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BJP, Congress battle over USAID

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

At the backdrop of BJP and Congress engaged in a fierce battle of words over certain revelations about USAID funding for certain activities in the country, the Ministry of External Affairs on Friday said they are "deeply troubling" and have led to concerns about foreign interference in its internal affairs.

BJP sharpened its attack on the Congress on the USAID funding issue and called Rahul Gandhi a "traitor", accusing him of colluding with foreign forces in his bid to weaken India as it dismissed as "cover up" media reports that claimed USD 21 million was sanctioned in 2022 for Bangladesh, not India.

Congress on their part, following reports that an amount of USD 21 million approved by the USAID was meant for Bangladesh and not India, the party demanded an apology from the BJP alleging that the ruling party's narrative was aimed at diverting attention from its own use of foreign funds to destabilise past governments led by the grand old party. Congress also reiterated its demand for the government for a white paper on the USAID funding as well as funding by other such agencies in India.

Since the Trump administration's Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) announced on February 16 that it had "cancelled", among a string of projects, the USAID funding of "USD 21 million for voter turnout in India", the ruling BJP has accused the Congress of using external influence in India's election process.

In a speech in Miami on Wednesday, US President Donald Trump said: "Why do we need to spend USD 21 million for voter turnout in India? Wow, USD 21 million! I guess they were trying to get somebody else elected."

Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar too voiced concern over the alleged USAID funding for raising voter turnout in India, saying people who allowed such an attack on the country's democratic values should be exposed. He also said



that it was the "national duty" of people to strike at such forces.

Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said relevant departments and authorities are looking into the information put out by the United States administration regarding certain US activities and funding. "We have seen information that has been put out by the US administration regarding certain US activities and funding. These are obviously very deeply troubling," Jaiswal said.

"This has led to concerns about foreign interference in India's internal affairs. Relevant departments and agencies are looking into this matter. It would be premature to make a public comment at this stage, so relevant authorities are looking into it and hopefully, we can come up with an update on that subsequently," Jaiswal said.

Addressing a Press conference at the BJP headquarters, party national spokesperson Gaurav Bhatia claimed the USAID funding came to India to meddle with internal politics and disrupt electoral process in India.

"More than USD 2000 million funding came to the government in India from 2004-13 during the erstwhile Congress led UPA rule. And, just USD 1.5 million came during Modi ji's term. It's because they know that Narendra Modi will not

sell India and India's interests to any foreign power," he said.

A larger share of the USAID fund came into India during the UPA regime because the Congress can broker the country's sovereignty and its interests, Bhatia alleged.

"While funding for the government (in India) stopped, there was an increase in funding for the NGOs during Rahul Gandhi's Bharat Jodo Yatra to strengthen Rahul Gandhi ahead of the polls in an attempt to defeat Narendra Modi (in the Lok Sabha elections)," he claimed.

Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh said, "Lies first mouthed in Washington. Lies then amplified by BJP's Jhoot Sena. Lies made to be debated on Godi Media." "Lies now thoroughly exposed. Will the liars apologise?" he asked in a social media post.

Addressing a press conference Congress's media and publicity department head Pawan Khara alleged that the entire "USD-21 million USAID funds narrative" perpetrated by the BJP, Modi government's ministers, its economic advisor, the party's IT department head, the RSS-BJP ecosystem and a section of the "BJP-friendly media" was done to divert attention from their "own sins" of using foreign funds to destabilise Congress governments of the past.

New Delhi Assembly to begin with CAG reports

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

The newly constituted BJP led Delhi Assembly is set to begin its first session on Monday. The session will be held on February 24, 25, and 27, with 14 pending Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) reports on the previous Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government's performance will be tabled. According to Rohini MLA Vijendra Gupta, 14 pending CAG reports will be tabled on February 25. This comes after newly sworn-in Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta announced on Thursday, that 14 pending reports from the CAG, allegedly withheld by the previous AAP government, will be tabled in the first session under the new BJP-led administration.

"In the first cabinet meeting, it was decided to hold a three-day Assembly session on 24th, 25th and 27th February. First of all, a pro-tem Speaker will be appointed by the LG.



President Droupadi Murmu with Delhi CM Rekha Gupta during a meeting at Rashtrapati Bhavan

He (pro-tem Speaker) will chair the House and on all 70 members will take oath (as MLAs) in the Assembly. Senior leader Arvinder Singh Lovely would be the Pro-tem Speaker of the House. Pro-tem Speaker is a temporary Speaker who conducts House proceedings for a limited period and till the election of the full-time Speaker. After that Speaker and Deputy Speaker will be elected. The first agenda after this is CAG report. The report has already been received by the Speaker's office. So, the first agenda is to table the CAG report and hold discussion on it after the election of Speaker and Deputy Speaker," Gupta said.

Gupta said the newly elected MLAs will take the oath on February 24-25. During AAP's rule in Delhi, the BJP had approached the court to direct the government to table the CAG reports. BJP accused the AAP government of stalling the report to hide its "corruption".

SNOW SPARKLES

Tourists pose for photos at the snow covered Solang valley, at Manali in Himachal Pradesh

MARKETS

SENSEX 75,311.06 ↓ -0.56%

1 US\$ = 86.71 INR

WEATHER

AQI 158
MAX 26.6°C(+1.1)
MIN 12.3°C(+0.5)

ED search gold heist in Mohali

PTI ■ CHANDIGARH

The Enforcement Directorate on Friday searched the Mohali premises of a man who is an alleged suspect in Canada's biggest-ever gold heist of more than USD 20 million, official sources said.

The sources identified the man as Simran Preet Panesar, who is in his thirties.

The man could not be contacted for his response on the allegations.

The federal probe agency has recently filed a criminal case under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) to investigate the said loot from Canada's Pearson International Airport in April, 2023. The premises of Panesar in Punjab's Mohali is being searched and the ED investigators will question him, the sources said.

The ED had booked a case suo moto, without a request from Canada, as the PMLA allows for such an investigation into an instance of cross-border ramification where an Indian national is suspected to be involved.

The agency wants to probe if the "proceeds of crime" of this alleged heist travelled to India and if there were any beneficiaries here.

According to media reports, an air cargo container with gold bars was stolen from a secure storage facility at the said airport in 2023, possibly using fake documents.



Army protests LoC firing with Pakistan

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

Indian Army on Friday lodged a strong protest with Pakistan over recent incidents of cross-LoC firing at a Brigade Commander level Flag meeting that took place along the line of control near the Chakan-Da-Bagh crossing point in Poonch. The flag meeting took place in the backdrop of a sharp increase in the incidents of cross-border firing, desperate sniping, and attempts by Pakistan's Border Action Team (BAT) to breach Indian defences since the beginning of this month.

Tamil Nadu, Centre spat over Hindi, NEP 2020

KUMAR CHELLAPAN ■ CHENNAI

The DMK's proclivity for seceding from India has come out in the open with the declaration by Tamil Nadu chief minister M K Stalin that the Dravidian party would destroy and eradicate Hindi once and for ever from the State. Weeks after Stalin and his son Udhayanidhi Stalin, the deputy chief minister made it known that the DMK would ensure the eradication of Sanatana Dharma, from the Dravidian heartland, the former quoted a Tamil poet in his social media as a reply to union minister for Education Dharmendra Pradhan rejecting Tamil Nadu's demand for central funds for implementing the state's education programs.

The Centre's decision to hold back the fund was the fall out of Tamil Nadu's adamant attitude against the New Education Policy which includes the three-language formula for curriculum in schools. Tamil Nadu's opposition towards Hindi is infamous as the agitation launched by the Dravidian major has claimed hundreds of lives in the 1960s. Tamil Nadu is the only State in India which has not allowed Navodaya Vidyalayas, a dream project of late Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi who wanted students in rural areas across the country should get subsidized public school education.

"Oh Hindi Language, in the midst of this joyful Dravidian land, it is you



(Left to right): MK Stalin Tamil Nadu CM and Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan addresses media regarding the ongoing row on the implementation of NEP

who will be cast aside. Oh Hindi, that has caused so much suffering, your cunningness will not deceive us! When Tamil youth speak, they open their mouths to the sweet Tamil, lovingly given by their mother. If we are forced to feed you, then is it not also our duty to destroy you," Stalin writes quoting a late Tamil chauvinist poet.

What made Stalin furious is Pradhan's letter to him on Friday in which the latter asked him not to view the NEP with myopic eyes. "The continued opposition to NEP 2020 for political reasons deprive students, teachers and educational institutions in Tamil Nadu of the immense opportunities and resources that this policy offers. The policy is designed to be flexible, allowing States to customise their implementation to suit their unique

educational needs," Pradhan reminded Stalin. The Union Minister also emphasised various programmes associated with NEP 2020 which are capable of elevating the institutions to exemplar schools.

But the vicious attack launched by Stalin against Hindi and NEP 2020 has opened a Pandora's box. Josephine Jayasanthi, a former Tamil professor at Loyola College, the alma mater of Udhayanidhi and his wife Kritika questioned the propriety of chief minister's opposition to Hindi and NEP. "The chief minister and his deputy speak the language of secessionists. It is an open secret that Stalin is for seceding Tamil Nadu and form an independent Tamil nation which is detrimental to the State as well as the country," said Prof Jayashanti.

Prof R Vaidyanathan, educationist and former professor of IIM, Bangalore challenged the DMK to show at least one sentence from NEP 2020 which speaks of imposing Hindi. "Stalin cannot destroy Hindi. All private schools including the one owned by his daughter (Sunshine School, Chennai) teach Hindi. He should not forget the fact that Dakshin Bharat Hindi Prachar Sabha set up by Mahatma Gandhi has its headquarters in Chennai and it has helped hundreds of Hindi Pracharakas to get job in south India," said Prof Vaidyanathan who authored the pathbreaking "Caste as Social Capital", a book that took India by storm.

K Annamalai, the State BJP chief did some plain speaking on Friday when he pointed out that schools owned by the DMK leaders teach three languages while children of common man who go to government run schools are taught only two languages. "The DMK leaders maintain three wives - wife, concubine and mistress. Even for watching movies, the Tamil people have to follow the diktat of Udhayanidhi who decides the movies to be made and released," said Annamalai while addressing a public meeting at Karur.

But the DMK's politicians' hatred for Hindi is in stark contrast to the super stars of Tamil film industry who never hesitate to bend backwards to stoke the movie makers of Bollywood to get a role in Hindi films.

Human support to endangered Olive Turtles

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ BHUBANESHWAR/KENDRAPARA

As many as 5,55,638 eggs have been laid by the endangered Olive Ridley turtle species at Rushikulya and Devi River mouth to Astaranga near Paradip in Odisha symbolising collective conservation efforts of State Government, Coast Guard and other stakeholder towards wildlife protection.

Coast Guard on Thursday said it has launched the annual operation to ensure the safe mid-sea sojourn of breeding Olive Ridley sea turtles and mass nesting of these delicate marine species in Odisha. The Olive Ridley turtles turn up in millions for mass nesting along the Odisha coast every year between February and March.

Conservationists have established protected areas on beaches off Odisha coast where these turtles lay their eggs and thus these areas are regularly monitored to prevent human interference, whether through seaward poaching or disturbance from leisure activities, they said.



Every year since 1991, the Indian Coast Guard (ICG) has been providing continuous assistance under 'Operation Olivia' to central and state authorities and agencies to protect endangered species under the Wildlife Act, 1972.

Under Operation Olivia, the ongoing season of mass nesting of endangered

Olive Ridley turtles at the coast of Odisha has yielded productive results as the nesting data mainly at Rushikulya have come up with 6,126 nests with 5,51,238 eggs, where in nesting at Devi River mouth to Astrang is sporadic in nature with 60 nests and 5,400 eggs.

Being a maritime law enforcement

organisation, the ICG has been entrusted with the charter responsibility of preserving and protecting the maritime environment. In coordination with the state's fisheries and the forest departments. Coast Guard is conducting the operation, which commenced on November 1 and will continue up to May 31, 25. As part of the ongoing operation, ICG conducts periodic social awareness drives and a special community interaction programme for sensitising the coastal populace and fishing communities.

During this period, fishing vessels and boats operating close to the marine reserve areas and protected areas are being regularly monitored by ICG for the usage of the Turtle Excluder Device (TED).

ICG ships and aircraft are deployed and tasked towards protection of turtles and to ensure that an appropriate environment is provided to the turtles for mass nesting and to enforce the legislation promulgated by the Government.

...slim, smart... to unknown woman at night is obscenity: Mumbai Court

PTI ■ MUMBAI

A sessions court here has ruled that sending messages like "you are slim, look very smart and fair, I like you" to an unknown woman at night amounts to obscenity.

The Additional Sessions Judge (Dindoshi) D G Dhoble made these observations while upholding the conviction of a man booked for sending obscene messages on WhatsApp to a former corporator.

The obscenity must be judged from the perspective of an "average person applying contemporary community standards", noted the order of February 18.

The court noted that pictures and messages were sent to

the complainant between 11 pm and 12.30 am with content like "you are slim", "you are looking very smart", "you are fair", "my age is 40 years", "are you married or not?" and "I like you".

No married woman or her husband who are "reputed and (former) corporators" would tolerate such WhatsApp messages and obscene photos, particularly when the sender and the complainant do not know each other, the court said.

"Nothing has been brought on record by the accused that there was any relationship between them," it said.

The judge held that the messages and the act amounted to an insult to the modesty of a woman.

Earlier, the accused was convicted by a magistrate court here in 2022 and

sentenced to imprisonment for three months. He subsequently challenged the decision in the sessions court.

Among other grounds, the accused claimed he was implicated falsely in the case over political rivalry.

However, the court rejected his contention, saying it was not supported by any evidence.

"Furthermore, no woman would stake her dignity implicating an accused in a false case," it held.

The prosecution has proved that the accused sent obscene WhatsApp messages and images to the woman, the court said.

"Therefore, the accused is rightly convicted and sentenced by the trial court (magistrate)," the sessions judge noted.

DMFT Trust Council approves 9675 priority schemes for mining-affected areas

PNS : JAMSHEDPUR

In an important step towards uplifting mining-affected areas, the District Mineral Foundation Trust (DMFT) Council approved 9675 priority schemes in a meeting chaired by District Magistrate and Deputy Commissioner Ananya Mittal at Town Hall, Sidgora. The meeting saw the participation of MP Jamshepur Bidyut Baran Mahto, MLA Jugaslai Mangal Kalindi, MLA Bahragoda Sameer Mohanty, representatives of MLA Jamshepur East and West, Deputy Development Commissioner Aniket Sachan, Civil Surgeon Dr. Sahir Pal, Director NEP Santosh Garg, and other key officials.

The council emphasized the effective utilization of DMFT funds under the Pradhan Mantri Mineral Sector Welfare Scheme, which aims to develop mining-affected areas and implement welfare schemes. It was revealed that 14169 schemes were received from Gram Sabhas held from mid-January to February, out of which 9675 schemes were selected based on priority.

These selected schemes are aimed at improving the standard of living for people in both directly and indirectly affected mining areas. The breakdown includes: 1206 schemes for drinking water supply, 3 schemes for environmental protection and pollution control, 300 schemes for health sector improvements, 1367 schemes for education enhancement, 60 schemes



for women and child welfare, 78 schemes for skill development and livelihood creation, 866 schemes for sanitation, 80 schemes for agriculture sector, 4755 schemes for infrastructure develop-

ment, 348 schemes for irrigation, 581 schemes for energy and water catchment development and 32 other schemes. Of these, 3960 are high-priority schemes, while 5716

are categorized as other priority schemes, including 8438 schemes for directly affected areas and 1390 schemes for indirectly affected regions. District Magistrate

Ananya Mittal emphasized that 70% of DMFT funds would be allocated to high-priority sectors, including drinking water supply, environmental protection, health, education, women and child welfare, skill development, sanitation, agriculture, and animal husbandry. The remaining 30% would go towards other priority areas such as infrastructure development, irrigation, energy, and watershed development. He underscored the importance of transparent and effective implementation and announced a special training session in March for all Panchayat heads. This training will ensure that scheme selection and implementation are conducted as per DMFT guidelines. The three-level implementation process includes: Selection at

Gram Sabha level, Priority decision by the Management Committee and Final approval at the Trustee Council Meeting. Mittal reiterated the district administration's commitment to work transparently for the rehabilitation of mining-affected communities, socio-economic development, and environmental protection. He urged Panchayat heads to select schemes with sensitivity to enhance the overall development of Gram Panchayats. Mahto stressed that health, education, and livelihood promotion should be given top priority, ensuring long-term improvements in the standard of living for local residents. He stated that the selected schemes would be implemented over the next five years, with

active monitoring and support from the district administration. Mangal Kalindi emphasized the need for continuous monitoring to maintain quality and effectiveness in the schemes implemented by DMFT. He called for a focus on long-term impact and urged the Gram Sabha to select meaningful and sustainable schemes. Sameer Mohanty highlighted the importance of participatory governance and urged Panchayat heads to make the partnership meaningful by actively participating in the selection and implementation of schemes. He recommended prioritizing agriculture resource enrichment, employment generation, and educational schemes for sustainable development.

Radiant Jharkhand: Over 4000 visit on second day

PNS : JAMSHEDPUR

The 'Radiant Jharkhand' exhibition, organized for the first time by Visual Myths, will conclude on February 23. On the second day, the exhibition witnessed a foot-fall of 4000 visitors, with a majority of youth and students from various educational institutions of Kolhan participating actively. The exhibition featured over 30 stalls from government and non-government institutions, providing valuable information on education, career opportunities, and placement. The event aimed to empower students and youth by offering them



insights into central government schemes and career-oriented programs. A large number of students were seen exploring the stalls, gathering information on career opportunities and placement avenues.

Each stall had experts guiding visitors about their respective departments and initiatives. Free pamphlets, leaflets, and coffee table books were also distributed to provide detailed information about the schemes.

Geological Survey of India (GSI): Displayed minerals found in different parts of Jharkhand, with a special focus on dinosaur eggs from millions of years ago and human brain remains from five million years ago. This exhibit generated immense curiosity among the youth. CSIR National Metallurgical Laboratory (NML): Provided insights into ongoing research and developments in the field of metallurgy. Reserve Bank of India (RBI): Educated visitors on financial literacy and digital banking initiatives. Central Mining and Fuel Research Institute: Offers information on mining tech-

nologies and fuel research. Aadhaar (UID) Stall: Saw a large number of visitors updating their biometrics and gathering information about Aadhaar-related services. Neetu Pal Gupta of Visual Myths expressed her gratitude for the enthusiastic participation and overwhelming response from the youth and students. She emphasized that the objective of the exhibition was to educate and empower the youth by providing them with accurate and valuable information about career paths, government schemes, and educational opportunities.

IMD predicts thunderstorms and rain in the next 24 hours



PNS : JAMSHEDPUR

India Meteorological Department (IMD) has forecast thunderstorms and rain in southern and eastern regions of Jharkhand over the next 24 hours. According to the Ranchi Meteorological Centre, isolated areas in these regions are likely to experience thunderstorms accompanied by lightning and gusty winds. The maximum wind speed is expected to reach 40-50 kmph, posing a potential risk of temporary disruptions. The weather office has issued an alert for Saturday, predicting thunderstorms and lightning in isolated places over southern and eastern Jharkhand. The situation is expected to continue on Sunday, with thunderstorms like-

ly over southern and central parts of the state. Residents in these regions are advised to exercise caution, particularly during outdoor activities, and stay updated on weather alerts. A Western Disturbance is presently seen as a cyclonic circulation over north Pakistan at an altitude of 3.1 to 4.5 km above mean sea level. It is accompanied by a trough aloft in the middle and upper tropospheric level. The axis of this trough is located at 5.8 km above mean sea level, extending roughly along Longitude 70°E to the north of Latitude 30°N. Satellite images also indicate an induced cyclonic circulation over West Rajasthan, extending up to 1.5 km above mean sea level. This system is contributing to the unstable weather conditions over eastern India, including Jharkhand. Additionally, a trough from Gangetic West Bengal to Telangana is observed, stretching from north Bangladesh to Telangana across Gangetic West Bengal, interior Odisha, and south Chhattisgarh. This trough extends up to 1.5 km above mean sea level and is influencing the cloud formation and precipitation patterns over Jharkhand. The IMD has advised residents in affected areas to take necessary precautions against thunderstorms, lightning, and gusty winds. People are advised to stay indoors during heavy lightning and avoid taking shelter under trees. Farmers have also been alerted to protect their crops from potential wind and hail damage. Most parts of Jharkhand woke up to overcast skies on Friday, with moderate humidity. The daytime temperatures are expected to be pleasant, but a drop in night temperatures is anticipated after the rainfall. "The weather is likely to improve gradually by Monday, with the disturbance moving eastward. The unexpected thunderstorms and rain are expected to provide temporary relief from the warm weather, but the gusty winds and lightning could pose challenges. The residents are urged to stay vigilant and prepared for any adverse weather developments," said an official.

RPF rescues two minors at Daltonganj Railway Station

PNS : DALTONGANJ

Children rescued by the RPF find it hard to be lodged in a government care home. The management of the care home in Daltonganj is refusing to admit rescued children by the RPF. The management insists that children rescued by the GRP will be admitted but not the rescued ones of the RPF said sources. Sources said last night RPF team led by its in-charge Banarasi Yadav rescued boy and girl aged 13 from platform number 1 main entrance gate. The boy and the girl coming from two different families, hailed from Latehar district. They told the RPF that they have fled their homes as their mothers always beat them up. The two were to go to Delhi as they decided not to go to Mumbai where their fathers work as labourers and they may find them out added the inspectors in-charge Banarasi Yadav. These two boarded the intercity express train and

some sensible passengers in the coach of the intercity express train asked them to get down at the Daltonganj railway station. Here at the Daltonganj railway station the RPF rescued them last night. Sources said these two rescued minors were shifted to Barwadeeh railway junction by the RPF following refusal here in Daltonganj to admit them. Sources said the RPF under its care took these two rescued minors from Daltonganj railway station to the Barwadeeh railway junction last night itself where these two were safely handed over to the child help desk at the Barwadeeh railway station. Sources said this situation is because of the closure of a shelter home in Daltonganj for sex abuse of the girl inmate there. Railway sources said there is hardly any two weeks when such a rescue of minors is not done and refusal like this, is surer to increase the problem of the rescuer agency as well as of the rescued ones.

CMPDI inks MOA with CIPET



PNS : RANCHI

Central Mine Planning & Design Institute (CMPDI) signed an MoA with Central Institute of Petrochemicals Engineering and technology (CIPET): Centre for Skill and Technical support (CSTS), Ranchi on 21.02.2025 for "Providing Skill Development Training in the field of Machine Operator to 80 underprivileged/unemployed/underemployed youth from Jharkhand state through CIPET: CSTS" under CSR of CMPDI(HQ), Ranchi. CMPDI has approved Rs.

68 Lakhs for the skill development program. The MoA was exchanged between R.K. Mahapatra, GM(HRD/CSR), CMPDI and Pravin B. Bachhav, Joint Director & Head, CIPET:CSTS, Ranchi. On this occasion, HRD/CSR team of CMPDI(HQ), Ranchi and other officials from CIPET, Ranchi were present. Forty beneficiaries would be trained in Machine Operator -Plastics Processing (MO-PP) and forty beneficiaries in Machine Operator-Injection Molding (MO-IM) Technology at CIPET, Hehal,

Ranchi. The courses will be of six-month duration including boarding and lodging, aligned to NSQF (National Skills Qualification Framework) & approved by National Skills Qualification Committee (NSQC) - National Skill Development Agency (NSDA), Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship, Govt. of India. Skill development programs enable the youth to upgrade their skills and gain industrial exposure and expertise resulting in securing jobs in the Plastic engineering sector.

THIEVES RACKET BUSTED, 3 HELD IN GARHWA



NITYANAND DUBEY : GARHWA

Garhwa police have arrested three members of a gang involved in nearly three dozen theft cases in the Palamu commissary. Jewellery and cash worth around Rs. 500,000 were recovered from them. One member of the gang is still at large, and police are searching for him. Garhwa Superintendent of Police Deepak Kumar Pandey said there had been an increase in theft and housebreaking incidents in the Garhwa police station area in recent months. To catch the suspects and recover the stolen goods, a police team was formed under the leadership of the Sub-

Divisional Police Officer, Garhwa. During a raid, police officers spotted three suspicious individuals near Nahar Chowk between midnight and 1 am. They arrested the three men. Based on information from the suspects, police recovered around 75 lakh in cash and jewellery from the homes of three goldsmiths and thieves. The three individuals were identified as Dilkash Roshan (21), Satish Kumar Vishwakarma (26), and Lalbabu Ram (35). Three goldsmiths were also arrested for buying stolen goods. They were identified as Mukesh Kumar Soni, Sushil Soni alias Pinttu Soni, and Krishna Soni. The arrested individuals admitted to com-

mitting thefts in several areas, including Ashok Bihar, Jobaraiya, Kalyanpur, Sahijhana, Piparakhurd, Chetana, Farthia, Garhwa police station, and the Sadar areas of Maziyanwan, Meral, and Haltanganj. Stolen gold and silver ornaments, and 742,490 were recovered from their homes. The suspects said they would scout houses during the day and target those that were locked. They would then break into these houses at night and steal valuables. They would sell the stolen gold and silver to goldsmiths, including Mukesh Soni, Krishna Soni, and Sushil Soni. They would then divide the money equally. The SP added that all of them have a criminal history.

DC holds meeting of District Disaster Authority

PNS : LOHARDAGA

The meeting of the District Disaster Authority was held in the Collectorate Auditorium under the chairmanship of the appropriate Dr. Waghmare Prasad Krishna. In the meeting, Deputy Commissioner Waghmare directed the District Disaster Management Officer Pramod Das not to keep the benefits given under the disaster pending under any circumstances. They should take the backward action only after examining the desired documents and records. He said that to give coordination to give the benefits affected by the disaster. The meeting was mainly attended by Superintendent of Police Shri Harish bin Jama, Deputy Development Commissioner Dilip Pratap Singh Shekhawat, District Council President Reena Kumari, Sub-Divisional Officer Amit Kumar, District Cooperative Officer, City Council Executive Officer, District Public Relations Officer were present.



750 farmers to benefit from new agricultural school in Potka



PNS : JAMSHEDPUR

In a major initiative to empower farmers with modern agricultural techniques, Potka MLA Sanjib Sardar laid the foundation stone of the Integrated Birsra Gram Vikas Yojana. The project, which involves the establishment of an agricultural school at a cost of Rs 3.17 crores, aims to train 750 farmers from 10 villages in modern and sustainable farming practices. This will be the sixth agricultural school in East Singhbhum district and the first in Potka block, marking a significant step towards enhancing the capabilities of local farmers. The school will provide comprehensive training in organic farming techniques, including beekeeping, mushroom production, horticulture, and livestock rearing such as cows, goats, ducks, and pigs. Additionally, farmers will receive information on various schemes related to

Agriculture, Animal Husbandry, Fisheries, and the Co-operative Department, enabling them to access government benefits and support. Speaking at the foundation stone laying ceremony, MLA expressed his optimism about the project's impact on the agricultural community. He stated, "This agricultural school will prove to be a milestone for the farmers of this area. It will not only increase their income but also introduce them to modern farming techniques and advanced animal husbandry practices. This initiative will empower them to adopt sustainable and profitable agricultural practices." The Integrated Birsra Gram Vikas Yojana is expected to revolutionize traditional farming methods in Potka by introducing innovative and sustainable agricultural practices, thus enhancing productivity and profitability for local farm-

ers. The agricultural school will provide farmers with hands-on training and practical demonstrations in modern farming techniques. In addition to organic farming, the school will also promote horticulture practices and integrated livestock management, ensuring a holistic approach to rural development. The project aims to boost rural employment by empowering farmers to explore agribusiness opportunities in beekeeping, mushroom cultivation, and animal husbandry, thereby diversifying their sources of income. The foundation stone laying ceremony witnessed the presence of several key officials and community leaders, including: District Agriculture Officer Vivek Birua, BTM Kaushal Jha, Mukhiya Vidhan Sardar, Panchayat Samiti Member Sitaram Hansada and Former District Councilor Hiramani Murmu.

BUDGET SESSION BJP, AJSU skip all party meet called by Speaker

PNS : RANCHI
BJP and AJSU kept themselves away from the all-party meeting called by the Speaker over the budget session. Finance Minister Radha Krishna Kishore, MLA Pradeep Yadav, LJP MLA Janardan Paswan, RJD MLA Suresh Paswan and JDU MLA Saryu Rai attended the meeting. After the meeting, Speaker Ravindra Nath Mahato said that cooperation is expected from the opposition. Leader of Opposition is necessary to run the House in a better way. The absence of Leader of Opposition causes trouble to the chair. There is diffi-

culty in running the House. Leader of Opposition is needed 100 per cent. We have requested. He said that if one of the two wheels of the vehicle is missing, then there will be trouble. The Speaker said that a letter was sent to the BJP for the meeting. After the meeting, on the question of the leader of the BJP Legislature Party, Chief Minister Hemant Soren said that the BJP people also know the legislative process very well. What do you people want to hear from me on this. What should I say on this. Then he said that this session will continue. It is expected from all the members that all will put the issues of their region and



Chief Minister Hemant Soren attends the meeting of leaders and representatives of the legislative party held under the chairmanship of Jharkhand Assembly Speaker Rabinranath Mahato in the Jharkhand Legislative Assembly for the successful and smooth conduct of the second (budget) session of the sixth Jharkhand Legislative Assembly convened from 24 February to 27 March, 2025. PNS

state in the House. The speaker said that the original budget will be discussed for two days. The budget will be presented in the House on March 3. This is the first budget session of the Hemant government after the big victory of the Grand Alliance in the recently concluded assembly elections in Jharkhand. The MLAs and ministers of the ruling party are very excited about the session. The government's goal is to have a budget that is dedicated to the overall development of Jharkhand and some special provisions should be made for every section. This time the Jharkhand government had taken sug-

gestions from the public and experts before making the budget. On the instructions of Finance Minister Radhakrishna Kishore, opinions were taken from the general public on their needs and priorities under the 'Abua Budget'. The government claims that this budget has been made completely inclusive and development-oriented, so that every section of the state can benefit. While the government is ready to run this budget session smoothly, the opposition parties have made full preparations to corner the government. BJP is planning a strategy to attack the government especially on the amount of 'Maiba

Samman Yojana'. BJP leaders say that at the time of elections, the Mahagathbandhan government had promised that a financial aid of Rs 2500 will be given in the account of every woman, but this scheme has not been implemented yet. The opposition is preparing to corner the government on this issue on the charge of breaking the promise. In the budget session, there is a possibility of a heated debate not only on economic provisions but also on many other burning issues. Opposition parties can corner the government on issues like employment, farmers' problems, law and order and corruption.

Raju stresses on empowering grassroots level Congress workers

PNS : RANCHI
State Congress in-charge K. Raju today stressed on strengthening the Congress party by empowering the grassroots level workers in the State. During his first visit to the State after being appointed State in-charge of the party he said that he has come to serve the party and not to run it. "I will be accountable to the workers. Any worker can meet me and ask questions. It is necessary to strengthen the lower level workers of the party and give them their rights. The sentiments of the workers will also have to be included in the decisions of the party," he said. He said that only the Congress Party can protect the Constitution of the country and can give their rights to the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, OBCs and minorities. We will run the Jai Samvidhaan Campaign for the next one year. We will give good governance to the people of Jharkhand from the government so that everyone can get their rights and through the organization, we will work to take all the schemes to the ground.

Govt committed to empower tribal youth in every respect: CM

CEO of Worldbeing, Steve Leventhal meets CM Hemant Soren

PNS : RANCHI
Chief Executive Officer of International Organization Worldbeing, Steve Leventhal met Chief Minister Hemant Soren and MLA Kalpana Soren today in the Chief Minister's chamber in Jharkhand Legislative Assembly and apprised him of the work being done by Worldbeing India Foundation. Through the Arohan program, he made the tribal youth aware of the work being done towards their welfare along with empowering and strengthening them. Through this program, he also shared with the Chief Minister the positive changes in the teachers and students in the Ashram Residential Schools. The Chief Minister learned in detail the work being done by this international organization for the upliftment and development of the tribal society of this state and appreciated it. Additional Chief Secretary to the Chief Minister, Avinash Kumar was



Chief Executive Officer of international organization Worldbeing Steve Leventhal (USA) met Chief Minister Hemant Soren, apprised him of the work being done by Worldbeing India Foundation to empower tribal youth in Jharkhand. PNS

also present on this occasion. The Chief Minister said that Jharkhand is a tribal dominated state. Our government is continuously taking concrete steps towards advancing the tribal youth generation of this state in all areas including economic, social, educational. He said that the cooperation of various organizations can prove to be very effective in this. The government is committed to strengthen and empower this state with the positive cooperation of all. While giving information about the work being done by this organization, Sunita Munda, Jharkhand in-charge of Worldbeing India Foundation, said that there is no lack of strength in the tribal youth here. They have full ability to fight even against adverse circumstances. But, there is a need to make them a little stronger mentally. In such a situation, this organization is working towards making the tribal youth mentally strong through its Arohan program. The Chief Minister also said that the government will move forward by deeply assessing the work done by you in how the tribal youth can be mentally strong. Worldbeing India Foundation told the Chief Minister that this organization is working in association with the education system of Bihar through Arohan. On this, the Chief Minister said that the government will seriously consider how to include education in the main system of education in Jharkhand as well. In this direction, a team of teachers and officials of Jharkhand will be sent to Bihar to see the work done by you.

17th Foundation Day of Jharkhand Jaguar celebrated



DGP Anurag Gupta along with IG (STF) Anup BIRTHARE inspecting the parade on the occasion of the 17th Foundation Day celebrations of Special force Jharkhand Jaguar (STF) with great joy and enthusiasm at Jharkhand Jaguar premises, Tender Village on Friday. PNS

PNS : RANCHI
The 17th Foundation Day of Jharkhand Jaguar (STF) was celebrated with great joy and enthusiasm on Friday at Jharkhand Jaguar premises, Tender Village. On this occasion, as the chief guest, DGP Anurag Gupta took the salute of the grand parade. Also, on this occasion, the action being taken against the Naxalites by the commando squad of Jharkhand Jaguar was also demonstrated. Special Force Jharkhand Jaguar (STF) was formed in the year 2008 for the elimination of left wing extremism in the state of Jharkhand. Jharkhand Jaguar has achieved a new height in the last 17 years by successfully taking action towards the elimination of extremism in the state. Many brave soldiers have been lost in the journey of these 17 years. The DGP paid tribute to the brave martyred soldiers who sacrificed their lives to maintain peace and progress in the state. In his address, Gupta praised the action being taken by Jharkhand Jaguar against extremist organizations for the elimination of extremism in the state. "Along with the paramilitary forces working in the state, this force has made an unparalleled contribution in making the extremely inaccessible and sensitive area of Budha Pahad, Tri Junction and other Naxal-affected areas Naxal-free. The reduction in the number of Naxalites and Naxal violence is a sign of high leadership and excellent training of Jharkhand Jaguar. Today Jharkhand Jaguar is fully prepared to give a befitting reply to all the organizations involved in extremist activities in the state and to root them out," he said. IG, Jharkhand Jaguar, Anup BIRTHARE, in his address shared the achievements of Jharkhand Jaguar in the direction of elimination of extremism in the last 17 years. Whether it is the high hills of Parasnath or the dense forests of Saranda, whether it is the difficult terrain of Budha Pahad or the inaccessible area of Parasnath Pahad, Jharkhand Jaguar has registered its valiant presence everywhere. "In the last 17 years, 297 Naxalites have been arrested by various sections of Jharkhand Jaguar and 34 dreaded extremists have been killed in encounters during various operations," he said. On the occasion of Foundation Day, their families were honoured by visiting their home district, paying tribute to the martyrdom of 23 martyred police officers and personnel of Jharkhand Jaguar.

Jharkhand participates in Media and Entertainment Business Conclave in Chennai



Assistant Director, IPPRD, Biru Kushwaha along with others in the Media and Entertainment Business Conclave organized by FICCI in Chennai on 21 and 22 February. Jharkhand, Maharashtra and Gujarat are in the role of partner states in this conclave. PNS

PNS : CHENNAI/RANCHI:
Jharkhand Film Development Corporation Limited has also participated in the Media and Entertainment Business Conclave organized by FICCI in Chennai on 21 and 22 February. Jharkhand, Maharashtra and Gujarat are in the role of partner states in this conclave. The conclave was inaugurated by Tamil Nadu Deputy Chief Minister Udhayanidhi Stalin. On this occasion, many South Indian filmmakers and artists including famous South Indian film actor Kamal Hasan, Trisha Krishnan participated. On behalf of Jharkhand, Assistant Director of Information and Public Relations Department Biru Kushwaha and Assistant Company Secretary of JFDCL Aman Kumar participated in the conclave. Biru Kushwaha said that during the Knowledge Series session, all the filmmakers present were

invited to shoot films in Jharkhand. It was told that Jharkhand has a very favourable environment for shooting films. Jharkhand has beautiful valleys and many charming tourist places which are excellent for shooting films. During this, a video documentary based on the features of Jharkhand including tourist places, art culture, mines was also shown. Kushwaha said that the filmmakers present at the Media and Entertainment Business Conclave were given information about the grants given to filmmakers by JFDCL. He said that the Jharkhand government is determined to promote films in Jharkhand. The government is also giving grants for making films in Jharkhand. Film Development Corporation Limited (JFDCL) has been established to promote films and filmmakers and artists in Jharkhand.

Destroy poppy crop completely: Chief Secretary

Review of action taken on instructions to stop poppy cultivation

PNS : RANCHI
Chief Secretary Alka Tiwari today said that the campaign against poppy cultivation is showing positive results, but 100 per cent destruction of poppy crop should be ensured. She said that the officers associated with the campaign should make mutual coordination more strong and effective. Pointing out that arrests are less than the number of cases registered, she said that focus should be on making maximum arrests and getting them punished. Emphasizing on making a real assessment of the resources required in the process of destruction, she said that the availability of necessary resources will be ensured. On receiving information that poppy crop is still grown at some places,



Chief Secretary Alka Tiwari holds a meeting with senior officials in Ranchi on Friday. PNS

she directed to continue the campaign against poppy cultivation till March 15. On Friday, she was reviewing the compliance of the instructions given in the meeting chaired by her two months ago against poppy cultivation. During the review, it was told that during the campaign against poppy cultivation, a total of 19,086 acres of crop has been destroyed, which is four times more than the last few years. The maximum poppy crop grown in 10,520 acres has been destroyed in Khunti. Ranchi district is in second place, where poppy crop grown in 4624 acres has been destroyed. The least poppy plants grown in 396 acres have been destroyed in Palamu. It was told that at some places the poppy crop is still to be destroyed, where action is being taken by running special drives. It is worth noting that a total of eight districts of Jharkhand, Chatra, Khunti, Latehar, Ranchi, Palamu, Chaibasa, Saraikela, and Hazaribagh are affected by poppy cultivation. During the review, it was told that a total of 283 cases and 958 FIRs have been registered during the destruction of poppy crop. A total of 190 people have been arrested in this regard. During this, DGP Anurag Gupta directed the police officers to register FIR against the concerned people on the basis of the report of action taken by the Forest Department regarding poppy cultivation.

Relief to Singhal as Court rejects ED petitions on posting



PNS : RANCHI
In a big relief to IAS officer Pooja Singhal, the special PMLA (Prevention of Money Laundering Act) court has rejected a petition filed by the Enforcement Directorate (ED). The agency had requested the court to bar Singhal from being assigned any department. After hear-

ing arguments from both ED and Singhal's counsels, the court delivered its verdict in her favour. The court's order has come at the time when Pooja Singhal was allotted new department after the court the reinstatement. On Tuesday, the Department of Personnel, Administrative Reforms and Official

Lawyers abstain from court work

Language has issued its notification. The Personnel Department has issued an order for the transfer posting of 15 officers of the Indian Administrative Service (IAS). As per the notification, Singhal has been appointed as the Secretary of the Department of Information Technology and e-Governance. She will also have the additional charge of Chief Executive Officer of

Jharkhand Communication Network Limited. Earlier, the ED had argued that if the state government assigned Pooja Singhal a department, she could misuse her position and influence the ongoing case. However, the court ruled that the state government has the authority to decide her posting and that it would not interfere in the matter.

government of India. "The Bill is totally against the unity, integrity and dignity of Advocates but also draconian in nature. It will directly affect the autonomy of all Bar Associations and Bar Council of all states," it read.

Pooja Singhal, accused of the MNREGA scam, was arrested by the ED on May 11, 2022. Prior to her arrest, on May 5, 2022, the ED had conducted raids at 25 locations linked to her, uncovering crucial evidence of unaccounted money and undisclosed investments. During the operation, officials seized ₹19.31 crore in cash from the residence and office of her chartered accountant, Suman Singh.

Rs 1.5 lakh looted from woman

A woman was robbed of 1.5 lakh in the Dhurva police station area on Friday. The woman's name is Bindu Devi. The woman had gone to SBI Bank in Dhurva with her brother-in-law. She had to withdraw money for her daughter's admission in nursing. After withdrawing 1.5 lakh, she was going home, during this time, the criminals on a bike who were already waiting in ambush, looted Bindu Devi's money and fled from the spot.

JPSC-1 topper Shalini Vijay commits suicide

Jharkhand Public Service Commission-1 (JPSC-01) topper Shalini Vijay, her mother Shakuntala and brother Manish Vijay have committed suicide. The incident took place in Kerala. Manish Vijay was working as Additional Commissioner in the Customs Department in Kakkand, Kerala. Shalini Vijay was the topper of JPSC-1. She was working in the Deputy Collector rank in Jharkhand for a long time. Two years ago she went on leave, after which she did not return to duty. Shalini was a resident of Kerala.

Former J&K LG, MK Sinha visits Vikas Bharti

Former Lieutenant Governor of Jammu and Kashmir Manoj Kumar Sinha arrived at the Ranchi office complex of Vikas Bharti Bishunpur, Arogya Bhawan 1, Bariatu, Ranchi on February 20. On this occasion, the first Chief Minister of Jharkhand, Babul Marandi, senior pracharak Gurusharan, Chatra MP Kalicharan Singh and Ajit Kumar Sinha of Ranchi University, Vice Chancellor of Dr. Shyama Prasad Mukherjee University, Tapan Kumar Shandilya, Vice Chancellor of Sainath University, S.P. Agarwal, Vice Chancellor of Rai University, Savita Sengar and current and former legislators and senior journalists of the media, Prof. Dr. Pradeep Munda of BIT Mesra who has special knowledge about tribes, Jaleswar Bhagat and other intellectuals of the city were present.



PM pitches for world-class leaders in every field

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday pitched for world-class leaders in every field who can find solutions to global complexities and needs while prioritising the interests of India.

Addressing the School of Ultimate Leadership (SOUL) conclave here, Modi said an institute like this can be a game-changer at a time when India needs energetic leaders in every field, be it bureaucracy, policy-making or business, who have a global approach but a mindset rooted in local perspectives.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi addresses during the inauguration of the first edition of the SOUL Leadership conclave in New Delhi on Friday. PTI

He called for leaders in different fields who have "global thinking and local upbringing", saying what is needed is a leadership that reflects India's vision in every field when the country is emerging as a "global powerhouse".

The country's speed and momentum need to be replicated in every field, Modi said, adding that institutes like the SOUL are not only a choice but a necessity.

"There is a need for energetic leaders in every sector who can find solutions to global complexities and needs while prioritising the nation's interests on the global stage," he said. These leaders should have a global approach but retain a local mindset, and should be ready for strategic decision-making, crisis management and futuristic thinking, the prime minister said.

The future leadership, he said, will not be limited to power, an apparent reference to the political arena, adding that leadership roles will require capabilities in innovation and impact. Modi said such leaders, who understand international dynamics, are required for the country to compete in international markets and global institutions.

He emphasised the need for

preparing the leadership for emerging sectors, such as deep-tech, space, biotech and renewable energy, besides conventional sectors like sports, agriculture, manufacturing and social service.

"India must not only aspire for excellence in all sectors but also achieve it. India needs leaders who can develop new institutions of global excellence," the prime minister said. He noted that India's history is filled with glorious stories of such institutions and emphasised the need to revive that spirit.

Modi underscored the importance of building human resources and said the development of better citizens is necessary for nation-building when everyone is working for the making of a "Viksit Bharat". In this context, he cited the example of Gujarat, noting that questions were raised about its future as a separate state due to its lack of natural resources.

However, the state is doing very well today due to its leaders, Modi said, adding that it has no diamond mine but nine out of 10 diamonds in the world pass through the hands of a Gujarati. He said a new and spacious campus of the SOUL would be ready, close to Gujarat's GIFT City, in the

near future.

The SOUL is an upcoming leadership institution in Gujarat to enable "authentic leaders to advance public good", according to an official statement.

Modi said India should have leaders in different sectors who can spearhead innovation and channelise skills. He expressed confidence that the SOUL will develop critical thinking, risk-taking and solution-driven mindsets and produce leaders who are prepared to work amidst disruptive changes. They should not just follow trends but set those, he added.

As India grooms new leadership in sectors ranging from diplomacy to tech innovation, the influence and impact of the country will multiply across various sectors, the prime minister said, adding that the nation's entire vision and future depend on producing a generation of strong leadership.

"When we move forward with a common goal and collective efforts, the results are extraordinary," he said.

Modi said the Indian society is being shaped by those born in the 21st century and a decade prior to it, asserting that they will be the "Amrit Peedhi" as the country embarks on the path of development.

Shah to chair Western Zonal Council meeting in Pune

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Home Minister Amit Shah will chair on Saturday the 27th meeting of the Western Zonal Council in Pune, which will provide a platform for resolving disputes and issues between the Centre and States in the region.

The Western Zonal Council comprises the states of Gujarat, Goa, Maharashtra and the Union Territories of Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu.

The zonal councils hold discussions on a wide range of issues, including speedy investigation of cases of sexual offence/rape against women and children and implementation of Fast Track Special Courts for expeditious disposal of such cases.

Facilitation of banks/India Post Payment Bank branches within 5 km in each village, implementation of Emergency Response Support System (ERSS-112), issues relating to infrastructure, mining, environment and forests, food security parameters and other subjects of common interest at the regional level are other issues discussed at the meetings.

The Maharashtra government is hosting the meeting which is being organised by the Inter State Council Secretariat under the Ministry of Home Affairs, in collaboration with the state government.

The meeting is expected to be attended by the chief ministers of the member states and the administrator of the Union Territories, along with two senior ministers from each state, the statement said.



Amit Shah interacts with students of rural and tribal community who came from Santokba Dholakia Vidyya Mandir located in Dang district of Gujarat in New Delhi. PTI

Chief secretaries, advisors and other senior officers of the state governments and union territories and Union Home Secretary, secretary, Inter State Council and other senior officers of the Central government will also participate in

the meeting.

Five zonal councils were established in 1957. The Union Home Minister is the Chairman of these five councils, while the chief ministers of the states included in the respective zonal council and

the administrator/LG of the union territories are its members.

Zonal councils provide an excellent platform for resolving disputes and issues between the Centre and the States and between the several States in the region. Many issues of national importance are also discussed in each meeting of the zonal councils.

These include power operations, urban master plan, eliminating malnutrition among children through POSHAN Abhiyan, discussion on reducing the dropout rate of school children, participation of government hospitals in Ayushman Bharat-Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana, strengthening Primary Agricultural Credit Societies and other issues of common interest, the statement said.

Verifying individuals are Indian nationals in Panama: MEA

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The external affairs on Friday said it has seen some reports about deportation flights to Panama and New Delhi is "verifying the details" as to whether the individuals concerned are Indian nationals or not.

"Once that verification details are complete, then arrangements will be made for the return of these Indian nationals back home," MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal told reporters here in response to a query during his weekly briefing.

On a query on any steps taken to curb illegal immigration, he said, "We are committed to fight it tooth and nail."

Many reporters asked him if Panamanian authorities had approached India on this issue. "We have seen some reports about deportation flights to Panama and Costa Rica. Now it is our understanding that these have been undertaken as per a bridge arrangement between the US and the respective governments. Both Costa Rica and Panama have agreed



Venezuelan migrants deported from the United States arrive at Simon Bolivar International Airport in Maiquetia in Venezuela. PTI

to serve as transit countries for deportees while the US bears all the costs of the operation," Jaiswal said.

These deportees have been kept in a hotel, he said. "There could be some Indian nationals we understand... And our mission in Panama, which is also accredited to Costa Rica, they are in touch with the local authorities," the MEA spokesperson said.

In case of Panama, India is "verifying the details whether the individuals concerned are Indian nationals or not," he

said.

"Once that verification details are complete, then arrangements will be made for the return of these Indian nationals back home," he said.

In case of Costa Rica, "while we have heard that some people have been sent from the United States, we have heard this through media. Officially, we have yet to hear from the Costa Rica side."

Jaiswal in response to another query said, "yes, we are in talks with the Panama government there."

"Our embassy there is in regular touch. They have had consular access. In fact, there was an issue that, you know, some of them were having some difficulty there. That may have been case with people from other nationalities, not with people who are, who supposedly are of Indian nationality," he said.

During Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recent visit to the US, a joint statement was issued conveying the commitment of both countries to combat it.

This matter has been discussed here in India at the highest level and this matter was discussed in Washington as well, Jaiswal said.

"If you read the joint statement, there is expansive language on illegal immigration conveying the commitment of both countries to combat it. Prime Minister, in his statement in Washington, also made it very clear that human trafficking needs to be fought by India, United States and all countries who have a stake in it because we need to fight it tooth and nail," he said.

Yasin Malik to virtually appear in Jammu court from Tihar on March 7: SC



File photo

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday directed jailed JKLF chief Yasin Malik to appear in a Jammu court from Tihar Jail through video-conferencing on March 7. A bench of Justices Abhay S Oka and Ujjal Bhuyan noted that the Jammu sessions court was "well-equipped" with the video-conferencing system enabling the virtual examination.

The CBI sought the transfer of the trials in the 1989 case of the kidnapping of Rubaiya Sayeed, daughter of former union minister Mufti Mohammed Sayeed, and the 1990 Srinagar shootout case, from Jammu to New Delhi.

Delhi court reserves order in 2022 case against Lalu

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

A Delhi court on Friday reserved for February 25 its order on whether or not to take cognisance of a chargesheet filed in the land-for-jobs case involving former railway minister Lalu Prasad and others. Special judge Vishal Gogne, who was scheduled to decide it on Friday, adjourned the matter on February 25 after hearing CBI's clarifications on certain points.

The CBI said three separate final reports (chargesheets) in the matter required only one trial given the entirety of the allegations reflected in it.

As the allegations in the three chargesheets involved the same foundational conspiracy and named a number of common accused and witnesses, the second and third chargesheets were in the nature of supplementary chargesheets, the agency said.

The submissions came in response to a query posed by the court on whether the case would require separate trials. The judge recorded the submission and posted the matter for February 25 for orders on cognisance and further proceedings.

The CBI had informed the judge that it had received requisite sanctions from the authorities concerned to prosecute public servant RK Mahajan.

On January 16, the judge said



File photo

if the sanction against Mahajan was not processed by January 30, the "competent authority shall furnish" an explanation by the next date of hearing.

The CBI on November 26, 2024 filed before the court requisite sanctions obtained from authorities concerned to prosecute 30 accused persons in the case, while submitting that sanctions regarding the prosecution of Mahajan were still awaited.

The case relates to Group-D appointments made in the West Central Zone of Railways based in Jabalpur, Madhya Pradesh, during Prasad's tenure as the railway minister between 2004 and 2009 in return for land parcels gifted or transferred by the recruits in the name of the RJD supremo's family or associates, according to officials.

The agency registered the case on May 18, 2022, against Prasad and others, including his wife, 2 daughters, unidentified public officials and private persons.

AI to be used for improving agriculture sector: Dhankar

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Vice President Jagdeep Dhankar on Friday said disruptive technologies like artificial intelligence (AI) should be used for improving the agriculture sector, and asserted that the rural population represents both opportunities and responsibilities.

Speaking at the inaugural session of 21st General Session of African Asian Rural Development (AARDO) Conference, the vice president also stressed using technology to alleviate suffering.

Speaking at the event, Dhankar said the rural regions nurture 3.6 billion lives, including 894 million rural Indians, "representing both our opportunity and responsibility."

"A challenge to our intellect is in form of emergence of disruptive technology. Artificial intelligence, machine learning...No less than industrial revolution," he said.

"They offer daunting challenges but also bring a basket of opportunities, only if we learn to unleash them," he said. Dhankar said these technologies should be used for improving the farm sector and rural areas.

"If we can unleash these disruptive technologies for greater good of rural India and farm sector, and of the entire world, humanity will be a safer place," the vice president said.



Vice President of India Jagdeep Dhankar addresses inaugural session of the 21st AARDO Conference in New Delhi. PBI

"India has taken some flagship initiatives and one initiative is digital India," he added.

He stressed on using technology to mitigate suffering, reducing corruption, and generating accountability.

Stating that India has the target to become a developed nation by 2047, Dhankar said there was a time when India had to deposit its gold with banks in Switzerland to sustain fiscal credibility.

"By then the foreign exchange reserve was only 11 billion US dollar, if it can be compared to the present situation the volume has gone to seven hundred billion US dollar," he said.

He said India is an example for the rest of the world that what could be the impacts of good initiatives in the field of rural development and empowerment of people.

Dhankar also talked about the significance of the role of women in governance and said India has constitutionally struc-

tured participation of women at village and municipal levels.

"Gender participation in governance is fundamental to bring about equality and to cut into inequities. India perhaps the only country in the world that has constitutionally structured participation of women in governance," he said.

He said that in village and municipal bodies, one third seats have been reserved for women. AARDO, one of the earliest examples of South-South and Triangular cooperation in the fields of agriculture and rural development in the African-Asian region, was established in 1962. It is an autonomous inter-governmental/multilateral organisation, comprising 32 countries of Africa and Asia as full members and three associate members.

It has been given the status of an international organisation by the Government of India, at par with other UN organisations in India.

India, Bangladesh to launch new 'hotline'

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

India and Bangladesh have decided to establish a new communication link between the deputy commanders of their respective border-guarding forces and identified about 99 fresh patches for erecting a fence along their shared border.

The decisions were finalised during the biannual director general-level talks between the Border Security Force (BSF) and the Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) that concluded here on Thursday, sources in the security establishment told PTI.

This was the first time that a high-level meeting between the two forces took place after the fall of the Sheikh Hasina government in Bangladesh on August 5 last year.

The three-day talks, held from February 18 to February 20, went off in a "cordial manner", with the Indian side able to "convince" its neighbour about the importance of fencing on the remaining areas of the 4,096-km-long frontier that spans across five Indian states on the eastern flank, the sources said.

A total of 864.48 km of the front remains unfenced, including 174.51 km of "non-feasible" gap, according to official data.

The two sides have decided to open a new "hotline" for effective communication after the latest round of DG-level talks.

This link will be between the additional director general (ADG) of the BSF eastern command based in Kolkata and his BGB counterpart posted at the force's headquarters in Dhaka, the sources said.

It was felt "necessary and important" to enhance the engagement between the two sides and hence, this new platform for commanders' interaction has been agreed upon and included in the official records for the first time, they added.

Currently, "hotlines" or links of communication exist between the two force chiefs and officers in the ranks of inspector general (regional commander for the BGB), deputy inspector general (sector commander for the BGB) and other field-level officers. These communication lines are used to convey real-time information and intelligence so that issues related to the front and instances of cross-border crimes can be checked promptly.

The BSF delegation, headed by its Director General Daljit Singh Chawdhary, also asked the BGB to take "stringent and effective" steps to ensure that Bangladeshi miscreants and criminals are not able to "breach" their security layer and cross the border to attack BSF personnel and Indian civilians.

During the hearing, Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the CBI, informed the court that as per the report filed by the registrar general of the Jammu and Kashmir High Court, the video-conferencing system was working properly in the Jammu court.

Mehta said it appeared all the accused were working in tandem to delay the trial while pointing out that Malik refused to engage a lawyer and others were opposing the transfer of trial.

The top court previously directed the registrar general of the Jammu and Kashmir High Court to ensure proper video-conferencing facilities at the Jammu special court while hearing two cases against Malik and others.

The top court on December 18, last year, gave six accused two weeks to respond to the CBI's plea to transfer the trial of the cases.

The plea is over the two cases in which four Indian Air Force personnel were killed on January 25, 1990 in Srinagar and the abduction which took place on December 8, 1989. Malik, chief of the proscribed JKLF, is facing trial in both cases.

The top court was hearing a CBI plea against the September 20, 2022 order of a Jammu trial court directing Malik, serving a life term in Tihar jail, to be produced before it physically to cross-examine prosecution witnesses in the abduction case.

Keep away from attempts to create divisions on basis of language: Modi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday said there has never been any animosity among Indian languages and each has enriched the other, giving a fitting reply to attempts to discriminate on the basis of linguistics.

Addressing the inaugural function of the 98th Akhil Bharatiya Marathi Sahitya Sammelan here, Modi hailed Marathi as a complete language reflecting the elements of bravery and courage, beauty, sensitivity and equality.

"There has never been any ani-

mosity among Indian languages. Languages have always influenced and enriched each other," Modi said.

He said often, when efforts were made to create divisions based on languages, India's shared linguistic heritage gave a fitting reply.

"It is our social responsibility to distance ourselves from these misconceptions and embrace and enrich all languages," the prime minister said.

His remarks came on a day when Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin reiterated his remarks that the implementation of the National

Education Policy (NEP) is an attempt to impose a three-language formula throughout the country.

Modi said India is one of the oldest living civilisations in the world because it has constantly evolved and embraced new ideas and welcomed new changes.

"The fact that India has the world's largest linguistic diversity is a proof of this. This linguistic diversity is also the most fundamental basis of our unity," Modi said.

NCP-SP chief Sharad Pawar, Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis, litterateur Tara Bhawalkar, the pres-



Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Nationalist Congress Party (NCP-SP) leader Sharad Pawar during the inauguration of 98th Akhil Bharatiya Marathi Sahitya Sammelan in New Delhi. PTI

ident of the 98th Akhil Bharatiya Marathi Sammelan, were present at the inaugural function, among others.

The three-day Akhil Bharatiya Marathi Sahitya Sammelan is being held in the national capital after a gap of 71 years and a year after Marathi was granted the classical language status.

Modi said the event is being held in Delhi in the 350th year of the coronation of Chhatrapati Shivaji and the centenary celebrations of the RSS.

"We take pride in the fact that in the great land of Maharashtra, a remarkable Marathi-speaking individual

planted the seeds of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh 100 years ago. Today, we celebrate its centenary. The organisation has grown and flourished like a banyan tree," he said.

"For the last 100 years, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh has been running a Sanskar Yagya to take India's great tradition and culture to the new generation," Modi said.

He said the RSS has inspired lakhs of people like himself to live for the country and it is because of the Sangh that he got the privilege of connecting with the Marathi language and Marathi traditions.

Mahakumbh 2025 to end with a cosmic spectacle

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

As the Mahakumbh enters its final week before concluding on February 26, skywatchers and spiritual seekers alike are in for a rare celestial treat.



Devotees offer prayers after taking a holy dip during the ongoing Mahakumbh Mela at Sangam in Prayagraj

occur in mid-August 2025, when six planets will be visible in the morning sky. While Uranus and Neptune remain challenging to spot without optical aid, ideal viewing conditions and equipment will help locate them.

adding spiritual depth to the Mahakumbh celebrations. Many devotees believe that such cosmic occurrences amplify spiritual energy and divine consciousness.

nomical event; it is a moment of immense spiritual significance. The energies of the cosmos are believed to influence human consciousness, making this Kumbh Mela even more powerful," said S N Jha, lecturer in

Department of Astrology in Lucknow University. The best time to witness this alignment is during twilight—just after sunset or before sunrise—when the planets are positioned higher in the sky. Five planets—

Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn—can be seen with the naked eye, while Uranus and Neptune require binoculars or a telescope due to their dimness. Astronomers predict that a similar planetary alignment will

Assam Assembly uproar over MP attack



Congress MP Rakibul Hussain addresses media after filing an FIR following an attack on him in Assam

PNS ■ GUWAHATI

The Assam Assembly on Friday witnessed uproarious scenes over the attack on Congress MP Rakibul Hussain in Nagaon district, leading to two adjournments.

ment inaction, said the attackers have been identified and action is being initiated. Unsatisfied with the response, the Congress legislators stormed into the well of the House and created noisy scenes.

UP supplies prisons with Sangam water



Inmates from 62 UP jails take a symbolic holy dip with Mahakumbh water

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

As the Mahakumbh 2025 witnessed a record-breaking turnout with 59 Crore devotees taking a holy dip at the Sangam, the Yogi Adityanath government extended the sacred experience to prisoners across Uttar Pradesh.

state were given the opportunity to partake in a symbolic holy dip within their respective jail premises. To facilitate this, large water tanks were constructed inside the jails, where sanctified water from the Triveni Sangam was transported and poured, enabling prisoners to immerse themselves in its spiritual significance.

their confinement, could experience religious purification and virtue. At Central Naini Jail in Prayagraj, where over 1,700 inmates are currently lodged, more than 1,400 prisoners participated in the ritual.

jail premises, allowing inmates to bathe in the consecrated water. A similar arrangement was made at the District Jail of Prayagraj, which houses over 1,300 prisoners.

Punjab police busts foreign-backed target killing module

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Punjab police on Friday said they have busted a target killing module and apprehended two operatives of a foreign-based gangster from Patiala.

related to target killings in Mohali and Rajpura," he added. Police teams have also recovered five pistols, including three .32 caliber, one .30 caliber, and one .315 caliber country-made pistol, along with 15 cartridges and 1,300 intoxicant tablets from their possession.

Muslims voluntarily remove 168-year-old Mosque in Meerut

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ MEERUT

In a significant development, the management of a 168-year-old mosque in Meerut has begun dismantling the structure to make way for the city's Metro and Rapid Rail Corridor projects.

Region Transport Corporation (NCRTC), met with the mosque's Imam and management committee. The officials explained the necessity of clearing the structure to facilitate rapid construction work, urging a resolution through mutual agreement.

Mamata clarifies her 'Mrityu Kumbh' remarks

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Days after raking up controversy with her 'Mrityu Kumbh' (deadly Kumbh) remarks, Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has done a volte face, saying her love for her own religion was beyond question, and that religion is a personal affair, while festival belongs to all.

gions and cultures equally," she said. Banerjee capped her Thursday comments with another one on Friday saying her Government was working tirelessly for the development of Bengal as a language.

a mother language and so we have recognised all the languages from Gorkhali to Kurmali to Hindi to Alchiki." Banerjee drew criticism after she criticised the BJP Governments both in the Centre and Uttar Pradesh for making Mahakumbh a money spinning event by heavily publicising without making adequate arrangements to handle the massive turnout.

Hathras stampede: Judicial inquiry clears Bhole Baba

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ LUCKNOW

The judicial commission investigating the tragic stampede at a religious gathering in Hathras has given a clean chit to Bhole Baba, also known as Narayan Sakar, according to the sources.

during a religious congregation attended by tens of thousands of devotees. According to eyewitnesses, as Bhole Baba concluded his sermon and began leaving, a sudden rush ensued.

similar incidents in the future. The report suggests enforcing strict crowd management protocols, including a cap on the number of attendees at religious events and mandatory security drills before such gatherings.

Gurugram police nabs bank staff for aiding cybercriminals

STAFF REPORTER ■ GURUGRAM

A team from the cyber cell of the Gurugram police has arrested two accused including a bank official of a private bank for allegedly providing bank accounts for cybercriminals, police said.

alleged involvement in the crime from Delhi on Wednesday. During interrogation, the accused disclosed that Aditya Chaturvedi was currently working as business development manager at gujranwala town-2 of Idsund bank in Delhi since 2023.

ing in the stock market, reducing electricity bills, in the name of buying or selling cheap goods online, sextortion through video calls on WhatsApp, morphing, sending links through various means, posing as a customs officer or police officer in the name of implicating false case, in the name of issuing a No-Objection Certificate, digitally arresting people by showing the fear of implicating them in a criminal case, etc," Priyanshu Diwan, ACP (cybercrime), said.

Harish Choudhary is new in-charge of MP Congress unit

GIRISH SHARMA ■ BHOPAL

The Madhya Pradesh Congress finds itself at yet another critical juncture with the appointment of Harish Choudhary as the new in-charge of the state unit.

in the party. His efforts played a crucial role in reinvigorating the Congress in Madhya Pradesh, culminating in the party's victory in the 2018 assembly elections under the leadership of Kamal Nath.

stance, was believed to have actively sought Singh's replacement. This episode is indicative of the larger issue of factionalism within the state unit, where power struggles between senior leaders continue to weaken the party's organisational framework.

Singhar and other senior leaders contradict this call for unity, raising questions about the feasibility of his mission. The fissures within the Congress were further underscored during Harish Choudhary's formal induction at the PCC headquarters.

ment presents an opportunity for course correction, but whether he can succeed where his predecessors have struggled remains to be seen. The party needs a stable and decisive leadership that prioritises organisational strength over factional battles.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Trump's peace offensive

Though US President Trump is attempting to resolve the prolonged war in Ukraine, the effectiveness of his methods remains uncertain

As the war in Ukraine enters its third year, US President Donald Trump is trying to broker peace. However, his approach has sparked controversy, as it appears to sideline Ukraine in key negotiations. With Russia still holding a significant portion of Ukrainian territory, the implications of this initiative could reshape the geopolitical landscape of Europe and beyond. The critical questions remain: What would a Trump-led peace deal entail? How would it affect Ukraine's sovereignty? And what choices do Ukraine and Europe have in response? If Ukraine is sidelined in these negotiations, it could be pressured into accepting a deal that legitimises Russia's territorial gains, effectively rewarding aggression. For Russia, such an outcome would be a strategic victory, allowing it to retain control over nearly a fifth of Ukraine's land, including areas it currently does not fully control. A peace deal without Ukraine's full participation and interests at its core would have profound consequences. The Ukrainian government has consistently maintained that any agreement must include the restoration of its 1991 borders and accountability for war crimes committed during the invasion. However, a Trump-negotiated settlement could pressure Kyiv into compromising its sovereignty in exchange for an end to hostilities.



For Europe, such a scenario would be equally troubling. If Russia emerges from the conflict with territorial gains, it could embolden further aggression against NATO's eastern flank. The Kremlin's broader objective has always been to reverse the strategic impact of the Soviet Union's collapse and limit the sovereignty of Eastern European nations. A weakened Ukraine would shift the burden of deterrence squarely onto NATO's shoulders, requiring significant military investments and commitments to prevent further Russian expansion. The effectiveness of Trump's initiative is highly uncertain. While a ceasefire might reduce immediate bloodshed, it would not necessarily lead to lasting stability. If Ukraine is forced into a compromised peace, resistance movements could emerge, leading to prolonged low-intensity conflict. Additionally, the global implications of a weakened Ukraine extend beyond Europe. A victorious Russia could inspire China to take a more aggressive stance on Taiwan, believing that the West lacks the resolve to uphold international law. Trump's initiative to end the Ukraine war could mark a turning point in the conflict, but the manner in which it is pursued will determine its impact. If Ukraine is sidelined and forced into territorial concessions, the consequences could be dire—not just for Kyiv but for the entire European security framework. While a peace deal might bring temporary relief, a settlement that fails to address Ukraine's sovereignty could embolden Russia and reshape the global balance of power in ways that will be felt for decades to come. The choices made in the coming months will define the future of Ukraine, Europe, and world security.

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PICTALK



A black-naped oriole perches on a bloomed cotton tree, in Nadia

A reminder of Delhi's seismic vulnerability

The 4.0 magnitude earthquake that shook Delhi-NCR recently underscores Delhi's alarming seismic risks, given its location on active fault lines



SATENDRA SINGH

In the early morning of February 17, 2025, the residents of Delhi-NCR awakened by a sudden unexpected jolt awakening due to a tremor. A 4.0-magnitude earthquake struck the region, with its epicentre located near Dhaura Kuan, Delhi, sending shockwaves throughout the city along with neighbouring NCR. Although the quake was relatively minor, its impact felt stronger because it originated from a shallow depth and was intensified by widespread fear of bigger earthquakes. People hurriedly evacuated their homes, buildings swayed and social media was abuzz with concern.

This event served as yet another reminder that Delhi remains dangerously vulnerable to seismic shock vulnerability to seismic activity. Delhi hazily sits on several active fault lines, including the Delhi-Haridwar Ridge and the Mahendragarh-Dehradun fault. The city falls in Seismic Zone IV and is recognised as being at high risk for earthquakes. Its closeness to the Himalayas, one of the most seismically active areas globally, further increases its risk. According to geoscientists, the Indian plate is continually pushing beneath the Eurasian plate at a rate of about 47 mm per year, generating significant underground stress.

When this stress is released, it results in earthquakes—ranging from minor to devastating. History has shown us the potential destruction of earthquakes. The 2001 Bhuj earthquake in Gujarat, which registered 7.7 on the Richter scale, resulted in over 20,000 fatalities and left entire towns in rubble. If a similar earthquake event were to strike Delhi-NCR, the aftermath could be even more disastrous. Simulations from global seismic studies, including the USGS PAGER system and the GEM Global Seismic Risk Map, indicate that a 7.7-magnitude earthquake in Delhi could result in between 150,000 to 250,000 deaths. The combination of a dense population, ageing infrastructure, and unplanned urbanisation makes the capital particularly vulnerable to widespread devastation. One major concern facing the city is the quality of construction.



Many buildings, especially in older areas and unauthorised settlements, are not designed to endure strong earthquakes. Although there are strict regulations set by the National Building Code and the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS), enforcement often remains weak. High-rise buildings and even some government facilities in the region frequently lack the necessary retrofitting to enhance their earthquake resistance. With over 30 million people living in Delhi-NCR, the scale of destruction from a significant earthquake could be unimaginable. So, what steps can be taken? Demolishing all unsafe buildings and reconstructing them with seismic-resistant technology is neither practical nor economically viable. However, sincere efforts can be made to raise awareness about the earthquake risk and ensure people are prepared for a potential major earthquake in Delhi.

First and foremost, raising awareness and ensuring preparedness should be a top priority. Every household needs to have a well-defined earthquake survival plan. Schools and workplaces should regularly conduct earthquake drills to prepare individuals for how to react during tremors. Simple actions, like securing heavy furniture, identifying



SEVERAL CITIES LIKE TOKYO AND SAN FRANCISCO HAVE SUCCESSFULLY IMPLEMENTED ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY TO MAKE BUILDINGS MORE EARTHQUAKE-PROOF. DELHI SHOULD LOOK TO THESE GLOBAL EXAMPLES TO REDUCE THE RISK OF WIDESPREAD CASUALTIES

safe areas in homes, and having emergency kits ready, can greatly improve safety. The government also needs to take necessary actions in this regard.

A comprehensive structural audit of buildings, particularly those constructed before modern seismic standards were established, is urgently required. Buildings that fail to meet safety criteria should be reinforced and retrofitted. It is essential to enforce the use of earthquake-resistant construction methods in new projects. Retrofitting at-risk buildings may be expensive, but it is a crucial investment for protecting lives. Additionally, public infrastructure needs to be reassessed. Bridges, flyovers, and metro stations need to be evaluated for their ability to withstand seismic activity. Several cities like Tokyo and San Francisco have successfully implemented advanced technology to make buildings more earthquake-proof. Delhi should look to these global examples to reduce the risk of widespread casualties.

A city that is well-prepared for disasters always invests in the education and awareness of its residents. Creating an Earthquake Awareness Museum in Delhi, akin to the one in Bhuj, Gujarat, could make a significant impact on

people's awareness, not only from Delhi NCR but from all over the country.

This museum could highlight Delhi's seismic history, delve into the science behind earthquakes, and inform the public about safety protocols. Additionally, a dedicated "Earthquake Clinic" within the museum could provide free consultations with engineers on how to house earthquake resistance at a reasonable price. Moreover, implementing an efficient early warning system could significantly minimise the risk of casualties. For instance, Japan's earthquake early warning system alerts people just seconds before a quake, allowing people to take cover. Establishing a similar system in Delhi should be a national priority. Despite scientific advancements, earthquakes remain unpredictable. However, we can control the level of preparedness when a disaster strikes. The recent tremor in Delhi is more than just a fleeting event—it serves as a warning. Ignoring it could be disastrous. The time to take action is now before nature delivers a lesson that is too harsh to endure.

(The writer is former executive director of National Institute of Disaster Management, Govt. of India; views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

PEACE TALK WITHOUT UKRAINE

Madam — It is indeed a strange move that Ukraine is not involved in the peace talks being held to bring the Ukraine war to an end. America is holding talks with Russia, the country that pounds Ukraine. Any meaningful negotiation should be between the countries on the war and others may facilitate reaching a settlement to end the war. In the process, any other country may help but not keep the victim behind the screen. Ukraine has unnecessarily taken up war with Russia. The demand of Russia was that Ukraine should not take membership in NATO as it disturbs its security concerns. For NATO also Ukraine joining the group will add to its strategic security concerns. That is why it extended all possible help, like weapons and funds, except for its soldiers to Ukraine.

The sanction against buying Russian fuel also proved to be a failure, as all the EU members were buying the same Russian fuel through India. Ultimately Ukraine is at a loss but gives a sound lesson to others not to depend on others' strength to wage a war, but instead to sort the issues out through diplomatic strength. It is also time to remember the moral story that when two parties decide to fight each other, there are always other parties to reap rich harvests. The giants in the field of weapons production found Ukraine a flourishing market to pump in weapons. It is also time to rethink before deciding to enter the war field, over-assuming one's strength.

A G Rajmohan | Anantapur

WHO RECEIVED \$21 MILLION FROM US?

Madam — US President Donald Trump has once again questioned the United States' decision to allocate \$21 million for voter turnout efforts in India. Speaking at the FII PRIORITY Summit in Miami, he said, "\$21 million for voter turnout, why do we need to spend \$21 million for voter turnout in India?" Trump expressed his respect for India and its Prime Minister Narendra Modi but wondered why the US needs to spend millions on voter turnout in a foreign country. He further argued that

Tharoor praises PM Modi's achievements



Senior Congress leader and MP Shashi Tharoor's praise for PM Modi's achievements during his recent visit to the US, followed by his article in a national daily praising Kerala's startup economy under the

ruling LDF alliance, has not gone down well with his party leaders. In a stifling political atmosphere where political parties are buying for each other's blood, his praise does not help his party's attempts to target the NDA and the LDF governments on these issues.

But Tharoor, a former diplomat and well-known for his intellect, is a rare class of politician who has the spine to speak their mind. He has proven time and again that he is a true statesman who deeply believes in democratic values. On his criticism, he has further clarified that we cannot always speak only in terms of party interests. Thus, his principled political behaviour is a lesson for all political leaders.

Manoj Parashar | Ghaziabad

India, with its strong economy and high tariffs on US goods, doesn't need such financial support.

"They got a lot of money. They're one of the highest taxing countries in the world in terms of us. We can hardly get in there because their tariffs are so high." Hence, the \$21 million allocation was part of a larger list of international aid programmes cancelled by the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE), headed by Elon Musk. There is no doubt a lot of money, white and Black, is used. Then who knows that foreign funding is also not another source? Hope the NDA government should come out clearly on who revived this 21-million-dollar (about 176 crore rupees) and how this money was distributed. As reported earlier, the money can't be received by the Election Commission legally.

Bidyut Kumar Chatterjee | Faridabad

MULTILINGUALISM FOSTER UNITY

Madam — A recent incident highlights the importance of embracing multilingualism in India's diverse political landscape. During the INDIA bloc meeting in Patna,

DMK leader TR Baalu requested a translation of Bihar CM Nitish Kumar's Hindi speech into English, as DMK chief MK Stalin was unable to follow Hindi. The request was met with a sharp reaction from Kumar, who emphasised that leaders should understand Hindi, leading to an uncomfortable moment for the DMK delegation. The DMK's resistance to the three-language formula stems from its commitment to preserving Tamil.

While this is admirable, instances like these underline how knowing a third language, including Hindi, can be a practical asset. Whether for employment, travel, or national collaboration, multilingual ability fosters inclusivity and avoids such avoidable embarrassments. Balancing linguistic pride with pragmatic multilingualism is key. Leaders and citizens alike must view additional language skills as tools for growth rather than threats to cultural identity.

Gopalaswamy J | Chennai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

The road to change: A story of hope in Uttarakhand's remote Villages

As government initiatives push forward rural road development, the hope remains that these villages will soon find themselves linked to a future of greater possibilities

In the mountains, roads are more than just paths from one place to another—they are lifelines. They connect people to schools, hospitals, and markets, making daily life easier and opportunities more accessible. For many remote villages in Uttarakhand, however, the wait for a proper road continues, shaping everyday realities in ways that outsiders rarely see.

In Surag and Bhagdhanu villages of Garud Block, Bageshwar District, the absence of a proper road is a challenge that residents navigate every day. The people here have adapted—carrying essentials on foot, finding their ways to reach schools and markets, and supporting each other through difficult times. Yet, the dream of a well-built road remains. Kedar Singh, 70, has spent a lifetime in Surag. He describes how unpaved, uneven roads make even the simplest tasks difficult, especially during the monsoon. "When it rains, the paths become slippery, making it hard for both people and animals to move. We take our cattle to graze on the



mountains, and during the rains, they often slip on the muddy paths and fall down the slopes. It's heartbreaking to see, and it makes our work much harder." For many, the challenge is not just about movement but about access to essential services. Nandi Devi, 45, explains how women and elderly residents face particular difficulties: "When someone falls ill, finding transport is nearly impossible. Vehicles don't come here because of the poor road conditions. We have to rely on each other and make do with what we have."

A Journey to Education

For students, an incomplete road is more than an inconvenience—it shapes their future. Bhavana Rawal, a 10th-grade student, walks 5 km every day on an unpaved

road to reach her school in Sailani, 9 km away. "Most of the time, we manage, but during the rains, we arrive at school covered in mud. On some days, we can't go at all," she says. Kavita, 18, has similar concerns. "During the monsoon and winter, getting to school is incredibly difficult. The steep paths become dangerous, and there is always the fear of slipping. Sometimes, we miss school for days, which affects our studies."

The Road Ahead

Efforts have been made over the years to bring road connectivity to Surag and Bhagdhanu. A survey for the road's construction was conducted, and discussions continued resolving land-related concerns. Local leaders, like village head Champa Devi,

have been advocating for progress, and there is optimism that change will come. In Uttarakhand, over 33,500 km of roads have already been built, with 171 km of new roads planned for 2024-25 under the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana. Across the state, better road connectivity has opened doors to education, healthcare, and employment. There is hope that the Rs 70,000 crore allocated in the Union Budget for rural roads will also reach villages like Surag and Bhagdhanu, ensuring that they, too, become part of this expanding network.

For now, the people of these villages continue their journeys—on foot, through difficult terrain, with patience and resilience. But with consistent efforts from local communities, government agencies, and policymakers, the day is not far when these paths will finally be paved, bringing with them new possibilities for those who have waited the longest.

(The Author writes on development and a resident of Bageshwar district, Uttarakhand. Views are personal. Charkha features)



HEMA RAWAL



FIRST COLUMN

MAKE THE RIGHT CHOICES IN LIFE

Those who exhibit positive behaviour and make righteous choices excel and live a meaningful life



AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

Yes, there are five choices; by making them we can excel in life. These are to become good people. We know whom we call good. They are good in their behaviour, choices, etc. The next level is of those, who are not only good but they mostly follow dharma also, which pleases God. The next level is that of welfare workers, who dedicate their lives to the service of humanity without any selfish motive. Out of the followers of dharma, God appoints some as His (nimitta) instrument to carry out activities for God to uphold dharma. The top-most level of course is of bhaktas (devotees) of God. I will now give details regarding how one can become these five and what benefits one will derive by doing so.

To be good in spiritual parlance means to have the highest percentage of the mode of goodness. There are three modes, which are: goodness, passion and darkness. They are always competing with us. (The Bhagavad-Geeta 14.10) The mode of goodness is illuminating and free from diseases on account of purity. (14.6) The mode of passion suffers from the fault of attachment. (14.7) One is too attached to certain acts and their results. Unfortunately, the results are not in our hands. (2.47) One, therefore, suffers from anxiety, fear, depression, etc.



The mode of darkness deludes, which gives rise to many faults like carelessness. (14.8) Lord Krishna has set out in great detail about activities in goodness in the Bhagavad-Geeta. If we imbibe them, the percentage of the mode of goodness will gradually increase in us. There are many benefits in doing so and the best is goodness being the stepping stone to devotional life – the highest, and good karmaphalas of course. The next level is of persons, who strictly follow dharma besides being good.

This sets them apart from the masses. One is aligned with the plan of God for us, who is for upholding dharma. God even incarnates to do so. (6.7) We know what dharma is; it is the highest moral and religious principle. Benefits are many including accumulating pious karmas. The third higher level is that of welfare workers. God promises no 'durgati' (bad end) for such persons. (6.40) This is a big achievement because old age and bad ends are very scary prospects for human beings. Lord Krishna has singled out King Janaka as the role model in the Bhagavad-Geeta (3.20) in this connection.

The next higher level is that of 'nimittas' (instruments) of God; He chooses them from those who are habitually followers of dharma and are inclined to serve God as Arjuna did. God does everything as a karta for them and they get credit for the acts done. (11.33) The topmost category is those of devotees of God. Their rise is from being good people to strict followers of dharma. Then, they do spiritual practices like praying, darshan of God's Deities, offering obeisance to God, chanting of God's names and mantras, dhyana of God, thanking God for favours done, etc.

They become very dear to God, who is everything. (7.19) The top-most benefit of being a devotee of God is liberation in a few lives. (6.45) I am going to describe the benefits in greater detail because these are the highest. God guides, and He, being omniscient, knows what will work every time. I have made a habit of praying for guidance anytime I have some doubts about something. I have been surprised by God's response. They are no longer intuitions because they work. The same happens in the case of help. God helps His devotees like one cannot even dream of.

(The writer is a spiritual teacher, views are personal)

Beyond the boundary: The passion, intelligence and legacy of cricket



HIRANMAY KARLEKAR

Cricket, the game of glorious uncertainties, is almost a religion in our country. It often gets more attention than other sports but then you have to play it to experience its magic



There are people who frown upon what they view as the obsessive interest that many Indians have in cricket and, to a lesser extent, soccer. One wonders how many of them are familiar with Rudyard Kipling's reference to the "flannelled fools at the wicket or the muddled oafs at the goal" in his poem, The Islander, first published in The Times, London, on January 4, 1902. One also wonders whether even those who are familiar are aware that any attempt to cite the quote in vindication of their position, can run into a squall.

He wrote the poem in anger, as he felt that the English cricket team that was on an ashes tour of Australia in 1901-02, was getting more attention from the public than the British soldiers who were dying in the Boer War in South Africa, which was then limping towards an end. People paid lip service to their valour and "Then ye returned to your trinkets; then ye contented your souls/ With the flannelled fools at the wicket or the muddled oafs at the goals."

It is clear from the lines that follow that Kipling's rebuke was addressed not primarily at Britishers who played cricket and soccer but his countrymen in general for not doing enough to cope with the challenges that were going to confront the British empire—of which he was an unabashed apologist. These read, "Given to strong delusion, wholly believing a lie, / Ye saw that the land lay fenceless, and ye let the months go by/Waiting some easy wonder, hoping some saving sign/Idle—openly idle—in the lee of the forespent Line. / Idle—except for your boasting—and what is your boasting worth/If ye grudge a year of service to the lordliest life on earth?"

The reference in the last line was to conscription for military service that many in Britain abhorred. Let us, however, not digress, especially when it not even caused by "perfume from a dress"—as TS Eliot puts it in The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock. Our original concerns were cricket and soc-



INTELLIGENCE WAS NEEDED TO TAILOR ONE'S BATTING AND/OR BOWLING TO MEET THE DEMANDS OF THE PITCH AND THE NATURE OF THE OUTFIELD, THE MIND HAD TO BE SET TO WORK TO FIND OUT THE VULNERABILITIES OF THE PLAYERS OF THE OPPOSING SIDE, AND DEVISE THE STRATEGY TO WIN A MATCH

cer, to which we must now revert. I have never played much soccer. I played cricket for my College (Presidency) and clubs (Union Sporting and Dakshin Kolikata Sangsad), in Kolkata in the 1950s. Even at those levels—by no means lofty—I realised that playing required a lot of intelligence and application of mind, intense concentration, reflection, enormous will power and determination, courage, considerable physical fitness and huge reserves of stamina.

Intelligence was needed to tailor one's batting and/or bowling to meet the demands of the pitch and the nature of the outfield, The mind had to be set to work to find out the vulnerabilities of the players of the opposing side, and devise the strategy to win a match. Determination was needed to continue fighting even when the odds were heavily loaded against one, will power to calm the butterflies that began in fluttering in one's stomach as one walked out to bat and took guard, and courage not to run away from fast bowling on a wicket with uneven bounce where one could get hurt any moment.

The matches we played were mostly for a day. As an opening batsman, I could be at the wicket for a maximum period of three hours. As a first-change medium pacer, I bowled a maximum of eight overs in two spells. As the skipper of my college team, I fielded mostly at first slip or short square leg, which meant I did not have to do much running around. Yet I was pretty much drained out at the end of it all. Cricket matches are war by other means among well-established rivals, and particularly so when it comes to India and Pakistan, or

England and Australia for the ashes. It, however, also has other dimensions. If history, to quote TS Eliot again—this time from Gerontion—"has many cunning passages, contrived corridors," cricket has its tantalising moments and amusing anecdotes.

Several of the latter relate to Dr WG Grace, a legend of English cricket who had an MRCS and LRCP against his name. In one of these, he had gone to a village to play in a charity match, and a massive crowd had turned out to watch. A huge cheer rent the sky as he walked to the wicket and took guard. Then the unthinkable happened. A village lad who was bowling shattered his stumps with the devil of a delivery. The umpire signalled "out." A deadly hush fell on the ground. Grace did not move. He looked at the bowler and said, "All of these people have come to see WG Grace bat and not your monkey tricks. So go back and start bowling."

There are stories relating to India as well. One of these is about Ganesh Bose who, along with his brother, Kartik Bose—both my maternal grand-uncles—constituted the bedrock of Bengal's batting from the late 1920s to late 1940s. A dashing batsman, he was once out to a rank bad shot in a critical match.

One of his maternal uncles, who was among the spectators, rushed to him as he returned to the pavilion, and unleashed a mouthful of colourful abuses. Ganesh Bose glared at him for a moment and then said between his teeth, "I would have buried you here had you not been my maternal uncle (mama na hole tomake eikhane punte pheltam in Bengali). There are many stories about Kartik Bose too.

There was a good spinner who played college and club cricket and kept long hair, which fell on his eyes every time he bowled. Watching him at the Cricket Association of Bengal's nets at the Eden Gardens, which he conducted, Bose had asked him several times to cut his hair. As the spinner showed no sign of complying, he summoned one of Kolkata's many roadside barbers who sat in the Kolkata Maidan, and, as the nets concluded, had a crew-cut administered to him.

I had to give up cricket shortly after 21. Those days, cricket offered neither money nor the kind of career I wanted. The crunch came when I saw some of those who played with me join the railways at subordinate levels, while my friends at college joined the Indian Railways Traffic Service and the Indian Railways Accounts Service, both central services of the Government of India, as officers.

It was a deeply painful step. My family's link with cricket goes back to the time of Saradaranjan Ray (1858-1925), principal Metropolitan College and elder brother to my maternal great-grandfather, Upendrakishore Ray (1863-1915). A brilliant player himself and dubbed WG Grace of Bengal, he is known as the father of Bengal cricket. His grand nephew, Shivaji Ray, played for Bengal in the Ranji Trophy tournament. A person who was deeply saddened by my decision was another of my maternal grand-uncles, Prabhataranjan Ray. Very fond of me and a great supporter of my cricket, he watched every match I played.

(The author is Consulting Editor, The Pioneer. The views expressed are personal)

US exits Paris Agreement again: A setback for global climate action?

As the climate crisis escalates, the US exit threatens to disrupt climate diplomacy, financial commitments and emission reduction efforts worldwide

The newly elected president, Donald J. Trump has ordered the withdrawal of the United States from Paris Agreement on global warming for the second time, the first official exit being on November 4, 2020. The question is- Will the global momentum to cut emissions get stalled once again, as has happened in the past? Will other countries fill up the void or will we witness reduced contributions?

Though the withdrawal announcement of the world's biggest economy aligns with America first in international environmental agreements, can it disrupt the international climate diplomacy, at a critical moment of the climate crisis? With 200



TAVISHI TEWARY

countries committing towards reducing greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) and keeping the global temperature rise below 1.5 degrees Celsius, the signing of the Paris Agreement in 2015 showcased the collective accountability and shared responsibility of nations in addressing climate issues.

In his tenure, the former president, Joseph R Biden Jr has often communicated the vital role of the US in leading the world in curbing fossil fuel pollution. The support to developing countries for transitioning to renewable energy, building resilient infrastructure and adapting to climate change is essential to mitigate the adverse consequences of the

phenomenon and pace up the global progress on emission reduction. This is in sharp contrast to the recent, yet not surprising announcement. Mr. Trump has often referred to it as an unfair and one-sided agreement that permits the South, particularly China and India to free-ride the economic burden of the North. With less than a year for it to be

effective, the U.S. will soon find itself with the other three countries- Iran, Libya and Yemen- of not being a party to the Paris agreement. This further raises the question of whether must all the countries contribute equally in terms of efforts and resources.

Though the principle of "Common but Differentiated Responsibility" has been undermined at all successive CoPs, does it imply that the developed countries can default on their financial commitments and jeopardise the global climate commitment?

With the announcement of US retrenchment from the agreement in 2017 and the beginning of the formal



withdrawal process, the International Energy Agency reported that global energy-related CO2 emissions increased by 1.7 per cent in 2018, after a steady decline over the last three years. In recent times, as is already known that the NDCs of

individual countries are not in pace with the Paris pact goal. With the withdrawal of the US, will it imply that countries will have to make greater reductions in emissions?

Will it be possible? However, the key lessons learned from

this episode underscore the importance of political stability for long-term climate commitments. As an outcome, countries like China will take advantage of this situation by leveraging themselves as reliable and committed partners in global climate leadership. It will also halt the mitigation and adaptation efforts of developing countries due to the disrupted support from developed countries. Ceased contribution of the U.S. to the Green Climate Fund will hinder the availability of critical resources for developing countries. This tops up the already low pledges announced in COP29 at Baku this year compared to the demand by developing countries.

All of this can disrupt critical alliances, deviate nations to scale down their climate commitments and impact the world's ability to fight climate change.

The U.S. withdrawal from the Paris Agreement raises urgent concerns about global climate action. As nations strive to meet climate goals, America's absence could weaken commitments, disrupt funding, and shift leadership dynamics. The world must now adapt, ensuring collective progress continues despite political instability and shifting priorities in international climate diplomacy.

(The writer is Assistant Professor, FORE School of Management, New Delhi; views are personal)

Netanyahu decries release of wrong body as ceasefire violation

HAMAS PLEDGES TO INVESTIGATE

PTI ■ JERUSALEM

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu vowed revenge Friday for what he described as a "cruel and malicious violation" of the ceasefire agreement after a body that Hamas released as part of the deal was found to not be that of an Israeli mother of two young boys, as the militants had promised. The incident has thrown the future of the fragile ceasefire into question. Six more living hostages are scheduled to be released Saturday as part of the tenuous ceasefire that has paused over 15 months of war. In a statement on Friday, Hamas said it would "conduct a thorough review" of the information regarding the body, and suggested a possible mix-up of remains might have occurred due to Israeli bombing of the area where the Israeli hostages were being held, where other Palestinians were also present. Hamas turned over four bodies Thursday as part of the ceasefire. They were supposed to have been those of Shiri Bibas and her two young sons, Kfir and Ariel Bibas, and of Oded Lifshitz, who was 83 when he was abducted during the Hamas attack that started the

war on October 7, 2023. Israeli authorities said that while the remains of the two boys and of Lifshitz were positively identified, the fourth body was found to not be that of Shiri Bibas, but that of an unidentified woman from Gaza. "We will work with determination to bring Shiri home together with all our hostages — both living and dead — and ensure that Hamas pays the full price for this cruel and malicious violation of the agreement," Netanyahu said. "The sacred memory of Oded Lifshitz and Ariel and Kfir Bibas will be forever enshrined in the heart of the nation. May God avenge their blood. And so we will avenge." Hamas said it had "no interest in retaining any bodies," adding that it had "demonstrated full compliance with the agreement in recent days and remain committed to all its terms." "We reject Netanyahu's threats, which serve only to manipulate Israeli public opinion," Hamas said, calling on mediators to ensure the continued implementation of the ceasefire. The group also called for the return of the unidentified remains, which Israel has said are those of a Palestinian woman. The revelation of the body's

identity was a shocking twist in the saga surrounding the Bibas family, who have become global symbols of the plight of Israeli hostages held by Hamas. During the ceasefire, which began in January, Hamas has been releasing living hostages in exchange for hundreds of Palestinian prisoners being held in Israeli jails. Thursday's release marked the first time the group has returned the remains of dead hostages. The Israeli army said Thursday that the fourth body released by Hamas was an "anonymous, unidentified body." It said the Bibas family had been notified, including Yarden Bibas, Shiri's husband and father of the two boys, who had been taken captive separately from his wife and children and was released early this month as part of the ceasefire deal. Hamas has claimed Lifshitz, Shiri Bibas and her sons were killed in Israeli airstrikes. But Israel said the testing had found the two boys and Lifshitz were killed by their captors. US envoy Adam Boehler described the release of the wrong body as "horrific" and a "clear violation" of the ceasefire. "If I were them, I'd release everybody or they are going to face total annihilation," Boehler, who serves as the US envoy for

hostages, told CNN. It was unclear how the incident might affect the next scheduled swap of hostages for prisoners, set for Saturday. Hamas has said it will also release four more bodies next week, completing the first phase of the ceasefire. It is also unclear whether the truce will be extended beyond the end of the current phase, which expires in early March. In another potential blow to the deal, a series of explosions struck three parked, empty buses in central Israel overnight. There were no injuries and no claim of responsibility. But the Israeli military said in response it was beefing up its forces in the West Bank, raising the likelihood of further escalation in the area. Israel has been carrying out a broad military offensive in the occupied territory since the ceasefire took effect. If the current phase of the ceasefire goes according to plan with the release of six hostages on Saturday and four more bodies next week, Hamas will be left with about 60 hostages, about half — all men — believed to still be alive. Hamas has said it won't release the remaining captives without a lasting ceasefire and a full Israeli withdrawal. Netanyahu, with the full backing of the



People gather during a vigil in Tel Aviv, Israel, hours after Hamas militants turned over four bodies to Israel, three of which have been identified by Israel as hostages Ariel and Kfir Bibas, and Oded Lifshitz, while the fourth, they said, is that of an unknown person. AP/PTI

Trump administration, says he's committed to destroying Hamas' military and governing capacities and returning all the hostages, goals widely seen as mutually exclusive. Trump's proposal to remove about 2 million Palestinians from Gaza so the US can own

and rebuild it, which has been welcomed by Netanyahu but universally rejected by Palestinians and Arab countries, has thrown the ceasefire into further doubt. Hamas could be reluctant to free more hostages if it believes that the war will resume.

Israel's military offensive killed more than 48,000 Palestinians, mostly women and children, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which doesn't distinguish between civilians and combatants. Israel says it has killed more than 17,000 fighters, without providing evi-

dence. The offensive destroyed vast areas of Gaza, reducing entire neighbourhoods to rubble. At its height, the war displaced 90 per cent of Gaza's population. Many have returned to their homes to find nothing left and no way of rebuilding.

A kickback scheme, says Trump as he targets Biden for funding 'voter turnout'

PTI ■ NEW YORK

US President Donald Trump has claimed that the USD 21 million funding to India for 'voter turnout' was a "kickback" scheme, as he continued to attack the previous Biden administration over the now cancelled financial aid. Trump made these remarks while speaking at the Republican Governors Association meeting in Washington DC on Thursday. "USD 21 million for voter turnout in India. Why are we caring about India's turnout? We have got enough problems. We want our own turnout," said Trump. "I would say in many cases, many of these cases, anytime you have no idea what we're talking about, that means there's a kickback because nobody has any idea what's going on there," he said. This is the third time within a week that Trump has questioned the funding. Earlier addressing the FII PRIORITY Summit in Miami on Thursday, he had raised similar concerns over funding to India and suggested that they were trying to "get somebody else elected".



On Wednesday, he questioned the purpose of providing USD 21 million to India for "voter turnout" as he reiterated that the US "can hardly get in there" because of high Indian tariffs. His remarks came days after the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) led by Elon Musk disclosed that USAID contributed USD 21 million to the Election Commission to boost voter turnout in India. On February 16, DOGE listed items on which the "US taxpayer dollars were going to be spent" and the list included "USD 21M for voter turnout in India." DOGE noted that all of the items have been cancelled.

The list also included USD 29 million for "strengthening political landscape in Bangladesh", USD 20 million for "fiscal federalism" and USD 19 million for "biodiversity conservation" in Nepal as well as USD 47 million for "improving learning outcomes in Asia". Trump during the speech at the Republican Governors Association meeting also questioned USD 29 million to strengthen the political landscape in Bangladesh. "Nobody knows what they mean by the political landscape. What does that mean?" he asked. "USD 20 million for fiscal federalism and USD 19 million for biodiversity in Nepal, USD 47

million for improving learning outcomes in Asia. What the hell do I care about? We got a lot. We got enough problems and all of this is terminated. We terminated this stuff and we're on the track. And by the way, there were so many others I could have I could read all night long, but so many were so terrible, and were actually disgusting. And I know you're eating your dinner, so I didn't want to do that but we're draining the swamp," Trump said. The DOGE has been put in charge of overseeing workforce reduction across the government, and as part of that, Musk announced that he would shut down USAID, which is responsible for humanitarian efforts around the globe. According to USAID officials on February 7, all USAID humanitarian work worldwide was stopped, ABC News reported. The agency's website was shut down before Musk's announcement. Later, a Trump-nominated judge announced a temporary restraining order that prevents the president and DOGE from placing 2,200 employees on administrative leave.

Ukrainians rally around Zelenskyy

PTI ■ KYIV

Days before the third anniversary of Russia's full-scale invasion, Ukrainians are as sombre and tense as they were right before Moscow launched the war. Only now, they aren't just worried about their longtime enemy. Ukraine's stunning new threat comes from its once staunchest ally, the United States, whose support appears to be fading as President Donald Trump echoes the narrative of Russian President Vladimir Putin while pledging to stop the fighting between the two countries. After their initial shock at Trump's false claims this week that Ukraine is led by a "dictator" who started the war with Russia, the Ukrainian people are rallying around a defiant President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, who publicly criticized Trump for promoting Russian "disinformation." "Yes, he's not a perfect president, but he's not a dictator," said Kateryna Karasuh, a 25-year-old tech worker from Kyiv who like many Ukrainians — and even some Republicans in Congress — is struggling to wrap her head around Trump's embrace of Russia, which represents a major about-face in US foreign policy. "It feels like the whole world is against us," Karasuh said. Against long odds, Ukrainians — with massive military support from the US — have prevented



Russia from overtaking their country, even if roughly one fifth of it is now under Russian control. But after three years of war, both civilians and soldiers are exhausted. Hundreds of thousands have been killed or wounded, tens of thousands are missing, and millions have fled the country. The mood only became gloomier in recent days as Trump signaled his desire to rapidly bring the fighting to a close on terms that Zelenskyy and many in the West say are too favorable to Russia. After Trump called Zelenskyy a "dictator" — for legally postponing an election last year — and as reports emerged of US and Russian officials meeting in Saudi Arabia to discuss a possible ceasefire without input from Ukraine, even some of Zelenskyy's harshest domestic critics have begun defending him. "We may have different opinions

about Zelenskyy, but only Ukrainian citizens have the right to judge his support," said Yaroslav Zhelezniak, a lawmaker from the opposition party Holos. "And to publicly criticize him too, because, in the end, he is our elected leader." Trump's harsh words for Zelenskyy have drawn criticism from Democrats and even some Republicans in the US Congress, where defending Ukraine from Russia — with tens of billions of dollars in military aid — has had bipartisan support. But Vice President JD Vance admonished Zelenskyy for publicly warning Trump about falling for Russian disinformation. On Thursday, the deepening tensions led to the cancellation of a news conference that had been planned to follow talks between Zelenskyy and Trump's Ukraine envoy over how to end the war. A poll released Wednesday by the Kyiv International Institute of

Sociology put public trust in Zelenskyy at 57%. The survey was conducted Feb 4 to Feb 9 among 1,000 people living across Ukraine in regions and territories controlled by the Ukrainian government. "We have a president whom we support. During war, we are united," said Larysa, a 52-year-old resident from the northeastern city of Kharkiv, who refused to give her last name due to security concerns. The political rift with the US comes as Ukrainian forces, outnumbered and outgunned, increasingly struggle to hold back Russia's slow but steady advances. Speaking from the front lines, some Ukrainian soldiers said they were not panicking yet, and not ready to give up the fight. "Even if we don't get enough weapons or if funding is cut, that doesn't change our duty to (fight)," said a Ukrainian officer who spoke on condition of anonymity in line with military rules. "No shells? We'll take up rifles. No rifles? We'll grab shovels." On Wednesday, Trump echoed one of Putin's frequent talking points, claiming Zelenskyy, whose term expired last year, must hold elections. But the idea has little traction within Ukraine — even among opposition politicians, who recognize Zelenskyy's right to postpone elections during wartime.

Macron's message to Trump: 'You can't be weak in face of Putin'

PTI ■ PARIS

French President Emmanuel Macron said he intends to tell Donald Trump that it's in the joint interest of Americans and Europeans not to "be weak" in the face of Russia's Vladimir Putin amid US-led negotiations to end the almost three-year war in Ukraine. Macron is to travel to Washington to meet with Trump on Monday, the White House said. In a one-hour question and answer session on his social media Thursday, Macron said he'll tell Trump: "You can't be weak in the face of President Putin. It's not you, it's not your trademark, it's not in your interest. How can you then be credible in the face of China if you're weak in the face of Putin?" Trump's recent statements that echo Putin's narrative and plans to have direct negotiations with Moscow have left European allies and Ukrainian officials worried. But Macron suggested Trump's strategy to create "uncertainty" in talks with Russia could actually make Western allies stronger in these talks. Putin "doesn't know what he (Trump) is going to do, he thinks (Trump) is capable of anything," Macron said. "This uncertainty is good for us and for Ukraine." Macron added he would seek to persuade Trump that US interests and Europeans' interests are the same, telling him: "If you let Russia take over Ukraine, it would be unstoppable." That means any peace deal must be negotiated with Ukrainians and Europeans around the table, Macron reaffirmed. "We want peace, but we don't want a ceasefire that means Ukraine surrendering, because that's dangerous. And we know that would lead to Russia going further. We've already experienced it," he said. Macron also appeared ready to answer Trump's call to boost defence spending. "Us, Europeans, we must increase our war effort," he said.

Trump admin flouting order to temporarily lift freeze on foreign aid, judge says

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

The Trump administration has kept withholding foreign aid despite a court order and must at least temporarily restore the funding to programmes worldwide, a federal judge has said. Judge Amir H. Ali on Thursday declined a request by nonprofit groups doing business with the US Agency for International Development to find Trump administration officials in contempt of his order, however. The Washington, D.C., district court judge said administration officials had used his February 13 order to temporarily lift the freeze on foreign aid to instead "come up with a new, post-hoc rationalisation for the en masse suspension" of funding. Despite the judge's order to the con-

trary, USAID Deputy Secretary Pete Marocco, a Trump appointee, and other top officials had "continued their blanket suspension of funds," Ali said. The ruling comes in a lawsuit by the nonprofit groups challenging the Trump administration's month-old cutoff of foreign assistance through USAID and the State Department, which shut down USD 60 billion in annual aid and development programmes overseas almost overnight. Even after Ali's order, USAID staffers and contractors say the State Department and USAID still have not restored payments even on hundreds of millions of dollars already owed by the government. Marocco and other administration officials defended the nonpayment in writ-

ten arguments to the judge this week. They contended that they could lawfully stop or terminate payments under thousands of contracts without violating the judge's order. The Trump administration says it is now doing a programme-by-programme review of all State Department and USAID foreign assistance programmes to see which ones meet the Trump administration's agenda. Aid organisations, and current and former USAID staffers in interviews and court affidavits, say the funding freeze and deep Trump administration purges of USAID staffers have brought US foreign assistance globally to a halt, forced thousands of layoffs and is driving government partners to financial collapse.

Xi passes orders to transform China's military into world-class armed force

PTI ■ BEIJING

Chinese President Xi Jinping issued fresh orders on Friday revising rules to transform the country's military into world-class armed forces, focusing on combat readiness and war preparation amid growing rivalry with the US and tensions over Taiwan and neighbours. Xi, 71, who heads the military besides the powerful ruling Communist Party of China (CPC) and the Presidency, signed orders to publish three regulations on the military's interior order, code of conduct and military formation, state-run Xinhua news agency reported. The revisions to the regulations prioritise combat readiness as the foremost duty, with a fundamental orientation of preparing for and engaging in warfare. Fully applying the strategy of running the armed forces by law, the revised rules aim to promote a more standardised order in war preparation,

training, operations and daily life, the report said. The revision to the military code of conduct refines the rules to award the excellent, punish violators and streamline relevant procedures, it said. The revised rules, which will take effect April 1, are designed to fully transform the country's military into world-class armed forces. The regulations on the military's interior order were revised to improve the management of military personnel in matters such as soldiers' appearance and conduct, leave-taking and military training. The revised regulations on military formation were added with detailed codes of practice concerning military parades on the land, in the sea, at the dock and in the air. These rules were promulgated as China gears up for increased frictions with the US after the return of President Donald Trump, who vowed to follow a firm policy to contain Beijing's rise with tariffs as well as strengthened American armed forces.

Canada designates 7 Latin American criminal groups as terrorist entities

PTI ■ OTTAWA

Canada is designating seven Latin American criminal organisations as terrorist entities under the country's Criminal Code, giving Canadian law enforcement another tool in the fight against fentanyl trafficking, Public Safety Minister David McGuinty said. The list includes Mexico's Sinaloa Cartel, Jalisco New Generation Cartel and La Nueva Familia Michoacana, and was announced a day after the US government formally designated eight Latin American organized crime groups

as "foreign terrorist organisations." "The measures will help keep fentanyl off Canadian streets and from entering the United States," McGuinty told a news conference. The announcement was Canada's latest response to US President Donald Trump's claim that the flow of fentanyl and illegal immigration into the US were behind his threats of imposing a 25 per cent tariff on all Canadian goods — with the exception of 10 per cent on energy. Trump has paused the implementation of those tariffs until at least

March 4. US border patrol statistics show that less than 1 per cent of all fentanyl seized is found at the northern border. But Canadian officials have expressed a willingness to do more to combat the deadly synthetic opioid. The other organisations designated as terrorist groups are Cartel del Golfo and Carteles Unidos, also from Mexico; Tren de Aragua, in Venezuela, and the Mara Salvatrucha, or MS-13, which started in California but became a dominant criminal force in El Salvador.

The designation effectively freezes a group's assets and property. "Banks and brokerages will freeze these entities' assets, which can then be the subject of seizure, restraint or forfeiture," said McGuinty. It is also an offence to knowingly participate in, or contribute to, any activity of a listed terrorist group. The listing process begins with intelligence reports that indicate whether an organisation has knowingly carried out, attempted to carry out, participated in or facilitated a terrorist activity.

McGuinty said listing a group as a terrorist entity follows a rigorous process that "must meet a legal threshold." If the public safety minister believes that threshold has been met, the minister may recommend to the federal cabinet that the organization be added to the list. RCMP Commissioner Mike Duheme said the RCMP has intelligence indicating that crime cartels operate in Canada. "There's also strong intelligence that Canadians have actually

moved to Mexico and South America to facilitate the transport of certain commodities into Canada," Duheme said. Canada recently appointed Kevin Brosseau, a former member of the RCMP and a former national security and intelligence adviser, as its fentanyl czar to help stop drugs entering the US. The Canadian government has also announced it is spending 1.3 billion Canadian dollars (USD 910 million) on increased border security, including new helicopters, technology and personnel.

UK foreign secretary questions Russia's 'appetite' for peace ... challenges Lavrov at tense G20 meet

UK Foreign Secretary David Lammy said he saw no appetite for peace from Russia in Ukraine after listening to a speech by Russia's top diplomat at a tense Group of 20 meeting in South Africa.

Russia has learned nothing, "I was hoping to hear some sympathy for the innocent victims of the aggression. I was hoping to hear some readiness to seek a durable peace. What I heard was the logic of imperialism dressed up as a realpolitik, and I say to you all, we should not be surprised, but neither should we be fooled."

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The Russian Foreign Ministry did release details of a bilateral meeting Lavrov held with China's Wang. Afterwards, Lavrov said Russia's relations with China "have become and remain an increasingly significant factor in stabilising the international situation and preventing it from sliding into total confrontation," according to a statement from the ministry.

Kash Patel confirmed as Trump's FBI director



New FBI director Kash Patel has vowed to "rebuild" trust in the bureau as he becomes the first Indian-American to lead the country's premier law enforcement agency after being confirmed by the US Senate.

The morning news conference. "Our Republican colleagues, intimidated by this president and threats of primary challenges from the MAGA (Make America Great Again) world, may vote to confirm him. But... they will have to live with that vote." In his new position, Patel will lead a mammoth organisation with more than 30,000 employees, hundreds of offices nationwide and a sprawling mandate to investigate cases involving national security, terrorism and violent crimes.

Trump announced his plans to make Patel the FBI director in November. Patel's supporters include a group of former agents who have previously been accused of misconduct and were suspended, the New York Times reported.

Brazil's top court justice orders X to pay USD 1.4 million fine for non-compliance

Brazil's Supreme Court Justice Alexandre de Moraes ordered X to pay \$1.4 million Brazilian reais (USD 1.4 million) in fines for failing to comply with judicial orders, according to a judicial ruling.

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Public Notice: My client Sh. Sunil Kumar Singh owner of vacant Plot having land area adm. 40 sq. yds. (33.44 sq. mt.), out of Khassa no. 40, situated in village sadullapur Pargana and Jh. Dadr. Dist. Gudemuhur Nagar Vide Registered sale deed as Doc no. 18851 dated 18.12.2017 executed by Priyanka Singh at SR-DADR/UP the Original Registered sale deed as Doc no.10083 dated 20.07.2017 executed by Sonu in favour of Smt Priyanka Singh has been sold and this regard NCR LR no. 2025 0000130228 has been filed. The above mentioned property is going to be mortgaged with Muthoot Fincorp Limited Any person/bank/institution having any claim/right, lien any objection whatsoever in regard to above property, should notified to the undersigned/Adv. Vishal Mehan, E-713, Kankaradom Court, Delhi-110092 along with documentary evidence under address through registered a/d 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, Kankaradom Court, Delhi-110092; Mobile Number- 9811212181.

NOTICE INVITING TENDER: The Secretary, on behalf of the President Dhan Pothwar CGHS Ltd invites percentage rate bids in sealed envelope (Two bid system) from CPWD enlisted contractors of appropriate Class or above in Buildings & Roads category for the following work: NAME OF WORK: Additions / Alterations of the Mohinder Apartments (B1+S+10) due to increased FAR as per MPD-2021 at Plot No. 17, Sector-12, Dwarka, New Delhi. NIT No.: 01/DHAN POTHWAR/2024-25

ESTIMATED COST/PUR TO TENDERS: Rs.13,32,84,96/- (Civil Rs. 12,73,65,981/- Electrical Rs. 59,2515/-) EARNEST MONEY: Rs.23,13,285/- (to be refunded after receiving the Performance Guarantee). PERIOD OF COMPLETION: 27 Months. Last date & time of submission of Bid, EMD, copy of receipt for deposit of original EMD and other documents as specified in Notice Inviting Tender. 08.03.2025 up to 03.00 P.M.

FORN HD UHC-2 Advertisement giving notice about registration under Part I of Chapter XXI of the Act (Pursuant to section 374(b) of the Companies Act, 2013 and rule 41) of the Companies Act, 2013. 1. Notice is hereby given that in pursuance of sub-section (2) of section 366 of the Companies Act, 2013, an application is proposed to be made after fifteen days hereof but before the expiry of thirty days hereinafter to the Registrar at Central Registrarate Centre (CRC), Indian Institute of Corporate Affairs (IICA), Plot No. 8, 7 & 8, Sector 5, IIT Manesar, District Gurgaon (Haryana), Pin Code-122050 that a partnership firm "M/s. PARI INVESTMENT PRIVATE LIMITED" (CIN: 7460032025) under Part I of Chapter XXI of the Companies Act 2013, as a company limited by shares. 2. The Principal objects of the company are as follows:- To carry on the business of builders, developers, contractors, subcontractors, civil engineers, surveyors, designers, consultants, and to undertake construction, development, and maintenance of residential, commercial, industrial, and other infrastructure projects. To purchase, acquire, develop, lease, exchange, or otherwise deal in land, buildings, townships, commercial complexes, industrial estates, highways, roads, bridges, airports, and other infrastructure facilities. To acquire, hold, buy, sell, lease, sublease, mortgage, or otherwise deal with land, buildings, and properties of all types, whether freehold or leasehold, and to act as property managers, consultants, and advisors. To invest in, acquire, or collaborate in real estate projects through joint ventures, partnerships, or special purpose vehicles (SPVs) for development, sale, or lease of properties. To plan, develop, and construct affordable housing projects, smart cities, integrated townships, eco-friendly buildings, and urban infrastructure projects. To obtain necessary clearances, approvals, and approvals from government authorities, local bodies, and regulatory agencies for development and construction projects. 3. A copy of the draft memorandum and articles of association of the proposed company may be inspected at the office at E024, Oxford Square, Supertech E-024, Village-3, Near EkMurtiChauraha, Noida, Gautam Buddha Nagar, UTTAR PRADESH-201306. 4. This notice is hereby given that any person objecting to this application may communicate their objection in writing to the Registrar at Central Registrarate Centre (CRC), Indian Institute of Corporate Affairs (IICA), Plot No. 8, 7 & 8, Sector 5, District Gurgaon (Haryana), Pin Code-122050, within twenty days from the date of publication of this notice. Dated this 10th day of February, 2025. Name of Applicant: 1. Vinit Kumar 2. Amit Kumar 3. RAJESH KUMAR PATHAK 4. ALIRITA DEVI 5. SUMIT SHARMA 6. POOJA 7. SHALINI MISHRA

De Moraes rejected the argument and, in early August, imposed a daily fine of 100,000 Brazilian reais (USD 17,500) if the social media platform failed to provide the data. By October, the total fine for non-compliance had reached 8.1 million Brazilian reais. X appealed but later notified the court that it would pay the fine. In Wednesday's ruling, the justice ordered the company to pay the full amount immediately. It is unclear from the decision reviewed by The Associated Press whether X provided the requested registration data. The company didn't immediately reply to AP's request for comment. Last year, De Moraes ordered X's nationwide shutdown after the company said it was removing all remaining Brazil staff in the country, saying de Moraes

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SUNIL HEALTHCARE LIMITED. Regd. Office: 38E/252-A, Vijay Tower, Shahpuraj, New Delhi-110049. CIN-L24302DL1973PLC189662. Email ID: info@sunilhealthcare.com. Web: www.sunilhealthcare.com. Tel.: +91-11-49435555. Fax: +91-11-43850087. NOTICE OF POSTAL BALLOT: Members of the Company are hereby informed that pursuant to Section 110 and other applicable provisions, if any, of the Companies Act, 2013 read with Rules made thereunder, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Listing Obligations and Disclosures Requirements) Regulations, 2015 and Secretarial Standards on General Meeting issued by the Institute of Company Secretaries of India including any statutory modification or re-enactment thereof for the time being in force read with applicable Circulars issued by the Ministry of Corporate Affairs ("MCA") and by the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI Circulars) and other applicable laws, rules and regulations, if any, the Company is seeking approval of its Members for the Special Business by passing Special Resolution(s) as set out in the Notice of the Postal Ballot dated February 13, 2025 ("Notice") and accordingly has completed dispatch of said Notice through electronic mode on February 21, 2025 to the members of the Company, whose name appears in the Register of Members/List of Beneficial Owners as received from NSDL and CDSL as on Friday, February 14, 2025 and who has registered their email with our RTA/Company, for the approval of members by way of Special Resolution(s) through Postal Ballot only through remote e-voting. A person, who is not a Member as on Friday, February 14, 2025 should treat postal ballot notice for information purpose only.

Public Notice: This is to inform the general public that Saroj and Kavita are the owners of Plot of land area measuring 140 Sq. Yds., Khawat, Khata no. 529/504, Khatori no. -2557 Khassa no. -158 & 159, Fatehpur Billoch Faridabad 121004 through 2 Sale Deeds i.e., Sale Deed dated 24.08.2013 as doc. No. 2864 executed by Mr. Giring Parsad, Mr. Mahabir Parsad, Mr. Anil Kumar & Mr. Anil Kumar for self and as general attorney of Mr. Ashok Kumar, Mr. Rajesh Kumar, Mr. Manoj Kumar & Kamla Devi in favour of Mrs. Saroj in respect of area measuring 100 Sq. Yds., and Sale Deed dated 27.05.2021 as doc. No. 874 executed by Mr. Ashok Kumar, Mr. Rajesh Kumar, Mr. Manoj through GPA Mr. Anil Kumar in favour of Kavita in respect of area measuring 40 Sq. Yds., Khawat Khata no. -529/504, Khatori no. -2557 Khassa no. -158(9-3) & 159(10-8).

Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar Short Term E-Tender Notice For Internet Bandwidth. Short Term E-Tenders are invited for the purchase of 1 GBPS (1:1) Internet Bandwidth to be submitted online latest by 08-03-2025 upto 4:00 p.m. Detailed information can be obtained from website www.eproc.punjab.gov.in. Any corrigendum/ Addendum related to these e-tender will be uploaded, if required, on Punjab Govt. website: eproc.punjab.gov.in Director of Research NA/12/28242/2023/41904 Dated CHD - 2/21/2025

Securitymen kill 6 militants in NW Pakistan

Security forces in Pakistan acting on intelligence raided a militant hideout in a former stronghold of the Pakistani Taliban in the country's northwest on Friday, triggering an intense shootout in which six militants were killed, the military said. The raid was carried out in Karak, a district in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province bordering Afghanistan, the military said in a statement. An operation was underway to eliminate any other militants found there. The military provided no further details about the killed militants, but such operations are often conducted against the Pakistani Taliban, which are also known as Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan, or TTP. The TTP is an ally of the Taliban in Afghanistan and has stepped up its assaults in Pakistan since the Afghan Taliban seized power in Afghanistan in 2021.

The members may note that: The remote e-voting period shall commence on Sunday, February 23, 2025 from 09:00 A.M. (IST) onwards and shall end on Monday, March 24, 2025 at 5:00 P.M. (IST) (both days inclusive). During this period, Members of the Company holding equity shares either in physical or dematerialized form as on the Cut-off date, i.e. Friday, February 14, 2025 (including those Members who may not have received this Notice due to non-registration of their e-mail address with the Company or the Depositories/ Depository Participants or RTA), may cast their vote electronically, in respect of the resolutions as set out in this Notice only through remote e-voting. The remote e-voting module shall be disabled by "MFGINTIME" thereafter. Once the vote on resolution(s) is cast by a Member, no changes shall be allowed subsequently. ii) The Board of Directors of the Company has appointed Mr. Tara Chand Sharma, Proprietor of Jain Sharma & Associates, Company Secretaries (ICSI Membership No.: F-5749, C.P. No. 4078), Company Secretary in Practice as Scrutinizer for conducting the Postal Ballot through remote e-voting process in a fair and transparent manner. iii) The results of the Postal Ballot will be announced by the Chairman or any other person authorized by the Chairman in writing for this purpose on or before Thursday, March 27, 2025 at the Registered Office of the Company. The said result along with Scrutinizer's report would also be displayed at the Registered and Corporate Office of the Company. Additionally, the Results will also be uploaded on the Company's website of the Company www.sunilhealthcare.com as well as on website of "MFGINTIME" at https://instavote.linkintime.co.in. iv) Helpdesk for Individual Shareholders holding securities in demat mode: In case shareholders' members holding securities in demat mode have any technical issues related to login through Depository i.e. NSDL/ CDSL, they may contact the respective helpdesk given below: Login type Helpdesk details Individual Shareholders holding securities in demat mode with NSDL Members facing any technical issue in login can contact NSDL helpdesk by sending a request at evoting@nsdl.co.in or call at : 022 - 4886 7000 Individual Shareholders holding securities in demat mode with CDSL Members facing any technical issue in login can contact CDSL helpdesk by sending a request at helpdesk.evoting@cdsindia.com or contact at toll free no. 1800 22 55 33 Helpdesk for Shareholders holding securities in physical mode / Non-Individual Shareholders holding securities in demat mode: Shareholders holding securities in physical mode / Non-Individual Shareholders holding securities in demat mode facing any technical issue in login they may refer the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) and Instavote E-Voting manual available at https://instavote.linkintime.co.in, under Help section or may contact INSTAVOTE helpdesk by sending a request at notices@in.mpm.mfg.com or contact on : Tel: 022 - 49186000. v) For detail instruction of Remote e-voting, the members are requested to go through the notice of the Postal Ballot under the heading "REMOTE E-VOTING INSTRUCTIONS FOR SHAREHOLDERS" (as mentioned after note no. 14).

SUNIL HEALTHCARE LIMITED. Regd. Office: 38E/252-A, Vijay Tower, Shahpuraj, New Delhi-110049. CIN No: L24302DL1973PLC189662. Email ID: info@sunilhealthcare.com. Web: www.sunilhealthcare.com. Tel.: +91-11-49435555. Fax: +91-11-43850087. 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A person, who is not a Member as on Friday, February 14, 2025 should treat postal ballot notice for information purpose only. The Company is providing remote e-Voting facility to all its members to cast their votes electronically. For this purpose, the Company has engaged the services of M/s. MFG Intime India Private Limited (Formerly Link Intime India Private Limited) ("MFGINTIME") as the agency to provide e-Voting facility. The Postal Ballot Notice is also available at website of the Company at https://www.sunilhealthcare.com/postal-ballot and on the website of "MFGINTIME", the Company's Agency for conducting Remote E-Voting at https://instavote.linkintime.co.in and on the websites of BSE Limited (www.bseindia.com). The Members holding shares in dematerialized mode are requested to update their KYC details including email address with the relevant Depository Participants. Members holding share in Physical mode are requested to update/register their KYC details including email address by submitting duly filled and signed form ISR-1, by providing Folio No., Name of shareholder, scanned copy of the share certificate (front and back), PAN (self-attested scanned copy), AADHAR (self-attested scanned copy) at cs@sunilhealthcare.com/info@sunilhealthcare.com or to M/s Alankit Assignment Limited at #4E2, Alankit House, Jhandewalan Extension, New Delhi 110055. Contact No. 91-11-4254 1234 email id: rta@alankit.com, info@alankit.com. The members may note that: i) The remote e-voting period shall commence on Sunday, February 23, 2025 from 09:00 A.M. (IST) onwards and shall end on Monday, March 24, 2025 at 5:00 P.M. (IST) (both days inclusive). During this period, Members of the Company holding equity shares either in physical or dematerialized form as on the Cut-off date, i.e. Friday, February 14, 2025 (including those Members who may not have received this Notice due to non-registration of their e-mail address with the Company or the Depositories/ Depository Participants or RTA), may cast their vote electronically, in respect of the resolutions as set out in this Notice only through remote e-voting. The remote e-voting module shall be disabled by "MFGINTIME" thereafter. Once the vote on resolution(s) is cast by a Member, no changes shall be allowed subsequently. ii) The Board of Directors of the Company has appointed Mr. Tara Chand Sharma, Proprietor of Jain Sharma & Associates, Company Secretaries (ICSI Membership No.: F-5749, C.P. 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Additionally, the Results will also be uploaded on the Company's website of the Company www.sunilhealthcare.com as well as on website of "MFGINTIME" at https://instavote.linkintime.co.in. iv) Helpdesk for Individual Shareholders holding securities in demat mode: In case shareholders' members holding securities in demat mode have any technical issues related to login through Depository i.e. NSDL/ CDSL, they may contact the respective helpdesk given below: Login type Helpdesk details Individual Shareholders holding securities in demat mode with NSDL Members facing any technical issue in login can contact NSDL helpdesk by sending a request at evoting@nsdl.co.in or call at : 022 - 4886 7000 Individual Shareholders holding securities in demat mode with CDSL Members facing any technical issue in login can contact CDSL helpdesk by sending a request at helpdesk.evoting@cdsindia.com or contact at toll free no. 1800 22 55 33 Helpdesk for Shareholders holding securities in physical mode / Non-Individual Shareholders holding securities in demat mode: Shareholders holding securities in physical mode / Non-Individual Shareholders holding securities in demat mode facing any technical issue in login they may refer the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) and Instavote E-Voting manual available at https://instavote.linkintime.co.in, under Help section or may contact INSTAVOTE helpdesk by sending a request at notices@in.mpm.mfg.com or contact on : Tel: 022 - 49186000. v) For detail instruction of Remote e-voting, the members are requested to go through the notice of the Postal Ballot under the heading "REMOTE E-VOTING INSTRUCTIONS FOR SHAREHOLDERS" (as mentioned after note no. 14). By order of the Board of Directors For SUNIL HEALTHCARE LIMITED Sd/- SATYENDU PATTAIAK COMPANY SECRETARY & COMPLIANCE OFFICER FCS-7736 Place - New Delhi Dated- February 21, 2025 Email: cs@sunilhealthcare.com Contact No. 011-49435541 Reg. Office: 38E/252-A, Vijay Tower, Shahpuraj, New Delhi-110049 CIN No: L24302DL1973PLC189662 Email No: +91-11-49435555/00 Fax no 011-43850087 Phone ID: info@sunilhealthcare.com Web: www.sunilhealthcare.com

Rate cut appropriate monetary policy response: RBI Governor

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Governor Sanjay Malhotra opined that rate reduction was an appropriate monetary policy response at this juncture citing movement of inflation towards the central bank's 4 per cent target, said the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) meeting minutes released on Friday. Malhotra, along with five other members of the MPC had voted for a 25 basis points reduction in the short-term lending rate (repo) to 6.25 per cent. The RBI at its meeting held from February 5 to February 7 effected the rate cut after a gap of five years. "Given the macroeconomic outlook when inflation is expected to align with the target, and recognising that monetary policy is forward-looking, I view a lower policy rate to be more appropriate at the current juncture," Malhotra said, according to the minutes. Chairing his first MPC meeting, he had also pointed out that rising uncertainties on global financial markets

and trade policy front, coupled with continuing risk of adverse weather events pose risks to the inflation and growth outlook. While the central bank had reduced the rate, it continued with the neutral stance of monetary policy. "This will provide the flexibility to respond to the evolving macroeconomic environment. By taking this logical course, monetary policy will be able to fulfil its mandate and play its part in the sustainable development of the Indian economy," Malhotra said. Headline inflation, after moving above the upper tolerance band in October, has moderated and was at a five-month low of 4.3 per cent in January. MPC member and RBI Deputy Governor M Rajeshwar Rao said that at the current juncture, with a further alignment of headline inflation towards the 4 per cent target, there is greater space to address concerns regarding growth by way of reduction in the policy repo rate. "This monetary policy measure in conjunction with

the fiscal measures announced in the Budget should give a fillip to aggregate demand conditions. Furthermore, the government has reaffirmed its commitment to fiscal consolidation, which should help to anchor medium-term inflation expectations," Rao said. RBI Executive Director and panel member Rajiv Ranjan said in line with the sequencing path that the RBI followed, a policy rate cut in February 2025 is the most rational and appropriate next step as we now have greater confidence on the disinflation path. "In line with this prognosis, we also prepared the market by infusing sufficient liquidity for better transmission. The baseline projections suggest headline inflation to average at 4.2 per cent during 2025-26," he said, according to the minutes. The external members of the MPC - Nagesh Kumar, Saugata Bhattacharya, and Ram Singh - too had voted for a reduction in the repo rate. Nagesh Kumar had flagged concern about a threat of

dumping of excess capacities in China with their deep pockets and their access to the Western markets coming under a cloud. He also noted that some manufacturing sectors have begun to feel the pinch including steel (possibly explaining the negative growth) while labour-intensive consumer sectors, such as garments and leather goods have been facing an onslaught. The latest Economic Survey shows FDI inflows have been subdued, with foreign investors both FDI and FPIs repatriating, leaving little investments in net terms. "Therefore, the case for supporting growth cannot be overemphasised," Kumar said. External member Saugata Bhattacharya said that in view of the downward inflation trajectory, rate cut is the "appropriate policy response at this point of the economic cycle". Bhattacharya also voted to continue with the neutral monetary policy stance. Ram Singh said the Union Budget 2025 has given a push to demand.

CEPA with UAE fastest agreed FTA: Piyush Goyal

PTI ■ KOCHI

The proposed bilateral trade pact between India and the US will be the "mother of all deals" that will provide huge opportunities for Indians and Americans to work together, Union Minister Piyush Goyal said on Friday. Addressing the Invest Kerala Global Summit (IKGS) here, the commerce and industry minister said he has come here to express the central government's solidarity and full support to the event. His comments also came against the backdrop of differences between the BJP-led Centre and the Kerala government, which is headed by the Left Democratic Front (LDF), on various issues. The minister mentioned about India's Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) with the UAE and said it was the world's fastest ever negotiated free trade agreement. "We hope to start the process soon for CEPA with Bahrain," he said in the presence of ministers from Bahrain and the UAE. According to Goyal, India is already in dialogues with the European Union, the UK and



Union Minister Piyush Goyal addresses a gathering during Invest Kerala Global Summit 2025, in Kochi, Kerala

Oman for the trade deals. "We will soon start discussing with the Trump administration of the US a strong, powerful economic engagement and a bilateral trade deal which will be the mother of all deals providing huge opportunities for Indians and Americans to work together and complement each other's strengths in this very turbulent world," the minister said. Highlighting the growth opportunities in Kerala and the country, Goyal told investors not to miss the bus and with respect to the state, not to miss the boat.

"Those who miss the boat may be left at the shore while others will sail with tailwinds of growth, progress and prosperity that India offers," the minister said. Around 3,000 participants are expected at the two-day summit. Goyal said it is always a pleasure to visit God's Own Country and in every visit, you will feel like never going back. "I will go back, so you don't have to worry. The lotus has not yet bloomed in Kerala but very soon. That was on a lighter note, do not take it that this is a political platform," Goyal, also a senior BJP leader, said.

Forex reserves drop to USD 635.721 Billion

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Snapping the three-week rising streak, India's forex reserves dropped by \$2.54 Billion to \$635.721 Billion in the week ended February 14, the RBI said on Friday. In the previous reporting week, the reserves had increased by \$7.654 Billion to \$638.261 Billion. The forex reserves had increased to an all-time high of \$704.885 Billion in September 2024. The forex kitty however declined thereafter due to forex market interventions by RBI to reduce volatility in the rupee. For the week ended February 14, foreign currency assets, a major component of the reserves, decreased by \$4.515 Billion to \$539.591 Billion, the data released on Friday showed. Expressed in dollar terms, the foreign currency assets include the effect of appreciation or depreciation of non-US units like the euro, pound and yen held in the foreign exchange reserves. Gold reserves, however, increased by \$1.942 Billion to \$74.15 Billion during the week, the RBI said.

Sensex declines nearly 425 points

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Falling for the fourth straight day, benchmark Sensex declined by nearly 425 points on Friday due to selling in auto, pharma and banking shares and relentless foreign fund outflows. The 30-share BSE benchmark Sensex dropped 424.90 points or 0.56 per cent to settle at 75,311.06. During the day, it tanked 623.55 points or 0.82 per cent to 75,112.41. The NSE Nifty declined 117.25 points or 0.51 per cent to 22,795.90. In four trading days, the BSE barometer tumbled 685.8 points or 0.90 per cent while the Nifty declined 163.6 points or 0.71 per cent. From the Sensex pack, Mahindra and Mahindra tanked over 6 per cent. Adani Ports, Tata Motors, Sun Pharma, Power Grid, Zomato, ICICI Bank, State Bank of India and UltraTech Cement were also among the laggards. Tata Steel, Larsen and Toubro, HCL Tech, Asian Paints, HDFC Bank and NTPC were among the gainers. "A combination of negative factors such as relentless FII selling, falling rupee, expensive valuations and the US threat of reciprocating tariff levies continue to drive investors away from Indian equities. "In fact, local benchmarks under-performed both Asian and European indices, which logged significant gains. Barring metals, the slump in domestic markets was led by weakness in banking, IT, telecom, auto, realty and oil and gas shares," Prashanth Tapse, Senior VP (Research), Mehta Equities Ltd, said. Foreign Institutional Investors

(FIIs) offloaded equities worth ₹3,311.55 Crore on Thursday, according to exchange data. The BSE midcap gauge declined 1.18 per cent and smallcap index dipped 0.43 per cent. Among BSE sectoral indices, auto dropped 2.60 per cent, consumer discretionary (1.49 per cent), oil and gas (1.42 per cent), realty (1.33 per cent), telecommunication (1.19 per cent) and consumer durables (0.87 per cent). Metal emerged as the only gainer and jumped 1.23 per cent. As many as 2,246 stocks declined, while 1,701 advanced and 113 remained unchanged on the BSE. On the weekly front, the BSE benchmark declined 628.15 points or 0.82 per cent and the Nifty went lower by 133.35 points or 0.58 per cent. The domestic market continued to exhibit broad-based weakness, primarily influenced by investor concerns over the hawkish tone of the FOMC minutes, which signalled prolonged higher interest rates that could constrain liquidity in emerging markets, Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services, said. "Although the market has undergone a healthy correction, the uncertainties surrounding the gradual recovery of corporate earnings and ongoing tariff-related risks continue to cast doubt on valuation levels, particularly in the broader market. India is currently lagging behind its Asian peers, as FII outflows remain high, with the "sell India, buy China" strategy continuing to yield returns for the time being," he added.

Government classifies barytes, feldspar, mica, quartz as major minerals

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The government on Friday said that it has changed the classification of barytes, feldspar, mica and quartz into the category of major minerals. This move would pave the way for an increased exploration and scientific mining of such resources that are primary source of many critical minerals. Earlier, these were classified as minor minerals. "The Ministry of Mines vide gazette notification dated 20th February, 2025 has shifted minerals Barytes, Feldspar, Mica and Quartz from the list

of minor minerals to the category of major minerals," an official statement said. The development came on the heels of the government's National Critical Mineral Mission which seeks exploration and mining of critical minerals within the country including recovery of these minerals from various mines, overburden and tailings. Quartz, feldspar and mica are found in pegmatite rocks, which are an important source of many critical minerals such as beryl, lithium, niobium, tantalum, molybdenum, tin, titanium and tungsten among others.

PM to release 19th instalment of PM-KISAN

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will on Monday release the 19th instalment of PM-KISAN scheme, transferring around ₹22,000 Crore directly to bank accounts of 9.8 crore farmers, as part of the government's effort to enhance income of the farming community. Under this scheme, each beneficiary gets an annual benefit of ₹6,000, in three equal installments of ₹2,000 every four months. Addressing a press conference here, Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Friday said, "Prime Minister will release the 19th instalment of PM-KISAN on February 24 at a function in Bhagalpur, Bihar. The amount will be directly

credited to bank accounts of eligible farmers." He said a total amount of ₹22,000 Crore will be disbursed to 9.8 Crore farmers. Chouhan said the number of beneficiaries has increased from 9.6 Crore in the 18th instalment. The minister said that the government has disbursed total ₹3.46 Lakh Crore so far under Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN) and the number will rise to Rs 3.68 Lakh Crore after the release of 19th instalment next week. The PM-KISAN, launched in February 2019, is the world's largest DBT (Direct Benefit Transfer) scheme and has helped farmers meet their expenses towards purchase of seeds and fertilisers.

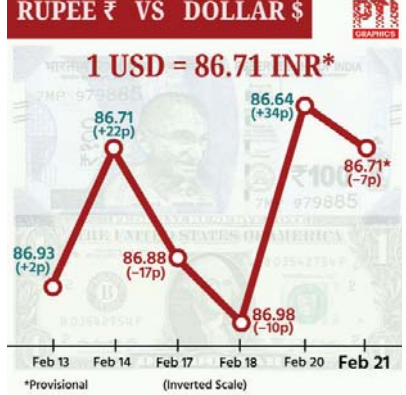
Asked about the talks with protesting farmers in Punjab, Chouhan said the government has been holding talks with the farming community and will continue to do so. He said the government is committed to increasing production, reduce input cost, enhance farmers' income from their produce and encourage natural farming. Chouhan said the Congress party talks a lot about farmers welfare but it never gave any direct financial assistance to farmers when they were in power. Elaborating on the event at Bhagalpur, Chouhan said around 2.5 Crore farmers are expected to participate physically and virtually. He said Bihar Governor, Chief Minister and the central ministers belonging to the

state will also attend the event. Chouhan informed that the Prime Minister will also inaugurate a dairy processing unit being established at Barauni and a centre of excellence under Gokul Mission, besides a couple of rail projects in the state. The minister said the release of 19th instalment from Bhagalpur should not be linked to upcoming assembly election in Bihar. He added that the Prime Minister has been releasing the instalments from different states. Chouhan said that he will be meeting Makhana farmers at Darbhanga on February 23 to understand the problems faced by them. He said the Makhana Board proposed in this year's Budget will be soon established.

Rupee falls seven paise against US dollar

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The rupee pared initial gains and settled 7 paise lower at 86.71 (provisional) against the US dollar on Friday, weighed down by sustained foreign fund outflows and a recovery in the American currency index. Forex traders said the Indian rupee declined on Friday on weak domestic markets and a recovery in the US dollar index. However, weak crude oil prices cushioned the downside. At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened on a positive note at 86.50 against the greenback. During the session it pared the gains and fell to an intra-day low of 86.77 before ending the session at 86.71 (provisional) against the dollar, logging a loss of 7 paise from its previous close. On Thursday, the rupee appreciated 34 paise to close at 86.64 against the US dollar. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 0.22 per cent higher at 106.61.



Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, fell 0.42 per cent to \$76.16 per barrel in futures trade. "We expect the rupee to trade with negative bias on the back of weak domestic markets and selling pressure by FIIs. A bounce back in the US dollar pressurised the rupee further. "However, any fresh intervention by the RBI and weak tone in crude oil prices

may support the rupee at lower levels," said Anuj Choudhary - Research Analyst at Mirae Asset Sharekhan. Choudhary further noted that the \$-INR spot price is expected to trade in a range of 86.50 to 87. In the domestic equity market, the 30-share BSE Sensex declined 424.90 points, or 0.56 per cent, to settle at 75,311.06, while the Nifty fell 117.25 points, or 0.51 per cent, to 22,795.90 points. Foreign institutional investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth ₹3,311.55 Crore on net basis on Thursday, according to exchange data. Meanwhile, Moody's Analytics on Thursday said India's growth will slow to 6.4 per cent in 2025, from 6.6 per cent in 2024, as new US tariffs and softening global demand weigh on exports. In its report titled 'Asia-Pacific Outlook: Chaos Ahead', Moody's Analytics said growth across the Asia-Pacific economy will slow in 2025 as trade tensions, policy shifts, and uneven recoveries knock the region's fortunes.

Moen enter premium sanitaryware market in India

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Moen, a global leader in kitchen and bathroom solutions, has partnered with Bathline Acquaviva Group to expand into India's fast-growing sanitary ware market. This strategic alliance blends Moen's expertise in innovation and sustainability with Acquaviva's strong presence in the Indian premium segment. India's sanitary ware industry, currently valued at ₹539.5 Billion (\$6.5 Billion), is projected to grow at a CAGR of 7.74 per cent over the next five years. Moen's entry aligns with rising consumer demand, driven by increasing incomes and a booming real estate sector. "This collaboration allows us

to merge Moen's innovation leadership with Acquaviva's deep market understanding. Together, we aim to deliver premium, sustainable solutions," said Vinay Gupta, Chairman of Bathline Acquaviva Group. To mark its entry, Moen has launched its first Experience Centre in New Delhi's upscale MG Road area, offering customers an immersive look at its cutting-edge products, from faucets to shower panels. "India is poised to be Moen's next growth engine," said George Wu, President of WINN Asia at Fortune Brands Innovations. With this partnership and flagship store, Moen is set to redefine India's premium bathroom solutions market.

Adani Foundation unveils 'Butterfly Effect' framework for women empowerment

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Ahead of the upcoming International Women's Day next month, the Adani Foundation hosted the first national-level roundtable consultation on February 19, 2025, in New Delhi. The event brought together key stakeholders to discuss strategies and chalk out pathways to accelerate women's empowerment across India. The national-level event also saw the unveiling of the Foundation's 'Butterfly Effect' framework - a transformative approach tailored to address the evolving needs of women throughout their lives. This roundtable served as an important platform to engage stakeholders and derive strategic insights on pathways to enhance the outreach and impact of women-centric interventions. It also aimed at identifying newer collaborations to scale up the socio-economic

empowerment of women across all age groups pan India. The Adani Foundation has been dedicated to empowering women for nearly three decades since 1996, implementing a series of targeted interventions designed to meet the unique needs of women at all life stages. From infancy and early childhood to adolescence, young adulthood, middle age, and old age, the Foundation strives to ensure continuous support for women, ensuring that women receive the necessary guidance and opportunities to enhance their socio-economic well-being. Its commitment to women's empowerment is holistic and across dimensions. The focus is on causing inter-generational improvement of outcomes, benefiting women in all stages of life from infancy to old age. Instead of charitable distributions, it focuses on education, nutrition and health security, skill building, and sustained outcomes through program designs that unlock



self-reliance, agency and autonomy. With a sharp focus on enabling economic activity, the Foundation is catalysing transformation for women through health, education, sustainable livelihoods, and infrastructure initiatives that empower them to make meaningful choices for themselves and their families. The 'Butterfly Effect' framework embodies this holistic approach by positioning women at the center of all interventions. The framework has been designed to support women across different stages, promoting their growth, self-reliance, and overall well-being. During the event, the Adani Foundation also released its 'Supporting Her Exponential Empowerment (S.H.E.)' Report, a carefully curated document that highlights the Foundation's ongoing efforts to empower women through every stage of their lives. The report offers a detailed look into the Foundation's approach, with a focus on the holistic nature of its interventions and how they are working to empower women throughout the country. On the occasion, Dr. Abhishek Lakhtakia, Chief Executive Officer of the Adani Foundation, reaffirmed the Foundation's resolve to empowering women, saying, "Our interventions are designed to ensure equitable access to opportunities, promoting growth, well-being, and empowerment at each phase of a woman's journey. This inaugural roundtable discussion will surely be a steppingstone to further the cause of women empowerment and help expedite outcomes." He emphasised the importance of all stakeholders coming together and generating the ideal scale for interventions at each life stage. Through this transformative approach, the Foundation

continues to enable 'Inclusive', 'Sustainable' and 'Transformative' change in the lives of women it touches. So far, the Foundation has positively transformed the lives of over 2 million girls and women through its dedicated efforts. Since 1996, the Adani Foundation, social welfare and development arm of the Adani Group, has remained agile and deeply committed to making strategic social investments for sustainable outcomes across India. It is empowering and enriching the lives of children, women, youth, and marginalised communities in the core areas of education, health and nutrition, sustainable livelihoods, climate action, and community development. The strategies of the Foundation are integrated in national priorities and global Sustainable Development Goals. The Adani Foundation is currently operating in 6,769 villages across 19 states, positively impacting 9.1 million lives.

INBRIEF

NEED FOR CURRICULUM RELEVANCE IN TODAY'S JOB MARKET: PROF KARAMJEET SINGH

AMRITSAR: Vice Chancellor of Guru Nanak Dev University, Prof Karamjeet Singh, underscored the pivotal role of higher education in enhancing employment opportunities during an interactive session with renowned economist Professor Arun Kumar, a former professor of economics at Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. Addressing the gathering, Prof Singh emphasised the necessity for students to engage with emerging technologies to better prepare for the evolving job market. He articulated that the university is proactively modifying its curriculum to align with contemporary needs, aimed at maximising student benefits.



MORE SUSTAINABLE ENVIRONMENT REQUIRED FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

AMRITSAR: Prof (Dr) Karamjeet Singh, Vice Chancellor, Guru Nanak Dev University emphasized the importance of international collaborations in tackling climate-related issues while inaugurating the five days' workshop on "Climate Change, Atmospheric Pollution, and Environmental Degradation", in collaboration with the Department of Geoinformatics - Z. GIS, University of Salzburg, Austria, at Department of Education. A large number of environmentalists were present on this occasion.





PHOTOS : PANKAJ KUMAR

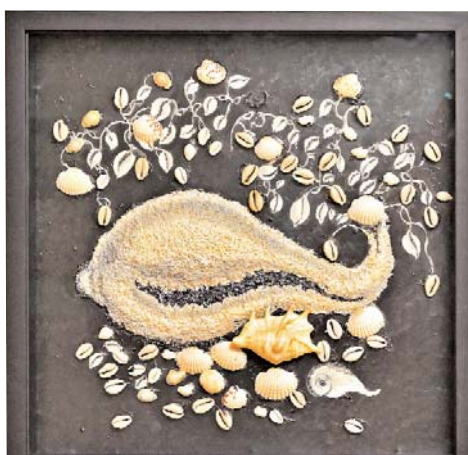
A CANVAS OF SOUND

Parvathy Baul's voice brings Jayasri Burman's art to life, says SAKSHI PRIYA

The gentle murmur of water and the silent glow of distant stars create an atmosphere of quiet enchantment. Jayasri Burman's latest exhibition, *The Whisper of Water, The Song of Stars*, at Art Alive Gallery, invites viewers into a world where nature and mythology come alive. This new body of work moves beyond the purely figurative into dreamlike landscapes filled with delicate textures and flowing forms.

Her canvases hold a sense of stillness yet breathe with life. Works like *Cosmic Churn* and *Ocean's Whisper* echo the rhythms of nature, drawing viewers into a space where land and water meet. The use of shells and cowries does not feel ornamental but deeply symbolic, representing the fluidity of time and the weight of tradition. These natural elements settle into the layers of paint, grounding the works in something tactile, something ancient.

The softness in her palette stands out. Shades of deep blues, earthy browns and muted golds create a sense of harmony, as though each piece is bathed in the quiet glow of twilight. *Weeping Grace* carries an emotional depth that is felt rather than



stated. Femininity here is not delicate but enduring, deeply connected to nature, ever-flowing like the tides.

This exhibition holds memory, echoes of childhood impressions and a silent dialogue between past and present. Jayasri Burman does not simply paint, she listens, to water, to the stars, to the spaces in between. The result is a body of work that invites reflection through quiet, persistent beauty. Until 28 February 2025, step into Art Alive Gallery and experience this world for yourself.

LIVING MYTHOLOGY
Burman's art has always been deeply rooted in tradition, but in this exhibition, she invites us to see mythology not as something distant and fixed but as a living, evolving entity. The figures in her paintings seem to emerge from the elements themselves, women rise from swirling waters, constellations seem to echo human longing and the landscapes are not just backdrops but active participants in a grander story. Each piece reflects a deeply human desire for connection: to nature, to the past, to something larger than oneself.



A VOICE FULL OF EMOTION
Parvathy Baul began to sing, her voice carrying the weight of centuries-old traditions. Dressed in saffron, she moved with effortless grace, her body swaying in rhythm with the soul-stirring notes of her ektara. Each verse felt like a whisper from another time, filling the space with a quiet intensity that held the audience captive.

Her voice, raw yet melodic, rose and fell like a river, flowing between longing and surrender. It was music that felt deeper, a calling, a prayer crafted into sound. Her eyes, lost in a world unseen, reflected the spirit of a seeker, as if she was not just performing but living each moment of her song.

Every movement of her hands, every beat of her duggi spoke of devotion. Silence held as much power as her singing, each pause stretching into something almost tangible. The audience sat motionless, as if afraid to break the spell she had cast.

As the final note faded, the room remained still, as though her voice refused to leave.



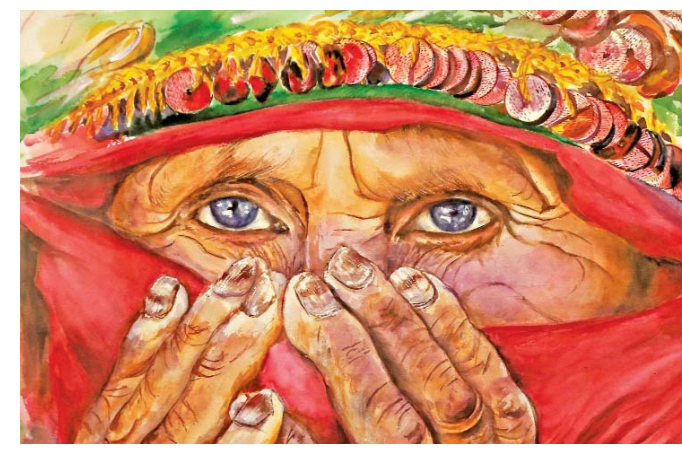
THE POETRY OF ART AND SOUND
Jayasri Burman's paintings and Parvathy Baul's music share a deep, poetic connection. Both artists draw from tradition yet reshape it into something personal and timeless. Burman's visual storytelling unfolds in layers of colour and texture, much like Baul's voice carries the weight of centuries through melody. Their art is

not just an expression but an experience, inviting the viewer and listener to step into a world where mythology, nature and devotion come together. Whether through brushstrokes or music, their work creates a space of reflection, emotion and quiet transformation, reminding us that true artistry is not only seen or heard but felt.

STANDING BEFORE THE ARTWORK, THERE IS A QUIET PULL, COLOURS MERGING LIKE DISTANT MEMORIES, TEXTURES WHISPERING FORGOTTEN STORIES. THE LINES, THE DEPTH, THE LIGHT, IT ALL SPEAKS, NOT IN WORDS, BUT IN FEELING AND REFLECTION

Frames of Silent Poetry

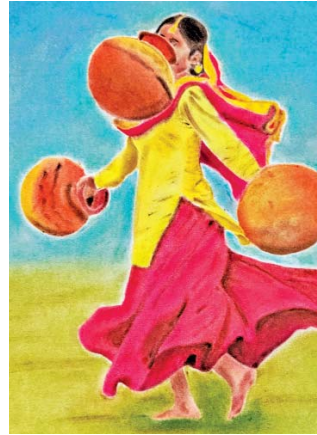
The exhibition, curated by Parul Bhagat, showcased detailed, expressive artworks by over 40 talented artists, writes TEAM VIVA



The gallery was transformed into a world of stories painted on canvas. Each artwork invited viewers to step closer, to lose themselves in its details, colours, and emotions. Some pieces felt like distant memories captured in delicate strokes, while others burst with energy, demanding attention.

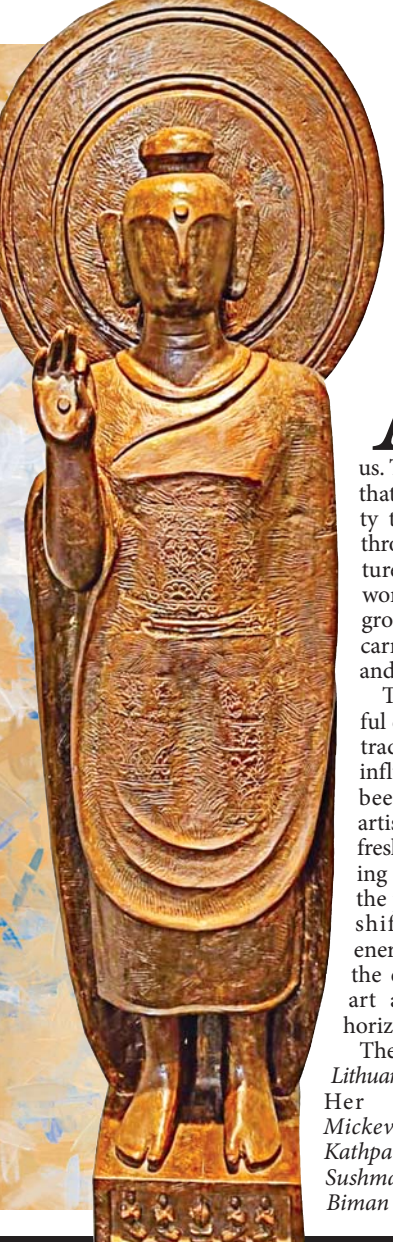
Magic with every stroke, Curated by Parul Bhagat, the National Group Art Exhibition brought together over 40 artists, each presenting their unique artistic vision. The walls carried a stunning mix of traditional and contemporary styles, with paintings that played with light and shadow, rich textures and bold contrasts. Every stroke spoke of the artist's passion, whether through intricate detailing or expressive, free-flowing movements.

From striking portraits to surreal landscapes, the exhibition showcased the limitless power of artistic expression. Some works carried a sense of nostalgia, drawing viewers into their depth, while others challenged perception with abstract forms and daring compositions. The colours, though varied, seemed



to tell a collective story, one of creativity, emotion and the boundless possibilities of art. Each artwork reflected a personal journey, a different way of seeing the world. Some drew from tradition, giving it a fresh perspective, while others defied convention, pushing the boundaries of contemporary art.

The exhibition continues till today at Gandhi Darshan Art Gallery, Delhi, offering visitors a final chance to experience this remarkable collection of artworks.



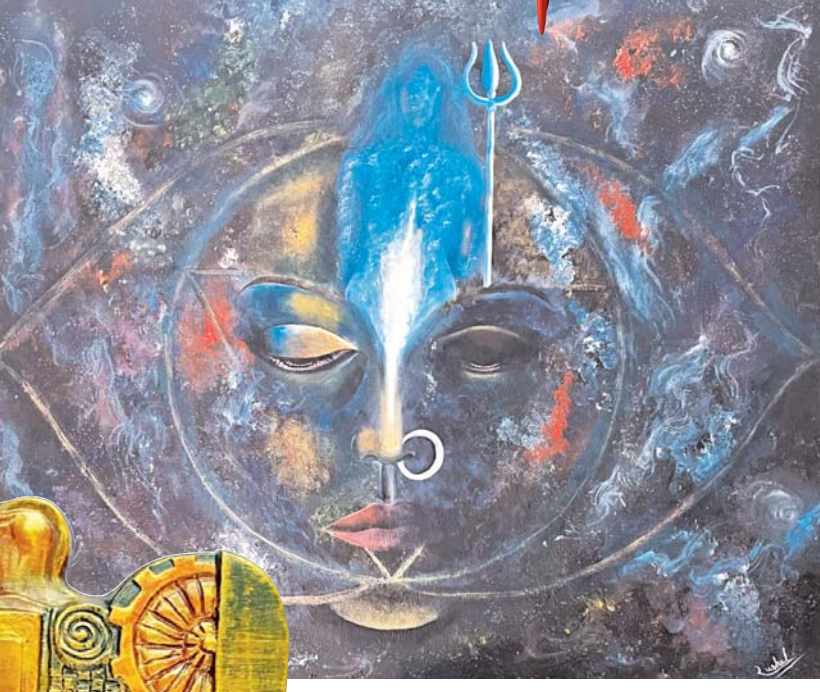
A Window Into the World of Art

Colours, Voices and Stories Breathing Life into Awadh Art Festival, says SAKSHI PRIYA

Art has a way of bringing people together, sparking conversations and creating moments that stay with us. The 7th Awadh Art Festival did just that, offering a space where creativity thrived and stories came to life through every brushstroke and sculpture. With 94 artists presenting their work, the festival became a meeting ground for diverse voices, each piece carrying its own essence, emotions and experiences.

The festival, guided by a thoughtful curation, brought together tradition and contemporary influences. While it has long been a platform for senior artists, this year introduced a fresh perspective by showcasing artists making a mark in the primary art market. This shift brought a dynamic energy, allowing visitors to see the evolving nature of Indian art and its ever-expanding horizons.

The inauguration was led by Lithuania's Ambassador to India, Her Excellency Diana Mickeviciene, alongside Jyoti Kathpalia, Dr Seema Bhalla, Dr Sushma K Bahl, Lipika Sud and Biman Das. The festival, founded



by Arka Pradhan with advisor Mrs Ratan Kaul, was organised in association with the Inner Wheel Club of Ghaziabad - Dist 301.

Beyond the artworks, the festival created moments of connection. A guided curator-

PHOTOS : PANKAJ KUMAR



al walk by Jyoti A Kathpalia allowed visitors to step into the minds of the artists, while a thought-provoking talk on legacy and value by Priya Kapoor explored the deeper significance of artistic expression. The demonstration on *Patachitra*, with its intricate storytelling on palm leaves, was a reminder of the craftsmanship that has been passed down through generations.

Every part of the festival held meaning, drawing people in and making them engage with art in a personal way. Conversations flowed, perspectives shifted and there was a sense of discovery in every corner. It was an experience to take forward, something to remember and return to in thought, long after the last artwork was packed away.

THE FESTIVAL BROUGHT TOGETHER ARTISTS FROM DIFFERENT GENRE, SHOWCASING TRADITION AND MODERN CREATIVITY



Gill gives India confidence against Pakistan

PTI ■ BENGALURU
Shubman Gill has an invincibility cloak hung around his shoulder in ODIs these days. Conditions and oppositions do not feature in his set-list. After taking a dominant avatar against England recently at home, Gill faced a different challenge against Bangladesh in India's Champions Trophy (CT) opener in Dubai on Thursday night. The pitch was sluggish and the bowlers consistently probed for weakness. But Gill beat both to notch up his eighth ODI hundred that led India to a six-wicket victory. The 125-ball century was the slowest he has made so far, but was perhaps the most important in his career. That uncharacteristically sedate outing carried a deeper meaning as it validated Gill's growing stature as India's all-weather batter in white-ball formats.

His form is a good omen when legends like Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma, who have been performing that role for several years, are in the twilight zone of their careers. And with important matches against Pakistan and New Zealand lined-up, India would need him to continue in the same vein. There were a couple of signature shots last night — a cracking short-arm pull off pacer Tanzim Hasan and a spearing, lofted cover drive off the same bowler for a four. Those hits in the ninth over were breathtaking, showcasing Gill's otherworldly timing, but even more mesmerising was his transformation to a batter full of self-restraint after that. When Rohit Sharma (41) got out in the 10th over, Gill was batting on 26 off 23 balls, and a lift-off looked imminent. But it wasn't there. His next boundary came in the 33rd over when pacer Taskin Ahmed returned to attack.



Till then, Gill was milking the spinners and pacer Mustafizur Rahman, a lethal slower ball, for singles and twos, ensuring that the quick start given by Rohit would not go in vain. In that phase, the 25-year-old scored just 30 runs off 52 balls, showing admirable situational

awareness. It was of little surprise when Gill termed it as a "satisfying" effort. "Definitely one of my most satisfying innings that I have played. The message was sent from outside that I have to try to bat till the end and that's what I tried to do," Gill would say later to the host broadcaster. Rohit was also chuffed to see the Punjab cricketer adhering to the team order. "He's been batting brilliantly of late and what he showed us (against Bangladesh), it shouldn't surprise anyone. What was good to see was he was there till the end," said Rohit. Along with carrying his bat through, Gill also tweaked his tactics as per the game's evolving needs. A feature of Gill's batting was him coming down the track even against pacers, something he does not usually do. Generally, he stays at the crease to drive, flick or pull the quicker bowlers, a minimalistic approach

that reduces the risk quotient. Gill explained that change in his approach. "Cutting the ball wasn't easy because the balls which were outside the off-stump weren't coming onto the bat that nicely. "So, I thought of using my feet to even the fast bowlers and tried to go over the circle," he added. The strategic fluidity apart, Gill's willingness to look beyond easy-on-the-eye but fleeting knocks will stand India in good stead in this tournament. If the early signs are anything to go by, then the pitches in Dubai could remain slow-burners. While Pakistan have only one spinner in Abrar Ahmed, New Zealand will be a more formidable rival as they have two excellent white-ball spinners in Mitchell Santner and Michael Bracewell. They were exceptional in stifling Pakistan in the middle overs in Karachi on a flatbed and the Kiwis can pose a bigger threat on the slack Dubai deck.



Kohli is putting lot more pressure on himself: Kumble

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
Former India captain and coach Anil Kumble feels Virat Kohli is putting a "lot more pressure on himself" in his effort to get out of the lean patch, and advised the batting icon to remain mentally relaxed. Since the 2023 ODI World Cup, Kohli has hit just one fifty while scoring 137 runs in six ODI innings. "I think he's trying a bit too hard. You can see that in the way he is going about his innings. He just needs to not worry about it," Kumble said on "ESPNcricinfo". "Rohit comes in there, has the freedom because there is plenty of batting and all of them are in great form. Similarly for Virat, he just needs to come in and not worry about anything else," he added. "All players go through tough moments in their career, but I get a feeling watching him bat, I think he is putting a lot more pressure on himself," Kumble added. Kumble reckoned a relaxed approach would help Kohli in getting out of the rut. "When you have that kind of pressure and you have that kind of expectation, you suddenly start putting undue importance to all of that and then try hard to do well. "When you do that, you're not really relaxed. The best innings that I am sure he's played, he's not even thinking about all of that." In India's Champions Trophy

opener against Bangladesh, Kohli struggled to score, and was eventually dismissed on 22 by leg-spinner Rishad Hossain, making it the Indian's sixth consecutive dismissal against spin. "To start off against spin, on surfaces like that, you need a lot of confidence. He's certainly trying too hard to manoeuvre that. He's a good player of spin when he's in form, when he wants to just knock singles off and keep rotating the strike. "Now he's trying too hard to score runs rather than just manoeuvre, and that's been his game plan. He just needs to relax a little bit and not worry too much about the outcome of what happens on the field rather than just go out there and have the freedom to play naturally, what he does really well." Kohli doesn't have big-hitting game anymore : Manjrekar Former India batter Sanjay Manjrekar said Kohli's lean run in Australia has left him in a "tight corner," affecting his confidence. "He still wants to show that he's up there for a fight, and I am starting to see maybe there's a little bit of bravado as well, and why not? You can't be revealing what's inside you." He suggested that Kohli might no longer possess the big-hitting ability to dominate bowlers at will. "Virat doesn't have the big game anymore. We've seen on occasion him playing the big shot, but he can't hit at will like a Shubman Gill does."

Kerala enter Ranji Trophy final

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD
A resilient Kerala on Friday sealed their maiden Ranji Trophy final by taking a dramatic two-run first-innings lead over Gujarat, 68 years after making their debut in Indian cricket's premier domestic competition. Going into the final day at 429/7, the home side, who won the Ranji title in 2016-17, needed just 29 runs to take a first innings lead. However, left-arm spinner Aditya Sarwate delivered under pressure, taking all three wickets to bowl Gujarat out for 455 in 174.4 overs to leave them two runs short of the mark. Making only their second semifinal appearance, the visitors had been left frustrated by a dogged 72-run eighth-wicket stand between Jaymeet Patel (74 overnight) and Siddharth Desai (24 overnight). They started the day needing three wickets with just 28 runs to defend. Kerala, who last made the semifinals in 2018-19 after making their Ranji debut back in 1957, will face Vidarbha in the summit clash after the latter defeat heavyweights



Mumbai by 80 runs in the other semifinal. Sarwate's breakthroughs came amid high drama, including a dropped catch, a tight stumping decision, and a successful DRS review that overturned a caught-out call to an LBW dismissal. First it was Kerala skipper Sachin Baby, who dropped the well-set Jaymeet with Gujarat 23 runs shy of a lead. But Jaymeet could not make it count and perished for 79 (177 balls; 2x4) in the same over when he dragged his foot outside the crease while the ball passed his outside edge for Mohammed Azharuddeen to complete an excellent stumping. After multiple replays, umpire finally ruled him out as his

foot was found to be on the line when the bail was knocked off as Kerala camp went up in celebration. But there was more to the contest as Gujarat left-arm quick Arzan Nagwaswalla, batting at No 10, counter-attacked and smashed Akshay Chandran for a cover boundary to take them within 14 runs of the lead. Breakthrough for Kerala came with Gujarat 11 runs behind when Sarwate broke the dogged resistance of Siddharth Desai, who got out for 30 that came off 164 balls with just one boundary. Desai reviewed a caught-out decision, and while Ultra Edge showed no spike, ball-tracking confirmed it would have hit leg stump, overturning the call to LBW. Nagwaswalla and last man Priyajitsinh Jadeja brought Gujarat within eight runs when Kerala missed a half-chance, with the ball slipping from Salman Nizar's grasp. Jalaj Saxena nearly claimed his fifth wicket as Nagwaswalla's inside edge brushed past leg stump, leaving Gujarat just two runs short. Then came the decisive moment. Sarwate tossed one up, Nagwaswalla swung hard, and the ball ricocheted off Nizar's helmet at short leg before lobbing to Baby at slip. The Amay Khurasiya-coached side erupted in celebration, securing a historic Ranji final berth as a dejected Nagwaswalla walked back in disbelief. For Kerala, Sarwate, who had started the day with 1/101, ended with figures of 45.4-7-111-4. Jalaj, who toiled hard for 71 overs, returned with 4/149 including 14 maidens. With their maiden Ranji final berth secured, Kerala batted with ease in the second innings, scoring 114 for four in 46 overs in their second innings in the drawn affair.



India interested in hosting 2030 CWG

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
India is "interested" in hosting the 2030 Commonwealth Games (CWG) and also conduct all those disciplines that were axed from the 2026 edition to ensure that the country's medal tally is not affected when the event is held in Glasgow, a source in the sports ministry revealed on Friday. The last date to submit an 'Expression of Interest' to host the 2030 CWG is March 31 and the ministry source said the process will get underway soon. "We are interested in hosting the 2030 Commonwealth Games and a formal interaction has taken place with the Commonwealth Games Federation on this. We have also proposed that all the disciplines that have been removed from the 2026 CWG be held in India," the source said. India last hosted the CWG in 2010. The ministry's push to have the axed events of the 2026 edition in India is a way to ensure that the CWG remains a high medal-yielding competition for the country. Last year, in a huge blow to India's medal prospects, key sports such as hockey, badminton, wrestling, cricket and shooting were dropped from the programme by host city Glasgow, which announced a pruned roster of 10 disciplines to keep the event budget-friendly. "We are merely looking to ensure that our medal tally does not suffer. An informal proposal (to have axed disciplines in India) has been put across, we will see how the host city responds to it," the source said. India had given a similar proposal for the archery and shooting competitions of the 2022 CWG in Birmingham and the CGE, along with the host city, had even approved it by agreeing to add the medals won to the finally tally. However, the idea could not be executed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Table tennis, squash and triathlon were also axed by Glasgow in a bid to limit the cost and streamline logistics given that only four venues will host the entire showpiece there. The total number of events at the Games is nine less than the 2022 Birmingham edition. The 23rd edition of Games is scheduled to take place from July 23 to August 2, marking Glasgow's return as host after 12 years. Athletics and Para Athletics (Track & Field), Swimming and Para Swimming, Artistic Gymnastics, Track Cycling and Para Track Cycling, Netball, Weightlifting and Para Powerlifting, Boxing, Judo, Bowls and Para Bowls, and 3x3 Basketball and 3x3 Wheelchair Basketball will form the sports programme in the 2026 CWG. Olympic bid on track India is also eyeing the hosting rights of the 2036 Olympic Games for which a letter of intent was sent to the International Olympic Committee (IOC) last year. "We are now waiting for the IOC elections to wind up next month for things to move ahead. The final decision on this is not coming before

Jiri Lehecka beats Carlos Alcaraz in Qatar Open quarterfinals

PTI ■ DOHA
Top-seeded Carlos Alcaraz lost for just the second time this year on Thursday when 25th-ranked Jiri Lehecka beat him 6-3, 3-6, 6-4 in the quarterfinals of the Qatar Open. Alcaraz's only other defeat in 2025 was to Novak Djokovic in the Australian Open quarterfinals. The 21-year-old Spaniard, ranked No. 3, won the Rotterdam Open earlier this month. "I've talked with my team, with my coach, and honestly I don't know what I could have done better," Alcaraz said in a press conference. "Honestly, I don't know. It was kind of a difficult feelings, I guess. I have to give credit to him as well, because when he was down, especially in the third set, he didn't give up."



Alcaraz led 4-2 in the third set and had a break point on Lehecka's serve, but couldn't finish off the Czech, who won the next three games to advance to the semifinals. The 23-year-old Lehecka will next play eighth-seeded Jack Draper, who knocked out Matteo Berrettini 4-6, 6-4, 6-3. "The match was up and down since the beginning," Lehecka

Rublev saved one match point and needed eight of his own to subdue second-seeded Alex de Minaur 6-1, 3-6, 7-6 (8). Rublev reached his fourth semifinals in Doha, where he won the title in 2020. He'll next face Canada's Félix Auger-Aliassime, who beat Daniil Medvedev when the Russian retired after losing the first set 6-3. "Unfortunately, I had food poisoning. Very disappointed to end my run here in Doha like this as I feel like I was playing well," Medvedev said in a statement. Auger-Aliassime said on court he thought Medvedev was "playing normal" until he retired. "And then I broke, I held my serve. And he just told (the umpire) that he didn't want to shake our hands because he was sick."

Attention to detail, loyalty towards craft make Shami lethal

PTI ■ DUBAI
A difficult and painful injury layoff firmly behind him, seasoned India pacer Mohammed Shami says attention to detail and loyalty towards his craft make him lethal in ICC events where he only cares about breakthroughs and not his economy rate. Shami grabbed an brilliant five-wicket haul in India's Champions Trophy opener against Bangladesh to play a pivotal role in the team's six-wicket triumph. In the process, he also became the fastest Indian and the second quickest overall to reach 200 ODI wickets here on Thursday night. "In ICC events, if my ball gets

hit a little, that's okay, but I should get a wicket, then that will be better for my team. I always think about this," Shami said at the post-match press conference. The 34-year-old quick battled a career-threatening 14-month layoff due to an ankle injury during the 2023 ODI World Cup. He returned to international action last month in the limited-overs series against England and is now leading India's attack here in the absence of an injured Jasprit Bumrah. "I just try to complete my skill with utmost loyalty. Like I have completed my 14 months - How loyal are you to that skill? How hungry are you to achieve your goal...How you will get that

rhythm again. You should be hungry," Shami said when asked about his love affair with ICC events. While wrecking Bangladesh here, Shami became India's leading wicket-taker in 50-over ICC events. His tally now stands at 60, overtaking former India pace spearhead Zaheer Khan. The retired left-arm seamer had taken 59 wickets in 32 innings while Shami crossed the mark in just his 19th innings. He has 55 wickets in ODI World Cups across three editions, with 24 coming in the 2023 tournament hosted at home. Shami said he has always focussed on minor details like rhythm, and level of discomfort while bowling to



understand where he stood in terms of his form. "Is your rhythm good? Do you have any discomfort? I pay attention to those things. I do not pay attention to the result. I pay attention to the present. And I always try to

meet the situation that is in demand. Am I good at that or not?" he said giving a peek into his mind. Shami, who claimed his sixth ODI fiver here, also has the most five-wicket hauls for India in the format. He recalled the frustration he felt while watching India's woes in the Border-Gavaskar Trophy last month when Bumrah shouldered the enormous burden of leading the attack without him at the other end. "It was very difficult...When you see that your team is very close to the edge, or it's a very close match, at that time you miss your bowlers who you used to bowl along with, or your unit. I wish I was there," he said. "I could have contributed something. Could have helped," he added. Shami has been candid enough to admit that the injury left him devastated to the extent that he feared he wouldn't be able to play again.

But the pacer said once he made a domestic comeback towards the end of 2024, his confidence rose up again. "...I got to play domestic matches to gain confidence and to see my rhythm. To see what changes have come in the last 14 months or after the surgery...I got four international matches to play and I played 8-9-10 domestic matches. That gave me a lot of confidence," he said. **All set for Pakistan clash** Sunday would be the proverbial show-stopper of ICC events when India take on Pakistan, hoping to add another exciting chapter to the rivalry that is almost always the marquee match of an ICC event. Shami said nothing changes for his team

in terms of mindset. "After winning, there is no point in having a mindset. You should stay in the same frame when you win a match and when you perform well. I don't think you need to think too much about the ICC tournament or any international match," he said, down-playing the giddy excitement that media drums up before India-Pakistan matches. "You should believe in your skills and back yourself. I always work on these two things that I believe in myself and back myself. So, it's not a matter of mindset to change. If you don't change in difficult times, then you don't change in such times," he added.