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MURDEROUS ATTACK ON SAIF ALI KHAN

PN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Bollywood actor Saif Ali Khan sustained six stab injuries, including one to his spine, in a knife attack by an unidentified intruder. The attack is suspected to have been part of a burglary attempt at his 12th-floor residence in a posh building in Bandra (West), north-west Mumbai, in the early hours of Thursday.

Shortly after the attack, a bleeding Saif was rushed to the nearby Lilavati Hospital, where he underwent surgery to remove the knife and address the leaking spinal fluid. "The actor was brought to our hospital with six injuries, two of which were deep. We performed surgery near his spine and removed a 2.5-inch piece of the knife from the spine," said Dr. Niraj Uttamani, the Chief Operating Officer of Lilavati Hospital. Dr. Nitin Dange, a colleague at the same hospital, elaborated: "The actor sustained a major injury to his thoracic spinal cord due to the knife piercing his spine. We performed surgery to remove the knife and plug the leaking spinal fluid. We also treated two other deep wounds-one on his left hand and another on his neck. He is completely stable now and recovering well. He is out of danger."

Known for his roles in films like Dil Chahta Hai, Kal Ho



Bollywood actor Kareena Kapoor at the Lilavati Hospital where actor Saif Ali Khan was admitted after he was injured in an attack by an intruder with a knife, in Mumbai PTI

Naa Ho, Omkara, Parineeta, and Hum Tum, the 54-year-old Saif is the son of legendary cricketer Mansoor Ali Khan Pataudi, popularly known as Tiger Pataudi, and actress Sharmila Tagore. He is also the 10th Nawab of Pataudi. "Saif Ali Khan has come out of surgery and is out of danger. He is currently in recovery, and doctors are monitoring his progress. All family members are safe, and the police are investigating the incident. We would like to thank Dr. Niraj Uttamani, Dr. Nitin Dange, Dr. Leena Jain, and the team at Lilavati Hospital. We also thank all his fans and well-wishers for their

prayers and support during this time," Saif's family said in a statement issued to the media. The incident took place around 2 a.m. at the 12th-floor flat of Saif's "Satguru Sharan" building, located at the junction of 29th and 24th Roads in Bandra (W). Saif and his family occupy the top four floors of the 12-storey building. A housemaid, identified as Eliyama Philippes alias Lima, was the first to spot the intruder and raised an alarm, prompting Saif to rush out of his bedroom. Upon seeing the actor, the knife-wielding intruder, who is suspected to have broken into the house

for a burglary, pounced on him. The actor attempted to resist, resulting in a scuffle. The intruder stabbed Saif multiple times before fleeing the scene. Taking the attack seriously, the Mumbai police formed seven teams to investigate the incident and arrest the assailant. Former encounter specialist Daya Nayak is one of the key investigators. Investigators are reviewing CCTV footage from the "Satguru Sharan" building and its vicinity to determine how the intruder gained access to Saif's flat.

Hindenberg winds up political turmoil

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA/PTI ■ NEW DELHI/WASHINGTON

Hindenberg Research, the US investment research firm known for short-selling, which primarily targeted Indian billionaire Gautam Adani and created a flutter in the Indian political system by holding hostage the functioning of the Parliament for multiple sessions in last three years, has shut down its operations. Announcement of the closure by Hindenberg Research founder Nate Anderson, who started in 2017, came just days before Donald Trump's inauguration as the new President of the United States. Adani Group CFO Jughesinder Robbie Singh in a cryptic social media post: "Kitne Ghazi Aaye, Kitne Ghazi Gaye". Adani group always denied the allegations. The announcement of disband of Hindenberg once again ignited political duel between the Congress and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). The Congress said its closure does not mean a clean chit for "Modani" and asserted that without a Joint Parliamentary Committee, the "already-compromised" institutions of the Indian state will continue to act only to protect the powerful. The BJP alleged that Congress leader Rahul Gandhi is in the "complete grip" of the thinking process of "urban naxals", and asked if he has now got the "contract" for the Hindenberg Research's closed "shop". Former Union minister Ravi Shankar Prasad said US-based short-selling firm Hindenberg Research "shut its shop" the day the Congress inaugurated its new headquarters building. The sudden and surprising announcement by Anderson comes within days of a Republican Congressman, a member of the House Judiciary Committee, asking the Department of Justice to preserve all the documents and communications related to the investigations of Adani and his companies. "As I've shared with family, friends and our team since late last year, I have made the decision to disband Hindenberg Research. The plan has been to wind up after we finished the pipeline of ideas we were working on. And as of the last Ponzis cases we just completed and are sharing with regulators, that day is today," Anderson announced according to the PTI from Washington.

40 years old Anderson said he looks forward to taking up hobbies, travelling and spending time with his fiancée and their child, adding



that he has earned enough money to provide for them in the future. BJP said it seems the "shop" of US-based billionaire investor George Soros is also going to close down with new administration under President-elect Donald Trump set to take over. Soros, he said, funds Hindenberg. Congress chief spokesman Jairam Ramesh said the closure of Hindenberg Research does not, in any way, mean a clean chit for Modani." The Hindenberg report of January 2023 proved serious enough to compel the Supreme Court of India to set up an Expert Committee to probe the allegation made in it against the Adani Group "whose prime patron is none other than the present Prime Minister of India", he said in a statement. "However the Hindenberg Report covered only one part of securities laws violations - of the hydra-headed Modani MegaScam. Out of the 100 questions on the Adani Mega Scam that the Congress party had asked of the PM in the Hum Adani ke Hain Kaun (HAHK) series during January-March 2023, only 21 questions related to revelations made in the Hindenberg report," Ramesh said. "The matter goes far deeper. It involves the abuse of Indian foreign policy to enrich the PM's close friends at the expense of the national interest. It involves the misuse of investigative agencies to force Indian businesspersons to divest critical infrastructure assets and help Adani build monopolies in airports, ports, defence and cement," Ramesh alleged.

The Swiss Public Prosecutors Office has frozen several Adani-linked bank accounts operated by Chang Chung-Ling and Nasser Ali Shaban Ahli that are "suspected of engaging in illicit activities, including money laundering and embezzlement", Ramesh claimed, citing a Swiss Federal Criminal Court order.

Government to constitute 8th Pay Commission

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday approved setting up the 8th Pay Commission to revise salaries of nearly 50 lakh central government employees and allowances of 65 lakh pensioners. The chairman and two members of the Commission will be appointed soon, I&B Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw told reporters here. "Prime Minister has approved 8th Central Pay Commission for central government employees," the minister said. The term of the 7th Pay Commission will end in 2026. Since 1947, seven Pay Commissions have been constituted, with the last one implemented in 2016. As the 7th Pay Commission's term concludes in 2026, initiating the process in 2025 ensures sufficient time to receive and review recommendations before its completion, the Minister added. He said the setting up of the Pay Commission in 2025 will ensure that its recommendations are received before the completion of the term of the seventh pay panel.

MARKETS



Ceasefire deal hangs in balance in Gaza

PTI ■ TEL AVIV



Izzat al-Rishq, a senior Hamas official, said the militant group "is committed to the ceasefire agreement, which was announced by the mediators." The deal announced Wednesday would see a scores of hostages held in Gaza released and a pause in fighting with a view to eventually wind down a 15-month war that has destabilised the Middle East and sparked worldwide protests. Hamas triggered the war with its October 7, 2023, cross-border attack into Israel that killed some 1,200 people and took 250 others hostage. Israel responded with a fierce offensive that has killed over 46,000 Palestinians, according to local health officials, who do not distinguish between civilians and militants but say women and children make up more than half of those killed. Israel says it has killed over 17,000 fighters, without providing evidence.

without elaborating.

Delhi residents suffer fluctuating GRAP restrictions

SAUMYA SHUKLA ■ NEW DELHI

Residents of the National Capital have no respite either from the hazardous air pollution or from the sudden revocation and imposition of different stages of the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) in the recent past, leaving common people to suffer due to the restrictions imposed.

Narrating their ordeal, many question the government's action plan, stating that only ordinary people are harassed by this flip-flopping. The Centre's panel on Delhi-NCR's air quality on Thursday revoked curbs under stage 4 of the GRAP amid dip in pollution levels following its invocation on Wednesday as the Air Quality Index (AQI) in Delhi crossed 400. However, stage 3 of GRAP is still in force which prohibits BS-III and BS-IV vehicle from plying on the roads. Moreover, the invocation happens with immediate effect, leaving many office-goers and regular citizens to face fines repeatedly. People say that the constant removal and imposition of GRAP stages causes significant problems in their daily lives. In several instances, people who book a cab in Delhi before boarding a flight from a different city are left in the



Photo: Ranjan Dimri

lurch after receiving a message that the taxi service they hired a few hours ago has been canceled due to GRAP in the city. "I booked a day-long cab service for an official visit to Delhi and boarded my flight early in the morning. The moment I switched on my mobile network, I received a message from the travel service regretting the cancellation of the service due to GRAP implementation overnight," said Ankit Guleria, a media professional who came to the Capital from Chennai. "I drove to my office in my private car in the morning. In the evening, when I was leaving, I heard that GRAP Stage-IV had been implemented. In such a

WEATHER



situation, what can we ordinary citizens do? While this is far from reducing pollution, it creates so much chaos. If I get fined because they implemented it while I am on my way, who will pay for that? What is my fault if they keep switching from one stage to another?" said a 30-year-old woman who uses her private vehicle to commute to and from the office. GRAP Stage-III has been implemented three times since last year, and Stage-IV

was enforced after 22 days. It was last enforced on December 16 last year and withdrawn on December 24. The most recent enforcement of Stage-III was on January 9, and it was withdrawn on January 12. People add that they remain unaware of these implementations, questioning the poor dissemination of such news by the CAQM. "How do they expect us to know or keep track minute by minute of these developments? Do you think ordinary people have so much time to keep reading the news to know if this stage of GRAP has been invoked or that stage has been revoked?" said a 35-year-old office-goer, advising the authorities to focus on effectively spreading these updates so people can be aware and plan accordingly. The city has been seeing Stage-I and Stage-II measures since October 14 and October 21, 2024, respectively. The measures under Stage-I and Stage-II include augmenting public transport to reduce the use of private vehicles, impounding or imposing heavy penalties on vehicles with visible emissions, and enhancing vehicle parking fees to discourage private transport, among other restrictions.



Centre keeps NEET-UG in pen-paper format

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre has decided against conducting the medical entrance exam NEET-UG in online mode for now, and announced on Thursday it will continue to be conducted in pen and paper mode. The decision comes after detailed deliberations between education and health ministries on whether to conduct the NEET-UG in pen and paper mode or online mode. "As decided by the National Medical Commission(NMC), the NEET-UG shall be conducted in Pen and paper mode (OMR based) in a single day and shift," a senior National Testing Agency (NTA) official said on

Thursday. The National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET) is the largest entrance exam in the country in terms of number of candidates appearing for the test. In 2024, a record more than 24 lakh candidates took the exam. The NTA conducts the NEET every year for admission into medical colleges. A total of 1,08,000 seats are available for MBBS course. Of the seats available for the MBBS course, approximately 56,000 are in government hospitals and about 52,000 in private colleges. Admissions to undergraduate courses in Dentistry, Ayurveda, Unani, and Siddha also utilise the results of the NEET for admission.

India joins US, Russia, China with satellite docking success

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ BENGALURU

In a major boost to India's ambitious future space missions, ISRO on Thursday successfully performed the docking of satellites as part of the Space Docking Experiment (SpaDeX) and announced that post docking, control of two satellites as a single object was also achieved. "India docked its name in space history! Good Morning India ISRO's SpaDeX mission accomplishes historic docking success. Proud to witness this moment!", ISRO said in a social media post. With the successful docking of satellites — Chaser and Target — India has become the fourth country after the US, Russia and China to accomplish the technological feat. In space, docking technology is essential when multiple rocket launches are required to achieve common mission objectives.



The docking experiment is crucial for the smooth conduct of the country's ambitious future missions, including Chandrayaan-4, Gaganyaan, setting up a space station and landing an astronaut on the moon. Last October, the government announced that India will have its own Space Station by 2035, known as the "Bharatiya Antriksh Station".

Continued on page 2

Indic languages are driving India's internet growth

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

The internet user base in India is set to surpass 900 million by 2025, driven by the growing use of Indic languages for digital content. The 'Internet in India Report 2024', jointly prepared by the Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI) and KANTAR, reveals that the number of active internet users in India reached 886 million in 2024, marking a robust 8% year-on-year growth. The report underscores the increasing role of Indic languages in shaping internet consumption patterns. It shows that rural India is leading the way when it comes to internet consumption. Not only that, but news consumption is also

highest among the rural Indian population. The report further highlights the increasing importance of Indic languages in shaping internet consumption patterns. Nearly all internet users (98%) accessed content in Indic languages, with Tamil, Telugu, and Malayalam emerging as the most popular due to their extensive availability. Over half (57%) of urban internet users prefer consuming content in regional languages, underscoring the growing demand for local-language content across platforms. The report highlights that the digital gender gap in India is steadily narrowing, with 47% of all internet users in the country being women-so far the highest. Female internet users now form a significant



Representative photo

portion of shared device users in rural India: 58%. This marks substantial progress in making digital access more inclusive and equitable over the years. While internet penetration continues to grow, the pace has moderated, especially in urban areas, compared to the exponential growth seen in

previous years. Rural India, however, continues to witness double the growth rate of urban regions, reflecting the untapped potential in these areas. Urban India leads in the adoption of non-traditional devices such as smart TVs and smart speakers, which have grown by 54% between 2023 and

2024. Concurrently, mobile devices remain the primary means of accessing the internet across both urban and rural demographics. Rural India dominates online engagement for top activities, including OTT video and music streaming, online communication, and social media usage, outpacing urban users in these categories. Conversely, activities like e-commerce, digital payments, and online education are still more prevalent among urban populations. According to the report, rural India, with 488 million users, leads this growth and now accounts for 55% of the total internet population. The report states that Indians spend an average of 90 minutes online daily.

MP bags investment proposals worth Rs 32,520 cr at Shahdol

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

REGIONAL INDUSTRY CONCLAVE (RIC) SHAHDOL

Chief Minister Mohan Yadav has stated that under the capable leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India will once again become the 'Golden Bird' through entrepreneurship. AS Modi government came into power in 2014, India's economy faced significant challenges. We were at the ranking as the 11th largest globally. By recognizing our internal strengths and infinite possibilities, we are now progressing rapidly using modern technology. Madhya Pradesh is also witnessing fast-paced development. Our state, a family of 9 crore people, aims to double its GDP in the next five years. Yadav emphasized the importance of entrepreneurs in embodying the eternal Indian philosophy of "Sarve Bhavantu Sukhinah" (May everyone be happy). Just as a warrior dedicates everything for the nation, an entrepreneur works for the welfare of many families. He stressed that if everyone fulfills their roles diligently, it will benefit all and lead to the nation's progress. Quoting, "Living for oneself is not living; live for the world." Dr. Yadav highlighted Madhya Pradesh's industry-friendly policies focused on simplicity and ease of doing business. The state provides a conducive environment for industries, offering cooperation, support, and respect. Special incentives are available for industries in sectors like tourism, IT, and ready-made garments, including assistance up to 200% and 5,000 rupees per worker for ten years. The Chief Minister mentioned that every youth in the state would be provided employment according to their skills and abilities. In recent times, six regional industry conclaves

have been organized, attracting investments exceeding 4 lakh crore rupees, creating job opportunities for 3 lakh people. On February 24, Madhya Pradesh will host the Global Investors Conclave, with departments working on sector-specific policies to be finalized soon. StartUps are also being encouraged, with congratulations extended on StartUp Day. Dr. Yadav clarified that development for his government is not just about physical infrastructure but also about the welfare of all social classes. Under the missions initiated by Prime Minister Modi for the welfare of the poor, youth, women, and farmers, rapid progress is being made. He remarked that religiously significant regions like Shahdol, Anuppur, and Umaria, which were previously underdeveloped, will now witness comprehensive growth. The 7th Regional Industries Conclave, themed "Land of Infinite Possibilities", has been organized in Shahdol to promote balanced development. Industrialists shared their experiences, and the state's progressive industrial policies have attracted continuous investment proposals. The vision is to develop Shahdol as an industrial hub, making it a center for the state and the nation. Deputy Chief Minister Rajendra Shukla stated that the conclave has instilled excitement among Shahdol residents. An event of this magnitude, previously confined to major cities, was made possible due to Yadav's visionary leadership and commitment to the state's inclusive development. Minister of State for Cottage and Rural Industries (Independent Charge), Dilip

Jaiswal expressed gratitude to the Chief Minister for the Regional Industry Conclave. He stated that industrial investment in this region would create new employment opportunities. Shahdol division has an ample supply of water, land, forests, and human resources for industries. The hardworking people of this area will contribute to taking industries to new heights. Under the leadership of the Chief Minister, the entire state is progressing rapidly on the path of industrial investment. **Industrialists Propose Investments in Coal, Energy, and Steel Sectors** At the Shahdol Regional Industries Conclave, over 40 industrialists presented various investment proposals, praising Madhya Pradesh's industrial promotion policy. Torrent Power Limited Vice President, Naveen Kumar Singh, appreciated the state's investor-friendly policies, highlighting the timely approval of investment proposals and the availability of adequate power, water, and infrastructure. Torrent Power Limited plans to establish a modern, technology-based thermal power plant in the state, which will generate employment for 1,000 people. Additionally, they intend to invest in renewable energy. Singh described Madhya Pradesh as an ideal state for investment. Balaghat-based industrialist Harsh Trivedi of Ramanik Power shared that they initially started with an investment of Rs 50 crore in Madhya Pradesh, which has grown to 350 crore rupees, thanks to the state's industry-friendly policies. Now, they plan to invest Rs 500 crore. The state's excellent roads, railways, and other facilities attract investors. Once

plagued by power shortages, Madhya Pradesh is now supplying electricity to other states. The state also boasts a large number of trained workers and technicians and is poised to become one of the leading states in the country. Reliance Energy representative, Ravi Kumar lauded Chief Minister Dr. Yadav for organizing regional industry conclaves in every division, calling it a bold and impactful step for both small and large investors. He noted that Reliance established a natural gas-based industry in Shahdol 20 years ago with an investment of Rs 6,000 crore, laying a 250-km gas pipeline from Shahdol to Phulpur, Uttar Pradesh. He identified the region as highly suitable for gas-based industries. Kamal Kishore Sharda of Sharda Energy, Raipur, announced plans to establish a coal-based steel plant in the Shahdol region, along with investments in renewable energy and thermal power. He emphasized that the establishment of industries will bring prosperity to the entire region. They also aim to improve local agriculture by training farmers in hybrid seed production. Industrialist Narendra Goyal shared his commitment to investing 3,000 crore rupees in Shahdol for setting up a rebar (steel rod) manufacturing plant. He revealed that they have acquired a coal block in the area, and mining operations will begin soon. Several other industrialists also presented attractive investment proposals during the program. Industrial Development Driven by Industry-Friendly Policies, Available Facilities, and Good Governance Principal Secretary of Industrial Policy and Investment Promotion,

Raghvendra Kumar Singh, elaborated on the immense investment potential in the Shahdol region. He highlighted that the state government offers attractive policies and facilities for investors, making the region a key hub for economic and industrial development. Singh emphasized that Madhya Pradesh is the second-largest state in India by area and ranks first in forest coverage. It is also the second-largest producer of food grains in the country. The state leads in the production of copper, manganese, molybdenum, and diamonds. He stated that as the fifth most populous state in India, Madhya Pradesh offers a vast consumer market. The state is home to 15.9 lakh MSME (Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises) units, which collectively employ over 83 lakh people. This positions Madhya Pradesh as the seventh-largest MSME hub in the country. To further support MSMEs, the state government provides Capital Subsidies under the MSME policy, financial assistance for quality certification, energy audits, and intellectual property rights (IPR). These initiatives have played a vital role in fostering industrial growth and attracting investments to Madhya Pradesh. **Launching Vast Opportunities for MSMEs and StartUps** Secretary of MSME, Smt. Priyanka Das, provided a detailed presentation on the state's policies, achievements, and future plans. She highlighted the Madhya Pradesh government's strong efforts to promote innovation and entrepreneurship, noting that the state's MSME and start-up ecosystem is rapidly progressing toward economic and industrial development.



Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav distributes letters of intent and land allotment orders to Industrialists during Regional Industry Conclave in Shahdol, Madhya Pradesh on Thursday. Pioneer photo

Rly officer to initiate defamation proceedings after blackmail

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

After being exonerated in the blackmailing case Railway Chief Controller Sanjay Katare is preparing to file a case of defamation against his colleague, Chief Controller Nirpendra Singh Gangwar, and a woman named Kajal Parmar for blackmail. The case, which has shaken the local railway community, centers around a complex conspiracy allegedly aimed at extorting money from Katare. According to the FIR, on December 30, 2021, Nirpendra invited Katare to his birthday party. At the event, Nirpendra introduced him to Kajal, who works with an NGO. Soon after, both Nirpendra and Kajal began blackmailing

Sanjay Katare described the ordeal as a nightmare, stating that he could not fathom that a trusted friend would orchestrate such a cruel conspiracy

Katare, threatening to falsely accuse him of rape. They claimed they would ruin his career, send him to jail, and destroy his reputation in society. Over the next 13 months, the pair extorted a staggering Rs 5.5 lakh from Katare. Sanjay Katare described the ordeal as a nightmare, stating that he could not fathom that a trusted friend would orchestrate such a cruel conspiracy. The pressure and fear of public humiliation were so overwhelming that Katare even considered suicide. He explained how the accused not only targeted him but also tried to manipulate his family with fabricated stories to create discord in his relationships. However, after 13 months, the court acquitted Nirpendra, dismissing all the charges as fabricated. Nirpendra, now planning to file a defamation case against Sanjay Katare, claims the entire situation stemmed from a financial dispute over a Rs 1 lakh loan. This case highlights the shocking depths of betrayal and manipulation, with both parties now seeking justice.



Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav addresses the Regional Industry Conclave in Shahdol, Madhya Pradesh on Thursday. Pioneer photo

Gauhar Mahal comes alive with annual event

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

The Pari Bazaar, a women's festival organized by a group of ladies in the city, got underway at Gauhar Mahal on Thursday. The four-day event will celebrate Indian art, culture, and crafts. The Pari Bazaar, a prominent feature on the city's social calendar, is organized by the Women Education Empowerment Society under the Begums of Bhopal Ladies Club. On the opening day, the festival featured a discussion on "The Role of Language in Cultural Consciousness," with renowned Urdu literary figure Iqbal Masood and Sudhir Azad as speakers. The session was moderated by Manju Mehta. Masood said that language is vital for cultural consciousness, acting as a bridge between understanding and shaping culture.



He encouraged the use of a vocabulary that reflected cultural awareness, noting that the language spoken by women in the home serves as a reflection of this consciousness. Azad explained that cultural consciousness goes beyond culture itself; it includes participation and respect for the environment, which influences consciousness through language. The festival also recognized the achievements of several women entrepreneurs, edu-

cators, and social workers. Honorees included literary figure Mamta Tiwari, entrepreneur Rachna Singh, Miss India 2024 Sangeeta Kumar, and others for notable contributions in their respective fields. Special awards were presented, including the Nazem Shameem Sports Award to Aruna Kumar and the Masroor Anwar Memorial Award to Rana Ashraf. The day's events culminated with a cultural performance by Bhopal's Virast: The Soul of Sufism group, directed by Rajeev Singh, which captivated the audience. Nine artists performed traditional Sufi poetry, with renditions of Amir Khusrau's "Chhap Tilak Sab Chheen" and "Damadam Mast Kalandar." **Katare demands probe in Transport department appointments** Bhopal: Deputy Leader of Opposition in the Madhya Pradesh Assembly, Hemant Katare, has raised serious allegations regarding the fake appointment of Saurabh Sharma, a former transport constable accused of corruption, in the Transport Department. Addressing a press conference at the Madhya Pradesh Congress Headquarters, Katare demanded an inquiry into the role of the then Transport Minister Bhupendra Singh, the then Transport Commissioner, and his private secretary in the alleged appointment. Katare presented evidence of Saurabh Sharma's appointment order, issued on October 29, 2016 (Order No. 6084/2016), which referenced a note dated September 14, 2016, by the then minister. This note, based on a letter from the Collector of Gwalior dated August 12, 2016, sought Sharma's compassionate appointment.

Fatal distraction: Snapchat leads to car crash, 2 dead

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

A shocking accident occurred in the Kolar area when a car, driven by 22-year-old Vineet, lost control and plunged into a canal on Wednesday night. The crash resulted in the death of two youths, Vineet and Palash Gaikwad (25), while the third passenger, Piyush Gajbhiye (24), survived with serious injuries. The incident took place in Kolar at around 11:30 pm, where the trio was allegedly making a video on a mobile phone while the car was in motion. According to eyewitnesses and the statements from Piyush's family, the car veered off the road and fell into the canal because the driver, Vineet, was distracted by Snapchat on his phone. Piyush, who survived, recalled that he had to break the rear window to escape the sinking vehicle. Despite his efforts, he was unable to rescue his friends because the car door was jammed. Vineet and Palash both died at the scene from serious injuries. The tragic irony lies in the fact that the accident might have

been preventable if not for the distraction caused by using a mobile phone while driving. Piyush's father, Vikas Gajbhiye, said his son, after escaping the car, was seen pleading for help. However, Vineet remained trapped inside as the car was submerged in the canal. Eyewitnesses noted that the rescue operation was delayed due to the difficulty of breaking the car's glass, which was the only way to retrieve the bodies. Adding to the concerns of this incident, it was reported that the narrowness of the culvert, along with a lack of barricades or safety measures, exacerbated the severity of the accident. The culvert, being too narrow for the road, contributed to the car losing control. This highlights both the reckless behavior of distracted driving and the inadequate safety infrastructure at the site. The police are continuing their investigation, but the tragedy serves as a stark reminder of the dangers of using mobile phones while driving, as well as the critical importance of road safety and proper traffic management.

2 nabbed for selling liquor illegally

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Koh-e-Fiza Police arrested two persons involved in the illegal sale of liquor and seized 63 liters of country liquor, along with a black Pulsar motorcycle valued at Rs. 1,25,000. The accused, identified as Anil Rai and Chand Khan both residents of Sekdakhedhi, Kotwali Schore, were caught after a tip-off from an informer. According to the information, the accused were transporting illicit liquor on a Pulsar motorcycle from the Halalpura area near the Christian cemetery to sell in rural regions. A police team, acting on this tip-off, successfully intercepted the vehicle, a Pulsar motorcycle (number MP37 MU 3113), and stopped the two individuals for questioning. Upon searching them, the police recovered 7 crates of country liquor, totaling 63 liters. The arrested individuals admitted during interrogation that they were transporting the liquor to rural areas for illegal sale. The liquor, valued at Rs. 25,000, along with the motorcycle, was seized as evidence. Both Anil and Chand Khan were arrested and booked under Section 34(2) of the Excise Act.

Mayor acts on sanitation, stray dogs, encroachments at Barkhedhi

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Conducting a review of civic services in Municipal Ward 35, Mayor Malti Rai on Thursday issued directives for the immediate removal of encroachments while urging officials to ensure the improvement of sanitary conditions in the area. Dissatisfied with sanitation standards in the area, the Mayor also ordered the transfer of the ward inspector and responded to residents' complaints by bringing the tardiness of employees to the notice of Municipal Commissioner Harendra Narayan. She warned ward officials to work with the dog squad for the capture of stray mongrels and also initiated action against pet keepers failing to register their dogs with the civic body. Additionally, she ordered the immediate removal of an eatery encroaching on a drain and slapped a Rs 5,000 fine on the errant business owner. During the inspection, the Mayor was accompanied by council member RK Singh Baghel and other municipal officials.

Mayor also ordered the transfer of the ward inspector and responded to residents' complaints

The Mayor reviewed the sanitation arrangements at various locations in the ward, including Barkehedhi and Extol College Road. Though the Mayor's intervention for the removal of squatters from drains is commendable, it is noteworthy that several drains and nullahs remain choked by illegal constructions that came up across the city in the aftermath of the Bhoj Wetland Project. Launched in 1995, the project aimed to conserve the various water bodies in the city in an environmentally sustainable manner. While the project was successful in controlling waste and other contaminants from flowing into the city lakes, it resulted in significant parts of the city's drainage system falling into the hands of encroachers, causing waterlogging issues in low-lying areas during monsoons.



Deputy Leader of Opposition Hemant Katare talking to media persons at PCC headquarters in Bhopal on Thursday. Pioneer photo

BMC action on encroachers, single-use plastics

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Persisting with its ongoing campaign against encroachers, the Bhopal Municipal Corporation (BMC) on Thursday removed squatters from various areas of the state capital, confiscating nearly 20 truckloads of goods. The anti-encroachment squads conducted operations on Thursday in areas including Karond Mandi, Arif Nagar

Bridge, Best Price Tiraha, Bhopal Memorial Hospital, and Karond Chauraha to remove encroachments from roads, footpaths, and other public spaces. The teams confiscated two truckloads of gravel and four truckloads of sand lying by the roadside. Additionally, they demolished 15 illegal shanties and seized 19 truckloads of various items, including kiosks, iron beds, planks, and storage drums. In Abbas Nagar Banjara Basti, the teams assisted in demolishing an illegally constructed building obstructing road and culvert construction. The building was demolished using JCB machines and labourers. Also on the day, BMC officials initiated action against vendors using prohibited polythene and single-use plastics. Municipal teams confiscated 55 kilograms of prohibited polythene and single-use plastic materials from various shops, rendered them unusable, and imposed fines amounting to 23,800 rupees in 123 cases.

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Cold wave grips Madhya Pradesh: Dense fog and rain add to chill

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Amid extreme cold weather conditions several districts have declared holidays on January 17 and 18, the period of severe cold continued in Madhya Pradesh on Thursday as well. Fog was seen in the morning in many districts including Gwalior-Chambal region while it has rained in Morena and Sheopur. Although Bhopal recorded day temperature at 23.4 degree Celsius chilly cold conditions were felt across the city while the night temperature was recorded 4 degree Celsius above the normal temperature. On Thursday, a drop of up to 5 degrees in day temperature was recorded in many districts including Indore. Nowgong of Chhatarpur was

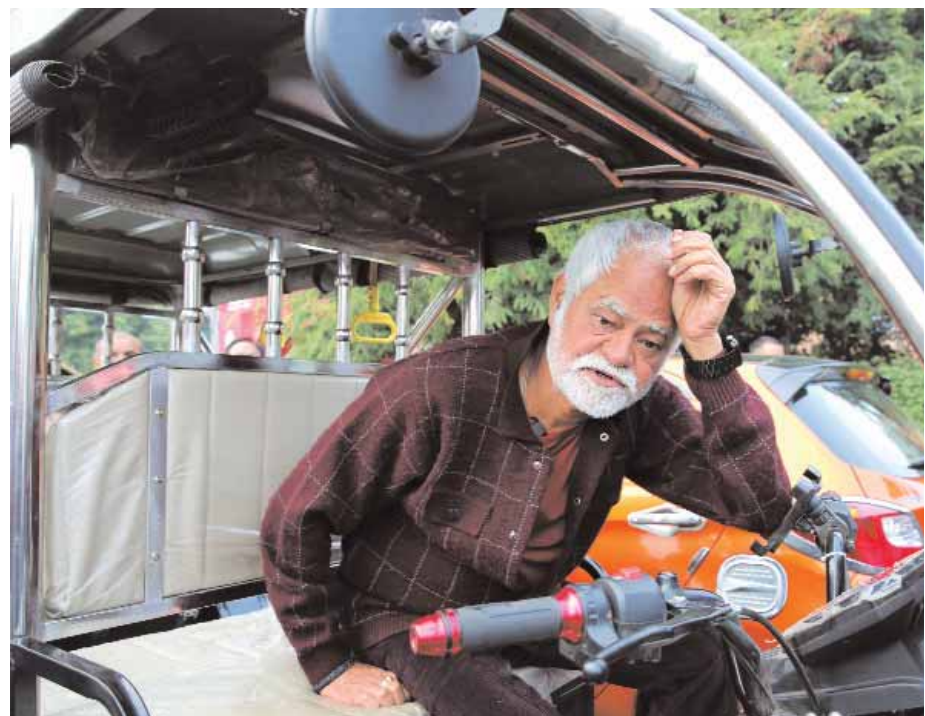
Although Bhopal recorded day temperature at 23.4 degree Celsius chilly cold conditions were felt across the city while the night temperature was recorded 4 degree Celsius above the normal temperature

the coldest. Talking about big cities, Gwalior was the coldest. The temperature here reached 18.6 degrees. The temperature was recorded at 23.4 degrees in Bhopal, 22.6 degrees in Indore, 20.4 degrees in Ujjain and 25.8 degrees in Jabalpur. Due to severe cold in Ujjain, holiday has been declared in all private, government schools and Anganwadis from nursery to class 8th on January 17. In Ratlam district, the administration has declared holiday in

schools from nursery to 8th on January 17 and 18 in view of the severe cold. In Agar Malwa too, the administration has declared a two-day holiday from January 17 to 18 in schools from nursery to 8th. Holiday has been declared in schools from nursery to 8th in Shajapur district too on January 17. It rained for about 15 minutes in Sheopur on Thursday morning due to which the weather has been extremely cold.

The activity of Western Disturbance is currently affecting the northern part of the state. After the system passes, the effect of cold will increase again from January 17. A fresh Western Disturbance is likely to affect Northwest India from 18th January and another from 22nd January 2025. Meteorologist said, 'The effect of Western Disturbance activity will last for two days. As soon as the system passes, the effect of cold will increase again in the state.' According to the Meteorological Department, another Western Disturbance will be active from January 18, which will affect the Western Himalayas. After this, the speed of icy wind will increase and the whole state will shiver. Earlier on Wednesday, the jet stream wind blew at a speed of 287 km per hour.

Moderate to Dense Fog prevailed in Bhind, Morena, Nivari & North Chhatarpur Districts; Shallow Fog prevailed in Sheopur Kalan, Gwalior, Datia, Shivpuri, Tikamgarh, South Chhatarpur, Panna, Satna, Rewa, Mauganj, Neemuch, Mandasaur, Agar, Ujjain, Rajgarh, North Guna & Ashoknagar Districts of the state. Minimum Visibility of 100 Meter has been recorded at Khajuraho, 400 meter in Gwalior Airport. The weather conditions are going to remain extreme as warnings of dense fog, thunderstorms & lightning have been issued for 11 districts. Dense fog would be experienced in Gwalior, Datia while moderate fog in Bhind, Morena, Sheopur, Chhatarpur, Niwari. Moderate fog along with thunderstorms and Lightning in Tikamgarh, Rewa, Satna, Panna.



Veteran Bollywood actor Sanjay Mishra during a shooting for his upcoming movie 'Vadhi' in Bhopal on Thursday.



College students perform at the state level dance competition 'Folk Dance of Indian Culture' under educational and cultural activities, organised by MP Higher Education Department at Government Sarojini Naidu Girls College, in Bhopal on Thursday.

MKVCL transforms operations in 5 years

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Madhya Kshetra Vidyut Vitaran Company (MKVVCL) on Thursday aod the company has successfully completed five years of its e-office system, enhancing operational efficiency and consumer services across corporate and field offices. MKVVCL's e-office system has streamlined operations, reducing time spent on consumer-related tasks. By integrating over two dozen IT applications, the company has set a benchmark in India's power sector, benefiting consumers from various sectors, including agricultural, non-domestic, and high-tension users. Several user-friendly applications were introduced to boost consumer convenience, such as online bill payments, electricity connection services, and com-

plaint resolutions via the Saral Sanjojan Portal. Additional features include POS machines, instant billing, quality control portals, self-meter reading, QR code payments, name change requests, and load enhancements. The UPAY app, chatbot support, e-KYC, and anonymous reporting of electricity theft through the Informer Scheme have further improved services for both the company and its consumers. Managing Director Kshitij Singhal said that the e-office system was implemented in line with state government directives, supported by the IT department and National Informatics Centre. Over the past five years, senior officials, junior staff, and field personnel have embraced the system, leading to seamless, efficient operations across MKVVCL offices.

PM praises Swapna Verma of Satna

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Prime Minister Narendra Modi commended Swapna Verma from Satna district on National Youth Day for her unique efforts toward achieving the goal of a Disease-Free India. Chief Minister Mohan Yadav extended his heartfelt congratulations and best wishes to Dr. Swapna for this remarkable achievement. He said that inspired by Prime Minister Modi, Swapna's contributions to the healthcare field are truly commendable. Acknowledging her invaluable work, the Prime Minister selected her among 10 participants from across the country, which is a matter of great pride for us.

न्यायालय अपर जिला दण्डाधिकारी, जिला इन्दौर

(श्री रोशन राय अपर कलेक्टर जिला इन्दौर क्रमांक-109)
क./2458/अक्री-4/2025 प्रकरण क./0256/व-121/2024-25 इंदौर दिनांक-15/01/2025
1. श्री मुकेश पायराशर 2. श्रीमती प्रतिभा पायराशर
दोनो का पता - 31 न्यु अनजानी नगर इंदौर म.प्र.
प्राथी प्राधिकृत अधिकारी हिन्दूजा हाउसिंग फायनेंस लिमिटेड पता - 101 - बी प्रथम तल एन आर के बिजनेस पार्क विजय नगर इंदौर म.प्र. द्वारा निवेदन किया कि बंधक संपत्ति- EWS युनिट न - जी - 1 लन्दन बिलास ग्राम भानिया तहसील व जिला इंदौर म.प्र पर बकाया ऋण राशि 8,43,158/- + ब्याज व अन्य खर्च का चुकाया आपके द्वारा नहीं किया गया । और न ही प्रतिभूति सम्पत्ति का कब्जा ही सोपा गया है । अतः विनीय आस्तियों का प्रतिभूतिकरण एवं पुनगठन और प्रतिभूतिहित प्रवर्तन अधिनियम कि धारा 14 में प्रतिभूति के रूप में रखी सम्पत्ति का कब्जा दिलाया जावे । अतः इस संबंध में एतद द्वारा सूचित किया जाता है कि मामले कि सुनवाई हेतु न्यायालय अपर कलेक्टर जिला इंदौर (कक्ष क्रमांक-109 में दिनांक 30-01-2025 को दोपहर 02:00 बजे होगा ।) आप प्रकरण के संबंध में समस्त दस्तावेज व साक्ष्य सहित उपस्थित रहे । आपकी अनुपस्थिति कि दशा में प्रकरण में एक पक्षीय कार्यवाही की जावेगी ।
जिला - इंदौर (रोशन राय)
दिनांक - 15/01/2025 अपर कलेक्टर एवं अपर जिला दण्डाधिकारी

BKS seeks organic produce space at Mandis

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Seeking dedicated enclosures for marketing their organic produce at Bhopal's mandis, the Bharatiya Kisan Sangh (BKS) on Thursday submitted a memorandum, highlighting benefits for both farmers and consumers. The Sangh office-bearers submitted the memorandum, addressed to Chief Minister Mohan Yadav, to ADM Ankur Meshram. President of the local BKS unit, Ashwani Mehar, along with Vice President Advocate Ruchir Tiwari, Dilip Singh Rajput, and other members, visited the Collectorate in the afternoon to present the memorandum. The memorandum outlines several key demands. One of the primary requests is the establishment of a space for organic

markets in Bhopal, where organic produce such as fruits, vegetables, grains, and other food items can be sold. The BKS also urged the government to discourage the burning of paddy straw by offering subsidies for paddy straw rollers. This would encourage farmers to bundle the straw and sell it to corrugated box manufacturing companies, promoting both environmental protection and income generation. Further, the BKS called for the ban of harmful red and blue poison pesticides, citing their detrimental effects on crops and the environment. Additionally, they urged that agricultural bills in rural areas, which are issued every six months at the rate of Rs 500 per horsepower, should be extended to urban areas as well.

CMHO leads TB screening camps at city old age homes

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

In a bid to eliminate tuberculosis by 2025, district health authorities organised special check-up camps at old age homes in the state capital to screen the elderly for TB, hypertension, and diabetes. The screening camps, a part of the Active Case Finding Campaign, were organised by the district health office under the guidance of Chief Medical and Health Officer (CMHO) Dr Prabhakar Tiwari. The screenings focused on individuals showing symptoms of TB, those with a history of TB, or those who have been in contact with TB patients. Health check-up camps were organised at Yashoda Old Age Home, Priyadarshini Nagar;

The screenings focused on individuals showing symptoms of TB, those with a history of TB, or those who have been in contact with TB patients

Apna Ghar Old Age Home, Rohit Nagar; Kamal Basant Old Age Home, Kolar Road; Anand Dham Old Age Home, Shivaji Nagar; Apna Ghar Old Age Home, Indrapuri; Asra Old Age Home, Shahjahanabad; and New Pratap Shiksha Samiti, Awadhपुरी, where 287 individuals were health-checked. Of these, 227 people were sampled for further testing. Along with TB screening, checks for hypertension and diabetes were also carried out in these health camps. Regular follow-ups, medicines, and

treatment were arranged by linking the old age homes with nearby health institutions. Ayushman cards and Aadhar IDs were also created for the attendees. Dr Tiwari said that, as per the call of the Honourable Prime Minister, India aims to eliminate TB by 2025. The health camps are being organised with the healthcare needs of high-risk populations in mind. The initiative started with old age homes, and similar camps will be organised for other high-risk groups as well, he informed.

AIIMS Bhopal experts shine at National conference

Bhopal: Recently, the faculty of AIIMS Bhopal actively participated in the National Conference on "Aging Through the Lens of Physiology: Unlocking Longevity" held at Chirayu Medical College & Hospital in Bhopal. The conference was organized in collaboration with the Physiology Society of India (PSI) and the Association of Physiologists and Pharmacologists of India (APPI). The conference aimed to explore various aspects of aging, including physiological, clinical, psychological, and lifestyle-related issues. In this event, Dr. Rehan-ul-Haq, Dean (Research) at AIIMS Bhopal, attended as the Chief Guest. He emphasized the importance of lifestyle changes in

promoting healthy aging, including music therapy, communal living, plant-based diets, and daily physical activity. He also discussed the possibilities of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between AIIMS Bhopal and Chirayu Medical College, which could play a crucial role in advancing research and collaboration in these areas. At the conference, Dr. Varun Malhotra, Additional Professor of Physiology at AIIMS Bhopal, conducted a meditation session inspired by Yoga Satsanga Society (YSS), which saw participation from over 310 delegates. Dr. Ragini Shrivastava, Additional Professor at AIIMS Bhopal, delivered a concise lecture on "The Physiology of Aging," highlighting the theories of aging and the significant role

of oxidative stress in the aging process. Additionally, Dr. Santosh Wakode, Professor and Head of the Department of Physiology at AIIMS Bhopal, chaired a session where eminent experts discussed new theories and practical approaches to aging and longevity. Prof. Singh remarked on the significance of the conference, saying, "This national conference provides an important platform for dialogue on aging and longevity. It offers us all an opportunity to understand that longevity is not just about physical health, but is deeply connected to mental and lifestyle factors. At AIIMS Bhopal, we are committed to research and knowledge dissemination that enable society to lead a healthy and balanced life."

Nation building in progress, says CM

Bhopal: Chief Minister Mohan Yadav has said that under the leadership and guidance of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, activities are going on at every level to take the country ahead and bolster the economy. Work is underway with determination to achieve the goal of doubling the state's economy. In this sequel, The Shahdol Regional Industrial Conclave discussions will be initiated with industry groups and investors regarding the expansion of industrial activities as part of a regional initiative. The new investment proposals received for the three districts Shahdol, Anuppur and Umaria of Shahdol division are encouraging. Chief Minister Yadav said that investment proposals are being received in all sectors including tourism, health, mining, heavy

industry and small & medium industries in the state. All necessary actions have been taken on the MoUs signed in the last Industrial Conclave. It is heartening that in this RIC, Bhoomi Pujan and dedication of industrial units under those industries are also being done today. This will not only expand industrial activities in the state but also provide ample employment opportunities to the youth. Chief Minister Dr. Yadav expressed these views in a message issued to the media before leaving Bhopal for the Regional Industrial Conclave in Shahdol.

A unique confluence of culture, spirituality, and art showcased

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

The four-day 'Madhya Pradesh Mahotsav', organized by the Madhya Pradesh Tourism Board at the Art of Living International Center in Bengaluru, magnificently showcased the rich culture, spirituality, and art of Madhya Pradesh. The event was graced by the presence of esteemed spiritual leader Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, who uplifted the program's spirit with his presence. He assessed the exhibitions set up by the Tourism and Culture Department and addressed thousands of attendees, praising the state of Madhya Pradesh and its Chief Minister for their commendable efforts. Ms. Bidisha Mukherjee, Additional Managing Director, of Madhya Pradesh

Tourism Board, remarked, "This platform has undoubtedly been an exceptional opportunity to highlight Madhya Pradesh's rich cultural heritage. The Tourism Department organized diverse exhibitions, promoting outreach, films, investment, and rural tourism, and also showcased handicrafts such as the Mrignayane Emporium. Additionally, food stalls representing the state's six regions offered a new culinary experience each day with unique dishes." While addressing the gathering, Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar said, "When Madhya Pradesh shines, its cultural and spiritual light spreads everywhere." He lauded Chief Minister Dr. Mohan Yadav for his vision and efforts, emphasizing that these initiatives are propelling Madhya Pradesh to new heights in tourism and

cultural excellence. Highlighting the state's spiritual legacy, he mentioned Omkareshwar, where Adi Shankaracharya attained Enlightenment, laying the foundation for spiritual awakening across the nation. The festival also featured local artworks from the state. Additionally, tourists explored opportunities for investment and film production in Madhya Pradesh. Exhibitions of famous Gond and Bhil paintings, Zari-Zardozi embroidery, and Chanderi silk attracted significant attention. Visitors also relished traditional delicacies such as Indrahar, Mawa Bati, Bhutte ki Kees, and Ragi Balushahi at the food stalls. The four-day festival included enchanting cultural evenings. The historic performance by the Maihar Band

emerged as a highlight, while a mesmerizing Shiva Stuti and Bharatanatyam ballet performed by Jabalpur artists captivated the audience. Renowned vocalist Uday Bhawalkar presented soulful Dhrupad music, and the entrancing violin-sarod jugalbandi by maestros Kiran Banne and Maamir Khan added further charm to the evenings. The festival saw the participation of thousands of visitors, making it even more grand and vibrant. This event not only spotlighted the state's cultural heritage but also marked a significant step toward placing it on the global stage. The "Madhya Pradesh Mahotsav" was not just a celebration but a remarkable platform where various facets of art, culture, and spirituality converged seamlessly.

OFFICE OF THE PRINCIPAL, GOVERNMENT POLYTECHNIC COLLEGE RAJGARH
Khujner Road, Rajgarh (M.P.)
Email Id: rajgarhpolytechnic@gmail.com Ph. No.: 07372-292001
S.No./GPCR/Lib/2025/756 Rajgarh, Date: 10.01.2025

RETENDER NOTICE

Principal Govt. Polytechnic College Rnjarh, hereby invite sealed tender, due to insufficient number of participants in previous retender. from the reputed and well established Publishers/Distributors, to supply Diploma level technical and general books. Interested parties may view and download the tender documents containing the detailed terms and condition from the state government portal <https://mptenders.gov.in>

Tender Number	S.No./GPCR/Lib/2024/495
Tender Documents	For Supply of Print Books
Date of issue of Tender Documents	11 January 2025, 06:00 pm
Last date of E-tender purchasing	01 February 2025, 06:00 pm
Last date and time of submission of Tender	01 February 2025, 06:00 pm
Date and time of Opening of Technical Bids	03 February 2025, 06:00 pm
Date and time of Opening of Financial Bids	05 February 2025, 06:00 pm
Tender Value	Rs. 2.00 lacs
Cost of tender Document (non-refundable)	Rs. 1000/- (Rs. One Thousand Only)
Earnest Money Deposit (EMD)	Rs. 6000/- (Rs. Six Thousand Only) (E- Payment Only)

Principal,
Govt. Polytechnic College
Rajgarh

THE PIONEER CLASSIFIEDS

CHANGE OF NAME

I, Sonveer Singh S/o Ramprakash R/o Gram Puradumana PO: Atarsuma Atarsuma, Bhind, Madhya Pradesh - 477333 have changed the Name of my minor Daughter Anushka aged 14 years and she shall hereafter be known as Sonam Baghel. PD(1265)C

बैंक ऑफ बड़ौदा Bank of Baroda E-AUCTION SALE NOTICE

Appendix-IV-A [See provisio to rule 8(6) & 6(2)]
SALE NOTICE FOR SALE OF IMMOVABLE PROPERTIES

E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with provisio to Rule 8 (6) & 6 (2) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002
Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower (s) and Guarantor (s) that the below described immovable properties mortgaged/charged to Bank of Baroda the Secured Creditor the Possession of which has been taken by the Authorised Officer of Bank of Baroda Secured Creditor, will be sold on "As is where is", "As is what is" and "Whatever there is" basis for recovery of Amount mentioned below plus interest and other expenses due to Bank of Baroda the Secured Creditor from below mentioned Borrowers & Guarantors.

Name of the Branch / Borrower / Guarantors/ Mortgager	Description of Secured Assets (Movable/Immovable Properties)	Reserve Price EMD Bid Increase Amt.	Date and Time of E-Auction	Demand Notice Date Possession Date Outstanding Amount
Bank of Baroda Sawarkar Path Vidisha Branch, Distt. Vidisha Tel.: 7247716446				
Borrower: 1.Smt. Shailja Katare W/o Mr. Ashish Katare 2. Mr. Ashish Katare S/o Vandendra Katare Guarantor: Alok Shrivastava S/o Shri Krishna Shrivastava,	Residential Flat no D-1 Fourth Floor "OM SAI PLAZA" RADHAKRISHNAN", Gandhi Nagar Colony ward no.38, Dist. Vidisha. Total area -789 sqft. standing In the Name of Mrs Shailja katare W/o Mr. Ashish katare Boundries: East- Plot Deegar, West- Flat No D-2, North- Corridor, South- Plot Deegar	₹ 11,35,800/- ₹ 1,13,580/- ₹ 10,000/-	06-02-2025 2:00 p.m. to 06:00 p.m.	12-04-2021 04.04.2024 ₹ 6,59,808.50/- +intt. & charges
Bank of Baroda Vidisha Branch, Kiri mohalla, Veer Hakikat Rai Marg, Vidisha - 464001 (M.P.) Ph: 8937886444				
Borrower: M/s Lakhmichand Pawan Kumar Proprietor : Mr. Pawan Kumar Jain Guarantor : Mrs. Preeti Jain W/o Mr. Pawan Kumar Jain	All that part and parcel of the properties consisting of Equitable Mortgage of Residential House at ward No.22 Ganesh Ganj Marg Rajendra Giri Gali No.01 Vidisha M.P. 464001 Admeasuring to the area 900 sq. ft. belonging to Mrs. Preeti Jain w/o Mr. Pawan Kumar Jain Boundaries : East : Gali Cemented, West : Kandar & open area of Jain sahib, North : Gali cemented then House of PC Jain, South : House of Jagdeesh Nema & house of Keval Singh.	₹ 78,55,000/- ₹ 7,85,500/- ₹ 10,000/-	20-02-2025 2:00 p.m. to 06:00 p.m.	28-08-2024 01.01.2025 as on 25.08.2024 ₹ 98,98,316.96 +intt. & charges

For detailed terms and conditions of the sale, please refer to the link provided in Bank of Baroda website: <https://www.bankofbaroda.in/e-auction.html> & http://BAANKNET Also, prospective bidders may contact the authorised officer on contact numbers as mentioned above in the table. Please Note : For any error(s) the details available on bank's website : <http://BAANKNET> will be final. Date: 16.01.2025, Place: Bhopal Authorised Officer, Bank of Baroda

Supreme Court to hear Godhra train burning case on February 13

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday said it will hear on February 13 the appeals filed by the Gujarat government and several other convicts in the 2002 Godhra train burning case.

A bench of Justices J K Maheshwari and Aravind Kumar made it clear that no adjournment will be given in the matter on the next date of hearing.

On February 27, 2002, 59 people were killed when the S-6 coach of the Sabarmati Express was burnt at Gujarat's Godhra, triggering riots in the state. Several appeals have been filed in the apex court challenging the October 2017 verdict of the Gujarat High Court which had upheld the conviction of several convicts and commuted the death penalties of 11 people to life term.

The Gujarat government had in February 2023 told the apex court that it will be seeking death penalty for the



11 convicts whose sentences in the case were commuted to life imprisonment by the high court.

When the matter came for hearing on Thursday, a lawyer, appearing for a convict, submitted that no evidence has been put on record.

"We don't know. We will hear the matter and we had clarified this earlier. We will not adjourn this case. This case has been adjourned at least five times. (For the) last one year, I have been adjourning this matter," Justice Maheshwari said.

The lawyer told the court that some of the convicts have filed remission pleas that are pending.

Refusing to adjourn the matter, the bench said, "We have instructions from the Chief Justice's office that the cases of criminal appeal and remission need not to be heard together."

Senior Advocate Sanjay Hegde, appearing for one of the convicts, submitted that the appeal filed by Gujarat against commutation of death penalty to life has to be heard first.

"Twenty-two years have

passed... My clients have not been awarded death. This bench will have to first confirm the guilt. Once that is confirmed, then comes the sentencing part. When we go through that, that will possibly take time. There will be repercussion if you were to send to three judges," Hegde said.

The court then deferred the matter for hearing to February 13 after the lawyers appearing for the convicts sought time.

During the hearing before the apex court earlier, the state's counsel said the 11 convicts were sentenced to death by the trial court and 20 others were awarded life term in the case.

The high court had upheld the 31 convictions in the case and commuted the death penalties of the 11 convicts to life term, the counsel had said. While the state has appealed against the commutation of death penalty to life term for the 11 convicts, several convicts have challenged the high court's verdict upholding their convictions in the case.

Government approves setting up of third launch pad at Sriharikota

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The government on Thursday approved setting up of a third launch pad at Sriharikota to send heavier spacecraft in orbit as it aims to build a space station, carry out human spaceflight Gaganyaan and land an astronaut on the moon.

The third launch pad will be built at the Satish Dhawan Space Centre at Sriharikota and will be capable of putting 30,000 tonne spacecraft in low earth orbit as against the existing capabilities of 8,000 tonnes as India eyes a larger pie in the global space economy.

The Union Cabinet, at a meeting chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, approved the setting up of the third launch pad at a cost of Rs 3,985 crore in the next four years with maximum participation from the industry, Information and Broadcasting Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said. The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) is also developing the Next Generation Launch Vehicle (NGLV) which will be 91 m in height, taller than the 72-m tall



Quotub Minar.

The launch pad is designed to have a configuration that is universal and adaptable as possible that can support not only NGLV but also the LVM3 vehicles with a semicryogenic stage.

It will also be able to support scaled up configurations of NGLV with capabilities of hauling 70 tonnes payload to low earth orbit. The launch pad will be built with maximum industry participation fully utilizing ISRO's experience in establishing the previous launch pads and maximally sharing the existing launch complex facilities. The third launch pad is targeted to be

established within a duration of four years, the statement said.

The project will boost the Indian space ecosystem by enabling higher launch frequencies and the national capacity to undertake human spaceflight and space exploration missions.

As on date, Indian Space Transportation Systems are completely reliant on the first and second launch pads.

The first launch pad was built 30 years ago for PSLV missions and continues to provide launch support also for the Small Satellite Launch Vehicle (SSLV).

The second launch pad was established primarily for

GSLV and LVM3 and also functions as standby for PSLV. The second launch pad has been operational for almost 20 years and has enhanced the launch capacity towards enabling some commercial missions of PSLV/LVM3 along with the national missions including the Chandrayaan-3 mission.

The second launch pad is also getting ready to launch the human rated LVM3 for the Gaganyaan missions.

The expanded vision of the Indian Space Programme, the government has announced plans to establish the Bharatiya Antariksh Station (BAS) by 2035 and achieve an Indian crewed lunar Landing by 2040. These ambitions require a new generation of heavier launch vehicles with new propulsion systems, which cannot be met by the existing launch pads, an official statement said.

The expediting establishment of a third launch pad to cater to a heavier class of Next Generation Launch Vehicles and as a stand by second launch pad is highly essential so as to meet the evolving space transportation requirements for another 25-30 years.

Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto to be chief guest at India's 76th Republic Day celebrations

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto will be the chief guest at India's 76th Republic Day celebrations on January 26, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) announced on Thursday.

Subianto will visit India from January 25 to 26 in his first trip to the country as president.

As a comprehensive strategic partner, Indonesia is an important pillar in India's Act East Policy and its vision of the Indo-Pacific, the MEA said. "At the invitation of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, President of the Republic of Indonesia Prabowo Subianto will pay a state visit to India during January 25-26," the MEA said, "President Prabowo will also be the Chief Guest for India's 76th Republic Day celebrations," it said in a



statement. "India and Indonesia share warm and friendly ties spanning over millenia," it said.

The MEA said the forthcoming visit of the Indonesian President will provide an opportunity for the leadership of the two countries to undertake a comprehensive review of bilateral ties as well as to discuss regional and global issues of mutual interest.

Every year, India invites world leaders to attend its Republic

Day celebrations. Last year, French President Emmanuel Macron was the Republic Day chief guest while Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi graced the occasion in 2023.

There was no Republic Day Chief guest in 2021 and 2022 in view of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In 2020, then Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro was the chief guest at the Republic Day celebrations. In 2019, South African President Cyril

Ramaphosa was the chief guest at the Republic Day parade, while in 2018, leaders of all 10 ASEAN countries attended the celebrations.

In 2017, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan was the chief guest at celebrations, while then French President Francois Hollande graced the occasion in 2016. In 2015, then US President Barack Obama watched the parade.

In 2014, then Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe was the chief guest at the celebrations, while Bhutan king Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck attended the parade in 2013.

The heads of state and government who have attended the Republic Day celebrations include Nicolas Sarkozy, Vladimir Putin, Nelson Mandela, John Major, Mohammed Khatami and Jacques Chirac.

Advanced Light Helicopter (ALH-Dhruv) will not be part of upcoming Republic Day flypast

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The indigenously designed and developed Advanced Light Helicopter (ALH-Dhruv) will not be part of the upcoming Republic Day flypast as the entire fleet of the military helicopters has been grounded following a crash of one of them this month.

The Army, the Indian Air Force, the Navy and the Coast Guard are operating around 330 ALHs.

A Coast Guard ALH crashed at Gujarat's Porbandar on January five following which the armed forces grounded the entire fleet of the twin-engine helicopters. The ALH Dhruv will not be part of the Republic Day flypast over Kartavya Path on January 26, an IAF official told reporters.

The helicopters are likely to remain grounded till a high-level probe panel finds the root cause of the crash that



parade. Manufactured by the HAL, the Tejas aircraft is a potent platform for air combat and offensive air support missions while reconnaissance and anti-ship operations are its secondary roles.

In February 2021, the defence ministry sealed a Rs 48,000 crore deal with Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd for the procurement of 83 Tejas MK-1A jets for the IAF. In November last year, the ministry accorded an initial approval to procure an additional batch of 97 Tejas jets for the IAF.

The official said the Republic Day flypast will feature 22 fighter jets, 11 transport planes, seven helicopters, and three Dornier surveillance aircraft. A Rafale fighter jet will also be part of the flypast. The IAF's marching contingent at the parade will comprise 144 personnel.

Lalu case - Court seeks sanction for prosecution in two weeks



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

A Delhi court on Thursday granted two weeks to authorities concerned to process sanction to prosecute an accused in a case related to the alleged land-for-jobs scam involving former Railway Minister Lalu Prasad. Special Judge Vishal Gogne said if the sanction is not processed by January 30, the next date, "the competent authority shall furnish a written explanation by the next date of hearing."

The judge passed the directions after the CBI informed the court that the processing of the sanction regarding accused RK Mahajan, a public servant, was at an advanced stage. "The competent authority is directed to process the said matter by the next date as the present proceedings, which are required to be conducted on a weekly basis in terms of previous directions of the Supreme Court and Delhi High Court, are delayed only awaiting the said sanction in charge sheet which was filed in July 2024..." The proceedings in the case are delayed only awaiting the said sanction in charge sheet which was filed in July 2024," the judge said. The judge had on November 26 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 was still awaited.

Label AI-generated content for polls: ECI

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

With campaigns for the Delhi Assembly elections heating up, the Election Commission on Thursday advised political parties to uphold transparency and accountability in their use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)-generated content, highlighting concerns over the increasing role of artificial intelligence in campaigns and its impact on voter opinion.

The poll body asked political parties and candidates to appropriately disclose and label AI-generated synthetic content. This move comes amid the increasing use of AI technologies in political campaigning, raising concerns about their potential impact on voter



perception and the authenticity of campaign messages. The advisory introduces labelling and disclosure norms requiring parties to clearly label any images, videos, audio or other materials generated or significantly altered by AI technologies with a notation such as "AI-Generated"/"Digitally Enhanced"/"Synthetic Content".

It also requires political parties to include disclaimers during dissemination of campaign advertisements or promotional content, wherever synthetic content is utilised.

The use of AI has surged in the Delhi elections, with political parties leveraging it to create high-impact campaigns. However, this has also led to the emergence of deepfake videos and misleading content. Recently, the Aam Aadmi Party released an AI-generated video featuring PM Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah, critiquing central government policies. While the video went viral, it sparked debates over ethical boundaries in election campaigning. Similarly, the BJP has been deploying AI-driven

strategies to craft targeted advertisements and posters attacking AAP's governance. While these tactics are effective, they also risk spreading misinformation and polarising voters.

Social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram have become hotbeds of election activity, with AI tools playing a central role. Viral hashtags, memes, and targeted ads are shaping voter opinions like never before.

The BJP's #KejriwalFailsDelhi and AAP's #AAPKaManifesto have dominated the digital space, engaging millions of users. Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar had recently cautioned against the potential of AI and deep fakes in compounding the malaise of

misinformation. He had expressed concern that deep fakes and misinformation have the potential to erode trust in electoral processes.

During last year's Lok Sabha elections, the Commission had issued guidelines for responsible and ethical use of social media platforms.

"In recent years, advances in artificial intelligence have enabled the creation of highly convincing synthetic content, including images, video and audio. "With the increasing use of AI technologies in political campaigning, it is essential to maintain transparency and accountability, as the AI-generated content, including images, videos and audio, has the potential to influence voter opinion and trust," the EC told heads of recognised national and state parties.

Justice (Retd) Arun Mishra appointed as BCCI Ombudsman

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Former Supreme Court judge Justice Arun Mishra has been appointed as Ombudsman of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI). Mishra will also function as the BCCI Ethics Officer.

He served in the apex court from July 7, 2014, to September 2, 2020 before being appointed as the chairman of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) on June 2, 2021, a position he held until June 1, 2024.

Mishra, born on September 3, 1955 in Gwalior in a family of lawyers, had decided around 97,000 cases as a judge of high courts of Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Calcutta.



He was appointed as a judge of the Madhya Pradesh High Court on October 25, 1999 and was later appointed as the Chief Justice of Rajasthan High Court on November 26, 2010. He was later appointed as the Chief Justice of the Calcutta High Court on December 14, 2012. A legal luminary, Mishra has also contributed immensely to betterment of legal education in the country.

PM Modi's stellar start to 2025: Transforming vision into reality

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has begun 2025 with a flurry of transformative initiatives, demonstrating his vision for a progressive, self-reliant, and united India. From advancing infrastructure and scientific research to empowering youth and celebrating India's cultural diversity, his leadership has set the tone for a remarkable year ahead.

The year began with a strong focus on the welfare of farmers during the first Cabinet meeting of 2025. The government approved the extension of a one-time special package for Di-Ammonium Phosphate (DAP), ensuring affordable fertilizer prices for farmers. This decision highlights the government's commitment to strengthening India's

agricultural backbone. On the same day, PM Modi met cultural icons such as singer-actor Diljit Dosanjh and chess grandmaster Koneru Humpy, underscoring his focus on promoting arts, sports, and excellence across fields.

Modi also handed over 1,675 newly constructed flats under the In-Situ Slum Rehabilitation Project in Delhi, ensuring better living conditions for thousands of families. He also laid the foundation stones for three transformative educational projects worth over Rs 600 crore, including the Eastern Campus at Surajmal Vihar, Western Campus at Dwarka, and the Veer Savarkar College in Najafgarh. These projects aim to enhance educational infrastructure and inspire future generations.

The government's commitment to rural development took center stage during the Grameen Bharat Mahotsav on January 4, promoting GI-certified village products and boosting rural economies.

This initiative aligns with the goal of empowering rural India and integrating it into the global economy. Meanwhile, PM Modi engaged with global tech leaders, including Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella, who announced a \$3 billion investment in AI infrastructure in India. These discussions focused on fostering indigenous innovation and creating a self-reliant tech ecosystem.



Infrastructure projects gained momentum with the inauguration of the Namo Bharat Train Corridor on January 5, connecting

Sahibabad to Ashok Nagar, and multiple rail infrastructure developments in Odisha, Telangana, and Jammu & Kashmir. These projects symbolize India's rapid progress in modernizing transport networks under PM Modi's leadership. Last week Modi launched two landmark projects in Andhra

Pradesh: the Bulk Drug Park, a Rs 1,877 crore initiative to reduce dependency on imported pharmaceutical ingredients, and the Green Hydrogen Hub, aimed at producing 1,500 tonnes of green hydrogen per day. These efforts position India as a leader in renewable energy and pharmaceutical manufacturing.

Thereafter on January 12, PM Modi participated in the Viksit Bharat Young Leaders Dialogue, coinciding with National Youth Day and Swami Vivekananda's Jayanti. This initiative united young innovators and achievers to exchange ideas and envision a developed India, reaffirming the government's commitment to empowering

youth. On January 13, Modi inaugurated the Sonamarg Tunnel in Jammu & Kashmir, improving connectivity and boosting tourism while enhancing national security. He personally interacted with workers and engineers, expressing gratitude for their efforts. That evening, he celebrated Lohri, Pongal, and Makar Sankranti with diverse communities, emphasizing India's cultural unity and heritage.

By January 15, PM reached another milestone with the commissioning of advanced naval combatants, including new ships and submarines, reflecting India's growing maritime capabilities. These additions strengthen India's position as a dominant force in the Indian Ocean and are a testament to the government's commitment to

Aatmanirbhar Bharat in defense.

On January 16, PM Modi's vision for India's space program reached another milestone with the successful demonstration of space docking of satellites completed by ISRO which is a significant stepping stone for India's ambitious space missions in the years to come. In just 15 days, Modi's leadership has delivered a transformative beginning to 2025. From scientific breakthroughs and infrastructure projects to youth empowerment and cultural celebration, his actions reflect a vision of a Viksit Bharat. As PM Modi said, "Together, we are shaping a developed India, where every citizen plays a vital role in building a brighter tomorrow."

MAHAKUMBH 2025: SPECIAL COVERAGE

International delegates take a dip at Triveni Sangam

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
MAHAKUMBH NAGAR

A 21-member delegation from 10 countries, on Thursday, visited the various Akhadas in the Sangam region during the ongoing Mahakumbh and took the holy dip at Sangam. The representatives not only gained an understanding of the religious significance of the Kumbh but also experienced the extraordinary elements of Indian culture. After taking a dip at the Triveni Sangam, the delegation toured the vast Mahakumbh area, witnessing the immense scale of the event. The international visitors lauded the Uttar Pradesh government for the grand arrangements made for the world's largest religious gathering. They said that the Mahakumbh sends a powerful message of unity to the world and encouraged people from all nations to visit Mahakumbh Nagar to witness and understand Indian culture. Sally Al Azab, a



representative from the United Arab Emirates (UAE), shared that she has come from the Middle East to India for this remarkable

event. She described it as an extraordinary moment, highlighting that the Kumbh Mela is the world's largest religious gathering.

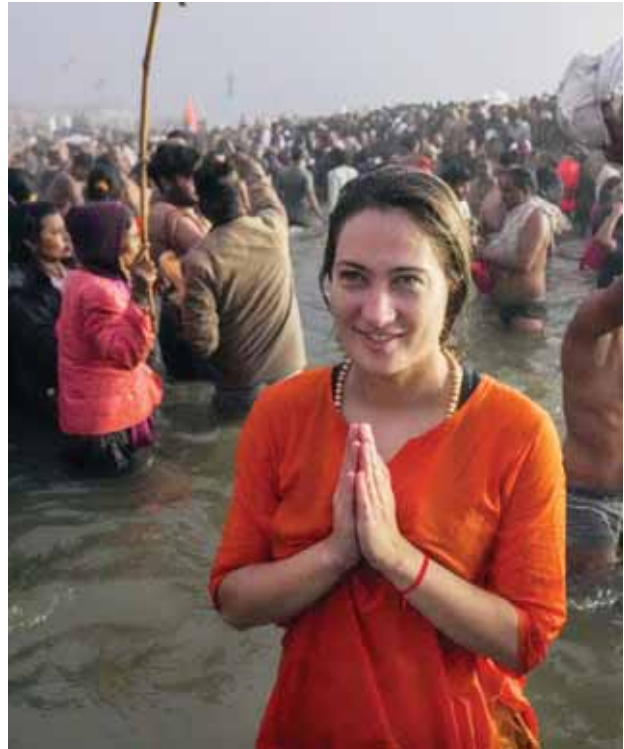
She praised the event's organization and emphasized that it not only spreads a message of unity within India but also to the

entire world. Witnessing millions of devotees and the meticulous security arrangements, she felt deeply moved by the

greatness of Indian culture. The international delegation also toured various Akhadas during the Kumbh Mela, meeting saints and learning

about the historical, religious, and cultural significance of the event. The saints shared insights into the ancient traditions of

the Kumbh, the role of the akhadas, and the glory of Indian culture. The international representatives were profoundly impressed by the saints' teachings and expressed their admiration for Indian religious traditions. This gathering of representatives sent a powerful message to the world, showing that people from different cultural backgrounds can come together in harmony. This included representatives from Fiji, Finland, Guyana, Malaysia, Mauritius, Singapore, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Trinidad and Tobago, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The international delegation experienced the diversity of Indian culture and the unity in religion during their visit. They were deeply moved by the culture and traditions on display. For them, the trip was not just a religious experience but also a precious opportunity to be part of a historical and cultural heritage.



Wife of Apple co-founder Steve Jobs, abruptly returns from Maha Kumbh due to health issues

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■
MAGAKUMBH NAGAR

Lauren Powell Jobs, wife of Apple co-founder and billionaire entrepreneur Steve Jobs, unexpectedly cut short her visit to the Maha Kumbh in Prayagraj after experiencing allergic reactions. Powell Jobs, who had planned a ten-day stay, left just three days into her trip. She is reported to be staying in Bhutan for the next few days. Lauren Powell Jobs arrived in Prayagraj on January 13 to participate in the grand spiritual event. During her visit, she stayed at the camp of Acharya Mahamandaleswar Swami Kailashanand Giri of the Niranjani Akhara. Her initial plan included taking a holy dip during Makar Sankranti, but she was unable to do so due to health issues. On Wednesday, Powell Jobs

received a spiritual initiation from her guru, Acharya Mahamandaleswar Swami Kailashanand Giri, who imparted the Mahakali Beej Mantra to her. She has been instructed to chant "Om Kroom Mahakalika Namah" as part of her spiritual practice. Acharya Kailashanand Giri praised Powell Jobs for her humility and simplicity, emphasizing that despite being one of the wealthiest and most famous individuals in the world, she remains free of ego and does not indulge in pretentiousness. He described her as very gentle and kind, adding that her quest for spirituality led her to the Maha Kumbh, where she was given the name "Kamala." He noted her low-key approach to life, often wearing simple clothes and interacting with others in a modest manner. In her journey before the

Maha Kumbh, Powell Jobs visited the Kashi Vishwanath Temple in Varanasi, where she performed a boat ride on the Ganges and received blessings from the temple's outer sanctum, adhering to the traditional practice of not touching the Shiva Lingam as a non-Hindu. The Maha Kumbh also saw a historic milestone on Wednesday with the launch of an international flight from Prayagraj Airport, marking the first such departure in 93 years. The flight, which carried Powell Jobs to Bhutan, was part of a growing trend, as international visitors, including expatriate Indians and foreign nationals, can now travel directly to Prayagraj for the Maha Kumbh. This development also led to the deployment of immigration officers at the airport for the first time.

Data says devotees spend an average of 45 minutes at ghats during Maha Kumbh

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■
MAGAKUMBH NAGAR

Data from Radio Frequency (RF) wristbands used at the Maha Kumbh has provided critical insights into crowd behavior, revealing that, on average, each devotee spent 45 minutes at the bathing ghats during significant festival days like Makar Sankranti and Paush Purnima. This duration accounts for the time from a devotee's arrival at the ghat to their departure after performing the ritual bath. The data was collected through wristbands equipped with RFID chips, which were distributed to devotees as part of an effort to better manage the massive influx of visitors to the event. This technology not only helped calculate the average time spent at the ghats but also assisted in accurately counting the total number of visitors at the Maha Kumbh. SSP Rajesh Kumar Dwivedi emphasized the importance of this data for effective crowd management. "The average time spent by devotees at the ghats is invaluable for planning crowd flow and ensuring safety. By understanding how long people spend in the area, we can determine the best times for implementing regular traffic plans or



shifting to emergency measures if needed," he said. Dwivedi further explained that the data will also help in the logistics of entry and exit points. "With this technology, we can better manage when and

where devotees should enter or exit, reducing congestion and improving the overall experience for everyone," he added. The RF wristbands have been a part of the authorities' strategy to

utilize technology for a smoother and safer Kumbh experience. "This year, we are using three different methods to track and monitor the number of devotees, and RF wristband data analysis is a

key part of this," said an official overseeing the event. The information gathered will continue to play a crucial role in managing one of the world's largest religious gatherings.

Devotees flock to Ayodhya and Kashi while taking part in Mahakumbh

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
MAHAKUMBH NAGAR

After attending the Mahakumbh in Prayagraj, devotees from across the country and abroad are now flocking to other sacred sites in Uttar Pradesh. In the past three days alone, around 10 lakh devotees visited Ayodhya, 7.41 lakh paid their respects at the Kashi Vishwanath temple, 5 lakh visited Vindhyavasini Dham, and more than one lakh devotees visited Naimisharanya Dham in Sitapur. As over seven crore devotees have bathed and prayed at the Mahakumbh so far, the devotees, following their ritual baths, have visited places like Shringverpur, Chitrakoot, Kashi, Maa Vindhyavasini Dham, Naimisharanya, and Ayodhya for darshan and worship. This surge of devotees is also boosting local employment in these regions. More than 7.41 lakh devotees visited the Kashi Vishwanath temple from January 13 to 15, with 2.19 lakh arriving on the 13th, 2.31 lakh on the 14th, and over 2.90 lakh on the 15th. Meanwhile, over 5 lakh visited Vindhyavasini Dham, and more

than one lakh visited Naimisharanya Dham. Ayodhya, also known as Ramnagari, has seen an overwhelming influx of devotees, radiating a palpable sense of faith. Thousands are gathering to witness the darshan of Ramlala and Hanumangarhi. Under the guidance of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, the district administration has ensured all necessary arrangements for the visitors. Over 10 lakh devotees have arrived in Ayodhya in the past three days, drawn by the historic occasion following Ramlala's enthronement after 500 years. A long line of devotees continues to form as they wait to pay their respects. CM Yogi Adityanath has instructed top officials, including Commissioner Gaurav Dayal, IG Praveen Kumar, District Magistrate Chandra Vijay Singh, SSP Rajkaran Nair, and Municipal Commissioner Santosh Sharma, to oversee the administration of key routes such as Dharmapath, Rampath, and Bhaktipath, ensuring that people in need are provided shelter and support.





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PAPER WITH PASSION

Hope and dread

The Gaza truce between Hamas and Israel may be fragile but it is still welcome as it offers some relief to beleaguered people

The recent announcement of a potential truce between Israel and Hamas has brought a mix of cautious hope and lingering fear to those on both sides of the conflict. After months of violence and suffering following the devastating events of October 2023, which saw Hamas's deadly incursion into Israel and the subsequent retaliatory offensive, the prospect of a ceasefire offers a moment of relief. However, the road ahead remains fraught with uncertainty. The conflict has left deep scars on both Israeli and Palestinian communities. For Israelis, the abduction of hostages—including women, children, and elderly civilians—has been a source of immense anguish. The release of 33 hostages as part of the initial phase of the ceasefire would bring some relief, but many fear the fragile agreement could collapse, leaving their loved ones in limbo. In Gaza, the humanitarian crisis is dire. The death toll exceeds 46,000, with women and children accounting for over half of the fatalities. Massive displacement has left 90 per cent of the population—approximately 2.3 million people—homeless. Entire neighbourhoods lie in ruins, and the lack of basic necessities has pushed residents to the brink of famine.



The proposed truce, brokered by the United States, Egypt, and Qatar, outlines a three-phased agreement. The first phase involves the exchange of hostages and Palestinian detainees, with the release of women, children, and the elderly prioritised. Subsequent phases would address the release of soldiers and other male captives, along with broader discussions to halt hostilities. A crucial component of the ceasefire includes a surge in humanitarian aid to Gaza. This would enable displaced Palestinians to return to their homes and help rebuild critical infrastructure. Yet, the long-term success of this agreement hinges on both sides' willingness to engage in meaningful negotiations during the second phase. The fragile nature of previous ceasefires—such as the one in November 2023 that lasted only a week—underscores the difficulty of achieving lasting peace. Key obstacles include Hamas's insistence on maintaining its military capabilities and Israel's objective to dismantle Hamas's governing structures. Both sides are under immense domestic and international pressure, but deeply entrenched mistrust makes compromise elusive. For hostages' families, uncertainty looms large. Many remain haunted by the possibility that their loved ones may not survive captivity if the truce fails. Meanwhile, Palestinians fear that a breakdown in talks could trigger renewed violence, exacerbating an already catastrophic situation. If the ceasefire holds, it could mark the beginning of a much-needed reprieve for Gaza's beleaguered population. Immediate priorities include addressing food insecurity, medical shortages, and the rebuilding of homes and infrastructure. International aid would play a critical role in alleviating the humanitarian crisis, but long-term recovery would require substantial investment, political stability and lasting peace.

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PICTALK



People try to tame a bull as they participate in the 'Jallikattu' event as part of 'Pongal' celebrations, in Tiruchirappalli

India's projector demand soars with eco-friendly innovations

These next-generation projectors not only offer enhanced energy efficiency and sustainability but also excellent output redefining the visual experience

India is rapidly becoming one of the fastest-growing projector markets globally, with an anticipated annual growth rate of 8.10 per cent over the next five years. This surge is driven by the increasing demand for projectors in both commercial and personal spaces. Technological advancements are playing a key role in this trend, as new, more eco-friendly projector alternatives are replacing traditional lamp-based models. These older models, while effective, had significant drawbacks such as high power consumption, reliance on hazardous materials, and limited recyclability. In contrast, modern projectors are designed with sustainability in mind, making them an attractive option for a wide range of applications. The rise in digitization across businesses and households further accelerates the need for effective display solutions. Eco-friendly projectors not only address this need but also offer a greener, more sustainable alternative to conventional options. With advanced production standards grounded in sus-



tainable development, these projectors are perfectly positioned to meet India's growing demand for high-tech, energy-efficient devices. Eco-friendly projectors are designed to tackle many of the issues associated with traditional models. They operate with much higher energy efficiency, significantly reducing power consumption. The manufacturing process also minimizes carbon footprints, with materials sourced responsibly. Innovations such as LED and laser light sources have significantly improved these devices' energy efficiency and lifespan, making them superior to traditional lamp-based projectors. These advancements appeal to environmentally conscious consumers and businesses alike, offering a more sustainable solution to their display and entertainment needs. Compared to earlier generations, eco-friendly projectors offer several clear advantages. Their energy efficiency makes them much more cost-effective in the long term, as they consume far less power and do not require frequent replacements of parts like traditional bulbs. Additionally, the longevity of these projectors reduces waste, further decreasing their environmental impact. Importantly, many eco-friendly projectors do not contain harmful substances like mercury, which is found in conventional models, thus contributing to safer disposal practices. Furthermore, these projectors are built to last longer and require less maintenance, thanks to technologies like LED and laser, which do not degrade as quickly as traditional bulbs. As a result, maintenance costs are significantly lower, and users benefit from reduced downtime and increased durability. This is an appealing factor for both businesses and consumers, as it translates to lower total ownership costs

over the life of the device. Looking ahead, there are several trends that will further shape the future of eco-friendly display technologies. One of the most promising is the development of even more efficient light sources, such as OLEDs and advanced lasers, which will provide higher brightness while consuming even less power. Another exciting possibility is the use of solar-powered projectors, especially in rural or off-grid areas, which would reduce reliance on conventional power sources and minimize carbon footprints. Additionally, there is growing interest in integrating biodegradable materials into the production of projectors, which would reduce the environmental impact when the product reaches the end of its lifecycle. The future will also likely see the introduction of more smart projectors that can integrate seamlessly with smart home and office ecosystems, featuring energy-saving modes based on usage patterns. (The writer is MD Optoma Technology; views are personal)



VIJAY SHARMA

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Diplomacy: The pillar of India's global aspirations



SANTHOSH MATHEW

To fulfill its aspirations as a global leader, India must urgently bolster its diplomatic infrastructure by expanding and modernising the Ministry of External Affairs

India, the world's most populous nation and the largest democracy is emerging as a pivotal force in global affairs. As a leader of the Global South, its growing economic might, strategic autonomy, and commitment to peace have positioned it at the centre of international diplomacy. However, despite these achievements, India's Ministry of External Affairs (MEA)—the critical institution shaping and executing its foreign policy—remains under-resourced. With only about 850 diplomats, the MEA is inadequately equipped to handle the complexities of a rapidly evolving global landscape. For India to realize its potential as a global leader, it must significantly expand its diplomatic infrastructure, scaling the MEA to at least 5,000 personnel. Such an expansion would align with India's ambitions and its stature as a major international power. India's diplomatic requirements have grown substantially alongside its global ambitions. As the world's largest democracy and one of its fastest-growing economies, India's foreign policy must address a wide range of global issues. From trade negotiations and climate change to digital diplomacy and global security, the MEA serves as the nerve center of India's international engagements. India's foreign policy has traditionally been guided by strategic autonomy and a commitment to peace, rooted in the Nehruvian tradition of non-alignment. Leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru and VK Krishna Menon laid the foundation of an independent foreign policy that prioritized non-violence while asserting India's sovereignty. This legacy of non-alignment, which positioned India as a bridge between competing superpowers, remains a cornerstone of its diplomatic approach. However, the global order is shifting, and India must adapt its foreign policy apparatus to meet modern challenges. Strengthening the MEA is vital not only for safeguarding India's interests but also for crafting a vision capable of influencing global politics. With a population



exceeding 1.4 billion and leadership roles in key international forums, India's current diplomatic infrastructure is insufficient for the demands it faces. Countries like the United States, China and Russia deploy thousands of diplomats and foreign policy experts to maintain their global influence. In contrast, India's diplomatic corps, though skilled, is a fraction of the size required. This gap underscores the urgent need for a larger, more specialised MEA capable of shaping global discussions and providing strategic depth across multiple domains. Expanding the MEA to 5,000 personnel would ensure that India's foreign policy is both proactive and comprehensive. Such an expansion is not merely about increasing numbers; it is about cultivating strategic expertise across diverse fields. India's diplomacy must address trade, defense, environmental sustainability, cybersecurity, humanitarian aid, and more. To achieve this, the MEA must recruit specialists who can navigate these complex issues. During the Cold War, figures like US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger demonstrated the transformative power of strategic brilliance in diplomacy. Similarly, India needs diplomats capable of long-term thinking and crafting policies that reflect its evolving global role. India's for-



THE NEED FOR A DIPLOMATIC CORPS THAT CAN SHAPE GLOBAL DISCUSSIONS AND PROVIDE THE INTELLECTUAL AND STRATEGIC DEPTH REQUIRED IN AN INCREASINGLY COMPLEX INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENT HAS NEVER BEEN MORE URGENT

eign policy must anticipate global trends rather than merely react to events. To compete with global powers like the US, Russia, and China, India requires a diplomatic team adept at building alliances, leveraging emerging opportunities, and addressing global challenges. This necessitates investments in strategic thinking and specialised knowledge. The MEA must develop expertise in fields such as space diplomacy, climate change negotiations, global trade, and defense strategy. Moreover, diplomats must engage with governments, businesses, think tanks, and civil society to shape decisions in India's favour. A well-staffed MEA would enable India to better engage with key global issues and deepen its relationships with major powers. Just as the US relied on figures like Robert McNamara and John Foster Dulles to shape its diplomacy, India must nurture a generation of visionary diplomats. These individuals should possess deep understanding of global security, international law, multilateral organisations, and global trade—qualities exemplified by VK Krishna Menon, who championed India's interests on the international stage during the 1950s. Expanding the MEA is not just about addressing immediate challenges but about aligning India's diplomatic capabilities

with its evolving priorities. Experts in climate change, energy security, trade relations, and technology diplomacy are essential to ensuring a forward-thinking foreign policy. The expanded MEA must also prioritise collaboration with think tanks, academic institutions, and media professionals. These partnerships can provide the intellectual foundation for strategic decisions and help India anticipate emerging global trends. Think tanks and universities—both domestic and international—can offer critical insights into shifting geopolitical dynamics, new economic policies, and other global developments. Engaging with these institutions will ensure that India's foreign policy remains agile and informed. Public diplomacy is another critical component of modern foreign policy. Beyond government-to-government negotiations, India must focus on shaping global perceptions and building relationships with international audiences. The MEA should work closely with media professionals to effectively communicate India's vision and policies to the world. Leveraging India's soft power—its rich culture, democratic ideals, and values—can amplify its global influence and ensure its voice is heard. (The writer is an associate professor; views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

RUPEE LOSING SHEEN

Madam — There is an ongoing concern over the rupee sharply losing value against the dollar. But then a nation's currency intrinsically represents two notions of value: one for the purchaser and seller in the domestic market and the other for the external one. China, in its monetary parlance, has the yuan and the renminbi. In layman's terms, the domestic standing of the rupee is broadly propped up by an incremental rise in GDP and per capita income, with the purchasing power sustained by low inflation. Compared to most economies, we are far better placed. Our current concern would be more reining in inflation and fiscal deficit to retain the value of the rupee. The exchange value of the rupee with other currencies is a matter of the difference between the inflow and outflow of foreign currency for our external buying or selling, be it products, commodities, or services. The crux lies in developing our niche in any one of them to reverse the trade deficit. China found it in manufacturing and commodities and dares to keep its currency highly depreciated. The US despite its huge debt has the privilege of printing the dollar, the global currency. We must find it in diligence, research, and human potential.

R Narayanan | Navi Mumbai

NGO SUSPECTED FOR BOMB THREAT

Madam—Apropos of the headlines 'Police find NGO, political ties in Delhi bomb threats', it is imperative to dig deeply into the conspiracy of scaring 400 Delhi schools with bombing. The 16-year-old boy is only a juvenile shield to escape punishment. This is a heinous crime closely connected with the terrorist act perpetrated by the sympathisers of terrorist Afzal Guru, who had been hanged during Congress's tenure. Delhi CM Atishi is also a potential source of investigation because of her family's sympathy with the terrorist Afzal Guru. All those associated with the NGO should be slapped with NSA under the zero-tolerance policy of the Union Government. The

Meta offers apologies on election remark



Mark Zuckerberg's controversial statement has sparked a new debate across India and the world. His remarks about the functioning of Joe Biden's administration and the 2024 Indian elections have angered the Indian Parliament. Now, Meta has publicly apologised following backlash over its CEO Mark Zuckerberg's comments on India's 2024 general elections. This issue raises critical questions about the responsibility of tech companies and the impact of their statements

on a global scale. Zuckerberg's comments on Joe Rogan's podcast regarding economic challenges and democracy in India are being seen as damaging to India's image. Particularly, the questions raised about Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government's economic management and COVID-19 strategies are considered serious. India's IT Minister, Ashwini Vaishnaw, has responded strongly, stating that foreign companies must respect India's constitutional dignity. This incident not only scrutinises the social impact of social media giants but also questions their political interference. India's stance highlights that major tech giants are now being held accountable for their actions. This development sends an important message that strict action against misinformation is essential to upholding the dignity of democracy.

R K Jain | Barwani

Jaish-e-Mohammad terrorist who carried out the Parliament attack in 2001 earned sympathy for those vying for Delhi rule. It is the most unfortunate for the country and the ugliest face of our political ecosystem. Hitherto, a part of the INDIA bloc, AAP must clarify the role of its Delhi CM. The Khalistani links of the Aam Aadmi Party and Arvind Kejriwal are already in public awareness. There seems to be no end to the revengeful acts of sympathisers of the terrorists, so the strongest punishment should be ensured against the culprits. We are aware that a team of leading advocates will protect the NGO behind the Delhi school bomb threats. Such an ecosystem should be exposed. Delhi has been targeted by the extremist forces; it is very obvious and evident.

Vinod Johri | Delhi

B'DESH AG'S ANTI-SECULARISM PITCH

Madam — Bangladesh's Attorney General Mohammad Asaduzzaman has demanded the removal of the word secularism from the Constitution. He has said that 90 per-

cent of Bangladesh's population is Muslim, so it should be a Muslim country by removing the word secular. The Attorney General has said that words like socialism and secularism do not present the correct picture of Bangladesh. He has suggested making major changes in the constitution and removing 'secularism.' He will make these changes before the next elections. Because Yunus is an educationist later and is first a fundamentalist Muslim. Earlier, in the year 2010, the Supreme Court of Bangladesh had ruled that the removal of secularism in 1977 was illegal. The court had reinstated secularism in the constitution. Just as Bangladesh is attacking temples in its country, similarly in India too, deities are being searched for in mosques. The destination of both the neighbours is the same. Bangladesh wants to become an Islamic nation while preparations are on in India to make it a 'Hindu Rashtree'

Jang Bahadur Singh | Jamshedpur

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FIRST COLUMN

US EXPORT CONTROLS: IMPACT ON INDIA'S AI

US export controls pose new challenges for India's AI and tech ambitions



KUMARDEEP BANERJEE

The Biden administration's Interim Final Rule (IFR), effective January 2025, introduces strict regulations on the export, reexport and in-country transfer of advanced computing integrated circuits (ICs) and artificial intelligence (AI) model weights. These measures aim to limit the proliferation of advanced technologies with potential military and intelligence applications, particularly in AI-driven systems. While this move marks a significant policy step from the outgoing administration, its future under the next presidency remains uncertain, as the new administration could pause the implementation for review. India, a nation rapidly advancing its AI infrastructure, faces significant challenges under the IFR. Here are the key implications:

The IFR enforces licensing requirements for exporting advanced computing ICs and AI model weights, particularly those integral to high-performance AI models. For India, which is heavily investing in AI research and infrastructure, these restrictions may hinder access to state-of-the-art U.S. technologies. A "presumption of denial" applies to licenses for advanced ICs used in training AI models, limiting India's ability to obtain cutting-edge hardware essential for its AI development.

The regulations impose stringent controls on advanced closed-weight AI models, while open-weight models are exempt. Since closed-weight models often drive groundbreaking AI research, this limitation could slow India's progress in leveraging advanced US AI models. Restricted access to these critical technologies could delay breakthroughs in AI-driven applications.



Although the IFR provides exceptions for low-risk destinations, India is not included in the list of preferred nations. As a result, Indian entities face capped allocations on advanced computing capacity based on total processing performance (TPP). Over the next three years, these limitations could restrict the computational resources available for Indian researchers and developers, potentially stalling AI initiatives.

Indian companies seeking US technology will face heightened scrutiny under the IFR, including stringent checks on supply chain security, personnel vetting, and cybersecurity compliance. These requirements will increase the complexity of partnerships with US firms and may delay India's efforts to scale its AI ecosystem.

India's plans to establish advanced data centers and high-performance computing clusters will be directly affected by the new regulations. The IFR mandates compliance with US security standards, such as NIST guidelines, adding operational costs and potential delays.

India's ambition to lead global AI collaborations, as demonstrated by its participation in initiatives like the Global Partnership on AI (GPAI), faces friction under these controls. With international partnerships playing a crucial role in India's technological growth, the restrictions on high-performance computing components and AI models could disrupt progress.

To mitigate these challenges, India must consider alternative strategies, including strengthening domestic research and development, partnering with non-US technology providers, and leveraging diplomatic channels to negotiate favorable terms with the US. The path forward will require Indian companies to adapt rapidly, focusing on self-sufficiency and fostering collaborations beyond traditional partnerships. While the IFR offers limited flexibility through license exceptions and potential adjustments, India's advanced computing and AI ambitions will require resilience and innovation to overcome the regulatory hurdles imposed by these new export controls.

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

The war they waged, the price we paid



NILANTHA ILANGAMUWA

With Trump's return, the stage is set for continuation of the bloodstained legacy, with devastating consequences for the world's most vulnerable



The Vietnam War should have been the United States' breaking point—a humiliating defeat that exposed the futility of projecting brute force in a world that had long learned to resist imperialism. But instead of becoming a sobering moment of reflection, it ignited a chain reaction of conflicts, interventions, and proxy wars that would devastate nations and leave millions dead. From Ronald Reagan to Joe Biden, the American war machine has not only endured but expanded, thriving on chaos and suffering. With Donald Trump poised to return, his new administration promises to perpetuate this bloodstained legacy, consolidating power at home while unleashing destruction abroad. Reagan's tenure marked a revival of the Cold War mindset, framed by a simplistic, almost cartoonish view of global politics.

His administration orchestrated covert operations and military interventions with reckless abandon, leaving a trail of devastation across continents. In Grenada, a minuscule island nation, the U.S. flexed its muscle in a laughable display of overkill. Yet, the price for the people of Grenada was far from humorous—hundreds of civilians died in an operation sold as a "rescue mission." In Lebanon, Reagan's deployment of U.S. Marines ended in catastrophe, with 241 servicemen killed in a suicide bombing. The retaliatory shelling of Lebanese villages left countless civilians dead, their stories erased from the official narrative. George H. W. Bush brought the carnage to Panama and Iraq. Operation Just Cause in Panama left at least 3,000 civilians dead, according to independent estimates—numbers far higher than the official U.S. tally. The Gulf War of 1991 killed tens of thousands of Iraqi soldiers and civilians, with entire neighbourhoods flattened by American airpower. The sanctions that followed—a form of economic warfare—led to the deaths of an estimated 500,000 Iraqi children, as reported by UNICEF. But these deaths were dismissed by then-Secretary of State Madeleine Albright as a price worth paying.

Bill Clinton's presidency, often remembered for its charm and centrism, was any-



THE GULF WAR OF 1991 KILLED TENS OF THOUSANDS OF IRAQI SOLDIERS AND CIVILIANS, WITH ENTIRE NEIGHBOURHOODS FLATTENED BY AMERICAN AIRPOWER. THE SANCTIONS THAT FOLLOWED—A FORM OF ECONOMIC WARFARE—LED TO THE DEATHS OF AN ESTIMATED 500,000 IRAQI CHILDREN

thing but peaceful. Under his watch, NATO's bombing campaign in Kosovo killed an estimated 500 civilians, while strikes on critical infrastructure plunged the region into chaos. In Somalia, Clinton inherited and expanded a disastrous intervention that culminated in the infamous Black Hawk Down incident. The fallout was not limited to American soldiers—it cost the lives of an estimated 10,000 Somali civilians caught in the crossfire. The Bush-Cheney years saw the bloodbath reach industrial levels. The 2003 invasion of Iraq, based on falsified intelligence, unleashed a catastrophe of staggering proportions. By conservative estimates, 200,000 Iraqi civilians died in the war, though many argue the real number exceeds half a million. Afghanistan, initially framed as a righteous response to 9/11, turned into a graveyard for American credibility. The war cost over 70,000 Afghan civilian lives, with many more lost to starvation and disease caused by the destruction of infrastructure.

These numbers, while horrifying, barely scratch the surface. Barack Obama, heralded as a harbinger of change, instead became the drone king. Under his administration, drone strikes killed an estimated 3,800 people in Pakistan, Yemen, and Somalia. These numbers include as many as 800 civilians, though independent investigations suggest the real toll is much higher. Libya, once a stable if repressive state, was reduced to a failed state after NATO's intervention, with Obama admitting it was his greatest foreign policy mistake. Yet his admission did nothing to rebuild Libya, now a haven for human traffickers and militia warlords. Donald Trump's first term shattered even the pretence of restraint. Civilian casualties from U.S. airstrikes in Syria and Iraq

soared, with independent monitors estimating at least 4,500 civilians killed in 2017 alone.

In Somalia, Trump's loosening of drone strike protocols led to a surge in civilian deaths, including women and children obliterated in remote villages. Yemen's civil war, fueled by U.S.-supplied bombs and logistical support to Saudi Arabia, created what the U.N. calls the world's worst humanitarian crisis. By some estimates, over 377,000 Yemenis have died—many of them from famine and disease exacerbated by the relentless bombing campaigns. Joe Biden's administration, while promising a pivot to diplomacy, has only perpetuated the violence.

The withdrawal from Afghanistan, while ending America's longest war, was executed with callous disregard for human life. At least 170 civilians were killed in a single ISIS-K bombing during the chaotic evacuation. Biden's continued drone strikes and military presence in Syria ensure that civilians remain collateral in America's unending "war on terror." In Ukraine, US military aid fuels a war that has already claimed tens of thousands of lives on both sides, with no end in sight. Across these decades, the pattern is unmistakable: the United States does not fight wars for freedom or democracy.

It fights for hegemony, resources, and geopolitical advantage, with human lives as expendable currency. The statistics are staggering but fail to capture the depth of the tragedy. From Vietnam to Yemen, from Iraq to Libya, the human cost is always paid by those least equipped to bear it: the poor, the displaced, and the voiceless. In just days, Donald Trump will return to the White House, his second administration poised to escalate the already relentless machinery of American war. This time, the

gloves are off—his power more consolidated, his team of loyalists more ruthless, and his ambitions unrestrained. The team surrounding him will be battle-hardened ideologues with little patience for opposition.

Trump has openly embraced authoritarian impulses, and his foreign policy will likely mirror his domestic ambitions—unapologetic, ruthless, and geared toward consolidating dominance. For the impoverished, this is a death sentence. The costs will not be borne by those who plan wars from air-conditioned offices or justify them in press briefings but by the powerless: Yemeni mothers sifting through the rubble for scraps, Syrian children cowering as drones circle above, and Gazan families freezing to death amid the ruins of their bombed-out homes. These are not accidents of war; they are deliberate outcomes of a global system that treats human life as expendable in the pursuit of dominance over dignity.

The bombs will continue to fall, the starving will continue to die, and the architects of this destruction will dine in opulence, their hands stained with the blood of the voiceless.

We collectively absorb these atrocities—not with shock or outrage, but with numbed detachment, anaesthetised by the relentless churn of media cycles and the droning rationalisations of pundits. It is not that we do not care—it is that we have been conditioned not to. Once our souls have been amputated by decades of warmongering, by a system that normalises suffering as the cost of 'security', we survive in resignation, compelled by the machinery of indifference to keep moving forward.

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

Uttarakhand's initiatives to strengthen climate resilience in the Himalayas

The State's efforts, encapsulated in the Dehradun Declaration, highlight the importance of collaboration and community empowerment

The Uttarakhand Council of Science and Technology (UCOST) recently organised a significant workshop in Delhi, focusing on climate resilience and disaster management, with a particular emphasis on Himalayan states. This workshop attracted eminent scientists, disaster management experts, and advocates of climate resilience, underscoring the pressing need to address environmental challenges in the region. This initiative follows Uttarakhand's landmark 2023 International Conference in Dehradun, which drew participants from approximately 50 countries.

The conference culminated in the adoption of the "Dehradun Declaration," a comprehensive action plan

aimed at fostering collaboration, innovation and effective strategies to mitigate the impact of climate change and natural disasters in Himalayan states. Uttarakhand's proactive approach to uniting stakeholders on these critical issues is both commendable and necessary.

Rationale Behind Uttarakhand's Initiatives

Uttarakhand's unique geographical and cultural significance drives its commitment to addressing climate resilience. With the second-largest Himalayan boundary after Arunachal Pradesh, the state plays a pivotal role in supporting Northern India's vast hinterland. The region's popularity as a hub for tourism, religious pilgrimages such as the Char



DINESH KUMAR TYAGI

Dham Yatra, and adventure activities exerts considerable pressure on its fragile ecosystem.

The state faces recurring natural calamities, including forest fires, landslides, cloud-bursts, and glacier shrinkage. These disasters significantly impact local communities, strain state resources, and demand robust measures to minimise their devastating

effects. By organising international workshops and fostering collaborations, Uttarakhand aims to raise awareness, share best practices and leverage technology, such as data analytics and artificial intelligence, to design both preventive and responsive strategies.

Highlights of the Dehradun Declaration

The Dehradun Declaration lays out a comprehensive framework for building climate resilience and disaster preparedness in Himalayan states. Its key features include: **Strengthening Preparedness** Integrating disaster resilience into educational curricula. Framing regulations to protect vulnerable populations. Developing financial tools and frameworks to advance the "science of survival."



Protecting the Himalayan Ecosystem

Merging indigenous knowledge with traditional community practices. Promoting nature-based solutions and active community engagement. Enhancing institutional collaboration for project monitoring and execution. **Empowering Communities** Establishing community-

based early warning systems. Educating and equipping communities to take local measures.

Strengthening livelihoods and building local networks of like-minded individuals.

Policy Integration

Establishing an Institute of Disaster Management and a global center for climate resilience.

Formulating policies based on national and international best practices.

Coordinating among state, central, and international organisations.

Promoting Innovation

Supporting startups and entrepreneurs in developing tools and technologies for climate resilience.

The Delhi Workshop and Global Consensus

The Delhi workshop served as a follow-up to the Dehradun Declaration and brought together disaster management scholars, international organisations, and corporate representatives engaged in CSR activities. Participants praised Uttarakhand's efforts to convene diverse stakeholders, emphasising that protecting the Himalayan ecosystem is a shared responsibility.

The Himalayas, often referred to as the "Soul of India" and the "Third Pole," are crucial for maintaining ecological balance. Workshop attendees agreed on the need for collective action to address challenges such as unchecked tourism and resource exploitation. Recommendations included regulating plastic use, promoting organic farming,

imposing green taxes on vehicles, and training locals to mitigate post-disaster damage.

National Perspectives on Climate Resilience

The recently concluded COP 29 in Baku included an agenda to establish a global fund for addressing climate change. Developed nations were urged to allocate higher budgets to support developing and poorer countries in reducing carbon emissions.

Training volunteers at the village level and connecting them through a centralised platform can foster trust and confidence in disaster preparedness efforts.

(The writer is a retired IAS officer and president of Society of Digital Entrepreneurs; views are personal)

Trump and Biden both claim credit for Gaza ceasefire deal

YouTube fraud theories fuel impeached S Korean Prez

PTI ■ WASHINGTON
President Joe Biden and President-elect Donald Trump are both claiming credit for Israel and Hamas agreeing to a ceasefire deal in Gaza on Wednesday after the White House brought Trump's Middle East envoy into negotiations that have dragged on for months.

Trump wasted no time in asserting he was the moving force behind the deal. Biden, meanwhile, stressed that the deal was reached under "the precise contours" of a plan that he set out in late May. "This EPIC ceasefire agreement could have only happened as a result of our Historic Victory in November, as it signaled to the entire World that my Administration would seek Peace and negotiate deals to ensure the safety of all Americans, and our Allies," Trump wrote on social media. "I am thrilled American and Israeli hostages will be returning home to be reunited with their families and loved ones," Trump added that his incom-

ing Mideast envoy, Steve Witkoff - who was participating in the talks in Doha, Qatar - would continue "to work closely with Israel and our Allies to make sure Gaza NEVER again becomes a terrorist safe haven." Biden said from the White House that "my diplomacy never ceased in their efforts to get this done." "It is the result not only of the extreme pressure that Hamas has been under and the changed regional equation after a ceasefire in Lebanon and weakening of Iran - but also of dogged and painstaking American diplomacy," Biden said. The jostling comes with both Biden and Trump determined to see the deal become a set piece of Middle East success for the legacy of their presidency. Biden's administration worked for months to broker peace in talks that inched frustratingly close to success before repeatedly breaking down. Trump, for his part, had warned of "hell to pay" if a deal wasn't done by his inauguration - in five days.

While Biden's refusal to impose meaningful restrictions on sending arms to Israel may have helped the key U.S. ally seriously degrade Hamas and fellow Iran-backed militant group Hezbollah in Lebanon, it also came with enormous suffering for innocent Palestinians and Lebanese who have been caught in the crossfire of the 15 months of grinding war. Jonathan Panikoff, director of the Scowcroft Middle East Security Initiative at the Atlantic Council, said Biden deserves praise for continuing to push the talks despite repeated failures. But Trump's threats to Hamas and his efforts through Witkoff to "cajole" Netanyahu deserve credit as well, he said. "The ironic reality is that at a time of heightened partisanship even over foreign policy, the deal represents how much more powerful and influential U.S. foreign policy can be when it's bipartisan," he said. "Both the outgoing and incoming administration deserve credit for this deal and it would've been far less likely to happen

without both pushing for it." In his White House remarks, Biden said his administration negotiated the deal but that Trump's team will soon be charged with making sure it's implemented. "For the past few days, we have been speaking as one team," Biden said in a nod to Witkoff being part of the talks. Trump's team pushed back, saying Biden couldn't get the deal done until Trump and Witkoff intervened. The Biden administration was handing the Trump administration a detailed roadmap to win a lasting peace that has broad support in the region, State Department spokesman Matthew Miller said. "The involvement of President-elect Trump's team has been absolutely critical in getting this deal over the line," Miller told reporters. "And it's been critical because obviously, as I stand today, this administration's term in office will expire in five days." Israeli President Isaac Herzog offered his gratitude to both the incoming and outgoing U.S.

presidents. Nancy Okail, head of the U.S.-based Center for International Policy, said acceptance of the deal in the face of Trump's insistence that a ceasefire be in place when he takes office "ironically shows how effective actual pressure can be in changing Israeli government behavior." The Biden administration's open embrace of the Trump team's involvement in the talks was rooted in far more than the president-elect's influence with Netanyahu and his threats to get a deal done before he's back in the White House, three current U.S. officials said. The officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity to offer candid details, said their interest in having Witkoff participate in the talks alongside Biden's Mideast pointman, Brett McGurk, was primarily designed to ensure that an agreement - which will require a lengthy American commitment - would have continued U.S. support after Biden leaves office. Yet, since Witkoff entered the

latest round of talks alongside McGurk, these U.S. officials have downplayed Trump's relevance to the process, apart from the importance of ensuring his support for a deal painstakingly negotiated over the past year. They also want backing for a plan pushed by the Biden administration for the governance, reconstruction and security of Gaza that will take many months - and significant U.S. backing - to succeed. One fear about not including Trump officials in the negotiations was that the post-conflict plan for Gaza that has been worked out over the past year might be abandoned by the new administration. It calls for an international presence in Gaza to help the Palestinian Authority with governance and reconstruction as well as a temporary foreign security presence to address Israeli security concerns. Implementation of the agreement could begin Sunday, when the first group of hostages may be freed, according to a senior U.S. official

involved in the talks. Negotiations intensified over the past four days, according to the official, who was not authorized to comment publicly and spoke on the condition of anonymity. The official described McGurk and Witkoff's coordination as a "fruitful partnership" in which the two closely coordinated as they pressed parties to come to terms. At a critical point last week, Witkoff left talks in Doha for Israel to meet with Netanyahu. That allowed McGurk to remain in Doha and continue to work with Qatari negotiators who were chief interlocutors with Hamas. The U.S., Qatari and Egyptian negotiators, along with Israel's team nearby, worked until the wee hours of Wednesday morning, just a floor above where the Hamas negotiators were holed up, the official said. Later Wednesday, Hamas made several last-second demands, but "we held very firm," and the group eventually agreed to the terms of the deal, the official said.

New US NSA signals continuation of Biden policies, calls India key partner

PTI ■ WASHINGTON
Incoming national security advisor Mike Waltz has indicated that the Trump administration will continue with several elements of Joe Biden's policies, particularly on China and India, which he described as a critical partner for the US in the future. Waltz would take charge as National Security Advisor to Donald Trump when he is sworn in as the 47th president of the United States on January 20. Making an appearance at the US Institute of Peace (USIP), Waltz identified China as the "greatest adversary" of the United States and India as a critical partner of the US in the future. "The President-elect firmly believes we can avoid conflict with the Chinese Communist Party because they need our markets. We are going to use the leverage in a way that's in line with what we have that's in line with our national security while we

still can," Waltz said at the panel discussion with the outgoing NSA Jake Sullivan. Waltz was quick to point out to the moderator Stephen J Hadley, former national security advisor, that he was also the Republican chair of the US-India Caucus in the last Congress. Sullivan, who was in India last week, told the audience that Waltz is very popular in India. "I was just in India last week. They love you there as a co-chair of the India Caucus. They love the India Caucus, so you're excited to have you come on board. I told them I could be the chair of the India Spouses Caucus in Congress going forward. They were a little less than that, but we'll do our best," Sullivan said jokingly. AUKUS and the Quad are areas that have continued from one administration to another, Waltz said. Aukus is a trilateral security partnership between Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States intended to promote a free and open Indo-

Pacific. The Quad is a multilateral framework comprising India, Australia, Japan, and the US, with a shared commitment to upholding a free, open, and inclusive Indo-Pacific, amidst China's aggressive behaviour in the strategically vital South China Sea. Waltz also stressed that the incoming administration would make sure that the USD 20 billion backlog of US weapons for Taiwan would be delivered "as a deterrent measure." "Then thirdly, to really continue to reinforce those partnerships and those alliances where I certainly give this administration some credit is the trilateral dialogue between South Korea the United States and Japan, and then also between the United States, Japan, and the Philippines, really helping those countries and those governments overcome historic animosities with a shared vision of a free and open Indo-Pacific," he said.

Standoff in South Africa ends with 87 miners dead

PTI ■ STILFONTEIN
The death toll in a months-long standoff between police and miners trapped while working illegally in an abandoned gold mine in South Africa has risen to at least 87, police said Thursday. Authorities faced growing anger and a possible investigation over their initial refusal to help the miners and instead "smoke them out" by cutting off their food supplies. National police spokesperson Athlenda Mathe said that 78 bodies were retrieved in a court-ordered rescue operation, with 246 survivors also pulled out from deep underground since the operation began on Monday. Mathe said nine other bodies had been recovered before the rescue operation, without giving details. Community groups launched their own rescue attempts when authorities said last year they

would not help the hundreds of miners because they were "criminals." The miners are suspected to have died of starvation and dehydration, although no causes of death have been released. South African authorities have been fiercely criticised for cutting off food and supplies to the miners in the Buffelsfontein Gold Mine last year. That tactic to "smoke them out," as described by a prominent Cabinet minister, was condemned by one of South Africa's biggest trade unions. Police and the mine owners were also accused of taking away ropes and dismantling a pulley system the miners used to enter the mine and send supplies down from the surface. A court ordered authorities last year to allow food and water to be sent down to the miners, while another court ruling last week forced them to launch a rescue operation.

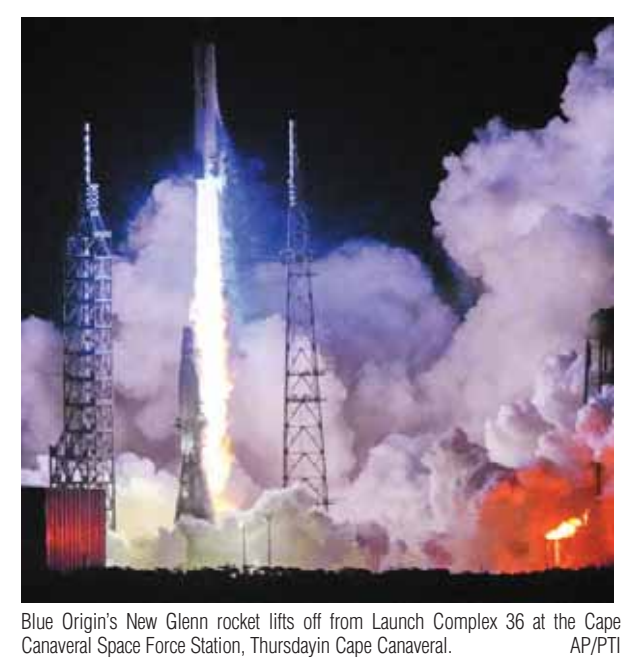
Many say the unfolding disaster underground was clear weeks ago, when community members sporadically pulled decomposing bodies out of the mine, some with notes attached pleading for food to be sent down. "If the police had acted earlier, we would not be in this situation, with bodies piling up," said Johannes Qankase, a local community leader. "It is a disgrace for a constitutional democracy like ours. Somebody needs to account for what has happened here." South Africa's second biggest political party, which is part of a government coalition, called for President Cyril Ramaphosa to establish an independent inquiry to find out "why the situation was allowed to get so badly out of hand." "The scale of the disaster underground at Buffelsfontein is rapidly proving to be as bad as feared," the Democratic Alliance party said.

Authorities now believe that nearly 2,000 miners were working illegally in the mine near the town of Stilfontein, southwest of Johannesburg, since August last year. Many of them resurfaced on their own over the last few months, police said, and all the survivors have been arrested, even as some emerged this week badly emaciated and barely able to walk to waiting ambulances. A convoy of mortuary vans arrived at the mine to carry away the bodies. Mathe said at least 13 children had also come out of the mine before the official rescue operation. Police announced Wednesday that they were ending that operation after three days and said they believed no one else was underground. A camera was sent down on Thursday in a cage that was used to pull out survivors and bodies to ensure no one was left behind, Mathe said.

Many at the pro-Yoon rallies, which are separated by police from anti-Yoon counter-protests, are significantly influenced by fictional narratives about election fraud that dominate conservative YouTube channels - claims that Yoon has repeatedly referenced in his attacks on election officials. A placard hanging from an overpass read: "Martial law was declared to investigate election fraud; lawmakers impeached (Yoon) to stop it." There were also "Stop the Steal" signs, a slogan associated with the US Capitol attack by a mob of Donald Trump supporters on Jan 6, 2021, who were angry over false claims that Joe Biden had stolen the election. "There have long been worries about Yoon's close ties with right-wing YouTube personalities, some of whom were invited to his inauguration ceremony. One has even boasted that Yoon listens to his show "even while sleeping." Those worries, however, have been heightened since Yoon's shocking martial law declaration on Dec 3, which led to the dispatch of hundreds of troops to encircle the legislature and the country's election commission - and which dredged up memories of military-backed dictatorships that ended in the 1980s.

Jeff Bezos' Blue Origin launches massive New Glenn rocket on first test flight

Cape Canaveral (PTI): Blue Origin launched its massive new rocket on its first test flight Thursday, sending up a prototype satellite to orbit thousands of miles above Earth. Named after the first American to orbit Earth, the New Glenn rocket blasted off from Florida, soaring from the same pad used to launch NASA's Mariner and Pioneer spacecraft a half-century ago. Years in the making with heavy funding by Amazon founder Jeff Bezos, the 98-metre rocket carried an experimental platform designed to host satellites or release them into their proper orbits. All seven main engines fired at liftoff as the rocket blazed through the predawn sky, drawing cheers from spectators lining the nearby beaches. Company employees erupted in shouts and frenzied applause once the craft successfully orbit



Blue Origin's New Glenn rocket lifts off from Launch Complex 36 at the Cape Canaveral Space Force Station, Thursday in Cape Canaveral. AP/PTI

13 minutes later, a feat that drew quick praise from SpaceX's Elon Musk. Bezos - taking part in the launch from Mission Control - declined to disclose his personal investment in the program. He said he does not see Blue Origin in a competition with Elon Musk's SpaceX, long the rocket-launching dominator. He stood much of the time at his seat in Mission Control, looking anxious and happy at the same time. "Congratulations on reaching orbit on the first attempt!" Musk said via X. For this test, the satellite was expected to remain inside the second stage while circling Earth. The mission was expected to last six hours, with the second stage then placed in a safe condition to stay in a high, out-of-the-way orbit in accordance with NASA's practices for minimising space junk.

Sunita steps out on Spacewalk after 7 months in orbit

Cape Canaveral (PTI): One of NASA's two stuck astronauts got a much welcomed change of scenery Thursday, stepping out on her first spacewalk since arriving at the International Space Station more than seven months ago. Indian-origin Sunita Williams, the station's commander, had to tackle some overdue outdoor repair work alongside NASA's Nick Hague. Plans called for Williams to float back out next week with Butch Wilmore. Williams and Wilmore launched aboard Boeing's new Starliner capsule last June on what should have been a weeklong test flight. But Starliner trouble dragged out their return, and NASA ordered the capsule to come back empty. Then SpaceX delayed the launch of their replacements, meaning the two won't be home until late March or early April - ten months after launching.

'Many Americans doubt Trump can lower prices in first year'

Washington (PTI): Worries about everyday expenses helped return President-elect Donald Trump to the White House. But with his second term quickly approaching, many US adults are sceptical about his ability to bring down costs. Only about 2 in 10 Americans are "extremely" or "very" confident that Trump will be able to make progress on lowering the cost of groceries, housing or health care this year, according to a survey from The Associated Press-NORC Centre for Public Affairs Research, while about 2 in 10 are "moderately" confident. Faith in Trump's ability to create jobs is a little higher - about 3 in 10 are extremely or very confident the Republican will make progress on this in 2025 - but the poll indicates that despite his sweeping promises about lowering prices, a substantial chunk of

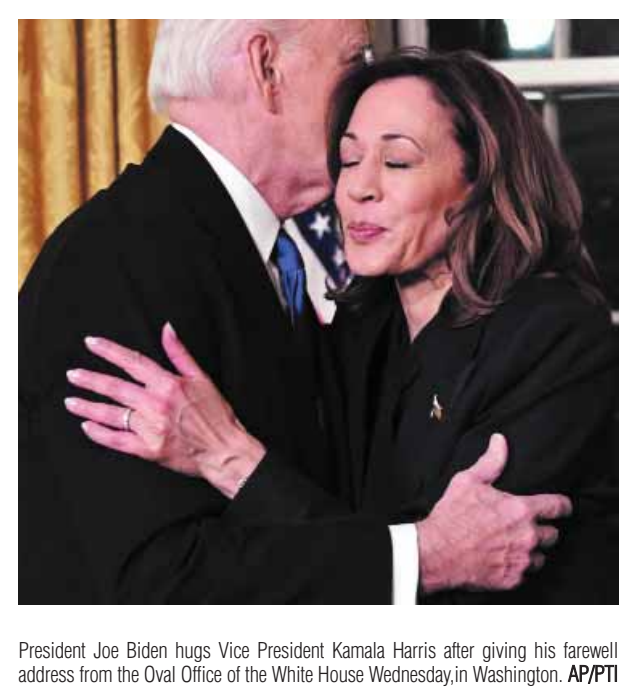
his own supporters don't have high confidence in his ability to quickly alleviate the economic pressures that continue to frustrate many households. Those tempered expectations haven't dampened Republicans' hopes for Trump's second presidential term, though. And Democrats' pessimism about his return to office is more muted than it was when he exited the White House in 2020. About 8 in 10 Republicans say Trump will be a "great" or "good" president in his second term, according to the poll. And while Democrats' assessments are much more negative - about 8 in 10 say he will be a "poor" or "terrible" president - they are less likely to say he'll be a "terrible" president in his second term than they were at the end of his first. Much of the 2024 presidential campaign revolved around prices - whether President Joe

Biden, a Democrat, was to blame for inflation and whether Trump could fix it. AP VoteCast, an extensive survey of voters and nonvoters that aims to tell the story behind election results, showed that about 4 in 10 voters in the November election identified the economy and jobs as the most important issue facing the country and that about 6 in 10 of those voters cast their ballot for Trump. As Trump takes office, though, the poll shows that many Americans don't anticipate that he will be able to immediately bring costs down. That includes some of his own supporters. Less than half of Republicans are at least "very" confident that Trump will make progress on lowering food costs, housing costs or health care costs, although about 6 in 10 are at least "very" confident in his ability to create jobs.

Oligarchy taking shape in America, warns Biden in his farewell address

PTI ■ WASHINGTON
Outgoing President Joe Biden has warned of a rising ultra-wealthy "oligarchy" in America that poses a threat to the nation's democracy, as he prepared to cede power to President-elect Donald Trump. In his farewell address to the nation, Biden also pushed for amending the Constitution to make clear that no president is immune from criminal liability - an apparent reference to Trump, 78. In July, the Supreme Court ruled that presidents cannot be prosecuted for "official acts" during their time in office. The court's ruling stemmed from the Justice Department's case against Trump over his efforts to overturn the 2020 election. Biden, 82, on January 20 will hand over the power to Donald Trump who won the presidential elections by defeating Vice

President Kamala Harris in both popular votes and the electoral college. Biden said that he wanted to warn the country of dangers that are concerning him. "That's a dangerous concentration of power in the hands of a very few ultra-wealthy people," he said. There are dangerous consequences if their abuse of power is left unchecked. "Today, an oligarchy is taking shape in America of extreme wealth, power, and influence that literally threatens our entire democracy, our basic rights and freedoms, and a fair shot for everyone to get ahead," Biden said. Biden's warning came as billionaire tech entrepreneurs have exerted increasing influence in US politics including Elon Musk, who is set to play a key role in Trump's second term.



President Joe Biden hugs Vice President Kamala Harris after giving his farewell address from the Oval Office of the White House Wednesday in Washington. AP/PTI

"We see the consequences all across America, and we've seen it before," said the president seated behind the resolute desk in the Oval Office. First Lady Jill Biden, Vice President Kamala Harris, Second Gentleman Doug Emhoff, President's son Hunter and some of the senior officials in his administration were also present in the room. Just before speaking, Biden waved to a grandchild and Jill Biden told him "you look great, Joe." Singling out social media companies, President Biden warned of the potential rise of a "tech industrial complex," comparing it to the "military industrial complex" that President Dwight D Eisenhower warned about in his 1961 farewell address. "I'm equally concerned about the potential rise of a tech industrial complex that could

pose real dangers for our country as well," Biden said in the 17-minute speech. "Americans are being buried under an avalanche of misinformation and disinformation, enabling the abuse of power," he said, referencing Mark Zuckerberg's recent announcement his company Meta would stop fact-checking on its social media platforms such as Facebook. "The free press is crumbling. Editors are disappearing. Social media is giving up on fact-checking," Biden said. "The truth is smothered by lies, told for power and for profit. We must hold the social platforms accountable to protect our children, our families and our very democracy from the abuse of power," Biden said. "We must hold the social platforms accountable to protect our children, our families and our very democracy from the

abuse of power," said the president. Noting that unless safeguards are in place, Artificial Intelligence (AI) could spawn new threats to human rights, way of life, privacy, how they work and how to protect the nation. As the land of liberty, America, not China, must lead the world in the development of AI, he said. Biden listed out some of the key achievements of his administration in the last four years. "You know, it will take time to feel the full impact of all we've done together, but the seeds are planted," he said. Biden said powerful forces want to wield their unchecked influence to eliminate the steps his administration has taken. "We must not be bullied into sacrificing the future, the future of our children and our

grandchildren. We must keep pushing forward and push faster. There's no time to waste," he said. In his remarks, Biden also talks about the works and reforms that need to be done in the months and years ahead. "In the years ahead it's going to be up to the president, the presidency, the Congress, the courts, the free press and the American people to confront these powerful forces. We must reform the tax code. Not the need to get dark money, that's that hidden funding behind too many campaign contributions," he said. "We need to get it out of our politics. We need to enact an 18-year time limit, term limit, time and term for the strongest ethics reforms for our Supreme Court. We need to ban members of Congress from trading stock while they are in Congress," he said.

Starmer in Kyiv pledges '100-year partnership' with Ukraine

PTI ■ KYIV
British Prime Minister Keir Starmer arrived in Ukraine's capital on Thursday with a pledge to help guarantee the country's security for a century, days before Donald Trump is sworn in as US president.

Monday, which is expected to bring a departure from the outgoing US administration's pledge to stand with Ukraine for as long as it takes to defeat Russia. Trump has also indicated he wants Europe to shoulder more of the burden for helping Ukraine.

Britain says its 100-year pledge is part of that assurance and will help ensure Ukraine is "never again vulnerable to the kind of brutality inflicted on it by Russia", which seized Crimea from Ukraine in 2014 and attempted a full-scale invasion in February 2022.

For the next century, bringing together technology development, scientific advances and cultural exchanges, and harnessing the phenomenal innovation shown by Ukraine in recent years for generations to come.

Imran says he's no Nawaz Sharif, vows not to strike deal with military

PTI ■ LAHORE
Pakistan's jailed former prime minister Imran Khan has said he is not Nawaz Sharif that he would strike a deal with the military establishment to come out of prison.

Pak soldier killed, 4 injured in rocket attack on aid convoy

Peshawar (PTI): One soldier was killed and four others were injured when a convoy of 35 vehicles carrying food and medical supplies to Pakistan's Kurram district, hit by sectarian violence, was attacked by rockets on Thursday, officials said.

THE PIONEER CLASSIFIEDS
CHANGE OF NAME
I, Abhay Raj Singh Rawat S/o Late Shri Rampal Singh Rawat R/o: D-961, Gali No.6, Nathupura, Delhi-110084.

INTERNAL CLEANING OF RADIATORS OF POWER CAR
E-Tender Notice No. EL/29-04 2025/K/1144 Dated: 08/01/2025. E-Tenders are invited by the undersigned for the following work: Tender No. 04_2025. Name of work: Internal Cleaning of Radiators of Power Car by using OG & ID27/Radiwash at Katihar & New Jalpaiguri Depot. Tender Value: ₹40,71,000/- Earnest Money: ₹81,500/- Date & Time of Closing of Tender: 15:00 hrs. of 31-01-2025 & opening at 15:30 hrs. of 31-01-2025.

PUBLIC NOTICE
Notice is hereby given that my client Gopurpreet Singh is in process to purchase the Property bearing No. 256, area measuring 250 sq. mtrs. in Block B, situated in the residential colony known as "Sushant Lok I", in and around villages Sarhaud, Chakarpur, Salokha, Kanhai and Wazirabad, District Gurugram, Haryana (availing loan from Kotak Bank) from Jyoti Sachdeva, having acquired the said property vide Conveyance Deed dated 9/11/2004 (Document No. 83) executed by Mrs Anshul Properties & Industries Limited. He confirmed that his seller i.e. Jyoti Sachdeva is not having the below documents pertaining to the property in question for the online FIR has already been lodged on dated 14/01/2025 vide application No.2492561/2025 Original Plot Buyer's Agreement dated 15.07.1986 executed by Mrs Anshul Properties & Industries Pvt. Ltd. in favour of Lakshmi Devi (Daily endorsed) in favour of Vishnu Kumar Sharma, thereafter endorsed in favour of Sunita Bhatia and further endorsed in favour of Jyoti Sachdeva.

GRADIENT VERIFICATION OF STATIONS YARD IN KATIHAR DIVISION
Tender Notice No.: KIR/Engg./02 of 2025, Dated: 09-01-2025; E-Tender are invited by the undersigned for the following work: Tender No.: 1; Brief Description of Work : Gradient verification of stations yard and section using Lidar Survey technology in Katihar Division. Tender Value: ₹ 2,18,61,953.30/-; Bid Security: ₹ 25,93,000/-; Date & time of closing at tender at 15:00 hrs. and opening at 15:30 hrs. on 05-02-2025. For complete information with the tender document of above e-tender will be available upto 15:00 hrs. on 05-02-2025 in website www.irebs.gov.in

PUBLIC NOTICE
It is to inform you that Mrs. Sarala had acquired Residential Plot area measuring 175 sq. yards, Kharsa No. 537/MI, situated at Deepak Vihar Khora Colony, Pargana Loni, Tehsil & Distt. Ghaziabad, U.P. vide Sale Deed Dt. 24.01.2023 executed by Mrs. Shashi Bala Sharma, Mrs. Urmila Kaushik, Mrs. Nirmal Sharma, Mrs. Seema Kaushik and Mrs. Monika Sharma and Now Mrs. Sarala is the undisputed owner of the said property.

PUBLIC NOTICE ON AUCTION OF PLEDGED GOLD ORNAMENTS
The borrower/s in specific and interested bidders in general, are hereby informed that an account of non-repayment of the Banks due by the borrowers as under despite the payment notice and recall/closure notice issued by the Bank, the gold ornaments pledged with the bank security by the respective borrowers for the loan availed by them will be sold in public auction on "as is where is" and "non-recourse" basis through e-auction portal https://csbgold.auctiontiger.net on 28th January 2025 at 10.30 AM. The auction may be adjourned to any other later date at the discretion of the bank upon publication of the same in the Bank's notice board. The borrowers are hereby further informed that the gold ornaments will be disposed of by private sale if the public auction is not successful and if there is a further balance to be recovered thereafter, legal action will be initiated against the borrower/s for recovery of the balance amounts due to the bank. In case of diseased borrower, all conditions will be applicable to legal heirs.

Table with columns: S. No., Account Name, Client ID, No. Acc., Bal. Outstanding as on 15/01/2025, Weight (grams). Rows include GAUTAM NAGAR, JANAKAPURI, ROHINI SECTOR 7.

Table with columns: S. No., Account Name, Client ID, No. Acc., Bal. Outstanding as on 15/01/2025, Weight (grams). Rows include SHALIMARG, SHYAM NAGAR - NEW DELHI, MODEL TOWN - NEW DELHI.

PUBLIC NOTICE
My client Gopal Sharma S/o Late Jambuna Sharma and Devanti Devi W/o Gopal Sharma R/o B-293 Gola, Shiv Mandir Tekhmad, Okhla Phase-I South Delhi, Delhi-20 have severed all relations with their son Sanjay Sharma and his wife Uttam Kumari and disposed them from their all movable & immovable properties due to their disobedience. My clients shall not be responsible for their- any civil and criminal acts. JASRAMP SHARMA (Advocate) Ch. No. 67, Lawyers' Block, Saket Courts Complex, New Delhi-110017.

PUBLIC NOTICE
My client Sh. Radhe Shyam S/o Sh. Ram Prasad (owner of Residential Plot No.25-A, area measuring 59.50 sq. mtrs. out of total area 200.64 sq. mtrs. out of Kharsa No.27/19, situated in unauthorized colony, Bharat Vihar, A Block, Village at Kakrola, New Delhi through Registered Conveyance Deed Dated 13.10.2023 executed by POI Vide Reg. No.12332 at SR-8, Delhi the above-mentioned property is going to be mortgaged with Federal Bank Financial Services Limited. If any person/bank/financial institution having any claim/right, lien, any objection whatsoever in regard to the above property, should notified to the undersigned, Adv. Vishal Mehan, E-713, Karkardooma Court, Delhi-110092 along with documentary evidence under address through registered within 7 days from the date of publication of this notice failing which any claim, lien or objection shall be deemed to have been waived. Adv. Vishal Mehan, E-713, Karkardooma Court, Delhi-110092; Mobile: 9811251581

New Okhla Industrial Development Authority
Main Administrative Building, Sector-6, Noida, G.B. Nagar, (U.P.) Website: www.noidaauthorityonline.in
E-TENDER NOTICE
E-Tenders are invited from eligible contractors/firms for the following jobs against which bids can be uploaded and same shall be opened / downloaded as per schedule mentioned. The details and conditions of all tenders are available on Noida Authority's official website: www.noidaauthorityonline.in & https://tender.up.nic.in. Please ensure to see these website for any changes/ amendments & corrigendum etc.

Table with columns: Sr. No., Job Number, Name of Work, Amount (Rs.), Publishing. Row 1: Construction of Dog Shelter in Sec-50 & 34, Noida.

Table with columns: Sr. No., Job Number, Name of Work, Amount (Rs.), Publishing. Rows include KAWALJIT KAUR, SANGEEETA KOMAL, YED PARKASH, PRABHAAR VATS, GOPI SINGH, PATEL NAGAR, RAJOURI GARDEN, TRI NAGAR, NEW DELHI, SHYAM NAGAR - NEW DELHI, MODEL TOWN - NEW DELHI, KALKAJI.

LOST AND FOUND
I, Anil Kumar S/o Ishwar Singh R/o Flat no 948, 2nd Floor, Akshardham apartment, Dwarka declare that my builder buyer agreement has been lost in Sector 21, Dwarka dated on 13-12-2024. LR no is 2498279/ 2025. If any person finds, please return at above address.

PUBLIC NOTICE
It is inform to all concern the original property document- Possession Letter (dated: 13.07.1987) of Flat No. 1876, 1st Floor, Sector-37, Arun Vihar, Noida, Gautam Budh Nagar, U.P 201301, allotted to SI AK Chaturvedi R/o Police Station Sector-20, Noida G.B Nagar, has been Lost/ misplaced.

PUBLIC NOTICE
NOTICE is here by Given to public at large that Mr. Ravi Kumar is purchasing property Plot area measuring 100 sq. yards, i.e., 83.61 sq. meters, out of Kharsa no. 2657/MI, situated in the village Karhera, Pargana Loni, Tehsil & Distt. Ghaziabad, U.P. from Arti Chauhan who is the owner of above said property is by Khatoriyan number 1424-1429 issued by Patwari & Sale Deed dated 21.12.2020 and intend to get a financial Assistance from Aditya Birla housing Finance Ltd. If any person/institute have any objection or claim with respect to the right title or interest in the said property may please contact with us within 07 days from the date of the notice on the address mentioned below failing which my client shall not be responsible in the manner whatsoever. Aditya Birla Housing Finance. Noida-8307442962/7042038471

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Table with columns: S. No., Account Name, Client ID, No. Acc., Bal. Outstanding as on 15/01/2025, Weight (grams). Rows include SHALIMARG, SHYAM NAGAR - NEW DELHI, MODEL TOWN - NEW DELHI, KALKAJI.

NCLAT admits Meta, Whatsapp pleas against CCI's ₹213-Crore penalty

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Appellate tribunal NCLAT on Thursday admitted the petitions filed by Meta Platforms and Whatsapp against an order passed by fair trade regulator CCI which imposed a penalty of Rs 213.14 crore for abuse of market dominance. After hearing the initial submissions from Meta and CCI (Competition Commission of India), a two-member bench of the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) said the issue requires consideration.

"We find that the submission raised by the parties needs consideration. We admit both the appeals," said the NCLAT bench which also comprised its Chairperson Justice Ashok Bhushan.

However, over the interim relief to stay the CCI order, NCLAT said it will decide next week. During the proceedings, the counsel appearing for Whatsapp and Meta Platform requested the appellate tribunal to stay the CCI order. However, this was opposed by the counsel appearing for the



Competition Commission of India. On November 18, the CCI imposed a penalty of Rs 213.14 crore on social media major Meta for unfair business ways with respect to the WhatsApp privacy policy update done in 2021. Meta Platforms and Whatsapp have challenged this order before the NCLAT,

which is an appellate authority over the orders passed by the CCI. Senior Advocates Kapil Sibal and Mukul Rohatgi, appearing for Meta and Whatsapp, contended that the CCI had overstepped its jurisdiction by ruling on WhatsApp's privacy policy as the matter is sub-judice before a Constitution Bench

of the Supreme Court. "CCI has gone into the entity's privacy policy. It is before 5 judges of the Supreme Court. It has no jurisdiction to deal with it," he said. Moreover, there is no complaint in this case and CCI has come to an "erroneous conclusion" on dominance but it did not take into account 'effect analysis' of

that. "Without an effect analysis, you cannot come to the conclusion," said Sibal, adding the CCI has not even examined what is the data that is being shared. He further said CCI has barred WhatsApp from sharing data collected on its platform with other Meta companies or Meta company products for advertising purposes for five years and alleged: "they are trying to destroy the business model." "No app can survive without monetisation," he said, adding the similar platforms as Telegram and Signal have their own models of monetisation. Moreover, search apps also monetise in their own ways. He further sought an immediate stay on the CCI order, which was directed to be implemented by February 19. Sibal said: "Let the Supreme Court decide on the privacy policy and let the statutory rules come, then you can (NCLAT) take up the matter and decide. Moreover balance of convenience in our favour as we have been operating this for years."



Contractors responsible for accidents due to bad roads: Union minister Gadkari

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Union Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari on Thursday said faulty road construction should be made a non-bailable offence and road contractors and engineers should be held responsible for accidents and sent to prison. Addressing an event organised by industry body CII, Gadkari further said India is number one in road accidents in the world. "Faulty road construction should be a non-bailable

offence and road contractors, concessionaires and engineers should be held responsible for accidents and sent to prison," he said. The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways aims to reduce road accident fatalities to half by 2030. According to the minister, the ministry data of road accidents in 2023 shows five lakh mishaps in the country resulting in 1,72,000 deaths. "Of this, 66.4 per cent, or 1,14,000, were in the 18-45 years age bracket while 10,000 deaths were of children,"

Gadkari said. He pointed out that 55,000 deaths were reported due to absence of helmets and 30,000 were due to non-use of seat belts. Gadkari also said the highways ministry is spending Rs 40,000 crore to rectify black spots on highways. Gadkari urged the industry and other stakeholders to partner with the government for setting up of driver training and fitness centres to address the acute shortage of drivers in the country.

Sensex, Nifty extend gains for third day on strong global cues



PTI ■ MUMBAI

Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty rallied for the third session on the trot on Thursday, helped by a rally in global markets after lower-than-expected consumer inflation in the US ignited hopes of more rate cuts by the Federal Reserve. Intense buying in Reliance Industries, ICICI Bank and HDFC Bank also boosted sentiments, traders said. The 30-share BSE index climbed 318.74 points or 0.42 per cent to revisit 77,000 level at 77,042.82. During the day, it jumped 595.42 points or 0.77 per cent to 77,319.50. On the similar lines, the NSE Nifty rallied 98.60 points or 0.42 per cent to 23,311.80. As many as 2,778 stocks advanced, while 1,188 declined and 101 remained unchanged on the BSE. Unabated foreign fund inflows, weakness in the rupee and elevated global crude prices continue to weigh on domestic equity markets, traders said. "Benchmark indices continued to trade in the positive, albeit off highs, driven by positive investor sentiment following mild US inflation data, which raised hopes for a potential rate cut by the Federal Reserve. "Additionally, favourable developments in the Israel-Hamas ceasefire and a reduced trade deficit further boosted the market's upward movement. However, weak economic growth data from the UK dampened some of this optimism," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services, said.

From the 30-share blue-chip pack, Adani Ports, State Bank of India, Bajaj Finserv, Bharti Airtel, Tata Motors, IndusInd Bank, NTPC, Maruti, Reliance Industries and Axis Bank were the biggest gainers. In contrast, HCL Tech, Nestle, Infosys, Hindustan Unilever, ITC and Tata Consultancy Services were among the laggards. IT services major Infosys on Thursday reported an 11.46 per cent year-on-year increase in consolidated net profit to Rs 6,806 crore in the October-December quarter of FY25. Shares of Infosys slipped 1.21 per cent to settle at Rs 1,926.20 apiece on the BSE. Meanwhile, Adani group stocks rallied on Thursday after Hindenburg Research founder Nate Anderson announced that he would disband the firm, which made international waves with campaigns targeting billionaire Gautam Adani that wiped billions from the market value of his group companies. Shares of NDTV surged 9.15 per cent, Ambuja Cements jumped 3.88 per cent, Adani Green Energy rallied 3.35 per cent, Sanghi Industries climbed 3.34 per cent and Adani Power went up by 2.45 per cent on the BSE. The stock of Adani Ports advanced 2.03 per cent, Adani Total Gas (1.78 per cent), Adani Enterprises (1.74 per cent), Adani Energy Solutions (1.54 per cent) and ACC (0.77 per cent). Shares of Adani Wilmar, however, declined 1.19 per cent. "Nifty has regained momentum, closing at 23,312, buoyed by demand and reclaiming the 23,300 mark, as Wall Street's strong performance helped bulls take charge. Risk-on sentiments were sparked by cooler-than-expected US CPI inflation data for December, easing concerns about rising inflation and boosting expectations that the Fed might continue its rate-cutting cycle throughout the year.

India's economy to grow at 6.4 per cent in current fiscal: FICCI

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Industry body FICCI on Thursday lowered India's growth projection for the current financial year to 6.4 per cent from 7 per cent estimated earlier. According to FICCI's Economic Outlook Survey, the revised projection is in line with the broad expectations and reflect a notable slowdown vis-à-vis 8.2 per cent GDP growth recorded in 2023-24. "...FICCI's Economic Outlook Survey projects an annual median GDP growth forecast of 6.4 per cent for 2024-25. The forecast in the current survey marks a moderation from 7.0 per cent estimate (for 2024-25) put out in the previous round conducted during the month of September last year," it said. The survey was conducted in December 2024 and drew responses from leading economists representing industry, banking and financial services sector. The participating economists observed global economy in 2025 to present a reasonable growth



trajectory, with an underlying note of caution. Sharing their perspective on the expected impact of US President Donald Trump's policies on the Indian economy, the economists indicated the possibility of short-term disruptions through channels like exports, foreign capital flows, and input costs for the US trading partners including India. The likelihood of tax cuts

(personal and business) could inflate the US fiscal deficit, while higher tariffs and stricter immigration norms could push up labour costs and inflation, they observed. The Federal Reserve, in response, could cut the policy rates by less than what was anticipated. This may reduce capital inflows into emerging markets, including India, causing rupee fluctuations.

Trade tensions, including a potential US-China trade conflict, could disrupt supply chains and raise input costs in the short term. However, economists expect US to take a calibrated approach towards India, the economists opined. The Union Budget for 2025-26, set to be presented on February 1, arrives amidst global economic uncertainties and moderating domestic

growth. Against this backdrop, economists shared their expectations that could shape the government's policy in the upcoming budget. Reviving private consumption emerged as a key priority. A review of the current tax structure including rates (both direct and indirect taxes) in the Union Budget 2025-26 is called for with a view to enhance disposable income and stimulate consumer spending, they said. Additionally, continued investments in welfare programmes such as MGNREGS, PMGSY, and PMAY were recommended. Further, the participating economists expect continued capex expansion, given its strong multiplier effects. An increase between 10-15 per cent in capex over 2024-25 is being looked at in the upcoming budget. Economists also recommended initiatives to increase agri productivity, improve rural infrastructure, and strengthen agricultural value chains. Investments in cold storage facilities and

supply chain efficiency were underscored as critical to managing inflationary pressures and minimizing food wastage. According to the participants, India's economic outlook for 2025 presents cautious optimism, amidst the backdrop of persisting external headwinds. Consumer spending is expected to gain momentum, driven by an improved outlook for the agriculture sector, which is likely to bolster rural consumption and sentiment in the first half of the next fiscal year. Food inflation which has remained elevated for over a year and strained household budgets, is expected to ease. Furthermore, monetary easing by the RBI, resulting in lower interest rates, could also provide an additional impetus to consumption. To address risks and unlock opportunities, economists recommended that India should evaluate reducing tariffs on select and specific US imports while ensuring revenue stability and minimal domestic impact.

Rupee declines 16 paise to settle at 86.56 against US Dollar

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The rupee depreciated 16 paise to close at 86.56 (provisional) against the US dollar on Thursday, dragged down by a strong American currency overseas, elevated crude oil prices and foreign fund outflows. However, positive domestic equity markets provided some cushion at the lower level, forex traders said. At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 86.42 and touched the intraday high of 86.37 before ending the session at 86.56 (provisional) against the greenback, 16 paise lower from the previous



close. The local unit settled with a gain of 13 paise at 86.40 against the dollar on Wednesday, a day after

rebounding 17 paise from its lowest-ever level. Anuj Choudhary, Research Analyst at Mirae Asset Sharekhan, said the rupee

declined due to increased demand for dollars by importers. "Importers may continue to buy dollars, which may further pressurise the rupee. Traders may take cues from retail sales and weekly unemployment claims data from the US. USD-INR spot price is expected to trade in a range of Rs 86.35 to Rs 86.75," he said. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 0.05 per cent higher at 108.97. Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, fell 0.12 per cent but stayed elevated at

USD 81.93 per barrel in futures trade. Analysts said concerns over geopolitical uncertainties are likely to add volatility in the dollar and crude until the US gets a new administration under President Donald Trump next week. In the domestic equity market, the 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 318.74 points, or 0.42 per cent, to settle at 77,042.82 points, while the Nifty rose 98.60 points, or 0.42 per cent, to 23,311.80 points. Foreign institutional investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 4,533.49 crore on Wednesday.

Gold rallies ₹500, silver soars ₹2,300

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Gold prices rallied Rs 500 to hit over a two-month high of Rs 81,300 per 10 grams in the national capital on Thursday amid fresh buying from jewellers and retailers and rupee depreciation, according to the All India Sarafa Association. The precious metal had closed at Rs 80,800 per 10 grams on Wednesday. The price of gold of 99.5 per cent purity climbed Rs 500 to Rs 80,900 per 10 grams. It settled at Rs 80,400 per 10 grams in the previous trading session. Silver also surged Rs 2,300 to Rs 94,000 per kg from the previous close of Rs 91,700 per kg on Wednesday. Gold contracts for February delivery rose Rs 297, or 0.38 per cent, to Rs 79,007 per 10 grams in the futures trade on the MCX on Thursday. "Gold surged higher trading above Rs 79,000 in MCX, supported by a rupee depreciation," Jateen Trivedi, VP Research Analyst of Commodity and Currency at LKP Securities, said. On Thursday, the rupee depreciated 16 paise to close at 86.56 (provisional) against the US dollar, dragged down by a strong American currency overseas, elevated crude oil prices and foreign fund outflows.

DB Corp Q3 profit down 4.6 per cent to ₹118 Crore

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Media house DB Corp Ltd on Thursday reported 4.65 per cent decline in consolidated net profit at Rs 118.21 crore for the third quarter ended December 2024. The company had posted a profit of Rs 123.97 crore for the October-December period a year ago, according to a regulatory filing from DB Corp. Revenue from operations was marginally down to Rs 642.65 crore from Rs 644.71 crore. Total expenses were Rs 495.58 crore as against Rs 497.38 crore earlier. Revenue from Printing, Publishing and Allied



business was down marginally to Rs 594.17 crore in the quarter. However, revenue from the radio business was up 5.47 per cent at Rs 48.64 crore. Total income of DB Corp, which includes other income, was down 1.37 per cent to Rs 655.64 crore in

the quarter. Meanwhile, in a separate filing, DB Corp informed about management changes. It has appointed Runit Kishor Shah as an Additional Director and Vijay Kumar TV as Chief Operating Officer in Ad sales. DB Corp is one of the largest print media companies and publishes five newspapers - Dainik Bhaskar, Divya Bhaskar, Divya Marathi, Saurashtra Samachar and DB Star. It also owns 94.3 MY FM radio station. Shares of DB Corp Ltd were on Thursday trading at Rs 267.15 apiece on BSE, down 1.06 per cent from the previous close.

Spencer's Retail Q3 loss narrows to ₹47.3 Crore

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Spencer's Retail Ltd on Thursday reported narrowing of consolidated net loss to Rs 47.34 crore for the December quarter. The company posted net loss of Rs 51.20 crore in the October-December period a year ago, according to a regulatory filing from Spencer's Retail, a RP Sanjiv Goenka firm. However, its revenue from operations was down 20.9 per cent at Rs 516.97 crore during the quarter under review. It was at Rs 654.01 crore in the year-ago period. The company had a "soft festive quarter with respect to consumer spending," said Spencer's Retail in its investor



presentation. Total expenses of Spencer's Retail was down 20.2 per cent to Rs 567.44 crore in the December quarter as against Rs 711.54 crore a year ago. Spencer's Retail's total income, which includes other income, was marginally down 21.23 per cent to Rs 520.03 crore in the December quarter.

"Despite a soft festive trading environment wherein LFL sales growth was flat, Spencer's delivered a very strong operational performance on the back of good delivery (19.7 per cent), strong control on all operational cost lines resulting in a milestone EBITDA positive achievement," Chairman

Shashwat Goenka said. "This is a strong validation of our decision to focus on core geographies, exit from loss-making, non-strategic regions & drive improvement across all operating metrics such as margins, sales productivity, and costs and to bring the business to operational profitability," he added. Spencer's started its quick delivery proposition JIFFY and opened two stores during the quarter for Natures Basket. Its total store count, along with Natures Basket, is 131 with a total 10.34 lakh square feet in over 27 cities in India. Shares of Spencer's Retail Ltd on Thursday were trading at Rs 86.76 on the BSE, down 6.48 per cent from the previous close.

NEW LAUNCH



Honouring Legal Luminaries

Through its pages, the book recounts the lasting legacy of lawyers who championed justice and equality, says **ABHI SINGHAL**

The Society of Indian Law Firms (SILF) commemorated the 75th anniversary of the Republic of India with a memorable event that highlighted the significant contributions of lawyers to the nation's democratic journey. The occasion witnessed the launch of an extraordinary book titled *Lawyers of India in Freedom Struggle & in Independent India (1872-2022): 150 Years and Continued Glorious Contribution Toward the Centennial - 2047*. The launch brought together luminaries of the legal fraternity. The highlight of the evening was the book's formal launch by K.K. Venugopal, former Attorney General of India, who presented the first copy to his successor, R. Venkataramani, the current Attorney General of India. Addressing the distinguished gathering, K.K. Venugopal praised the legal profession's crucial role in shaping India's democratic ethos. "The contributions of lawyers have always transcended the courtroom. They have been instrumental in guiding India towards its democratic ideals, especially during times of struggle," he said. The comprehensively



researched book chronicles 150 years of the legal profession's impact on India's socio-political landscape, from the colonial era to the present day. It pays homage to legendary figures like Mahatma Gandhi, Lala Lajpat Rai, and Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das, whose advocacy during the independence movement laid the foundation for India's freedom. Equally, it sheds light on post-independence lawyers and educators who have fortified the country's legal framework. Dr. Lalit Bhasin, President of SILF, emphasised the book's significance in preserving the history of Indian legal professionals. "This book is an homage to the lawyers who



ABOUT THE BOOK
Compiled, Edited and Authored by Dr. Lalit Bhasin (President) Society of Indian Law Firms

have played a vital role in the independence movement and, more importantly, in the development of a legal system that is the backbone of India's democracy," he said. The book highlights Lala Lajpat Rai's leading advocacy for social reform and the rights of Indians and explores how post-independence legal professionals have upheld the principles of democracy, justice, and fairness in the evolving Indian Republic. As India approaches its centennial of independence in 2047, the book serves as both a historical record and a call to action. It underscores the continuing role of lawyers in addressing modern challenges and ensuring the rule of law prevails.

A Literary Prelude

Curtain-Raiser for Jaipur Literature Festival 2025



By **SAKSHI PRIYA**

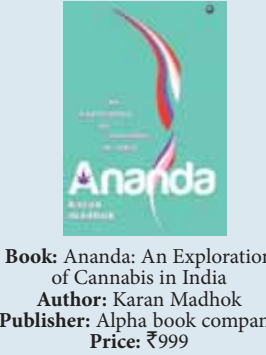
The curtain-raiser for the Jaipur Literature Festival 2025 at The Leela Palace New Delhi offered an engaging preview of what promises to be another remarkable edition of the world's most celebrated literary gathering. Hosted at one of Delhi's most prestigious venues, the event celebrated the enduring power of literature and its ability to spark meaningful conversations. This year marks the fourth consecutive partnership between the Jaipur Literature Festival and Teamwork Arts with The Leela Palace New Delhi. The event brought together distinguished authors, poets and intellectuals, creating an atmosphere filled with creativity and inspiration.

The evening featured insightful speeches by key figures associated with the festival, who reflected on the significance of literature in contemporary society. Their words highlighted the festival's mission to preserve cultural heritage and encourage dialogue through storytelling and ideas. The venue provided a fitting backdrop for discussions about the role of literature as a bridge between the past and the present. The event underscored the Jaipur Literature Festival's role as a global platform for literary excellence and its dedication to the written word. As a preview of the main event, the curtain-raiser successfully built excitement among attendees. It highlighted the festival's significance for readers and writers alike, continuing to inspire and promote intellectual exchange.



(Left to right): William Dalrymple, celebrated historian, author and co-founder & co-director of the Jaipur Literature Festival; Anupam Dasgupta Area Vice President (North India) and General Manager at The Leela Palace, New Delhi; and Sanjoy K. Roy, Managing Director, Teamwork Arts. In its fourth year of partnership with Teamwork Arts, The Leela Palace New Delhi hosted the curtain-raiser dinner for the Jaipur Literature Festival 2025, scheduled from January 30 to February 3. The collaboration culminates with the prestigious Writer's Ball at The Leela Palace Jaipur, showcasing The Leela's dedication to celebrating India's rich cultural heritage and traditions.

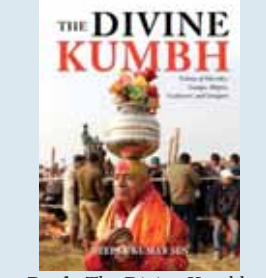
JANUARY READS



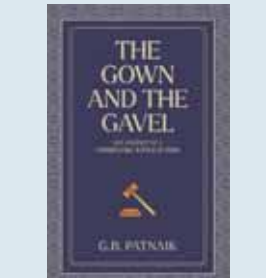
Book: Ananda: An Exploration of Cannabis in India
Author: Karan Madhok
Publisher: Alpha book company
Price: ₹999



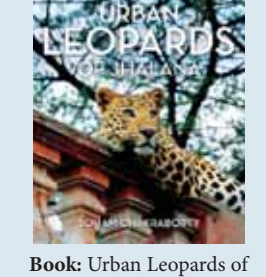
Book: Love in Action: Writings on Nonviolent Social Change
Author: Thich Nhat Hanh
Publisher: Alpha book company
Price: ₹399



Book: The Divine Kumbh Echoes of Eternity: Ganga, Shipra, Godavari, and Sangam
Author: Deepak Kumar Sen
Publisher: Niyogi books
Price: ₹695



Book: The Gown and the Gavel: Life Journey of a Former Chief Justice of India
Author: G.B. PATNAIK
Publisher: Niyogi books
Price: ₹695



Book: Urban Leopards of Jhalana
Author: Soham Chakraborty
Publisher: Niyogi Books
Price: ₹650

In *Contemplating Gandhi: Essays on Mahatma's Life and Thought*, Chandrashekar Dharmadhikari, a notable jurist and Gandhian thinker, presents a deeply reflective and insightful account of the Mahatma's life, philosophy, and enduring significance. The essays, thoughtfully compiled and expertly translated by Ramchandra Pradhan, present an intimate and vivid portrayal of Gandhi, seamlessly mixing historical insights with poignant personal reminiscences. This volume transcends the bounds of academic discourse, becoming a heartfelt and reverent tribute to a legacy that continues to inspire and guide generations, both past and present. Ramchandra Pradhan's preface is a heartfelt and expansive memoir detailing his serendipitous and deep association

with Justice Chandrashekar Dharmadhikari and the Institute of Gandhian Studies in Wardha. Through his reflective and eloquent writing, Pradhan reveals a deep and abiding respect for Dharmadhikari's unwavering dedication to Gandhian values and principles. Pradhan's preface is not merely an introductory passage; rather, it chronicles his decade-long journey of engaging with Gandhian thought, a journey characterised by mutual affection, intellectual camaraderie, and a shared reverence for the Mahatma's enduring legacy. Pradhan affectionately recounts Dharmadhikari's poignant anecdotes, including the inspiring words spoken by Dharmadhikari's mother to his father, Dada Dharmadhikari, during the pivotal Non-cooperation Movement. Such compelling narratives serve to enrich the book's historical context, offering readers a valuable glimpse into the familial and philosophical underpinnings that have so profoundly shaped Dharmadhikari's own work and perspective. Moreover, Pradhan's translation, which Dharmadhikari himself has described as enhancing the original text, underscores Pradhan's vital role in preserving the nuances and essence of Gandhian philosophy for a contemporary audience. The essays in this collection, written on various occasions, range from reflections on Gandhi's principles to portraits of significant figures in the Gandhian movement, including Jinnah's wife, Jankidevi. They explore themes like the Non-cooperation Movement, the challenges of India's independence, and Gandhi's response to partition. While Dharmadhikari's writings exhibit repetition, as acknowledged by the translator, this reiteration reinforces the profundity and timelessness of Gandhian ideas. Dharmadhikari emphasises the dynamic

The Relevance of Principles

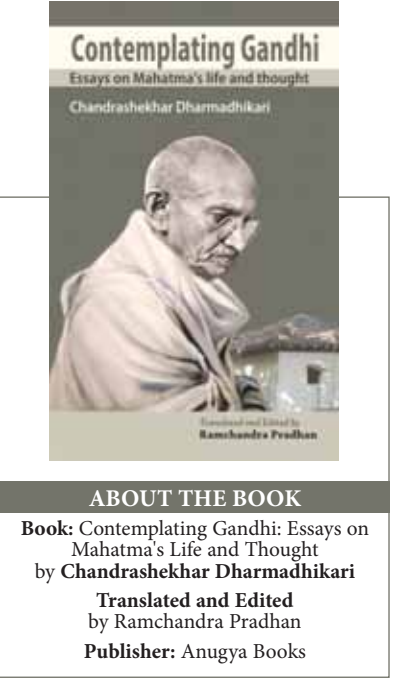
Contemplating Gandhi uncovers the depth of Gandhian philosophy, inspiring future generations, says **SHALEEN KUMAR SINGH**



nature of Gandhian philosophy. Drawing on his father's wisdom, he argues that ideas must evolve with the times to remain relevant. This approach challenges readers to engage critically with Gandhi's teachings, urging them to reinterpret his principles in contemporary contexts. The book's philosophical core lies in Dharmadhikari's insightful and nuanced reflections on the profound concepts of Anasakti Yoga and Karma Yoga, which Gandhi himself so eloquently embodied and exemplified throughout his life. These essays also powerfully highlight Gandhi's unwavering humanism, his inspiring ability to transcend personal sorrow during times of immense national crisis, and his steadfast commitment to living amidst and in service of the people. Dharmadhikari's deeply personal



recollections and experiences with the Mahatma himself, such as the cherished moments of walking alongside Gandhi and the profound anguish of mourning his tragic assassination, add an indelible emotional dimension to the essays. These poignant accounts elevate the book from a mere academic endeavour, transforming it into a living, breathing bridge that connects the revered past with the present day, allowing readers to forge a genuine, visceral connection to Gandhi's enduring legacy. Hence, the book titled *Contemplating Gandhi* is not merely a collection of essays; rather, it is a profound philosophical exploration and a heartfelt, reverent homage to the life and enduring legacy of the Mahatma. Through the insightful writings of Chandrashekar Dharmadhikari, enriched by the meticulous and evocative translation of Ramchandra Pradhan, this volume inspires readers to view Gandhi's teachings not as relics of the past, but as a living, dynamic philosophy that continues to guide and shape the present-day world. This book is a necessary read for scholars, students, and anyone deeply interested in Gandhian thought and principles. It challenges readers to think critically, to embrace the fluid and evolving interpretations of Gandhi's ideas, and to strive to embody his timeless values and principles in their own lives. Through this reflective work, Dharmadhikari and Pradhan remind us that the true relevance of Gandhi's legacy lies not in the provision of ready-made solutions, but in the offering of a transformative framework for ethical, purposeful and meaningful living in an ever-changing, dynamic global landscape. A book that deserves serious reading. — Shaleen Kumar Singh (shaleensingh.in) teaches English at Swami Shukdevanad College, Shahjahanpur, India, edits creativesaplings in an online journal



ABOUT THE BOOK
Book: Contemplating Gandhi: Essays on Mahatma's Life and Thought
by Chandrashekar Dharmadhikari
Translated and Edited by Ramchandra Pradhan
Publisher: Anugya Books

Australian Open: Iga Swiatek moves into third round against Emma Raducanu

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Iga Swiatek rushed through the first set in 26 minutes and completed her 6-0, 6-2 second-round win over Rebecca Sramkova in an hour at the Australian Open. The five-time Grand Slam champion makes a habit of advancing quickly through the early rounds at the majors. She's won almost 12% of her sets in Grand Slams by 6-0, which puts her in exclusive company. So when No. 49-ranked Sramkova ended a seven-game losing run by holding serve on Thursday, she raised her arm to acknowledge the applause from the Rod Laver Arena crowd. It was one of the few chances she had to celebrate. "It was good to play in such an efficient way and just finish it quick," Swiatek said. "Also, you know, just feel the court and how it is in RLA." Second-seeded Swiatek next faces 2021 U.S. Open champion Emma Raducanu, who recovered from

an early break in the second set to hold off Amanda Anisimova 6-3, 7-5. Taylor Fritz hasn't wasted any time advancing to the third round, dropping just eight games across two rounds and spending just over three hours on court. The 2024 U.S. Open runner-up and No. 4 seed beat Cristian Garin 6-2, 6-1, 6-0 to move into a third-round match against 38-year-old Gael Monfils, who last week became the oldest player to win an ATP Tour title. Also advancing on the men's side were local hope Alex de Minaur, seeded 8th, No. 16 Lorenzo Musetti, No. 19 Karen Khachanov and No. 21 Ben Shelton, who beat Pablo Carreno Busta 6-3, 6-3, 6-7 (4), 6-4. Raducanu has struggled with injuries since her breakthrough major in 2021, when she became the first qualifier to win a Grand Slam singles title. She didn't play a warmup tournament ahead of this year's Australian Open because of a muscle strain and needed time



during her match against Anisimova to get treatment on her back from a trainer. After advancing beyond the

second round for the first time at Melbourne Park, the No. 61-ranked Raducanu was confident she'd recover in time for her next

challenge against Swiatek. "It'll be a very good match for me, another opportunity to test my game," she said. "Going into it, I

have nothing to lose. I'm just going to swing." Swiatek is moving on from the doping infringement which led to her one-month ban last year. And she's not showing any signs of it being a distraction. She did everything at pace in the second round, including quick claps of her racket to acknowledge the crowd after her win. Swiatek didn't face a break point against Sramkova and converted five of the six she had. She finished off points with winners off both sides, and also hit some clean volleys on her ventures to the net. She's feeling slightly less pressure this year, too, after losing the No. 1 ranking to two-time defending Australian Open champion Aryna Sabalenka. "Yeah, there was a lot of pressure starting the year as No. 1, but I think overall last year I didn't think about it this much anyway," she said. "Also, I realized last year that I don't have 100% influence on what happens with my ranking sometimes. So now I just

focus on tennis." Emma Navarro, a U.S. Open semifinalist last year and seeded in the top eight for the first time at a major, was in trouble after two service breaks early in the third set before she reeled off four straight games to beat Wang Xiyu 6-3, 3-6, 6-4. She hopped from the baseline toward the net, and made a big, swirling swing of her arm to underline another tough, three-set victory. "It was really tough the whole time ... Super tough there at the end," Navarro said. "Found some good tennis there in the last games." She'll next play Ons Jabeur, a three-time Grand Slam runner-up, who struggled with asthma but held off Camila Osorio 7-5, 6-3. Sixth-seeded Elena Rybakina, the 2022 Wimbledon champion and runner-up in Australia two years ago, registered her 50th win in a Grand Slam main draw singles match when she beat American qualifier Iva Jovic 6-0, 6-3.



Barcelona reaches Copa del Rey quarterfinals with a 5-1 victory over Real Betis

PTI ■ BARCELONA

Barcelona followed up its rout of Real Madrid in the Spanish Super Cup final with a comfortable 5-1 victory over Real Betis in the round of 16 of the Copa del Rey. Gavi and Jules Koundé scored a goal each in the first half-hour and Raphinha, Ferran Torres and Lamine Yamal added to the lead in the second half to give the Catalan club the win and a spot in the quarterfinals. It was the fourth straight victory in 2025 for Barcelona, which on Sunday defeated Madrid 5-2 in Saudi Arabia to win the Spanish Super Cup. "We wanted to keep the momentum from the Super Cup here at home in front of our fans," Barcelona defender Pau Cubarsi said. "We continue like this and keep the foot on the throttle. The (Christmas) break did well for us, we were able to refresh." Barcelona had lost its last two games in 2024 before going on a winning streak against Barbastro in the Copa del Rey and Athletic Bilbao and Madrid in the Spanish Super Cup. Playmaker Dani Olmo, registered in the last minute after a long battle between Barcelona, the Spanish league and Spain's federation because of a missed deadline by the club, helped set up Gavi's opening goal in the third minute at Montjuic stadium. Yamal gave the pass for Koundé's goal in the 27th. Koundé thought he had added to the lead in first-half

stoppage time but his effort was disallowed by video review because he was offside. Yamal also had one called back by the VAR because of offside early in the second half. Barcelona's third goal finally counted when Raphinha found the net in a breakaway in the 58th. Torres scored the fourth from inside the area in the 67th, a few minutes after coming off the bench, and Yamal sealed it after a nice run in the 75th. Vitor Roque scored Betis' lone goal by converting an 84th-minute penalty kick. **ATLETICO KEEPS WINNING** Atletico Madrid, playing without many regular starters, routed second-division club Elche 4-0 to extend its record winning streak to 15 matches. The club had never won more than 13 games in a row across all competitions before. Alexander Sorloth scored from close range in the eighth and converted a 29th-minute penalty kick. Rodrigo Riquelme scored the third from long range in the 61st, and Julián Álvarez closed the scoring in the 75th. Elche played a man down from the 50th after Nicolás Fernández was sent off with a second yellow card. **OTHER RESULTS** Alvaro Rodríguez scored two minutes into the match as Getafe won 1-0 at fourth-division club Pontevedra. The visitors played a man down from the 41st after a straight red card was shown to Rodríguez.

India women must make this year their best in ODIs: Smriti Mandhana

PTI ■ RAJKOT

Smriti Mandhana believes India's back-to-back 3-0 series wins against the West Indies and Ireland have provided the perfect momentum for making it their "best year in one-dayers" as the team gears up for the 50-over World Cup at home. India will host the women's ODI World Cup later this year and the team, which has been able to rediscover its form with six consecutive ODI wins, should drive home the advantage now, says Mandhana. "Two 3-0 sweeps are definitely really good in a World Cup year especially. We have to like keep going and have this for the best year for one-days (dayers)," Mandhana said in a video



shared by BCCI. Mandhana (135) and Pratika Rawal (154) put on 233 for the first wicket for the third highest opening wicket partnership for India in ODIs, setting up their highest ever total of 435/5 and eventually for their biggest ever ODI win by 304 runs on Wednesday.

"I wanted to go out and bat with a lot of freedom. I said in the dugout before I went in about that you know, I'm going to try and play my shots because not many times you get an opportunity to do that," Mandhana said. Rawal, who notched up her first hundred to make 154 off 129 balls with 20 fours and

one six, admitted she slowed down nearing her century but gained pace of scoring once she was past the landmark. "As a batter I always wanted to score more runs and doing that for your country is actually a privilege and I am very happy," she said. "After (crossing) 70 (runs) I was a bit conscious that there was a hundred (on the cards). I was taking singles and going slow but when I got the hundred, I was like, let's just go for it. The 50 runs after the hundred came a bit quicker. I was able to score the way I score," she said. Talking about her 233-run opening stand with the senior batter, Rawal said, "It felt like that it was happening with the flow, we didn't think about it." "We got to know stats now, actually," Mandhana added.

India men, women hockey teams to commence season with Pro League matches next month

PTI ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Indian men's and women's hockey teams will commence their international assignments this year with the high-profile FIH Pro League matches here from February 15. The Indian men's team will face Spain, while their women counterparts will take on England on February 15 at the Kalinga Stadium. Most of the Indian men's and women's team players are currently playing in the Hockey India League (HIL) in Rourkela and Ranchi respectively. The Bhubaneswar leg of the FIH Pro League will be after the Australia leg (February 04-09) in Sydney. Between February 15 and 25, the men's teams of India, Spain, England, Germany and Netherlands," FIH said in a release. "With 24 matches over the 11 days, the action will be unceasing among the top ranked teams in the world, which will be a true showcase of the 'League of the Best'."



Following the Australian leg, the league will move to Bhubaneswar, India, renowned for its passionate hockey fan base. It will be the same in the women's competition for India, Spain, England, Germany and Netherlands," FIH said in a release. "With 24 matches over the 11 days, the action will be unceasing among the top ranked teams in the world, which will be a true showcase of the 'League of the Best'."

The FIH Pro League action this year will begin in Australia. The Kookaburras, who won the title in the previous edition, will start off their defence against reigning Olympic champions Netherlands, and Spain. The Hockeyroos will also start their 2024/25 campaign simultaneously, facing off against China and Spain. Both the Spanish teams will play their first matches of the season in the Sydney stage of the Pro League, with the

women's team making their first appearance since 2020 having qualified for the current season by winning the FIH Hockey Nations Cup in 2024. China women will look to continue their strong start to the season after taking eight points from the opening four games of their season, played at home in Hangzhou. Netherlands men, meanwhile, will be hoping to return to their best, after an uncharacteristic start slow saw them pick up no wins in their opening four games, totalling six points through three draws and a loss. The FIH Pro League action will also simultaneously continue in Argentina as the Bhubaneswar stage goes on, with Santiago del Estero hosting the final stage from the first half of the season from February 19 to 24. Locking horns in front of the large crowds will be Argentina, Belgium and Australia, in both the men's and women's competition.



Leroy Sané answers critics by scoring two goals as Bayern routs Hoffenheim

PTI ■ MUNICH

Leroy Sané answered critics by scoring two goals as Bayern Munich routed Hoffenheim 5-0 to restore its four-point lead in the Bundesliga. Sané is subject to increased attention with his contract due to expire at the end of the season. Pundits including former Bayern great Lothar Matthäus say he hasn't lived up to expectations since joining from Manchester City in 2020, making a contract extension unlikely. Matthäus was speaking to broadcaster Sky before kickoff. Sané wasted little time in responding with the opener in the seventh minute when he fired a fierce shot inside the far post after Thomas Müller laid the ball off. Sané's celebrations showed the criticism had perhaps taken its toll. "You always want to shake him, that he just does something and doesn't think too much. And today he did a lot and didn't think too much and he looked good," Müller said. Raphaël Guerreiro was celebrating five minutes later as a long evening beckoned for Hoffenheim. Guerreiro played a one-two with Harry Kane before scoring his first Bundesliga goal of the season. Kane made it 3-0 with a penalty in the 26th. It was his 16th goal of the season. Sané got his second after the break, set up by Mathys Tel,

and substitute Serge Gnabry scored minutes after going on for Kane. Sané went off to applause from the Bayern fans after Gnabry's goal. "In the end, you get praised if you give a good performance and you might get a bit of flack if things don't go so well," Sané said. "I always try to help the team, to give a good performance. And I'm the first one who's unhappy when I don't give a good performance and can't help the team." **S T U T G A R T PRESSURING LEIPZIG FOR CHAMPIONS LEAGUE QUALIFICATION** Leipzig finished with nine players after squandering a lead to lose 2-1 at Stuttgart, which moved a point behind the visitors. Benjamin Šeško gave Leipzig an early lead, but the home team was irate that play had continued after an apparent foul by Ridle Baku on Deniz Undav in the buildup. Referee Sascha Stegemann booked Stuttgart assistant coach David Krecidlo for complaining. Undav set up winter signing Jacob Bruun Larsen to equalize in the 50th and Nick Woltemade completed the comeback 10 minutes later when he poked home the rebound from an Undav effort. Šeško and Lois Openda were sent off late as Leipzig slumped to its fifth defeat of the season. Both will miss the next match at Bochum on Saturday.

Arsenal closes in on Premier League leader Liverpool after 2-1 win over Tottenham

PTI ■ LONDON

Arsenal closed the gap on Premier League leader Liverpool to four points after a 2-1 victory over Tottenham. Mikel Arteta's team took advantage of Liverpool's draw with Nottingham Forest on Tuesday, with Leandro Trossard firing the winner in the north London derby at the Emirates Stadium. "Everybody knows you need to win these games, the fans are buzzing and it's a great night for us," Trossard said. "It's an amazing feeling, especially to get the winner as well, it had to come and now we need to look forward." Arsenal was runner-up to Manchester City in the last two seasons and is in contention for the title again this year. But it was given a fright by Spurs when Son Heung-min opened the scoring for the visitors in the 25th minute. A Dominic Solanke own goal when trying to defend a corner leveled the game in the 40th and Trossard struck low from just inside the box four minutes later to put Arsenal ahead.

Liverpool still has a game in hand on second-place Arsenal but has dropped points by drawing its last two league matches and is on a run of just one win in four in all competitions. That was against fourth-division Accrington Stanley in the FA Cup. Arsenal bounced back quickly after the disappointment of being knocked out of the FA Cup by Manchester United on penalties and opened up a two-point lead over Forest in third. "Less than 72 hours ago we played 120 minutes in another competition that we went out of — that is not easy psychologically. So the way we performed and played today was exceptional," Arteta said. Tottenham has won just one of its last nine games in the league. "The losses hurt me but they aren't acceptable. We have had too many losses this year and too many games that have got away from us. That needs to stop," head coach Ange Postecoglou said. **ISAK ON TARGET AGAIN** Alexander Isak scored for the eighth straight league game to



propel Newcastle into the top four. The Sweden international struck twice in a 3-0 victory over Wolverhampton to take his season total to 17 in all competitions. He became the fourth player to score

in eight consecutive games in the Premier League, following Ruud van Nistelrooy, Jamie Vardy and Daniel Sturridge. Vardy scored a league record 11-straight games.

"Like most strikers, Isak wants to practice his finishing. It is an art form. He is there after training every day trying to do more," Newcastle manager Eddie Howe said.

Isak's form has pushed Newcastle into Champions League contention. He's scored 12 in his last 10 games in all competitions and Newcastle is on a nine-match winning streak. Isak opened the scoring in the 34th against relegation-threatened Wolverhampton at St James' Park. He got his second in the 57th and Anthony maintained his own scoring form with his fourth goal in successive games. Howe's team is now one point ahead of fifth-place Chelsea. **UNHAPPY HOMECOMING FOR MOYES** David Moyes' return to Everton didn't get off to the start he wanted after a 1-0 loss to Aston Villa. In his second spell at the Merseyside club, Moyes took charge of his 519th game as Everton manager and was welcomed by the Goodison Park crowd. But he couldn't inspire his relegation-threatened team to victory as Ollie Watkins' goal six minutes into the second half sealed Villa's win. Everton is 16th in the standings

and a point above the bottom three. Moyes' immediate priority is to find goals from somewhere. Everton has failed to score in nine of its last 11 league games. **LEICESTER SLUMPING** The hiring of Ruud van Nistelrooy hasn't paid off for Leicester yet. A 2-0 loss at home to Crystal Palace leaves the 2016 champion second from bottom of the standings and without a league win since Van Nistelrooy's first game in charge at the start of December. It's now six straight defeats in the league, with Jean-Philippe Mateta and Marc Guéhi scoring for Palace in the second half at the King Power Stadium. "Six without a win is not good enough. You can't keep talking about performances. We need to win and that needs to happen soon," Van Nistelrooy said. **UNITED DROPS** Manchester United doesn't play until Thursday, but Palace's win saw the record 20-time champion slip to 15th in the standings.