms Bikaner House into a space where the sculptures don't just sit still, they engage with you, making you pause and reflect.

Krishen Khanna's Retired Captain is an invitation to look closer. Crafted with resinated fibreglass and automotive paint, this piece gives life to a retired accordion player, frozen in a moment that feels both personal and intimate. It's not just a sculpture, it's a story, one you want to hear.

Himmat Shah's work offers a different kind of invitation. The calm, serene forms of *Rajnagar white marble* and *Bheslana black marble* are an exploration in stillness. They invite quiet reflection, drawing the viewer in with their delicate simplicity, revealing the power of subtlety in art.

Thota Vaikuntam's pieces bring bold energy and colour into the space. The sculptures of women from Telangana radiate strength and beauty. With their vibrant colours and powerful postures, they pull you into their world, urging you to appreciate the richness of identity and culture that they represent.

Dhananjay Singh's Jungle takes on the wild, untamed beauty of nature. The *stainless steel wire* feels fragile, yet complex and full of life. It draws a direct connection between human-made form and the unpredictable forces of nature. It's a visual reminder of how chaotic and beautiful life can be.

Phaneendra Nath Chaturvedi's Chaturayatan-3 captures the essence of change. Made of high-gloss stainless steel, it reflects everything around it, shifting as the viewer moves. It's a commentary on transformation and perception, nothing stays the same and the world constantly reshapes itself.

Yashika Sugandh's Matar offers a moment of calm amidst the dynamic energy of the other pieces. Crafted from acrylic on fibre resin and nylon, it evokes a sense of softness and tranquillity. The gentle curves and subtle colours encourage you to pause, breathe and reflect, showing how even the quietest moments can leave a lasting impression. These monumental sculptures do more than just fill space. They tell stories, provoke thoughts and challenge how we see the world around us. Each piece carries its own rhythm and message, pulling us into a conversation between the artist and the viewer. Alchemies of Form is a chance to engage with art in a way that feels immediate, visceral and real.

PHOTOS : PANKAJ KUMAR

A World Painted in Blue

By **TEAM VIVA**

What is it about the colour blue that captivates the imagination? From serene skies to vast oceans, blue has long been associated with peace, hope and endless possibilities. This evocative colour takes centre stage at Harvest 2024, presented by *Payal Kapoor* of *Arushi Arts*, under the theme *Blue Horizons.*

The exhibition offers visitors a chance to explore art inspired by the symbolism of blue across cultures and history. Blue has held a significant place in human civilisation, cherished in Indian art and far-eastern traditions and revered in Western masterpieces. Artists like *Monet, Van Gogh* and *Picasso* have embraced its depth to convey emotions and ideas and this exhibition continues that legacy.

The artworks on display evoke tranquillity while stirring deep emotions. *K.G. Subramanyan's* pieces, with their playful narratives, draw viewers into a world of vivid storytelling. *Shobha Broota's* minimalist approach creates a meditative experience, while *Satish Gupta's* works are admired for their intricate details and spiritual undertones. *Lado Bai's* vibrant depictions of tribal life and traditions stand out, bridging the gap between cultural heritage and contemporary expression.

Each artist interprets blue in a way that feels both personal and universally relatable. The layers of textures, interplay of light and shadow and central use of blue create a visual narrative that inspires introspection and connection. The exhibition showcases a variety of perspectives, celebrating art's ability to unite history, emotion and creativity.

This thoughtfully curated showcase of talent is a must-visit for art lovers and anyone looking to experience the magic of blue. *Held at W-23, GK-II, New Delhi*, the exhibition is open daily from *11:00 AM to 6:00 PM*. This showcase of creativity and talent remains open until **10th February 2024.**

FROM SITAR TO SAROD

By **TEAM VIVA**

Music lovers gathered for a special evening as the *Raga Fellowship Foundation* brought together two maestros. An evening with sitarist *Abhik Mukherjee* and sarod player *Arnab Chakrabarty* proved just that. Their performance celebrated tradition, devotion, and the timeless beauty of Indian classical music.

Mukherjee began with a mesmerising 50-minute rendition of *Raga Puriya,* playing through the pain of an injured finger. His alaap was rich with emotion, each note carefully placed, making the raga feel fresh and deeply personal. His jod and jhala sections carried a quiet intensity, and his adaptation of khayal compositions from the Agra gharana into sitar gats brought a new dimension to the music. Ustad Rafiuddin Sabri's tabla accompaniment provided a steady yet dynamic rhythm, adding depth to *Mukherjee's* melodies.

Chakrabarty followed with *Raga Hameer*, playing with a grace that felt both effortless and profound. His alaap unfolded gently, drawing listeners into the raga's mood. The rhythmic flow of his Dhamar composition, set to Rupak tala, added a lively pulse to the performance. With *Pandit Durjay Bhaumik* on tabla, the exchange between melody and rhythm was deeply engaging. The evening ended with *Raga Gara*, a tribute to *Chakrabarty's* musical roots, bringing a sense of warmth and nostalgia.

As the final notes faded, there was a moment of silence before the applause began, reflecting the depth of the experience. For those in attendance, it was a night of pure musical joy, a reminder of the enduring power of to move hearts and bring people together.

Manchester United, Tottenham reach Europa League round of 16

PTI ■ LONDON

Manchester United and Tottenham put their inconsistent domestic campaigns aside and advanced to the Europa League round of 16.

Diogo Dalot tapped in a precise cross by Kobbie Mainoo on the hour mark and Mainoo netted eight minutes later for a 2-0 victory over Romanian champion FCSB in Bucharest on Thursday.

Tottenham got goals from academy graduates to beat Swedish club Elfsborg 3-0 in London. Spurs waited until the 70th minute for substitute Dane Scarlett to break the deadlock before adding two more through substitute Damola Ajayi and 17-year-old Mikey Moore.

Of the 36 teams in the revamped competition, the top eight go directly to the round of 16 in March. Teams ranked ninth to 24th go into the two-legged knockout playoffs on Feb. 13 and Feb. 20 with the winners making the last 16.

The draw is scheduled for Friday.

United, which is 12th in the Premier League, competed the league phase of the second-tier European competition in third place and undefeated with five wins and three draws, trailing the top by one point.

"Kobbie (Mainoo) played very well in that position, with more freedom and not so much responsibility running back all the time," United manager Ruben Amorim told TNT Sports.

"The lads did a good job, another clean sheet."

Amorim's squad has shown signs of improvement since he said the team was "the worst, maybe, in the history of Manchester United."

Thursday's victory was the third straight in one week after beating Rangers in the Europa League a week ago and Fulham in the Premier League three days later.

Tottenham is languishing in 15th place in the Premier League. Its seven-match winless run in the league is its worst since 2008. But it won five, drew two and lost one for the fourth place in the Europa League.

Lazio, the only team that qualified to the round of 16 with a game to spare, was handed its first defeat, 1-0, away at Braga. Still, the Portuguese team was eliminated.

Lazio still topped the standings with 19th points, the same as the second Athletic Bilbao.

Bilbao secured the second place after a 3-1 home win over 10-man Viktoria Plzen, which has a playoff spot.

Frankfurt completed the league phase in fifth despite a 2-0 loss at Roma. Angeliño and Eldor Shomurodov lifted Roma with the goals at Stadio Olimpico.

Lyon was sixth despite being held 1-1 at home by Ludogorets.

Olympiacos in seventh after routing Qarabag 3-0.

Rangers squeezed in to complete the top eight by beating Union Saint-Gilloise 2-1.

José Mourinho's Fenerbahce avoided an embarrassing early exit with a 2-2 away draw at Denmark's Midtjylland. The result sent both into the playoffs. The hosts were 20th while Midtjylland took 24th, giving Mourinho a chance to add to his European trophies.

Ajax ended a three-game losing streak by handing Galatasaray its first defeat, 2-1 with both teams making the playoffs.

Hoffenheim's 4-3 away win at Anderlecht was not enough for the Bundesliga team to advance. The Belgian club finished 10th.

Real Sociedad, FCSB, Porto, AZ Alkmaar, Twente and PAOK are among other teams that advanced.

Lyon confirms Paulo Fonseca as its new coach

PTI ■ LYON

Lyon has confirmed the hiring of Paulo Fonseca as its new coach.

Fonseca is replacing Pierre Sage, who was fired despite leading the French league club out of a crisis last season and having the team within reach of a Champions League place in this campaign.

Sage's dismissal on Tuesday followed a 1-1 draw with Nantes in Ligue 1 last weekend and left many observers perplexed. Sage had rapidly become a fans' favorite after guiding Lyon from the bottom of the standings to a sixth-place finish last season.

The Associated Press reported earlier this week that Lyon had sealed a deal with Fonseca.

Fonseca's first match in charge will be against Marseille in the French league on Sunday, Lyon said.

Fonseca won the Portuguese Supercup with Porto in 2013 and the Portuguese Cup with Braga in 2016. He also coached Shakhtar Donetsk, where he won three league-cup doubles (2017, 2018, 2019) and the Ukrainian Supercup in 2017.

Paulo Fonseca then coached AS Roma between 2019 and 2021 before joining Lille in June 2022, where he built one of the best attacking and efficient sides in France despite operating on a limited budget. More recently, he was less successful at AC Milan, producing only 12 wins in 24 matches across all competitions.

Fonseca had been out of a job since he was fired by AC Milan on Dec. 30.

After 19 matches this season, Lyon is sixth in the league — just four points off a Champions League spot — and has qualified for the knockout stage of the Europa League. Lyon, however, said the decision to part ways with Sage was a "sporting choice" after the Frenchman averaged fewer points per game this season and struggled against big rivals.

Lyon is owned by American businessman John Textor, who visited the club in person this week. He had been in regular contact with Fonseca in recent years and previously tried to hire him. Fonseca joins on a deal until the end of June 2027.

Lyon believes that Fonseca will be able to add defensive stability to the team and make it more competitive against the top four Ligue 1 teams. The club's ambition is to qualify for the Champions League on a regular basis and to challenge Paris Saint-Germain's supremacy.

"Paulo Fonseca and his staff will be tasked with starting a new cycle and taking the club to the highest level in the second half of the season, with the ultimate goal of qualifying for next season's Champions League," Lyon said.

Only Santos can give me the love I need: Neymar

PTI ■ SAO PAULO

Neymar has confirmed he will sign what is expected to be a short-term contract with his boyhood club, Santos, as the Brazil striker aims to recharge his career ahead of the 2026 World Cup.

The 32-year-old Neymar said on Thursday that he's returning to the Sao Paulo club, and local media reported that the deal will extend only to June 30.

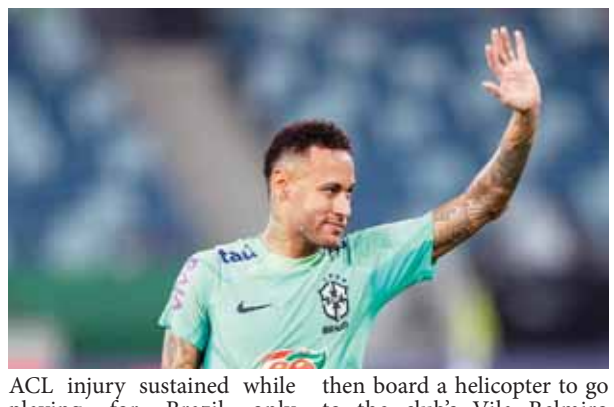
"Only Santos can give me the love that I need to prepare for the challenges I have in the next few years. All of you, no matter who you support, know well what I am talking about," Neymar said on his social media channels.

"I hope you all follow me in this new phase of my life."

Santos used its social media channels to respond Neymar's video: "Your home awaits. Your people awaits."

Neymar left Santos nearly 12 years ago to join Barcelona.

The striker's return follows the termination of his contract with Saudi Arabian club Al-Hilal. Neymar had returned in October from an



ACL injury sustained while playing for Brazil only months after he joined Al-Hilal. He played only seven matches and scored once for the Saudi team.

Neymar also left Paris Saint-Germain under criticism from fans, who accused him of not caring enough about his fitness. In 2017, his exit at Barcelona was also frustrating for club supporters, who hoped he could help Lionel Messi and Luis Suárez win more trophies.

A Santos official told The Associated Press that Neymar is expected to arrive at Sao Paulo's international airport at 9 am on Friday. He will then board a helicopter to go to the club's Vila Belmiro Stadium. After he signs his contract, he will be reintroduced to fans during the evening.

The official spoke on condition of anonymity due to lack of authorisation to discuss the matter publicly.

Neymar has already played 225 matches with Santos. He scored 138 goals for the club, many of which key for the six titles he won at the Brazilian giant, which was relegated in 2023 and returned to the country's top division last year.

Neymar became the most expensive player in soccer history when he transferred from Barcelona to PSG for 222 million euros (then USD 262 million) in 2017.

Neymar's most recent match was played in November. Al-Hilal coach Jorge Jesus had repeatedly cast doubts about the striker's form to play.

Neymar left the Saudi Arabian league after playing just seven games in 17 months following his big-money move to the oil-rich kingdom. The Brazilian's contract was due to expire after this year's FIFA Club World Cup, which will be played between June 15 and July 13 in the United States.

The striker joined the Saudi club from PSG in August 2023 for 90 million euros (USD 94 million). His salary was reportedly one of the biggest in world soccer as well.

Neymar, Brazil's all-time top goalscorer with 79 goals in 125 matches, also said he is focused on getting more playing time so he can prepare for the World Cup in North America next year in what could be his last shot at winning the tournament.

Mitchell Marsh out of Champions Trophy

PTI ■ SYDNEY

Australia all-rounder Mitchell Marsh has been ruled of next month's Champions Trophy and is also in doubt for the Indian Premier League after that owing to lower back pain that has "not responded sufficiently to rehabilitation".

Cricket Australia informed about Marsh's injury in a statement ruling him out of the Champions Trophy, which will be held in Pakistan and Dubai from February 19 to March 9. A few other reports suggest Marsh is also doubtful for the IPL.

"Mitchell Marsh has been ruled out of the upcoming ICC men's Champion's Trophy with ongoing lower back pain and dysfunction," CA said in a release.

"The National Selection

Panel and Australian men's medical team ruled Marsh out of the tournament with the injury which has not responded sufficiently to rehabilitation."

"His lower back pain flared in recent weeks leading the NSP to make the longer term decision for Marsh to complete a more extended period of rehabilitation," it added. CA said the national selection panel will be meeting soon to name a replacement of Marsh, who was picked in the 15-member side for the competition alongside other all-rounders Aaron Hardie, Glenn Maxwell and Marcus Stoinis.

"Marsh will now undergo a period of further rest and rehabilitation as part of his return to play plan. The NSP will meet to decide on a replacement for Marsh in due course.

"The deadline for the final squads for the ICC men's Champion's Trophy is prior to Wednesday 12 February," CA said.

The 33-year-old Marsh has been roped in by Lucknow Super Giants ahead of the 2025 edition of the IPL, which will start on March 23.

Marsh was dropped in favour of Beau Webster for the final Test of the five-match Border-Gavaskar Trophy which concluded earlier this month.

He had an ordinary run in the four Tests. The right-arm medium pacer did not share much workload with the front-line bowlers and managed to score in double digits only once in seven innings.

D Gukesh to meet Wei Yi in Tata Steel Chess Tournament

PTI ■ WIJK AAN ZEE

On top of the table with a slender lead, world champion D Gukesh will take on Wei Yi of China in the 11th round of Tata Steel Chess Tournament, aiming to continue his unbeaten streak and claim the season's first title.

With five victories and five draws, Gukesh has remained unbeaten in the first major tournament of the year and if he adds another 1.5 points in the last three rounds, it should be enough to lift the title.

With 7.5 points, Gukesh is in pole position, half a point ahead of Nodirbek Abdusattorov of Uzbekistan and a full point more than compatriot R Praggnanadhaa.

Yet to play two white games out of last three, Gukesh has to meet Jorden van Foreest of Holland in the penultimate round and then finally an out of sorts Arjun Erigaisi.

Both Abdusattorov and Praggnanandhaa have two black games left which makes Gukesh a huge favourite to win his maiden title here. It may be recalled that the Indian had lost in tiebreaker to Wei Yi last year after tying for the top spot.

Not only a victory here, what is also at stake for Gukesh is the 2800 rating barrier and he will be the third Indian to achieve it after Viswanathan Anand and Arjun if he can. He is at 2794 points in live ratings.

Praggnanandhaa will meet pre-event rating favourite Fabiano Caruana of United States while Abdusattorov has to tackle the solid defenses of Vincent Keymer of Germany in the other key clashes of the 11th round.

It has been tough for the remaining three Indians in the Masters section as Harikrishna has scored 4.5 points while Arjun and Leon Luke Mendonca are at the bottom of the table with three points each. These three will have to work hard in the remaining rounds to finish better in the final standings.

In the challengers section, R Vaishali is on five points out of a possible 10 and has shown brilliance in patches.

Divya Deshmukh is on two points and needs a pullback. This section is led by Czech Grandmaster Nguyen Thai Dai Van on 7.5 points with Erwin L'Ami of Holland in close pursuit a half point behind.

Pairings round 11

Masters: Jorden van Foreest (Ned, 4) vs Arjun Erigaisi (Ind, 3); D Gukesh (Ind, 7.5) vs Wei Yi (Chn, 5.5); Fabiano Caruana (Usa, 5.5) vs R Praggnanandhaa (Ind, 6.5); Vincent Keymer (Ger, 4) vs Nodirbek Abdusattorov (Uzb, 7); Anish Giri (Ned, 5)) vs Max Warmerdam (Ned, 3.5); Alexey Sarana (Srb, 5) vs P Harikrishna (Ind, 4.5); Vladimir Fedoseev (Slo, 6) vs Leon Luke Mendonca (Ind, 3).

Challengers: Oro Faustino (Arg, 2.5) vs Nodirbek Yakubboev (Uzb, 5); Lu Miaoyi (Chn, 5.5) vs Erwin L'Ami (Ned, 7); Nogerbek Kazybek (Kaz, 5.5) vs Ediz Gurel (Tur, 5.5); R Vaishali (Ind, 5) vs Aydin Suleymanli (Aze, 6.5); Svane Fredrik (Ger, 6) vs Nguyen Thai Dai Vam (Cze, 7.5); Irina Bulmaga (Rom, 1) vs Divya Deshmukh (Ind, 2); Benjamin Bok (Ned, 6.5) vs Arthur Pijpers (Ned, 4.5).

BCCI Award: Bumrah chosen for Best International Cricketer

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Talismanic pacer Jasprit Bumrah was chosen for the BCCI's Polly Umrigar Award for Best International Cricketer 2023-24 in men's category while elegant batter Smriti Mandhana was picked for the corresponding women's trophy in the Board's annual honours that will be presented here on Saturday.

Bumrah, who was selected as the ICC Test and overall Cricketer of the Year for delivering a "a master-class in skill, precision, and relentless consistency", was India's standout bowler last year, playing a pivotal role in India's home wins over England and Bangladesh.

The 31-year-old was also the Player of the Series against Australia in the Border-Gavaskar Trophy, bagging 32 wickets across five Tests.

Mandhana, who was the ICC Women's ODI Cricketer of the Year, made 743 runs in the 2024 calendar year.

She scored four ODI centuries, a record in the women's game, and found the boundary more than a hundred times in the year, hitting 95 fours and six maximums.

The 28-year-old cricketer's ODI runs came at an average of 57.86 and an impressive strike rate of 95.15.

Spin great Ravichandran Ashwin, who retired from international cricket in December 2024 as India's second highest wicket-taker in Tests with 537 dismissals and overall eighth highest, has been bestowed with a special award at the end of his career.

The 37-year-old Ashwin, who made his Test debut in November 2011, played a defining role in India's 12-year domination in the longest format at home wherein they won 18 series on the trot.

Among newcomers, Mumbai batter Sarfaraz Khan was picked for the Best International Debut among men for his quick-fire fifty against England in the Rajkot Test in February 2024.

The middle-order mainstay also hit a counter-attacking 150 against New Zealand in the Bengaluru Test to continue his ascent.

Among women, Asha Sobhana has been chosen for the award for Best International Debut as she picked up 4/21 against South Africa to help India win by 143 runs in their first ODI at Bengaluru in June 2024.

Mandhana will also be honoured with the Highest Run Getter in ODIs medal after she finished as the highest run-scorer in 2024, smacking 747 runs at 57.46 in 13 matches with four tons and one fifty.

Similarly, Deepti Sharma was awarded with the Highest Wickets in ODIs medal for taking 24 wickets in 13 matches.

Tanush Kotian continued to make waves with his rise through the ranks in Mumbai in the 2023-24 season, which culminated with his maiden call-ups for the India A side for their tour of Australia and subsequently for the Indian team for the last two Tests of the Border-Gavaskar Trophy.

Kotian will be awarded with the Best Performance in BCCI Domestic Tournaments trophy.

The 26-year-old, who rose to limelight with all-round performances in Mumbai's 42nd Ranji Trophy win in 2023-24, scored 502 runs in 10 matches at 41.83 with one century and five fifties and also grabbed 29 wickets.

Having won the Ranji Trophy for a record-extending 42nd time in the season, Mumbai also claimed the Irani Cup after a gap of 27 years.

The Mumbai Cricket Association would be given the Best Performance in BCCI Domestic Tournaments Trophy for winning various titles such as Ranji Trophy, U-16 Vijay Merchant Trophy, U-14 West Zone Championship, senior women's T20 Trophy, women's U-19 One Day Trophy, Bapuna Cup T20 Tournament and men's U-19 All India Tournament.

Mumbai teams also finished as runner-up in Cooch Behar U-19 Trophy and Vinoo Mankad U-19 Trophy.

Akshay Totre from Indore was adjudged the Best Umpire in Domestic Cricket for the season.

Legendary batter Sachin Tendulkar has been chosen for Col CK Nayudu Lifetime Achievement Award.

AFFIDAVIT

I, PANKAJ KUMAR, S/o Gopal Prasad Jee, R/O Jiwan Compound,Jogo Pahar Nagar, Morabadi, P.O-Ranchi University P.S- Batiatu, District-Ranchi (Jharkhand)-834008. That my daughter's correct and actual name is APARNNA PANKAJ and date of birth is- 07/07/2010, and Aadhar Card no is- 9861 4670 9653. That my daughter's old name is APARNA. That I hence this affidavit for the purpose of correction of my daughter's name APARNA to APARNNA PANKAJ. Vide affidavit no. 01239, dated –31 January 2025.

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