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INSIDE

**WORLD 8**  
TARIFF THREAT SWAYS  
COLOMBIA, BUT RISKS RISE  
WITH CANADA, MEXICO

BHOPAL, WEDNESDAY JANUARY 29, 2025; PAGES 12 ₹2

www.dailypioneer.com

PUBLISHED FROM: DELHI | LUCKNOW | BHOPAL | BHUBANESWAR | RANCHI | RAIPUR | CHANDIGARH | DEHRADUN | HYDERABAD | VIJAYWADA



## TRUMP THREATENS INDIA WITH TARIFFS



PTI ■ WASHINGTON

The United States will impose tariffs on the countries that "harm" America, President Donald Trump has said, as he named China, India and Brazil as high-tariff countries. "We're going to put tariffs on outside countries and outside people that really mean harm to us. Well, they mean us harm, but they basically want to make their country good," Trump told House Republicans at a Florida retreat on Monday, the first after he became the president for the second term last week. "Look at what others do. China is a tremendous tariff maker, and India and Brazil and so many other countries. So we're not going to let that happen any longer because we're going to put America first," he said.

He said that the US will establish a "very fair system where money is going to come into our coffers and America is going to be very rich again," adding that it will happen "very quickly". Trump underscored that it was time for the US to return to the system that made it "richer and more powerful than ever before." Referring to his inaugural speech last week, Trump said: "Instead of taxing our citizens to enrich foreign nations, we should be tariffing and taxing foreign nations to enrich our citizens." "Under the American first economic model, as tariffs on other countries go up, taxes on American workers and businesses will come down and massive numbers of jobs and factories will come home," he said. Earlier, Trump has already

talked about slapping "100 per cent tariffs" on the BRICS grouping, a bloc that includes India as well. During his address, Trump asked companies to come and set up manufacturing units in the US if they wished to avoid tariffs. "If you want to stop paying the taxes or the tariffs, you have to build your plant right here in America. That's what's going to happen at record levels. We're going to have more plants built in the next short period of time than anybody ever envisioned before because the incentive is going to be there because they have no tariff whatsoever," he said. The president said that the US will support companies building plants in America, particularly in industries like pharmaceuticals, semiconductors, and steel. Trump added that his administration would also be placing tariffs on steel, aluminium, copper and other materials required by the US military. "We have to bring production back to our country. There was a time when we made one ship a day, and now we can't build a ship. We don't know what the hell we're doing. It's all gone to other locations and other lands," he said. "To further return production to the United States, we're going to environmentally free up our rare earth minerals. We have some of the best rare earth anywhere in the world, but we're not allowed to use it because the environmentalists got there first," said the president in his address.

## Politics in Delhi goes digital

SAUMYA SHUKLA ■ NEW DELHI

In the intense race to wrest power from Aam Admi Party (AAP), the Congress which ruled 15 years and BJP which has not been in Delhi politics for about three decades now and incumbent AAP looking forward to retain itself have gone for an aggressive campaign by making optimum use of the available social media platforms. Digital platform has become the primary battleground for political messaging, overshadowing traditional forms of campaigning for the February 5 Delhi assembly poll. An analysis conducted by The Pioneer highlights the increasing reliance on digital reach by these political parties, with the BJP leading the charge in terms of spending on platforms like Facebook,



In the last 30 days: BJP spent ₹2.5Cr, followed by the AAP (₹77 Lakhs) and the Congress (₹23 Lakh)

Google, and YouTube. Sources aid BJP has allocated substantial funds to advertise their messages, using a combination of videos and images to creatively reach the targeted electorates. On Facebook, the BJP has spent a

whopping Rs 2,58,34,976 over 30 days, from December 26 to January 24, according to Google Transparency Report. This expenditure covers around 863 advertisements, which includes a diverse mix of content ranging from short, impactful videos to visually compelling image posts.

Trailing behind in Facebook advertising, AAP spent Rs 77,80,887 on 625 advertisements, while Congress followed suit with a more modest expenditure of Rs 23,22,372 across 49 ads. The competition doesn't stop at Facebook. On YouTube, a platform widely used in India, political ads have become ubiquitous ahead of the state elections, which are scheduled to take place on February 5. The BJP once again took the lead in terms of spending, shelling out Rs 4,34,15,250 between December 1 and January 27 for 505 YouTube ads. On January 25 alone, the BJP spent Rs 27,40,000, followed by Rs 24,60,000 on January 12, and Rs 23,30,000 on January 11. Through these ads, the BJP is deploying a variety of creative approaches to capture the attention of voters.

## Amit Shah paves the road for BJP in Capital

SAUMYA SHUKLA ■ NEW DELHI

Taking a jibe at his political rivals ahead of the high-octane Delhi assembly elections, Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Tuesday slammed Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge for his remark on BJP leaders taking a holy dip at the Sangam and said the Congress under Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi had always insulted Sanatan Dharma. He accused AAP supremo Arvind Kejriwal of falsely alleging that the Haryana government mixed poison in the Yamuna, daring him to make public the Delhi Jal Board (DJB) report that he cited to level the charge. Addressing a public meeting in the Kalkaji assembly constituency, he took a swipe at Kharge and said, "I took a



Union Home Minister and BJP leader Amit Shah with party MP Bansuri Swaraj during a roadshow in support of party candidate Neeraj Basoya ahead of Delhi Assembly elections, in New Delhi. Photo: The Pioneer

dip (at Triveni Sangam) and Kharge ji caught a cold." At the Jai Bapu, Jai Bhim, Jai Samvidhan rally in the Mhow town of Madhya Pradesh on

Monday, Kharge had alleged that BJP leaders were competing with each other to take a dip at the Sangam for the cameras, and asked if their act would help eradicate poverty in the country. "If anyone was hurt, I seek an apology," the Congress chief had also said. Reacting to the remark, Shah urged Kharge not to poke fun at the reverence of crores of people visiting the Maha Kumbh in Prayagraj to take a holy dip at the Sangam. "Kharge ji, if you do not have any reverence (for Maha Kumbh), there is no compulsion. But don't make fun of the reverence of more than 48 crore people visiting the Kumbh to take a holy dip," he said. "The Congress under the leadership of Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi has always insulted Sanatan Dharma," he charged.

Jan 31-Apr 4: Budget Session

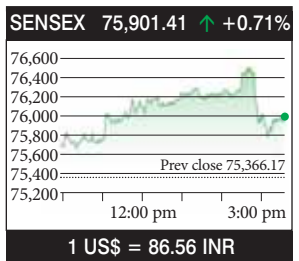


Jan 31-Apr 4: Budget Session

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha will take up discussion on President Droupadi Murmu's address to Parliament on Monday as the Budget Session begins on January 31. The President will address both the Houses of Parliament assembled together in the Lok Sabha chamber on Friday and Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman will present the General Budget on Saturday. The Finance Minister will table the Economic Survey on Friday when both Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha will convene briefly after the President's address. Lok Sabha has provisionally allotted two days (February 3-4) for discussion on the Motion of Thanks to the President's address, while Rajya Sabha has earmarked three days for the debate. Prime Minister Narendra Modi is expected to reply to the debate in Rajya Sabha on February 6. Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju has convened a meeting of floor leaders of political parties in Parliament on January 30 to ensure smooth functioning of the Budget Session. The first part of the Budget Session will have nine sittings from January 31 to February 13. Parliament will then break for recess to examine the budget proposals on February 13 and meet again from March 10 to discuss the demands for grants of various ministries and complete the budgetary process. The session will conclude on April 4. The entire Budget Session will have 27 sittings.

## MARKETS



## WEATHER

AQI 276  
MAX 25.4°C(+3)  
MIN 5.6°C(-3.8)

## Politics boil over 'water terrorism'



Union Ministers Nirmala Sitharaman, Bhupender Yadav, Haryana CM Nayab Saini and other BJP leaders after meeting the Election Commission of India. PTI

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI  
The Election Commission (EC) on Tuesday asked AAP national convener Arvind Kejriwal to substantiate with facts his allegations of poisoning of Yamuna River and mass genocide. The poll body has sought a response, a proof from the AAP national convener by 8pm on 29 January. The Commission has asked the AAP led Delhi government to provide evidence of Haryana government 'poisoning' Delhi water supply. This comes after both the BJP and Congress had complained to the poll panel against Kejriwal for levelling allegations of poisoning of

Yamuna river. A BJP delegation, comprising Union ministers Nirmala Sitharaman, Bhupender Yadav and Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh met all three members of the EC, and requested them to ask the AAP leader to retract his charge and apologise for creating "panic" among people. BJP leaders also urged the Commission to bar him from campaigning for his allegation that Haryana was poisoning the water of Yamuna. Meanwhile, Congress leader Sandeep Dikshit raised the issue with Delhi Lt Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena, demanding action against Kejriwal and Chief Minister Atishi over the

issue. In a letter to Kejriwal, the EC said the matter is being examined by the Commission in the light of provisions of Model Code of Conduct (MCC) and relevant provisions of law. "Therefore, you are called upon to furnish your response on the complaints especially on the factual and legal matrix along with evidentiary support thereof by 8 pm hours on 29 January, 2025 so as to enable the Commission to examine the matter and take action as appropriate." "However, as regards the allegations of poisoning, it is expected that there must be a factual foundation to the allegations especially when the veracity of the statements made by you is contested, then you must be able to back your statements on a factual basis," the EC said. The Commission noted that such allegations have serious ramifications of creating enmity between the regional groups, and residents of the neighbouring states, threat of a law-and-order situation due to actual or perceived shortage or non-availability of water, during this time of the year.

## Rahul Gandhi attacks INDIA bloc ally

SAUMYA SHUKLA ■ NEW DELHI

Heating up the election fervour ahead of the Delhi assembly elections, Senior Congress leader and Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi on Tuesday launched a scathing attack at his political rivals including AAP supremo Arvind Kejriwal and Prime Minister Narendra Modi while hitting out at the ruling party for 'sheeshmahal' and alleged money laundering linked excise policy scam. He also took a dig at the media for not highlighting the real issues, instead focusing on 'Ambani wedding' and cricket matches. Addressing a public gathering in Patparganj, Gandhi claimed that while former Chief Minister came with the promise of bringing 'clean politics', he is now known for the biggest liquor scam and sheeshmahal. "On one side there is BJP and on the other there is Kejriwal who says whatever he wishes. He said we will do a new kind of politics. He said we will change Delhi. And when poor needed him, he was nowhere to be seen. When there was violence in Delhi, he was nowhere to be seen," he said, while campaigning for



LoP in the Lok Sabha and Congress leader Rahul Gandhi with party candidate Anil Chaudhary during a rally for the upcoming Delhi Assembly elections, at Patparganj in New Delhi. PTI

Congress' candidate Anil Choudhary. Hitting out the ruling party, Gandhi asserted, "He said that the AAP will bring clean politics. Despite this, he is now known for the biggest liquor scam and resides in sheeshmahal." He added that when PM Modi threw him out of his home, he gave him the keys, stating that he doesn't need their house. Calling the sitting MLA and former Chief Minister Manish Sisodia the 'architect' of liquor scam, he said, "Manish Sisodia was a candidate before, who is the architect of liquor scam along with Kejriwal. Now he has run away from the seat out of fear." With Gandhi addressing his

second public meeting in the national Capital for the upcoming state polls, scores of party supporters gathered to hear him with the atmosphere palpable with enthusiasm. Resident of the area claimed that roads are filled with potholes and the schools, that the AAP claims to have built, were built in former Chief Minister Sheila Dikshit's rule and are merely renovated by the incumbent government. Taking a jibe at the media, he said, "I am saying that they are our friends but they are not. While the nation is grappling with poor infrastructure, unemployment and hunger, they show Ambani wedding and Modi attending it."

## Banks of Sangam ready for 10 crore devotees

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ MAHAKUMBH NAGAR

Prayagraj is abuzz with spiritual fervor as preparations for Mauni Amavasya Amrit Snan, the most auspicious bathing festival of the Maha Kumbh 2025, reach their final stages. With an anticipated turnout of over 10 crore devotees at the sacred Triveni Sangam, the city is witnessing a historic confluence of faith, tradition, and meticulous planning. Though Mauni Amavasya falls on January 29, thousands of pilgrims have already begun arriving at the sprawling Mela grounds, eager to partake in the divine experience. The administration has left no stone unturned in ensuring that the event is both grand and safe, offering seamless facilities to the millions expected. A massive 12-kilometer-long stretch of bathing ghats has been constructed along the riverbanks to

accommodate the influx of devotees. To prevent overcrowding, the administration has encouraged pilgrims to bathe at the ghat nearest to their entry points. Devotees entering from different zones will be directed to designated ghats based on their location, ensuring a smooth flow of pilgrims. Special arrangements have been made for different groups of devotees. The Airavat Sangam Ghat will host pilgrims from eastern Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Odisha, West Bengal, and northeastern states. Devotees from Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, and southern states will bathe at specially developed ghats in Aarail while pilgrims from Delhi, western Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Punjab, and Uttarakhand will be accommodated at ghats extending from Sangam to Nagvasuki. Separate ghats have been reserved for saints, seers, and their disciples from various Akharas, ensuring



Devotees gather at the Sangam on the eve of 'Mauni Amavasya' during the Maha Kumbh Mela 2025, in Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh. PTI

that traditional rituals are conducted without interruption. Common devotees will have access to exclusive ghats near the Sangam coast. Deputy Commissioner Ashok Tiwari described the management efforts as "unprecedented." "We

have deployed over 5,000 personnel across the Mela area, including SDMs, tehsildars, and IAS officers, to ensure smooth operations. Evacuation teams, watchtowers, and flying squads are on high alert to handle any emergency," he said. District Magistrate Ravindra

Kumar Mandhad appealed to Prayagraj residents to avoid using four-wheelers during the festival to prevent traffic snarls. "Your cooperation will allow lakhs of pilgrims to experience the Sangam without hurdles," he urged. Mela Grounds: A Glimpse into Spiritual Magnificence The Mela grounds have transformed into a vibrant hub of spirituality. Rows of temporary tents housing Kalpvasis (pilgrims who spend the entire month by the river) and saints are adorned with flags and banners. The aroma of freshly prepared khichdi wafts through the air as thousands gather for communal meals. Volunteers serve simple yet hearty meals, a testament to the hospitality associated with the Kumbh. Kavita Devi, a pilgrim from Odisha, shared her excitement: "The arrangements are remarkable. From clean ghats to free food, everything is well-organized. Taking a dip at

the Sangam is a blessing I've waited my whole life for." Local vendors have set up stalls selling religious items, including rudraksha beads, holy books, and brass pots for carrying sacred water. The chants of "Har Har Gange" reverberate through the air, adding to the divine atmosphere. Mauni Amavasya, a day of silence and introspection, is regarded as one of the most sacred days for taking a dip at the Sangam. Devotees believe the ritual purifies the soul and washes away sins. For many, the festival represents hope, renewal, and a deep connection with the divine. As preparations near completion, Prayagraj stands ready to welcome the world to this monumental celebration of faith and culture. With its meticulous planning and unwavering devotion, the Mauni Amavasya Amrit Snan promises to be an unforgettable chapter in the legacy of the Maha Kumbh.

# Immense potential for investment in Madhya Pradesh: CM

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Chief Minister Mohan Yadav held a meeting with senior officials from Toyota Motor Corporation to discuss investment opportunities in Madhya Pradesh on the first day of his visit to Japan. He met Mr. Toshiyuki Nakahara, General Manager, Administration & Support Department, India and Middle East Division, and Mr. Masahiro Nogi, Project Manager, Administration & Support Department, India and Middle East Division, for in-depth discussions on business prospects and investment opportunities. Chief Minister Dr. Yadav highlighted Madhya Pradesh as an ideal destination for investment and briefed to the

team Toyota about the state's key features. He stated that Madhya Pradesh's central location in India makes it an ideal hub for the north, south, east, and west regions. The state has a vast industrial land bank, a skilled workforce, and excellent infrastructure. Particularly, the Pithampur automobile cluster is emerging rapidly as an industrial hub, bringing immense opportunities for global investors. Dr. Yadav emphasized the peaceful and disaster-free environment of the state, drawing a comparison with Japan's reputation for peace and stability. He pointed out that Madhya Pradesh is safe from natural disasters, making it even more favorable for investment. The state's industrious and disciplined populace, along with its technical



expertise and business commitment, provides an excellent environment for industries. The Chief Minister invited Toyota to invest in Madhya Pradesh and particularly emphasized the potential for training and empowering youth for technical jobs. He stated that Madhya Pradesh offers an ideal location for Toyota to establish its facilities and expand its business. The state's industrial policies,

investment incentives, land availability, and its ability to attract global companies make it a favorable investment destination. Toyota's officials appreciated the state's industrial environment and investment-friendly atmosphere and expressed their commitment to collaborating with Madhya Pradesh. This visit by Chief Minister Dr. Yadav is a major milestone of the 'Invest in Madhya Pradesh' campaign, paving the way for the 'Global Investors Summit 2025' to be held in Bhopal in February 2025. The meeting is another significant step in strengthening economic cooperation between India and Japan and positioning Madhya Pradesh as a global investment hub.

**Investors Summit**  
Dr. Yadav also invited Japanese industrialists to participate in the 'Global Investors Summit', scheduled to be held in Bhopal on February 24-25, 2025. This two-day summit aims to showcase the state's investment opportunities, climate, and industrial infrastructure. It will provide numerous opportunities for potential collaboration in investment and will serve as a platform for global leaders, industrialists, and experts to share their insights on international markets and trends and discuss ways to maximize Madhya Pradesh's investment potential. The Chief Minister invited Japanese industry leaders to take part in the 'Invest Madhya Pradesh - Global Investors Summit 2025'.



Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav invites Toshiyuki Nakahara and Masahiro Nogi of Toyota Motor Corporation to invest in Madhya Pradesh during a meeting in Tokyo, Japan on Tuesday. Pioneer photo

# Parents protest FIITJEE fraud in Bhopal, demand refunds and arrests

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

The FIITJEE coaching center in Bhopal's MP Nagar has been sealed following allegations of fraud and sudden closure, leaving hundreds of students and parents in distress. On Tuesday evening, MP Nagar SDM LK Khare and Bairagarh SDM Aditya Jain, along with their staff, sealed the center. The owner, DK Goyal, is under investigation. Bhopal Police Commissioner Harinarayan Chari Mishra stated that three special teams have been formed to locate him. One team is conducting raids in Delhi to track down Goyal's possible hideouts. An FIR was registered on December 15 against DK Goyal and three others at Bhopal's MP Nagar police

## Parents have been protesting outside the coaching center, demanding Goyal's arrest, the seizure of his bank accounts

station under sections including fraud. The complaint, filed by students and parents, alleges that the sudden closure of the center has left approximately Rs 2 lakh per parent stuck, totaling around Rs 12 crore -Rs 15 crore. This has not only jeopardized the future of around 700 students but also caused significant financial strain on their families. Parents have been protesting outside the coaching center, demanding Goyal's arrest, the seizure of his bank accounts, and the return of their money. They have also called for stricter regulations

for coaching institutes to prevent such incidents in the future. Parent Akhilesh Agarwal stated that despite lodging complaints with the Collectorate and police, no concrete action has been taken yet. The Collectorate has canceled the center's Gumasta (trade license), but parents are still awaiting refunds. The closure has severely impacted students, particularly those preparing for board exams. Parent Ipsita highlighted the increased anxiety and mental health issues among children, while

Mukesh Mahawar shared that his son, an 11th-grade student, has fallen into depression due to the situation. Parents fear that the lack of resolution could lead to adverse consequences for their children. The police have recorded statements from over 100 parents and called the coaching staff for questioning. However, the center's head has shifted responsibility to the Delhi branch, leaving parents frustrated. With 72 branches nationwide, FIITJEE's Bhopal branch charged fees of Rs 2 lakh - Rs 3 lakh per student, making this a significant financial and emotional blow for affected families. Authorities are under pressure to take swift action to address the grievances and ensure accountability.



Parents of the students stage a protest against the owner of the FIITJEE coaching institute DK Goyal demanding his arrest over closure of the institute, in Bhopal on Tuesday. Pioneer photo

# Efforts to strengthen economic partnership will be made: CM

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Chief Minister Mohan Yadav's second day of Japan visit on Wednesday, he will engage in crucial discussions with prominent industrialists and organizations. Efforts will be made to strengthen India's economic partnership with Japan. The day will be dedicated to enhancing investment, trade, and industrial cooperation in the state. The first meeting of Chief Minister Dr. Yadav will be with Mr. Yuji Fukusawa, President of East Japan Railway Company and the South Asia Committee of Keidanren. The meeting will be held at the conference hall of the Imperial Hotel in Tokyo, focusing on technical cooperation and investment opportunities in the railway

and transport sectors. Dr. Yadav will meet with Mr. Susumu Kataoka, President of JETRO (Japan External Trade Organization). The meeting will take place at JETRO's headquarters, Ark Mori Building, Minato-ku, Tokyo. The primary goal of the discussions will be to explore business and industrial development opportunities in Madhya Pradesh and strengthen trade relations with Japan. Dr. Yadav will meet with Mr. Takayuki Sanno, Chairman of Suntory India, at the Imperial Hotel. The meeting will focus on investment and collaboration in the food and beverage industry. In the afternoon, Dr. Yadav will meet with officials at the Bridgestone Headquarters in Kyobashi, Chuo-ku, Tokyo. The discussion will aim to

expand technical partnerships and investment opportunities in the automobile and tire industry. Dr. Yadav will meet with Mr. Shohei Hara, Senior Vice President of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). The discussions will center on water management, smart city projects, and infrastructure development. In the afternoon, Dr. Yadav will meet with Mr. Tadashi Yanai, Chairman and CEO of Fast Retailing Company. The conversation will focus on developing Madhya Pradesh as a major hub for the textile and retail industry. Dr. Yadav will meet with Mr. Toshiyuki Shirai, Chairman of Nitoni Holdings, at the Imperial Hotel's conference hall. The meeting will focus on explor-

ing new opportunities for collaboration in the furniture industry. In the evening, Dr. Yadav will participate in an interaction program with the Indian diaspora and friends of Madhya Pradesh at the Hikari Hall of the Imperial Hotel in Tokyo. The Chief Minister will highlight the state's industrial progress, investment opportunities, and policies. He will also attend the dinner hosted during this event. This day of Chief Minister Dr. Yadav's visit will mark a significant step towards establishing Madhya Pradesh as a global investment destination and forging long-term industrial partnerships with Japan. The visit holds the potential to open new doors for the state's economic progress.

# AIIMS Bhopal conducts Forensic Histopathology Fellowship exam

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

The Department of Forensic Medicine and Toxicology at AIIMS Bhopal recently conducted the Senior Resident Linked Forensic Histopathology Fellowship Exam. This SRLF program was initiated under the guidance of the Executive Director of AIIMS Bhopal, Prof. (Dr.) Ajai Singh, with the objective of enhancing the skills of senior resident doctors. Forensic histopathology is a significant domain in forensic science that focuses on the microscopic analysis of tissue samples for medical and legal investigations. It plays a crucial role in determining the cause of death, estimating post-mortem intervals, and differentiating between ante-mortem and post-mortem injuries. Additionally, it aids in investigating sudden natural deaths, understanding wound healing processes, and identifying tissue damage caused by toxins or drugs. Beyond criminal investigations, forensic histopathology not only provides essential medical evidence but also pro-

motes research on disease patterns and public health trends. It contributes significantly to academic advancements and the development of forensic science and legal systems. The successful conduct of this fellowship exam highlighted the growing importance of specialized expertise in forensic histopathology. This initiative reflects AIIMS' commitment to promoting academic research and practical applications in forensic science, ensuring continued contributions to the fields of justice and public health. This first-of-its-kind forensic histopathology fellowship in India aims to equip residents with essential skills to provide more accurate and comprehensive opinions in medico-legal cases, helping bring legal cases to appropriate conclusions. The course coordinators were Professor Dr. Jayanthi Yadav and Additional Professor Dr. Jai Chaurasia from the Department of Pathology and Lab Medicine. The Head of the Department, Prof. (Dr.) Arneet Arora, expressed her happiness over the successful completion of the fellowship.

# Habibganj police nab robbers

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

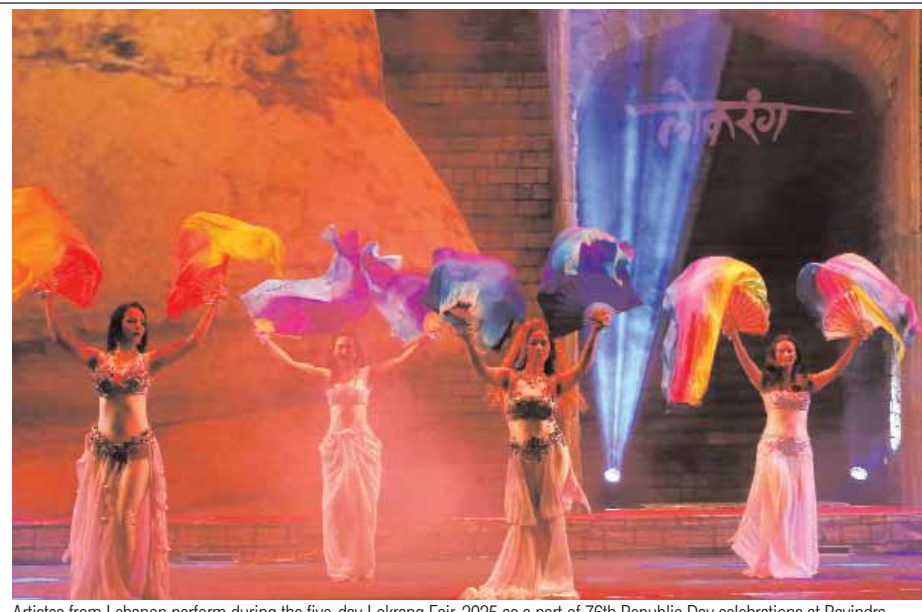
Habibganj police arrested two robbers and recovered stolen goods, including looted mobile phones and a stolen Activa, collectively worth ₹3 lakhs. On January 27, during a routine vehicle check near Metro Walk, police intercepted two suspects riding a white Activa without a number plate. The suspects, identified as Lilendra alias Sameer Singh Meena of Govind Dham Suraj Nagar and Manish alias Dev Malviya of Shahpura, failed to provide valid documents for the vehicle. Upon further questioning, they admitted to stealing the Activa 5-6 months ago from MP Nagar. A search of the Activa's trunk revealed seven mobile phones, which the accused confessed were snatched from passersby across various locations in Bhopal. The duo stated they were en route to sell the stolen phones when apprehended. The police registered a case under relevant sections of the law, and the stolen Activa, along with the mobile phones, was seized.

# Special train heading towards Mahakumbh vandalised in MP

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

People heading for the Maha Kumbh threw stones on Prayagraj-bound trains at two railway stations in Madhya Pradesh's Chhatarpur after passengers inside the packed coaches did not open the doors for them, officials said on Tuesday. Following the ruckus at the Chhatarpur and Harpalpur railway stations on Monday night, authorities said stricter security arrangements would be made to avoid such incidents and that special trains were being run for Prayagraj in Uttar Pradesh according to the demand. Some videos have surfaced on social media showing some people shouting at the Chhatarpur and Harpalpur railway stations. The clips also showed some people throwing stones and hitting at the doors of a train, and trying to force open them. R K Singh, a passenger from Chhatarpur, told reporters that he was going to Prayagraj in UP to take a dip at the Sangam during

the ongoing Maha Kumbh there. But, he could not board a Prayagraj-bound train as all its doors and windows were closed, he claimed. After the people created ruckus, the Government Railway Police (GRP) personnel opened doors of a train at Chhatarpur. But due to the train already being crowded, several people could not board it, he said. Jhansi railway division's public relations officer Manoj Kumar Singh said the matter of a dispute about boarding trains at the Chhatarpur and Harpalpur railway stations has come to their notice. The Railways will make stricter security arrangements by coordinating with the administration so that such incidents do not recur, he said. Trains are being run continuously (for Prayagraj) and if needed, special trains are also being run as per the demand, Singh said. The administration expects cooperation from the passengers, he added.



Artists from Lebanon perform during the five-day Lokrang Fair-2025 as a part of 76th Republic Day celebrations at Ravindra Bhawan in Bhopal on Tuesday. Pioneer photo

# Construction of 22 school buildings nears completion

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

To provide quality education to school students in the state, it has been recommended to provide interesting and enjoyable education in the New Education Policy-2020. For this purpose, 9200 schools have been selected in the CM Rise scheme. These schools are being equipped with full resources in two phases.

In the first phase of the scheme, approval has been given for building construction in 274 schools. Out of these, construction of 22 school buildings is nearing completion. In the second phase of the scheme, approval has been given to develop 276 schools as fully resourced in the academic session 2024-25. Work is being done at a rapid pace on this. Studies will be conducted in these schools from class KG to class 12th.

Among the CM Rise schools operating in the state, Vinoba Higher Secondary School of Ratlam has been awarded the top place in the world in the innovation category by the international organisation T-4 Education. The first fully equipped school building of CM Rise scheme has been built in Gulana district Shajapur. Free transport service has also been started in CM Rise School for children of nearby areas to reach the school.

# Achievements indicate speeding up of implementation: Guv

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Governor Mangubhai Patel stated that the achievements of health programmes signify the accelerated pace of their implementation. He emphasized that these successes serve as inspiration to set new records with enthusiasm. He congratulated the Health Department for leading the state in efforts to eliminate tuberculosis (TB) and sickle cell anemia.



Education, AYUSH, and Technical Education Inder Singh Parmar were present on this occasion. Governor Mangubhai Patel emphasized the importance of integrating modern and traditional medical systems in the fight against sickle cell and TB. He called for the involvement of the

AYUSH department in treatment and urged parallel studies on the effectiveness of Ayurveda and homeopathy. He stressed creating public awareness about affordable medicines available at Jan Aushadhi Kendras and ensuring their availability for patients and carriers along with screen-

ing. Additionally, he highlighted the need for community awareness campaigns on AYUSH diets to support nutrition alongside treatment. Governor Mangubhai Patel emphasized the importance of empowering tribal communities by guiding them on the rights granted to Gram Sabhas under the PESA Act. He called for expanding the formation of new Gram Sabhas and increasing community awareness about their benefits. Facilities and support should be provided to Gram Sabhas, including assistance in tendu leaf marketing.

He suggested studying Maharashtra's Gram Sabha Fund system to implement a similar funding arrangement in the state. Additionally, he urged efforts to encourage applications for community rights under the Forest Rights Act. Tribal Cell Chairman Deepak Khandekar, Additional Chief Secretary to Governor K.C. Gupta, Principal Secretary Panchayat and Rural Development Smt. Deepali Rastogi, Principal Secretary Tribal Affairs Gulshan Bamra, Secretary Revenue Anubha Shrivastava, Additional Secretary to Governor Umashankar Bhargav, Tribal Cell Secretary Jamuna Bhide and members were present in the meeting.



An eye check up camp is being organised for the vehicle drivers by a team of doctors from Seva Sadan Eye Hospital in collaboration with Traffic Police at Madhya Pradesh Council of Science and Technology in Bhopal on Tuesday. Pioneer photo



BJP MP from Bhopal Alok Sharma inspects Nishatpura railway station in Bhopal on Tuesday. Pioneer photo

## Alok inspects Nishatpura rly station

Bhopal: Bhopal parliamentarian Alok Sharma on Tuesday visited the Nishatpura Railway Station to take stock of preparations ahead of its opening, which will make it the fourth fully functional railway station in the state capital. Sharma inspected the station's under-construction facilities, including newly built platforms, a foot overbridge, lifts, ramps, and waiting rooms. He expressed concerns about access to the station, as he had difficulty locating it upon arrival. During his visit, Sharma instructed railway officials to clear the Central Warehouse godown near the station entrance to ensure smoother access for passengers. The MP highlighted the need for improved entry and exit points to avoid congestion. Two major trains, the Malwa Express and the Somnath Veraval

Express, will be the first to halt at Nishatpura station. The MP emphasised that this would help ease overcrowding at Bhopal and RKMP stations. He also raised the issue of parking facilities and station beautification. He plans to meet Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnav soon to finalise an official launch date for the station. Railway sources say the station could become operational by the end of February. During the inspection, Sharma also discussed with Bhopal Collector Kaushalendra Vikram Singh the urgent removal of the warehouse. This step is necessary for creating proper entry and exit gates to the station. Bhopal currently has three fully operational railway stations, namely Bhopal Junction, the Rani Kamalapati Railway Station, and the Bairagarh Railway Station.

## Madhya Pradesh exported \$92.8 Million to Japan in FY 2023-24

Bhopal: Chief Minister Mohan Yadav stated that under the leadership of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, India is emerging as a new global economic power with a spirit of universal brotherhood. Japan has historical links with the tradition of Gautam Buddha, and India is the land where Gautam Buddha incarnated. India and Japan have shared mutual relations for centuries. Japan has had a prosperous history. Chief Minister Dr. Yadav paid tribute and commended the entrepreneurship and resilience displayed by Japan in recovering from devastating earthquakes and natural disasters. CM said that this resilience has earned Japan an identity of global repute. Chief Minister Dr. Yadav addressed industrialists during an interactive session on

"Investment Opportunities in Madhya Pradesh," organized at the Indian Embassy campus in Japan. Yadav stated that Japan, with its distinctive lifestyle and industrial expertise, has achieved remarkable success in economic prosperity. Madhya Pradesh has established business relations with Japan as a matter of pride and happiness. Madhya Pradesh exported goods including aluminium, organic chemicals, nuclear reactors, boilers, mechanical equipment, pharmaceutical products, and other machinery worth 92.8 million dollars to Japan during 2023-24. Japan is also the home to industries related to manufacturing and other sectors. Yadav invited Japanese industrial groups to invest in Madhya Pradesh and expressed

gratitude to India's Ambassador to Japan, Mr. Sibi George, for his significant role in connecting business houses. The Chief Minister highlighted that Madhya Pradesh, with a population of over 90 million, is India's second-largest state areawise. The state's economy has tripled in the last decade, and the government aims to double it during the forthcoming five years. Capital and government expenditures have increased by 19% in the past year, reflecting the state's progress. The efforts over the last five years have resulted in exports worth 65,000 crore rupees in 2023-24. With industry-friendly policies in energy, mining, education, MSMEs, and other sectors, the state has created a conducive environment for investments, attracting global interest.

## NDVS University celebrates R-Day

PNS ■ JABALPUR

Students, faculty members, and the management at Nanaji Deshmukh Veterinary Science University, Jabalpur, marked the 76th Republic Day at an event attended by Vice Chancellor Dr Mandep Sharma. The festivities, held at the College of Veterinary Science and Animal Husbandry, commenced with Dr Sharma paying floral tributes to Nanaji Deshmukh and remembering the sacrifices of those who laid down their lives in the service of the nation. Invoking the unparalleled contributions of Dr BR Ambedkar, the architect of the Indian Constitution, Dr Sharma spoke of the merits of Indian democracy. While presenting the life history of Nanaji Deshmukh, the Vice

Chancellor elaborated on the outstanding role that Nanaji Deshmukh played in the social and economic upliftment of farmers and livestock keepers as part of rural development. As a result of his immense contributions, the university was named after him. The university and the College of Veterinary Science and Animal Husbandry organised cultural performances, an animal exhibition, veterinary camps, seminars, workshops, and various activities for farmers. Certificates were distributed to the participants of these events. The programme was conducted by Deputy Registrar Dr Ram Kinkar Mishra, and the vote of thanks was delivered by Registrar Dr SS Tomar. Notable attendance was seen from all the university directors, faculty members, officers, staff, and students.

## Police arrest six miscreants in human trafficking case

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

In the case of selling a 15-year-old minor from Bhopal for Rs 2 lakh, the police have arrested a total of 6 accused including a married couple. The accused husband and wife have also been arrested in cases of immoral trafficking earlier. Meanwhile, the girl has made shocking revelations during police interrogation. On the night of the incident, an auto driver saw her alone and kept her with him in the name of help and raped her. Later, she was sold to a young man living in Ashok Nagar with the help of the couple. DCP Zone-1 Priyanka Shukla said that the gang sold the 15-year-old minor in Ashok Nagar for marriage by telling her age as 25 years. She was

kept hostage in Ashok Nagar by hiding her identity. The kingpin of the human trafficking gang is Ashutosh Vajpayee and his wife Mehak Yadav. A case of immoral trafficking is also registered against Ashutosh in 2019. Investigation has revealed that the minor who ran away from home was found wandering in a deserted area by auto driver Salman. On the pretext of help, the accused took her to a hotel and did wrong things here. The auto driver had delivered the minor to the human traffickers. After raping the girl, Salman handed her over to the accused Ashutosh and Mehak. Both of them sold the minor in Ashoknagar through Shobharam. All the accused are previously acquainted with each other. During the investigation, the names of all the

accused came out one by one. The police identified the accused and arrested all 6 accused. Two have been sent to jail. While four accused have been taken on 6-day police remand on Monday. In a statement to the police, the minor said that after the death of her mother in 2022, she started living with her maternal uncle in his house. Where the maternal uncle used to do wrong things with her taking advantage of her loneliness. Fed up with this, she had decided to leave the house. After leaving the house, she had no place to stay. The auto driver saw her wandering. Then the auto driver Salman assured her of help and took her to the human traffickers. The gang got her married to a man in Ashoknagar by telling her age as 25 years.

## High dropout rate in MP schools in 15-16 age group: ASER

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

The National Annual Status of Education Report (ASER), released on Tuesday, suggests that Madhya Pradesh's education system faced both significant progress and alarming setbacks in 2024. The report consists of data on school enrollment, dropout rates, and proficiency levels for the year. While there have been improvements, the state continues to face critical challenges, particularly in dropout rates and gender disparities. One of the most concerning findings is the high dropout rate in the 15-16 age group, where a staggering 14.3 percent of children remain out of school. This is in sharp contrast to the low dropout rate in the 7-10 age group, which is just 1.9 percent. Gender disparities are also evident, with girls in the 15-16 age group facing a higher dropout rate than boys—15 percent of girls are not enrolled in school, compared to 11 percent of boys.

In terms of school enrollment, there has been a significant gender shift in the 11-14 age group, where the enrollment rate reaches 69.1 percent. This is largely due to a high enrollment of girls, who make up 72.5 percent of this group. However, the gap between urban and rural areas remains. While 67 percent of children in rural areas attend government schools, only 58 percent of urban children are enrolled in government institutions, with the rest opting for private schools. Despite improvements in non-enrollment rates since 2006, with a drop from 19 percent to 10 percent for boys and from 23 percent to 12 percent for girls, disparities remain. Early childhood education also reveals stark differences, with rural children relying more on Anganwadis, while urban children tend to attend private preschools. The data also shows that 40 percent of students in Standard

III are unable to perform basic arithmetic operations, and 30 percent cannot read basic words. This points to an ongoing struggle in foundational literacy and numeracy, with private school students consistently outperforming their government school counterparts.



CHANGE OF NAME

I, Hojefa Holding Indian Passport No: Z4978671 Issued at Dubai on 20/11/2018 and Permanent resident of 15 Bohra Bakhali Ali Raj Pur Jhabua M.P and presently residing at Dubai UAE do hereby change my name from Hojefa to Huzaifa (given name) Jamali (surname) with immediate effect

## BMC health camp for sanitation staff

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

The Bhopal Municipal Corporation (BMC) on Tuesday said it organised health check-up camps for its sanitation workers at the Adampur Chhawani Landfill site in the state capital. The camps, being organised in collaboration with the health department of the district administration, will continue until the first week of March. The initiative aims to provide general health examinations, eye tests, blood sugar screenings, malaria tests, and TB screenings, along with free medicines. Around 80 employees were examined during the first camp. The camps will be held periodically to ensure employees'

health and well-being. The next camps are scheduled for 29 and 30 January at the Danapani Garbage Transfer Station. The camps also offer screenings for non-communicable diseases, ABHA ID and Ayushman card creation, and free glasses through a mobile health unit. Chief Medical and Health Officer Dr Prabhakar Tiwari attributed the initiative to the district administration's efforts to improve health services and its efforts to reach out to all sections of society. He said the vital role of sanitation workers in maintaining the city's cleanliness and underscored the responsibility of providing them with proper healthcare. The camps will be held at various locations across the city.

## Bhopal Collector to list Waqf and Enemy Properties

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

In the midst of an ongoing controversy involving the properties controlled by Bhopal's erstwhile ruling clan, the state government has sought a list of all Waqf Board properties in adverse possession, as well as enemy properties in the district, claimed sources on Tuesday. The sources said that the district administration will prepare the lists in consultation with the revenue department. Notably, hundreds of crores worth of Waqf property are in adverse possession. The lists are expected to be circulated to all government departments in an attempt to stop encroachers from seeking bank loans or illegally trans-

fering the properties to other people. Those in the know say that several Waqf properties mentioned in Gazette notifications have never been recorded in the name of the government-run auditor.

Contrary to prevailing opinion, the Waqf Board is a statutory body of the state government that audits the financial records of various charitable trusts

and societies under its purview. With large tracts of land under the control of powerful members of the Muslim community, a Joint Parliamentary Committee is currently looking into the workings of Waqf Boards and the properties they are mandated to oversee. The matter involving enemy property in the city emanates from the migration of Abida Sultan, the eldest daughter of the last ruler, Nawab Hamidullah Khan, to Pakistan in 1950. While one part of the erstwhile ruling clan claims that Abida Sultan is not one of the inheritors of the last Nawab's estate, as was the 'ruler's property', others say that the properties were his personal holdings.

## Ambedkar Flyover headaches to continue for PWD, motorists

KISHAN SINGH RANA ■ BHOPAL

In a knee-jerk reaction, the Public Works Department (PWD), responsible for the mammoth Rs 154 crore Ambedkar Flyover project, has said that a traffic signal will soon be erected at the Y junction where the route splits into two. The announcement, which lends credence to a story first carried by The Pioneer, comes in the midst of growing criticism of the project, which many say is beset with inherent design flaws that threaten the safety of motorists using the road. Speaking ahead of the opening of the flyover, experts involved in the project had told The Pioneer that the project's infrastructure required a detailed

traffic management plan to ensure that the city derived the maximum benefit from the expenditure. They had said that the PWD had not yet addressed concerns regarding three major flaws, which motorists now say are causing confusion while driving on the flyover. Drivers taking the elevated road say the flyover is too narrow for the lane changes they must make before the Y junction, which splits the road into two, with one arm leading to Shaurya Smarak and the other going towards Gayatri Mandir. They say that the lane changes will become even more jarring with the installation of the proposed traffic signals at the junction. Towards the Rani Kamalapati Station end of the flyover,

motorists are having to drive several kilometres, all the way to the CSIR campus, before they can take a U-turn. Last, but the deadliest of the flaws, is the proximity of the end of the flyover to the traffic intersection near Shaurya Smarak, where many motorists coming down the flyover have to navigate lane changes, avoid traffic coming from below the flyover, and take a left turn all at the same time. The confusing traffic arrangement is already leading to melees and snarls, with a bottleneck of vehicles causing delays, which is proving contrary to the very purpose of the flyover. Adding to the woes of motorists, the PWD now plans to increase waiting times at the traffic signal at the Shaurya

Smarak intersection. A simple enough ploy, but the department is yet to speak of the distress of motorists who will be forced to wait on the sloping end of the flyover during rush hours. Less than ten days into its opening, experts say that it is only a matter of time before the creation of massive negative space below the flyover, a maze of metro and flyover pillars, starts to take a toll on businesses in the commercial district of MP Nagar. They say that even if the PWD does manage to overcome the teething troubles the flyover is facing at the moment, there is no way this much-delayed, mega project will keep up with the growing number of vehicles in the city, which are poised for massive growth in the near future.

## CM reaches Japan

Bhopal: On 28 January, Indian Ambassador to Japan Shri Sibi George met Chief Minister Dr. Mohan Yadav in Tokyo. During the meeting, they discussed the strong historical relations between India and Japan and explored ways to further strengthen these ties, with a particular focus on enhancing the trade and economic alliance between Madhya Pradesh and Japan. Yadav is on a four-day visit to Japan, which will continue until 31 January. During his visit, he will invite Japanese industrialists and investors to attend the Global Investors Summit (GIS), scheduled to be held in Bhopal on 24-25 February. He will engage in one-on-one discussions to inform them about various investment opportunities.

**INDIAN BANK**  
M. P. Housing Board Branch Bhopal

**APPENDIX - IV (Rule-8(1)) POSSESSION NOTICE (for immovable property)**

Whereas, the undersigned being the Authorised Officer of the Indian Bank under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of the powers conferred under section 13 (12) read with rule 8 and 9 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued a demand notice to the below mentioned Borrowers, Guarantors & Owner of property calling upon the borrowers and also the owner of the property /Surety to repay the dues within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice. The Borrowers having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the Borrowers/Mortgagors/ Guarantors and the public in general that the undersigned has taken Possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him/her under section 13 (4) of the said act read with rule 8 and 9 of the said rules on the date mentioned against the borrowers.

The borrowers, guarantors & mortgagors in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of the **Indian Bank M.P. Housing Board Branch Bhopal** for the amount mentioned against the borrowers and Interest thereon, costs etc. The borrower's attention is invited to the provisions of sub-section 8 of Sec 13 of the SARFAESI Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets.

Name of the Borrower/ Guarantor/ Mortgagor	Demand Notice Date Possession Notice Dt. Amount Outstanding	Description of Movable / Immoveable Property
Borrower & Mortgagor: Mr. Ashok Kumar Meghwani & Mrs. Meena Meghwani	28.10.2024 27.01.2025 as on 27.01.2025 ₹ 35,68,252/- + Interest w.a.f. 28.01.2025 & Charges	Residential Land & Building on Plot No. C-44, Sector-C, Indra Vihar Colony, Tilak Housing Society, Village Singar Choli, Tehsil Huzur, Bhopal (M.P.) Admeasuring area 968.40 Sq.Ft. (90.00 sq.mtr.) Owner of the Property: Mr. Ashok Kumar Meghwani & Mrs. Meena Meghwani Bounded by : East : Colony Road, West : Plot No. 72 (Sector-C) North : Plot No. 43 (Sector-C), South : Plot No. 45 (Sector-C)

Authorised Officer, (Indian Bank)  
Place: Bhopal, Date : 27/01/2025

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**ICICI Home Finance** Corporate Office : ICICI HFC Tower, Andheri Kurla Road, J.B. Nagar, Andheri (E), Mumbai - 400 059.

**Branch Office:** Office No-106, 1st floor, Pukhraj Corporate, Navlakha Indore - 452001

**[SEE PROVISIO TO RULE 8(6)] NOTICE FOR SALE OF IMMOVABLE ASSETS**

E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 8 (6) 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 property mortgaged/charged to the Secured Creditor, the Possession of which has been taken by the Authorized Officer of ICICI Home Finance Company Ltd., will be sold on "As is where is", "As is what is", and "Whatever there is", as per the brief particulars given hereunder:

Sr. No.	Name of Borrower(s)/ Co Borrowers/ Legal Heirs Loan Account No.	Details of the Secured asset(s) with known encumbrances, if any	Amount Outstanding	Reserve Price Earnest Money Deposit	Date and Time of Property Inspection	Date & Time of Auction	One Day Before Auction Date	SARFAESI Stage
(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	(E)	(F)	(G)	(H)	(I)
1	Deepak Hirani (Borrower)/ Vandana Hirani (Co-Borrower)/ NHIND00001266580 & NHIND00001266581	Plot No. 402, 4th Floor, Satguru Plaza, Palsikar Colony, Plot No. 410, LDA Scheme No. 44, (as on 20th January, 25) Khatiwala Tank, Indore, Madhya Pradesh - 452001.	Rs. 56,87,434/- (as on 20th January, 25)	38,10,240/- Rs. 3,81,024/-	11th Feb./25 11AM - 2PM - 3PM	18th Feb./25 2PM - 3PM	17th Feb./ 25	Physical Possession

The online auction will be conducted on website (URL Link- <https://assets.matexauctions.com>) of our auction agency **Matex Net Pvt Ltd.** The Mortgagors/ notice are given a last chance to pay the total dues with further interest till **17th Feb, 25 before 5:00 PM** else these secured assets will be sold as per above schedule. The Prospective Bidder(s) must submit the Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) RTGS/ Demand Draft (DD) (Refer Column E) at **ICICI Home Finance Company Limited Branch Office Address mentioned on top of the article on or before 17th Feb, 25 before 04:00 PM.** The Prospective Bidder(s) must also submit signed copy of Registration Form & Bid Terms and Conditions form at **ICICI Home Finance Company Limited Branch Office Address mentioned on top of the article on or before 17th Feb, 25 before 05:00 PM.** Earnest Money Deposit Demand Draft (DD) should be from a Nationalized/Scheduled Bank in favor of **"ICICI Home Finance Company Ltd. - Auction"** payable at the branch office address mentioned on top of the article. For any further clarifications with regards to inspection, terms and conditions of the auction or submission of tenders, kindly contact **ICICI Home Finance Company Limited on 9920807300.** The Authorized Officer reserves the right to reject any or all the bids without furnishing any further reasons. For detailed terms and conditions of the sale, please visit <https://www.icicifco.com/>

Date : 29.01.2025  
Place : Madhya Pradesh  
Authorised Officer, ICICI Home Finance Company Limited  
CIN : U65922MH1999PLC121016

# Government school enrolment back to pre pandemic levels

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) released on Tuesday has indicated an increase in government school enrolment seen during the COVID-19 pandemic seems to have reversed, with the proportion of children aged 6-14 years enrolled in government schools nearly back to the 2018 levels.

The report also noted that not only there has been a full recovery from the pandemic-induced learning loss, the learning levels in the primary grades are higher than past levels in some cases. The crucial report found that more than 82 per cent children in the 14-16 age group know how to use a smartphone but only 57 per cent of them use it for educational purposes.

"The increase in government school enrolment seen during the COVID-19 years seems to have reversed. Private school enrolment has been steadily rising since 2006 in rural India. The proportion of 6-14-year-olds enrolled in private schools rose from 18.7 per cent in 2006 to 30.8 per cent in 2014 and stayed at that level in 2018. "During the pandemic years, there was a big jump in gov-



ernment school enrolment with the proportion of 6-14-year-old children enrolled in government schools rising from 65.6 per cent in 2018 to 72.9 per cent in 2022. This number is back to 66.8 per cent in 2024. This almost complete reversal back to 2018 levels is seen across grades as well as gender, and is not particularly surprising given that the economy has recovered in other sectors as well," the report noted. The Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) 2024

is a nationwide rural household survey that reached 6,49,491 children in 17,997 villages across 605 rural districts in India. Facilitated by an NGO, "Pratham", in each surveyed district, a local organisation or institution conducted the survey. "At the all-India level, the proportion of children in Class 3, who are able to read at Class 2 level, rose slowly from 23.6 per cent in 2014 to 27.3 per cent in 2018 and then fell drastically to 20.5 per cent in 2022. Two

years later, we have a full recovery with the proportion of Class-3 children reading fully at 27.1 per cent. "We see a similar picture in Class 4, with the proportion of Class-5 children who can read a Class-2 level text rising from 48 per cent in 2014 to 50.5 per cent in 2018, then falling to 42.8 per cent in 2022 and finally recovering to 48.8 per cent in 2024," the report said. Some states have done very well and surpassed their pre-pandemic learning levels, while

others are yet to recover fully. Nevertheless, almost all states have shown improvements as compared to 2022. "In fact, the low-performing states like Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Tamil Nadu have made a remarkable recovery," the report noted.

For the first time, the nationwide household survey had a section on digital literacy, which applied to older children in the 14-16 age group. It included self-reported questions on access, ownership and use of smartphones, as well as a one-on-one assessment of some basic digital skills.

The report said "82.2 per cent of all children in the 14-16 age group reported knowing how to use a smartphone. Of these, 57 per cent reported using it for an educational activity in the preceding week, while 76 per cent said that they had used it for social media during the same period".

The report found that the proportion of "underage" children (aged five years or below) in Class 1 is decreasing over time. "In 2018, this figure was 25.6 per cent, in 2022 it stood at 22.7 per cent and in 2024, nationally, the percentage of underage children in Class-1 was at its lowest ever at 16.7," it said.

# Five Indian fishermen injured by Sri Lankan Navy in firing incident



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Five Indian fishermen sustained injuries, including two seriously, in an incident of firing by the Sri Lankan Navy in the proximity of Delft Island early Tuesday, triggering a strong reaction by India.

The acting high commissioner of the island nation in New Delhi was summoned to Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) and a strong protest was lodged with the top diplomat.

In its reaction, India said use of force is not "acceptable" under any circumstances whatsoever. "An incident of firing by the Sri Lankan Navy during the apprehension of 13 Indian fishermen

in the proximity of Delft Island was reported in the early hours of this morning," it said.

"Out of the 13 fishermen who were on board the fishing vessel, two have sustained serious injuries and are currently receiving treatment at the Jaffna Teaching hospital," it said. Three other fishermen received minor injuries and have been treated for the same, it added.

Indian Consulate officials in Jaffna have visited the injured fishermen at the hospital to seek their welfare and are extending all possible assistance to the fishermen and their families.

"The Sri Lankan acting high commissioner in New Delhi was called in today morning to

the Ministry of External Affairs and a strong protest was lodged over the incident," the MEA said.

The Indian high commission in Colombo has also raised the matter with the Sri Lankan foreign ministry.

"The government of India has always emphasised the need to treat issues pertaining to fishermen in a humane and humanitarian manner, keeping in mind livelihood concerns," the Indian readout noted.

"The use of force is not acceptable under any circumstances whatsoever. Existing understandings between the two governments in this regard must be strictly observed," the MEA said.

# SC asks Centre's stand after woman wants to be governed by succession law

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court (SC) on Tuesday asked for the Centre's stand on a Muslim woman's plea seeking to be governed by the Indian succession law instead of Shariat. The plea of Safiya P M, general secretary of "Ex-Muslims of Kerala", and hailing from Alappuzha, came up before a bench comprising Chief Justice Sanjiv Khanna and Justices Sanjay Kumar and K V Viswanathan.

Safiya's plea, filed through advocate Prashant Padmnabhan, said Muslim women were entitled to one-third share in the property under the Shariat laws. The lawyer said the declaration that the petitioner was not governed by the Muslim personal law had to come from the court, or else her father would not be able to give more than one-third of the property.

The top court had permitted Safiya to amend the petition suitably to challenge the Indian succession law and other provisions for excluding Muslims. "Fundamental right to religion under Article 25 of the Constitution must include the right to believe or not to believe, as per the judgment of this in Indian Young Lawyers Association v. State of Kerala (Sabarimala case)... To have meaning for that right, the person who leaves her faith should not incur any disability or a disqualification in matters of inheritance or other important civil rights," the plea said. Pointing out wide ramifications across the country, the plea urged the bench for an intervention.

It said the pending case in the Supreme Court was for all Muslim women but the present plea was for those who were born Muslim and wanted to



leave the religion. "As per Sharia law, the person who leaves her faith in Islam, will be ousted from her community and thereafter she is not entitled for any inheritance right in her parental property," the plea argued. The petitioner expressed apprehension over the application of the law in the case of her lineal descendant, her only daughter, if she officially left her religion. Seeking a declaration that the Muslim personal law shouldn't govern her for any of the matters listed in Section 2 or 3 of the Muslim Personal Law (Shariat) Application Act, she said, "But there is no provision either in the Act or in the rules wherein she can obtain such a certificate." The plea said there was a "clear vacuum" in the statute which could be plugged by judicial interpretation. "As of now, the petitioner will not be governed by the secular laws of the country, viz, the Indian Succession Act even if she officially gets a no-religion, no-caste certificate from any authority," said the plea. The precious fundamental rights under Article 25 to practice or not to practice religion were made meaningless by the absence of such a protection from the state, it added.

In a significant step towards furthering India-Indonesia comprehensive bilateral relations, the Indian Coast Guard (ICG) and the Indonesia Coast Guard (Badan Keamanan Laut Republik Indonesia - BAKAMLA) renewed the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Maritime Safety and Security Cooperation for a period of three years, defence ministry said here on Tuesday. Giving details, officials said the MoU was signed between both the organisation in July 2020 which marked a significant milestone underscoring the vision of Indian government towards a safer, secure and resilient Indo-pacific region.

# BJP is richest party with ₹7,113.80 crore in funds

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP, which claims itself as the biggest political party in the world, has a whopping cash and bank balance of ₹7,113.80 crore against the principal opposition Congress party's ₹857.15 crore as on March 31, 2024.

According to figures provided to the Election Commission, the BJP spent as much as ₹1,754.06 crore during 2023-24 when Lok Sabha elections were announced, a whopping 60 per cent rise than ₹1,092 crore spent in 2022-23.

In comparison, the Congress spent as much as ₹619.67 crore during 2023-24, against ₹192.56 crore in 2022-23. The Lok Sabha elections were announced on March 16, 2024. According to the figures provided to the EC in their annu-



al audit reports, the BJP has received voluntary contributions through the now banned electoral bonds of ₹1,685.69 crore during 2023-24, against ₹1294.15 crore in the previous year. The ruling party has also shown having received other contributions to the tune of

₹2,042.75 crore during the year, against ₹648.42 crore in the previous year 2022-23. In its audit report to the EC, the Congress has shown having received total contributions of ₹1,225.11 crore during 2023-24, including ₹1129.67 crore through grants, dona-

tions and contributions. This also includes ₹828.36 crore received through electronic bonds during the year ended March 31, 2024, which have now been banned by the Supreme Court.

During the year, the BJP spent ₹591 crore in advertisements, including ₹434.84 crore in the electronic media and ₹115.62 crore in printed material. The ruling party also spent ₹174 crore during 2023-24 on aircraft/helicopters, against ₹78.23 crore in 2022-23 and gave financial assistance of ₹191.06 crore to its candidates during the year in question, against ₹75.05 crore in the previous year.

The BJP spent ₹84.32 crore in meeting expenses during 2024 and ₹75.14 crore in organising morchas, rallies, andolan and call centre expenses during

2023-24. The Congress, on the other hand, spent as much as ₹207.94 crore on the electronic media and ₹43.73 crore on printed material during 2023-24.

The opposition party also spent ₹62.65 crore on aircraft/helicopters during 2023-24 and gave financial aid of ₹238.55 crore to its candidates. It also spent ₹28.03 crore on publicity expenses and ₹79.78 crore on social media expenses during the year ended March 31, 2024.

The party also stated in its audit report that it spent ₹49.63 crore on the Bharat Jodo Yatra 2, led by former party chief Rahul Gandhi during 2023-24, against ₹71.84 crore spent on Bharat Jodo Yatra undertaken by him from Kanyakumari to Kashmir during 2022-23.

# India, Indonesia Coast Guards sign MoU to boost maritime relations

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

In a significant step towards furthering India-Indonesia comprehensive bilateral relations, the Indian Coast Guard (ICG) and the Indonesia Coast Guard (Badan Keamanan Laut Republik Indonesia - BAKAMLA) renewed the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Maritime Safety and Security Cooperation for a period of three years, defence ministry said here on Tuesday.

Giving details, officials said the MoU was signed between both the organisation in July 2020 which marked a significant milestone underscoring the vision of Indian government towards a safer, secure and resilient Indo-pacific region.



Under the umbrella of the MoU provisions, eight member BAKAMLA delegation led by Vice Admiral Irwansyah, S.H, Chief of Indonesia Coast Guard is visiting India from January 24-28 which also included conduct of the second high level meeting between ICG and BAKAMLA on Monday, it said.

The high level meeting was led by Director General Paramesh Sivamani from the Indian

Coast Guard side. The meeting focused on augmenting operational level interaction and capacity building in areas of Maritime Search and Rescue, Pollution Response and Maritime Law Enforcement. The meeting was significant in providing added impetus to the existing professional relationship between the two Coast Guards.

Relations between the two Coast Guards go back a long way ICG ships first visited Indonesia on December 2002 towards professional interaction and exchanges. This meeting and visit is in continuation of the efforts by the Governments of the two countries to enhance cooperation between the Coast Guards in the field of maritime safety and security.

# Police can't serve accused notice via electronic means: SC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court has said police cannot serve notices to accused persons through WhatsApp or other electronic modes under the Criminal Procedure Code or Bhartiya Nagrik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023. A bench of Justices M M Sundresh and Rajesh Bindal directed all states and union territories (UT) to issue appropriate directions to police for issuing notices under Section 41A of CrPC, 1973 or Section 35 of BNS, 2023 only through the mode of service permitted under the law.

"All the States/UTs must issue a standing order to their respective police machinery to issue notices under Section 41-A of

CrPC, 1973/Section 35 of BNS, 2023 only through the mode of service as prescribed under the CrPC, 1973/BNS, 2023," the bench said on January 21.

The top court went on, "It is made amply clear that service of notice through WhatsApp or other electronic modes cannot be considered or recognised as an alternative or substitute to the mode of service recognised and prescribed under the CrPC, 1973/BNS, 2023."

The direction came when the court accepted a suggestion by senior advocate Sidharth Luthra, appointed amicus curiae in the matter. Luthra flagged instances where a notice under Section 41-A of CrPC, 1973 was sent through WhatsApp, but the accused did not appear before the investigating officer.

# Our suggestions accepted by Waqf committee: JD(U)

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Janata Dal (United) said on Tuesday that the changes suggested by it have been accepted by the Joint Parliamentary Committee scrutinising the Waqf (Amendment) Bill and accused the opposition of politicising the issue.

The BJP's allies like the Telugu Desam Party, JD(U) and the Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas) had come around to endorsing the bill with some amendments in the committee's meeting on Monday. All the three parties had refrained from wholeheartedly endorsing the bill when it was introduced in Parliament during the Monsoon Session last year and had pushed for a wider consultation to allay concerns of the Muslim community.

JD(U) spokesperson Rajeev Ranjan Prasad said, "Whatever the JD(U) suggested in the bill, it was all accepted. The amendments will have our suggestions. We don't have any complaints regarding the



functioning of the JPC. The opposition has a habit to politicise every issue." JD(U) MP Dileshwar Kamait had moved the amendment to the bill's clause which had made it mandatory for Waqf properties to be listed with details on the portal within six months of the new law coming into force.

Kamait's proposal that 'mutawalli' (caretaker) of the property be allowed to seek an extension if the reasons cited by him satisfies the Waqf tribunal. He had co-sponsored the amendment with BJP's Aparajita Sarangi, and it was endorsed by the panel with a majority vote, sources said. Four amendments moved by

TDP MP Lavu Sri Krishna Devarayalu along BJP's Brij Lal were also accepted. These amendments do away with vesting any inquiry into disputes over a government property with the district collector concerned as mentioned in the bill, the sources said. These amendments allow the state government to des-

ignate an officer above the rank of collector to carry out an inquiry. Several Muslim bodies had objected to the authority given to the collector, noting that he was also the head of revenue records, and any inquiry by him might not be impartial as he would go by his own office's claim.

The sources said the BJP had been nudging its allies to put up a united face over the proposed law, which has been decried by opposition parties as "unconstitutional" due to its alleged interference into the religious affairs of Muslims. The ruling BJP has insisted that the proposed law will make the functioning of Waqf boards more transparent and efficient, arguing that an elite group running the boards had benefitted at the expense of the community's interests under the existing framework. The committee headed by BJP MP Jagdambika Pal, is set to meet on Wednesday to adopt its draft report, which is expected to be tabled in Parliament in the Budget Session beginning Friday.

# Kejriwal writes to PM highlighting disparity in allocation of public funds

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Ahead of the Delhi Assembly Apolls, AAP convener Arvind Kejriwal launched an attack on the BJP-led Central government on Tuesday for waiving loans of its "billionaire friends" and demanded a halt to the practice, adding that such a move could transform the country's economic landscape. Instead, he has urged the government to redirect these resources toward easing the financial burden on common citizens, farmers and middle-class families.

In a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, AAP chief highlights a stark disparity in the allocation of public funds, cornering the BJP led Central government of prioritising the financial interests of a select few billionaires over the needs of ordinary taxpayers. Showing a letter at a press conference, Kejriwal said, "Today I wrote a letter to the prime minister on a very important issue. In the letter, I have told the prime minister that the BJP-led



Central government is spending money from the government treasury on the country's billionaires. Whichever billionaire friend they want to be kind to, they give him money from the government and waive off that loan in two or three years. In the last five years, the central government has waived loans of 400-500 such billionaires worth ₹10 lakh crore. Presenting an alternative vision, the AAP chief outlined how stopping these corporate loan waivers could transform the country's economic landscape. He proposed halving income tax and GST rates, doubling the taxable income limit, and abol-

ishing GST on essential food items—steps that would directly benefit millions of households.

"Common people are paying half their salaries in taxes, while the loans of the rich are being waived. Why doesn't the Central government waive home loans, car loans, or other financial burdens of ordinary citizens?" Kejriwal asked.

Having earlier served as a joint commissioner in the Income Tax Department, Kejriwal went to closely examine the tax burden on the common man. He said, "A middle-class individual who earns ₹12 lakh annually is burdened with so many taxes imposed by the central government. They pay income tax, GST, service tax, property tax, education cess, capital gains tax, road tax, and more. When all these taxes are combined, a person earning ₹12 lakh ends up paying at least ₹6 lakh in taxes—half of their income—to the government. And what do they get in return? Nothing. Absolutely nothing."

# Prayagraj residents facing unwanted guest

**BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ PRAYAGRAJ**

As millions flock to the Maha Kumbh 2025, the residents of Prayagraj find themselves grappling with the influx of relatives suddenly eager to reconnect—some after years of silence. While hosting family for the spiritual event is considered a blessing, the strain on personal spaces, relationships, and resources is beginning to show.

Kusum Srinet, a resident of Tellianganj, has been at the center of this chaotic hospitality. “We are hosting 15 people in our two-bedroom house,” she said with a weary smile. “The kitchen has not had a break in days, and I have been answering questions like, ‘Is there hot water?’ and ‘Do you have room for my cousin’s neighbor’s friend?’ I have stopped saying no because it does not work.”

In addition to managing the logistics of hosting, Kusum is also dealing with a sudden surge in phone calls from long-lost relatives. “I got a call from my aunt in Gorakhpur whom I have not spoken to in a decade,” she said. “She wanted to know if I could ‘arrange something’ for her son and his in-laws. I did not even know her son was married!”

The phenomenon is not limited to Kusum. Alpona Sen, originally from Kolkata but now a resident of Daraganj, said she is suddenly popular with



Devotees arrive for a holy dip at Sangam, on the eve of the 'Mauni Amavasya' or new moon day during the Mahakumbh festival in Prayagraj, UP

relatives who never cared to stay in touch. “People who forgot I existed are now calling,” she quipped. “One cousin rang up from Kolkata and started with, ‘Didi, how is your health?’—as if they were planning to visit me in the hospital! But of course, they just wanted to know if I could host their son-in-law’s family.”

She shared a humorous yet exasperating incident. “My relatives initially said they were ready to move to a hotel,” she said, rolling her eyes. “But then they added, ‘When we have a great sister-in-law like you, why should we stay there?’ Now, I am stuck hosting a mini-family reunion in my house!”

Even the humor does not fully mask the challenges. Rajendra Tiwari, a retired schoolteacher in Allapur, said, “I have relatives showing up with bags and a plan to ‘stay for a few days.’ A few days have now turned into a week, and they are making full use of the free Wi-Fi. One even asked me if we had Netflix!”

For some, the stay is brief and pleasant. “There are considerate relatives who come, stay for a day, and leave,” said Anita Mishra. “They take their holy dip, share a meal, and are off. I do not even get stressed with them.”

But others are not so easy. “Then there are the ones who arrived a day before Mauni Amavasya,” said Rajendra Tiwari of Allapur, “and they will only leave after taking their last dip on Basant Panchami. That’s more than a week! We are running out of beds, food, and patience.”

Amidst the chaos, residents are also finding ways to keep the mood light. Renuka Sharma from Govindpuri shared, “I told my sister-in-law, who has not spoken to me since her son’s wedding, ‘Why don’t you just shift here permanently since you have already taken over my bedroom?’ We both laughed, but I think she’s considering it.”

For now, Prayagraj residents like Kusum and Alpona are navigating a mix of familial bonding and unexpected stress, all while keeping their sense of humor intact. As Kusum put it, “At least the Kumbh is teaching us one thing: how to handle chaos with a smile.”



# Free meals for millions at community kitchens

**BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ MAHAKUMBH NAGAR**

At the heart of the Mahakumbh lies a unique tradition of selfless service—community kitchens, or bhandaras, feeding millions of pilgrims daily. These kitchens, run by religious organizations, ashrams, and private groups, ensure no visitor goes hungry, offering everything from tea at dawn to wholesome meals at night—all free of cost. The hospitality is unmatched. Volunteers lovingly invite passersby to sit and eat, creating an atmosphere of camaraderie and devotion. In every corner of Kumbh City, at least one bhandara is always open, ensuring constant access to food.

“I came here with just enough money for travel, but these kitchens made sure I did not have to worry about food,” said Gopal Das, a pilgrim from Madhya Pradesh. “The meals are simple but so tasty, and the love with which they’re served makes it even more special.”

Organizations like Anand Bhawan Seva Samiti from Gujarat serve up to 10,000 people on regular days and over 15,000 on special occasions like the Amrit Snan. “Feeding pilgrims is part of our devotion. It feels like we are serving God Himself through them,” said Rajendra Thakur, a volunteer with the Samiti. The meals, which typically include lentils, rice, vegetables, and khichdi, are prepared in spotless kitchens where hygiene is paramount. “We ensure all ingredients are stored securely, and even the dough is kneaded by machines to maintain cleanliness,” added Thakur.

For many pilgrims, these meals are more than sustenance—they are a moment of joy and gratitude. “I never imagined eating sweets like barfi and jalebi at a free kitchen,” said Rukmini Devi, a first-time visitor from Bihar. “It is like a blessing.”

To ensure environmental responsibility, many kitchens use disposable plates made from biodegradable materials like leaves, while others rely on reusable steel or plastic plates. At large kitchens like Anand Bhawan, diners themselves wash their plates as a gesture of devotion. “It feels like being part of a family,” said Prakash Mishra, a pilgrim from Uttar Pradesh.

# Pari Akhara’s fight for separate Amrit Snan for women saints reaches Allahabad High Court

**BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ PRAYAGRAJ**

The long-standing demand for a separate Amrit Snan (royal bath) for women saints at the Maha Kumbh has taken a legal turn, with Pari Akhara filing a petition in the Allahabad High Court. The petition challenges the lack of representation for women in the traditional system of akharas (religious orders), questioning why there are 13 recognized akharas exclusively for men but none dedicated to women.

Pari Akhara, which was founded in 2013 by female saint Trikal Bhavta, has been advocating for gender-specific arrangements in the Kumbh Mela. Despite receiving government support in previous Kumbhs in Haridwar, Nashik, and Ujjain, they were not granted permission for a separate Amrit Snan. This year, the Pari Akhara has renewed its efforts for inclusion in Prayagraj Maha Kumbh.

In the ongoing Maha Kumbh, women saints associated with Pari



Akhara have been vocal about their demand. Recently, they held discussions with senior figures, including the head of Niranjani Akhara, Acharya Mahamandaleshwar Swami Kailashanand Giri, and the Chief Patron of Juna Akhara, Swami Hari Giri. However, these talks failed to yield a resolution.

Faced with opposition from the established 13 akharas, Pari Akhara turned to Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, but their plea resulted in mere assurances. Left with no other option, the group filed a petition in the Allahabad High Court on January 2, urging the court to mandate separate royal bathing arrangements for women saints. The petition has created ripples within the religious community, sparking debates about gender inclusivity in the age-old tradition of Kumbh Mela.

The 13 recognized akharas in India are divided into three sects: Shaiv Sanyasi (seven akharas), Vairagi (three akharas), and Udasi (three akharas). These akharas hold immense sway over Kumbh Mela rituals and receive special government facilities. Pari Akhara, despite its efforts, has not been officially recognized by the Akhara Parishad, the apex council formed in 1954 to oversee the functioning of these orders.

Speaking on the issue, Akhara Parishad President Ravindra Puri reiterated that only the 13 established akharas are recognized. He stated, “Women saints are respected in all akharas, and many of them, including Mahamandaleshwars, are part of the existing akharas. No new akhara can be granted recognition.”

Saint Trikal Bhavta, founder of Pari Akhara, emphasized that the fight for separate Amrit Snan is symbolic of the struggle for gender equality within religious traditions. “Thousands of women saints from India and abroad are associated with Pari Akhara and aspire to participate in a separate royal bath during the Prayagraj Maha Kumbh. We have faith in the court to deliver justice,” she said.

Acharya Mahamandaleshwar Jagriti Chetna Giri of Pari Akhara added, “This is a fight for the very existence of women saints in religious traditions. We are raising our voices at every level and have received assurances of support from several senior saints. We hope for an expedited hearing so women saints can achieve their rightful place in the Prayagraj Maha Kumbh.”

The issue has ignited a larger debate about inclusivity and equality in religious practices. As the Allahabad High Court deliberates on the petition, the demand for a separate Amrit Snan for women saints has already stirred the traditional structures of the Kumbh Mela.

The court’s decision could mark a significant shift in the centuries-old customs of the world’s largest spiritual gathering.



# Devotees express discontent over limited darshan time

**BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ VARANASI**

The Shri Kashi Vishwanath Temple witnessed an unprecedented footfall of over 1.1 million devotees on Monday, as the Maha Kumbh reverse flow drove massive crowds to seek blessings.

While the temple administration celebrated the record-breaking turnout, many pilgrims expressed disappointment over being rushed during their darshan. Devotees who had waited for up to eight hours in serpentine queues were granted only a fleeting glimpse of Lord Shiva. “I stood in line for nearly eight hours, but when my turn came, I was pushed forward within seconds. I couldn’t even complete my prayers,” said 65-year-old Ram Bhajan Singh, who had traveled from Prayagraj.

Another devotee, Suman Devi from Kanpur, echoed similar frustrations. “We come with so much devotion, but we barely get a moment to pray or offer our puja properly. It felt rushed,” she said.

In response to the massive

# UP government deploys over 1,000 medical personnel for devotees’ safety



**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ MAHAKUMBH NAGAR**

For the auspicious occasion of Mauni Amavasya to be held on Wednesday, the Uttar Pradesh

government has deployed over 1,000 medical personnel at the Mahakumbh Mela to ensure devotees’ safety and health. Under Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath’s direction, modern medical facilities, including provisions for minor to major surgeries, have been established in every sector of the fair, ranging from minor surgeries to major operations. In addition, 300 specialist doctors have been stationed at a super-specialty hospital in Mahakumbh Nagar, ready to handle any emergency situations. Over 2 lakh patients have already benefited from the OPD services at central and other hospitals, and more than 2.5 lakh pathology tests have been conducted so far. Dr. Gaurav Dubey, the Nodal Medical Officer for the Mahakumbh Mela, highlighted that devotees from across the country and

# People pelt stones at special train for Prayagraj



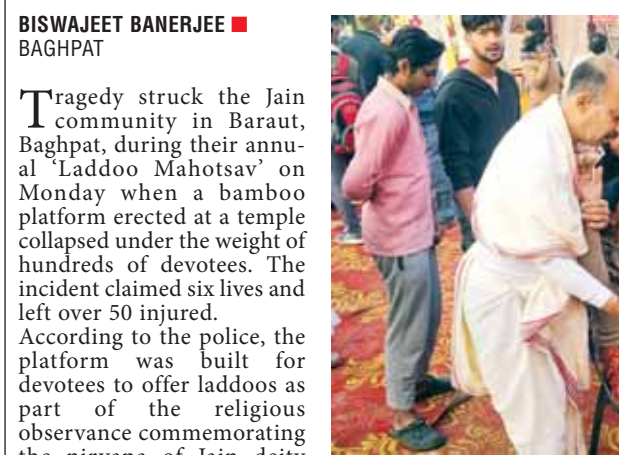
**BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ LUCKNOW**

Harpalpur, Uttar Pradesh: A special train traveling from Jhansi to Prayagraj for the Mahakumbh came under attack when agitated passengers at Harpalpur station pelted it with stones. The incident caused widespread panic among passengers as windows were shattered, and the train was damaged.

Videos circulating on social media show passengers screaming in fear as stones were thrown at the train. In one video, a passenger recounts, “The train left Jhansi for Prayagraj around 8 pm. When it reached Harpalpur, it was attacked. The windows were broken, and stones were hurled inside, endangering the lives of passengers, including women and children.”

The train, part of a special service organized to ferry devotees to the Mahakumbh in Prayagraj, drew large crowds. Many passengers at Harpalpur, about two hours from Jhansi, were waiting to board the train but found the compartment doors locked. Their frustration reportedly escalated into violence, with the crowd throwing stones and shattering

# Seven dead and over 50 injured as platform collapses during religious event



**BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ BAGHPAT**

Tragedy struck the Jain community in Baraut, Baghpat, during their annual ‘Laddoo Mahotsav’ on Monday when a bamboo platform erected at a temple collapsed under the weight of hundreds of devotees. The incident claimed six lives and left over 50 injured.

According to the police, the platform was built for devotees to offer laddoos as part of the religious observance commemorating the nirvana of Jain deity Adinatha. As the priests and devotees gathered on the structure, it gave way, leading to chaos. The injured were rushed to nearby hospitals. Those with minor wounds received first aid and were discharged, while those with serious injuries are

undergoing treatment,” he said. District Magistrate Asmita Lal confirmed the annual nature of the festival, which has been observed by the local Jain community for three decades. “The wooden structure collapsed, leaving about 40 people injured. Twenty have already been treated and sent home, and others remain under medical care,” she said. Eyewitness Rakesh Jain, a devotee present at the event, described the harrowing scene. “The platform is set up every year for the priests and devotees to offer laddoos. This time, it couldn’t bear the weight of the crowd, and it collapsed suddenly,” he said.

Authorities are investigating the incident and have assured enhanced security measures at railway stations along the route to prevent a recurrence of such events.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

## Recalibrating US-India ties

India-US relations face a shift as India tackles trade, immigration, amid Trump's 'America First' policy

As Prime Minister Narendra Modi and US President Donald Trump engage in dialogue to strengthen bilateral relations, the future of US-India ties appears poised at a critical juncture. Modi's commitment to global peace, prosperity and security, paired with Trump's vision of 'America First,' highlights a partnership that must balance shared strategic goals with diverging domestic priorities. India and the US have cultivated a robust Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership over the years, encompassing key areas like defence, technology, energy and counterterrorism. President Trump's emphasis on India increasing its procurement of American-made security equipment underscores Washington's aim to deepen defence collaboration. With Modi's planned visit to the White House and continued diplomatic exchanges, both nations are set to expand their cooperation in these critical domains. However, this partnership extends beyond bilateral gains. Modi and Trump's discussions on global challenges, including tensions in West Asia and the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, highlight their shared interest in playing pivotal roles on the global stage.



Trade remains a contentious issue, with Trump's protectionist policies, including potential tariff hikes, posing a challenge to India. The US President's focus on achieving a 'fair bilateral trading relationship' reflects his administration's concerns about trade imbalances. India, on the other hand, seeks to protect its economic interests while fostering a mutually beneficial partnership. Negotiating these trade tensions will require careful diplomacy, as both nations aim to preserve the benefits of their economic ties. The potential for increased investment, innovation and job creation through collaboration in sectors like renewable energy and space exploration offers a promising path forward. Immigration has emerged as yet another critical point of discussion. Trump's crackdown on illegal migrants and emphasis on tighter border controls have direct implications for India, one of the largest sources of irregular immigration outside Latin America. The US has identified approximately 18,000 Indian nationals for deportation, a figure India has cautiously addressed while advocating for a systematic verification process. Moreover, visa delays for Indian nationals have raised concerns, particularly as India is a significant contributor to the US tech workforce. Balancing Trump's domestic priorities with the need for a skilled global workforce will be essential to sustaining the mutually beneficial flow of talent and innovation. The relationship between India and the US is at once ripe with potential and fraught with challenges. While Trump's 'Make America Great Again' agenda and Modi's vision for a self-reliant India may occasionally clash, their shared goals of security, economic growth, and technological advancement offer ample ground for collaboration. As the world's largest democracies, India and the U.S. have a unique opportunity to lead by example in addressing global challenges.

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Folk artists take part in a procession on the eve of the unveiling of 'Bhuvaneshwari Devi' statue, in Bengaluru

PTI

## Simulation-based learning: Transforming emergency medical training

By replicating real-world medical emergencies, this innovative training method bridges the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical expertise

Simulation refers to the imitation of real-world processes or systems for training, education, or evaluation purposes. In emergency medical training, simulation creates realistic scenarios that replicate medical emergencies, allowing healthcare providers to practice and refine their skills in a safe, controlled environment. The implementation of Competency-Based Medical Education (CBME) by the National Medical Council (NMC) has shown that simulation significantly enhances clinical competence for both undergraduate and postgraduate medical students. One of the most significant advantages of simulation is that it enables learners to practice handling critical and high-stakes situations without risking patient safety. This is particularly important in emergencies, where errors can have severe consequences. By engaging in simulated scenarios, participants can repeatedly practice emergency protocols, improve technical skills such as intubation and defibrillation, and gain confidence in their abilities.



Simulations replicate the high-pressure environment of real emergencies, helping individuals develop the ability to make rapid, informed decisions under stress. They also provide a risk-free setting to identify and correct mistakes, enabling participants to learn how to prevent such errors in real-life situations. Additionally, exposure to diverse scenarios prepares learners to adapt to unexpected complications effectively. Teamwork plays a critical role in emergency medical training, and simulation emphasises the importance of collaboration and communication. Learners develop skills in articulating observations, providing updates, and conveying instructions clearly, which are essential in high-pressure situations. Simulation allows team members to define roles, such as team leader or airway manager and practice seamless coordination. Through repeated practice, team-based simulations equip medical students with both confidence and competence. The future of medical education lies in recognising the importance of practical skills alongside theoretical knowledge, making simulation a cornerstone of training programmes. (The writer is professor & HOD, Dr. D Y Patil Medical College, Hospital & Research Centre, Pimpri, Pune; views are personal)

# Trump's America: A reality check for the Desis



BHOPINDER SINGH

In Trump's transactional world no group, not even the perceived 'model minority,' is immune from the fallout of his unpredictable policies

It's not Elon Musk's early frustrations with President Donald Trump handing over the crucial project to build America's AI (Artificial Intelligence) infrastructure to rival Sam Altman-led 'Stargate,' that ought to worry us, but the fate of fellow Trumpeteer, Vivek Ramaswamy, that rings closer home. During the campaign trail, the racist Trump was busy mocking minority ethnicities and religions, the Indian-American Desis, seemed smug in assuming that somehow, they were a cut above the other minorities. The purported personal equation between Trump and the Indian Prime Minister was bandied as proof of the special treatment, that awaited India and Indians.

Names of a few Indian-Americans in the new Trump administration (especially of Vivek Ramaswamy in the Department of Government Efficiency or DOGE) were showcased as proofs of Trump's affection for the world's largest democracy. The lazy and simplistic assumption was that he'd be tough on the likes of China and Pakistan, hence pro-India. But the cold reality of dealing with the unpredictable politics of Trump hit much earlier than even anticipated by commentators who had been warning of Trump's ascendancy, despite many shortcomings of the Democrats under Joe Biden. For starters, Chinese President Xi Jinping got an invite to attend the swearing-in of President Trump, but the Indian Prime Minister didn't. Soon thereafter Trump kept peppering his Make-America-Great-Again (MAGA) spiel with threats of tariff spikes against traditional allies like Canada, Denmark, Mexico etc., (including naming India) but recently suggested that he'd 'rather not' impose tariffs against China - this after promising up to 60% tariffs against China during the campaign! He flipped. Soon thereafter, the Indian-American community was hit the hardest of all immigrant communities by the direct implications of the executive order ending birthright citizenship. Chances for many Indians working under H-1B (work), H-4



(dependent), L (intra-company transfer) and F (student) got jeopardized, as amongst the largest and fastest-growing immigrant groups in the US. With all assumed equations besetting Washington DC and Delhi, it seems fait accompli with little scope for Delhi to counter-influence a policy measure, that impacts it, more than anyone else. Such radical disruptions were certainly not the norm in the Biden era. The supposed leverage of a voluble Vivek Ramaswamy with a Trump also seems to have come a cropper, given the mystery surrounding Vivek's sudden decision to leave DOGE. Having invested a lot of personal stake, content, and pride, in supporting the Trump ascendancy to power (clearly prematurely?), Vivek is at pains to deny that his ouster has anything to do with him having defended the immigration position after calling some, 'lazy Americans'. To add insult to injury of being forced into grandstanding, a journalist has just released a video of Vivek's text confirming his departure from Trump, due to the same. The ostensible bid for Ohio Governorship (if true?) is an afterthought and wasn't the intention, even a week earlier. That for a Trump, anyone is completely dispensable once a purpose has been served, be it



IT IS A LESSON THAT VIVEK RAMASWAMY OR EVEN ELON MUSK WILL WAKE UP TO, AS IN THE INDIFFERENT AND TRANSACTIONAL WORLDVIEW OF A TRUMP, TOPICAL RELEVANCE IS ALL THAT MATTERS TO THE AUTHOR OF THE 'ART OF DEAL'

an individual, cause, country, or even a supportive Indian-American like Vivek, seems true. Anyone can be thrown under the bus, irrespective of their ethnicity or personal chemistry. A telling tweet by Vivek on 26th Dec 2024 captures his nuanced position on the contentious immigration issue (as wishfully believed by many Indian-Americans to be the first amongst the equals within minorities, owing to our unique culture and work ethics). He had commented, "The reason top tech companies often hire foreign-born & first-generation engineers over 'native' Americans isn't because of an innate American IQ deficit (a lazy & wrong explanation). A key part of it comes down to the c-word: culture". The underlying suggestion is that Indians do not suffer from the supposed "Wokeism" of the Democrats as Indians do not have "a culture that celebrates the prom queen over the math olympiad champ, or the jock over the valedictorian", hence would escape the prying eyes of a Trump targeting immigrants. While it is true that Trump has spoken about the logic of 'meritocracy' in extending citizenship - it is equally true that in applying his power of potential misuse, he hasn't spared or protected the interests of the Indian-American community which did tick most of the qualifying boxes defined by Trump. The hard truth is that Trump has no special affinity or even intention of any preferential treatment to Indian Americans or India if his conduct in the initial few days of his Presidency is anything to go by. The fact is, the one-time star of the TV series 'Apprentice' is more famous for his heartless line "You're fired" than for any historical demonstration of empathetic leadership. Ultimately, it is a lesson that Vivek Ramaswamy or even Elon Musk will wake up to, as in the indifferent and transactional worldview of a Trump, topical relevance is all that matters to the author of the 'Art of Deal' (that too, ghostwritten). Those eagerly waiting for a decisive and assertive POTUSA in Trump who would do wonders for India, need to brace for some discomforting reality check. Biden had limitations and undeniable failings, but he wasn't a bull in a China shop or necessarily anti-India, ever. With Trump, you never know, as Indians or India don't seem anything special, at least for now. (The writer, a military veteran, is a former Lt Governor of Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Puducherry. The views expressed are personal)

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### CHINA TAKES ON AI

Madam - Less than a week after his swearing-in ceremony, US President Trump said that the private sector would invest \$500 billion in AI technology, making the US the most advanced country in the world and creating jobs for millions. Just a week after this statement, the US stock market crashed on Monday, January 27. The reason behind this was the DeepSeek app launched by China last week, which became the most downloaded free app in the US, beating rivals including ChatGPT. DeepSeek was reportedly developed at a fraction of the cost of its competitors, raising questions about the future of America's AI dominance and the scale of investment planned by US firms. AI leader Nvidia's share price sank 17 per cent, and it lost about \$593 billion in stock market value, according to market experts, the biggest one-day loss ever for a company on Wall Street. I was wondering if Mr. Trump, who has just given a 75-day extension to China's app TikTok, will be able to show his displeasure with China and announce a 100 percent import duty on it instead of 60 percent. But it doesn't seem that Trump will be able to deal with China the way he deals with Mexico and Colombia. That's why he has refrained from imposing the previously announced 60 percent import duty. On the contrary, he is advising his American tech companies that 'this is a wake-up call for you guys'. Despite limited access to advanced hardware, DeepSeek's ability to compete with American models shows that software simplicity and data efficiency can compensate for hardware constraints, and underestimating China in any field can be a cause of embarrassment for anyone. Jang Bahadur Singh | Jamshedpur

### India-China border talks



The visit to Beijing by the foreign secretary, Vikram Misri and a series of high-level meetings between the officials of India and China meant to bring some normalcy back to their ties after years of heightened tensions. While these hectic parleys demonstrate intent on both sides to try to build on the momentum from the border pullback, the recent crises in their relationship have deepened mutu-

al distrust that will not go away with a few meetings. The past few months have seen India raise concerns about a new Chinese plan to build the world's largest dam in Tibet on the upstream part of what India calls the Brahmaputra. New Delhi fears that the dam could allow Beijing to weaponise water, either by denying India adequate water or by unleashing floods. The Quad grouping, which met in Washington on the margins of the swearing-in ceremony of Donald Trump, issued a statement that was more overtly critical of China and its territorial ambitions in the Indo-Pacific than has been the norm. No one expects New Delhi and Beijing to be best friends. But they do not need to be enemies either. N Sadhasiva Reddy | Bengaluru

### CRACKDOWN ON FRAUD CALLS

Madam - The Indian government's steps to curb fraudulent international calls are a significant and commendable effort in

the field of digital security. The Department of Telecommunications has developed an innovative and indigenous system that identifies and blocks the misuse of Indian mobile numbers. The primary aim of this initiative is to free users from cyber fraud and safeguard their financial interests. This new system has achieved the remarkable feat of reducing fraudulent international calls by 90 per cent within just 24 hours. Additionally, by blocking more than 20 foreign service providers, the government has sent a clear message that there is no place for such activities. This effort is not only a stringent step toward preventing fraudsters but also a symbol of securing the digital lives of Indian citizens. It is a critical move toward realising the vision of Digital India. The initiative not only curbs cybercrimes but also enhances the sense of trust and security among citizens. It brings greater transparency to the telecom sector and helps users feel safer in their digital activities. This initiative truly marks a new chapter in the

realm of digital security. R K Jain | Barwani

### SMRITI MANDHANA WINS ICC AWARD

Madam - India's star batter Smriti Mandhana was adjudged as the ICC Women's ODI Cricketer of the Year 2024, the global body announcement. Mandhana had a memorable outing with the bat in 2024. She smashed 747 runs this year with the help of four centuries and three fifties in 13 games. She set new batting standards in ODIs, scoring more runs than she ever had before in a calendar year. She also tested herself with the ball in hand and ended up taking a wicket as well. The 28-year-old now has equalled New Zealand batter Suzie Bates' record of winning the ICC Women's ODI Cricketer of the Year on multiple occasions. Mandhana won her ICC Women's ODI Cricketer of the Year award in 2018. Jayanthi Subramanian | Mumbai

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## FIRST COLUMN

### THE PATH TO BEING TRULY SPECIAL

We all want to feel special, but often our desires and decisions lead us astray



AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

We all want to be special. There is nothing wrong with such thinking, but most of us do not desire properly or decide sensibly. In this article, I will shed some light on how to do both of these wisely. What should we desire? This must be in sync with our circumstances and capabilities. Imagine desiring to become very rich while doing a small business. Similarly, desiring to become famous anytime soon while being a club-level sportsman is not wise.

We will be disappointed only. Persons not blessed with good looks should accept their limitations and focus on what capabilities they have been blessed with. There was a dark and not-so-good-looking actress in the USA; she only got small roles. But she acted so well that she became a household name. A social worker in India decided to help tribals. He moved in with them. He became very famous and very special. However, something awaits all of us; which is not so difficult either. This is simply to become a devotee of God, and He will make us special.

I will write more about it in this article. The same wisdom should



be used in decision-making. When there is a choice between being good and not so good, what should we choose? The same logic applies to following dharma and staying within 'maryada' (limits). We know what these are, but are very causal about controlling ourselves. Succumbing to negative emotions like anger, lust, greed, hate, etc. is so easy. What it does is to make us very ordinary. We have been taught to be disciplined in eating, sleeping, entertainment and what we do and how much. Are we prepared to do that? If we are keen on becoming special, we have to.

A similar yardstick is required in choosing goals. Are they good in the long term? Or, the short-term is easy? What will you choose? Regarding usefulness to others, we should be very sincere. If we wish to be special in the eyes of others, this is the 'mantra'. Lastly, if we really and truly wish to be special, be dutiful; do all duties as best as possible. This will be the starting point in pleasing God, who is everything. After the efforts of many births, a yogi in the end becomes wise and he takes My shelter. A great soul, who considers Lord Vasudeva thus as everything is very rare. (The Bhagavad-Geeta verse #7.19) What will happen then? You will be rewarded like you cannot imagine. Because God is the controller of what happens to us. Begin doing some easy spiritual practices, which suit your nature.

I have a large photo of Lord Krishna, which I have hung on the right side of my bed. I spend a lot of time looking at the Lord, while I gently chant Krishna, Krishna, Krishna.....What has happened? I have become special. God guides me when I pray for His guidance and help. Isn't God omniscient? He knows what will work. God helps us as only He can, being the controller. I am beginning to feel secure. Fears and anxieties are reducing.

There is more peace. I can tolerate better what I must. Physical health is improving. There is steady progress, which is very satisfying. I feel that I have become special. This is possible for one and all. Nothing mentioned in this article is very difficult. One just has to be determined. Then, one can enjoy the status of being special.

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

# Budget 2025: Prioritise health education for a stronger India



RAHUL MEHRA

With over 40 per cent of India's population under 25, empowering youth with physical and mental is a vital investment in the nation's future



As the Union Budget for 2025 approaches, expectations run high across various sectors. Among these, education - specifically health education - deserves special attention. To ensure the holistic development of our youth, the government must consider allocating funds for the integration of health education into school curricula. Such an initiative will not only address immediate concerns but also align with the aspirational vision of Viksit Bharat 2047, where a healthy population becomes the cornerstone of a developed nation. With the Union Budget 2025 at the stage of finalisation, it is time to prioritise health education.

Allocating funds to this cause is not merely an educational reform; it is an investment in India's future. It is stated time and again, including in the National Education Policy, that it is critical to allocate public investment in education from the current over 4.5 per cent to about 6 per cent of total budgetary allocation. Besides this, the Government must consider designing schemes that ensure health education is imparted to children at an early stage to be able to build a healthy society. Development is not merely economic or technological - it is also social, cultural and, above all, human.

A nation's progress depends on the health of its people, and with over 40 per cent of India's population under 25, ensuring the health and wellbeing of its youth is critical. This cannot be achieved without systematically integrating health education into our school curricula. Our goal is to improve student's health knowledge and more importantly, their health behavior. The urgency for such an intervention is rooted in troubling realities. Studies indicate that 30-40 per cent of Indian students face serious mental health challenges. A Global School



A NATION'S PROGRESS DEPENDS ON THE HEALTH OF ITS PEOPLE, AND WITH OVER 40 PER CENT OF INDIA'S POPULATION UNDER 25, ENSURING THE HEALTH AND WELLBEING OF ITS YOUTH IS CRITICAL

Health Survey (GSHS) conducted as far back as 2007 revealed that more than 25 per cent of students aged 13-17 experienced periods of deep sadness or hopelessness, often disrupting their daily activities. These numbers have only worsened in the years since, as highlighted by small-scale studies and the alarming rise in student suicides. Ignoring the mental and physical health of students today will lead to grave consequences for the nation tomorrow.

The contrast between India and nations that give primacy to health education is stark. In the United States, the Youth Risk Behaviour Survey (YRBS) collects data every two years on the health behaviours of high school students. This data informs evidence-based interventions and policies that address mental health, substance abuse, nutrition, and other critical issues. Many US states mandate health education, covering mental, physical, and social health literacy. Similarly, countries like the United Kingdom and Canada have integrated health education into their school curricula, starting at the primary level.

India, however, lacks a comprehensive approach. While physical education is emphasised in schools, the broader concept of health education, encompassing mental and social wellbeing, is largely absent. The much-lauded National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 only touches upon physical health, failing to address the critical need for a holistic health education framework. Why does this matter? Because healthy individuals contribute to a healthier economy. Poor health not only

reduces productivity but also pushes families into financial crises due to high medical expenses.

India's average life expectancy in 'full health' is a mere 60 years, significantly lower than that of many Asian countries, including Japan (74 years) and China (69 years). A healthy lifestyle, ingrained early, can change this trajectory. Countries like Japan provide valuable lessons. Their emphasis on hygiene, nutrition and physical activity is embedded in their cultural fabric. Children grow up practising these habits, resulting in a population that enjoys a higher quality of life and longer years of productive health.

India, with its rich traditions of yoga and Ayurveda, has the cultural foundations to promote such a shift. However, without institutionalising health education, these remain underutilised. Introducing health education as a mandatory subject in schools can address this gap.

A comprehensive curriculum must include modules on physical fitness, mental health resilience, nutrition, social interaction and technology use. For instance, students could learn the importance of balanced diets, strategies to cope with academic pressure, and the benefits of physical activities and mindfulness practices.

The curriculum should also emphasise practical life skills, such as decision-making, interpersonal communication, and self-advocacy, to prepare students for real-world challenges. A structured approach is essential. First, the government must design a standardised health education curriculum with clear performance

benchmarks. Students' progress should be evaluated at key stages, such as the end of classes 6, 8, and 10. Second, teachers need specialised training to effectively deliver this curriculum. Public-private partnerships can play a crucial role in addressing resource gaps and providing innovative solutions.

Importantly, this initiative aligns seamlessly with the vision of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Viksit Bharat 2047. A healthy India is a productive India. By equipping the younger generation with the knowledge and skills to prioritise their wellbeing, we are not only improving individual lives but also strengthening the nation's human capital, driving economic growth, and enhancing societal happiness.

Beyond the classroom, the ripple effects of mandatory health education can be transformative. A population that understands the value of preventive care will reduce the burden on India's healthcare system. Families will adopt healthier lifestyles, and communities will benefit from reduced rates of lifestyle-related diseases, such as diabetes, hypertension, and heart ailments.

The road to Viksit Bharat 2047 is paved with initiatives that prioritise people over policies, and action over aspirations. Health education is not just a subject; it is a foundation for a stronger, healthier, and more prosperous India.

(The writer is UNESCO Chair for Global Health & Education and Chairman of, Tarang Health Alliance. Views expressed are personal)

# How restoring forests can combat climate change and empower communities

## Reforestation stands as both a climate action imperative and a cornerstone for building sustainable future

Amid escalating climate changes, reforestation has come to be one of the most effective, nature-driven methods to combat environmental degradation and enhance climate resilience. Beyond absorbing carbon dioxide, forests support livelihoods, stabilise ecosystems, and foster sustainable communities. Forests have a great role in countering global warming and providing essential resources that not only support communities but also manufacturing and trade.

However, as research indicates, India in the past two decades has lost nearly 414-kilo hectares of humid primary forest which made up 18 per cent of its total tree loss. This highlights an urgent need to prioritise reforestation, not



SHWETA RAWAT

just as a climate action tool but also as a cornerstone for community development.

**Reforestation's Dual Role:** Climate Action and Community Resilience Forests have an immense capacity to capture and store carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, thus reducing the greenhouse effect.

The UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, established in 1988 estimates that reforestation and afforestation could account for up to 30 per cent of the carbon reduction required to limit global warming. Additionally, forests regulate microclimates, mitigating the urban heat island effect and stabilising local weather patterns crucial for agriculture. Reforestation plays a crucial role in combating desertification, which poses a significant threat to food security, water availability and livelihoods. Forests help anchor the soil, replenish organic matter, and improve water retention, thereby enhancing agricultural productivity and water access, particularly in ecologically fragile regions. According to

the India State of Forest Report 2021 (ISFR), tribal and rural communities living in these areas face high vulnerability but also exhibit remarkable climate resilience.

For these communities, reforestation is a game-changer as it can help prevent and even undo desertification by stabilising the soil using tree roots, which reduces wind and water erosion. Furthermore, forests help replenish organic material in the soil, leading to improved water retention and increased fertility which can lead to environmental regeneration and socio-economic stability.

**Community-driven Reforestation:** A Proven Model Even with rapid urbanisation, India's conservation ethos has a rich legacy of pro-



tecting nature. Be it the collective Chipko movement of the 1970s or the inspirational restoration of more than 1300 acres of Brahmaputra's Forest by Jadav Payeng, the Forest Man of India, the success of any reforestation effort hinges on community and local participation.

With the input of individuals and stakeholders from communities, any conservation project remains culturally relevant, ecologically sound and

economically beneficial. Take Aravalli Hills Afforestation Project as an example for instance. By involving Village Forest Protection Committees, the project rejuvenated over 151,390 hectares of degraded land and built nearly 200 water storage dams to support wildlife, boosting biodiversity and tiger populations in Sariska Sanctuary. With an impressive 87 per cent tree survival rate, the initiative balanced environmental restoration with tangible social benefits such as job creation and improved livelihoods.

This model demonstrates that sustainable reforestation thrives on collaboration, community empowerment, and measurable impact. Partnerships for a Greener Future To scale reforestation

efforts, collaboration is key. Governments, philanthropies, non-profits and businesses must unite to amplify impact. For instance, non-profits can mobilise grassroots participation and bring cultural insights. Corporations can leverage resources for large-scale projects while fulfilling sustainability commitments.

Local governments can ensure policy alignment and provide regulatory support. Together, these stakeholders can create integrated strategies that combine ecological restoration with community upliftment. Initiatives like the National Afforestation Programme and the Green India Mission lay a solid foundation, but partnerships can catalyse progress. Reforestation for Generations to Come

Reforestation offers a rare synergy—mitigating climate change while addressing critical challenges like water scarcity, food insecurity and rural poverty. It is not merely an environmental solution but a pathway to holistic development. By fostering meaningful partnerships with non-profits, businesses, and communities, and aligning efforts with governmental initiatives.

The time to act is now. With a shared vision and commitment, we can restore forests not just as carbon sinks but as vibrant ecosystems that sustain life and empower generations. A greener, more resilient future is within our reach—if we plant the seeds today.

(The writer is chairperson and founder, The Hans Foundation; views are personal)

# Trump signs order paving way for transgender troop ban

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

President Donald Trump signed an executive order on Monday directing Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth to revise the Pentagon's policy on transgender troops, likely setting in motion a future ban on their military service. He also ordered troops to be reinstated who had left voluntarily or been booted for refusing COVID-19 vaccines, outlined new rollbacks in diversity programmes and provided for the deployment of a space-based missile defence shield for the US — all on Hegseth's first day. Trump and Hegseth had described parts of the anticipated orders throughout the day, but the exact language did not drop until late Monday. A transgender ban had been widely expected, and Trump's order largely sets the stage for a future ban — but directs Hegseth to come up with how that

would be implemented in policy. In his order, Trump claimed that service by troops who identify as a gender other than their biological one "conflicts with a soldier's commitment to an honourable, truthful, and disciplined lifestyle, even in one's personal life" and is harmful to military readiness, requiring a revised policy to address the matter. Trump had tried to ban transgender troops during his first term, but it was tangled up in the courts for years before being overturned by then-President Joe Biden shortly after he took office. Two groups, Lambda Legal and Human Rights Campaign, which represent transgender troops the first time, vowed to fight again. "We have been here before and seven years ago were able to successfully block the earlier administration's effort," Lambda Legal attorney Sasha Buchert said. "Not only is such a move

cruel, it compromises the safety and security of our country and is particularly dangerous and wrong. As we promised then, so do we now: we will sue." During his first presidency, Trump established US Space Command and the US Space Force, which just marked its fifth birthday. Space continues to be a priority for the president, who has now directed the Pentagon to begin to develop the capability to shoot down missiles from space. For years, the US has cautioned that China, Russia and others were weaponising space. It has at times declassified information about both countries' efforts to create offensive weapons to disable critical US satellites, including the capability to move satellites from orbit, temporarily blind them or potentially even destroy them. The Space Force is building a low-orbit ring of redundant

satellites that can more quickly track and detect potential missile launches. But establishing a way to shoot missiles down from space is something the US has not pursued since President Ronald Reagan announced the Strategic Defence Initiative — "Star Wars" as it was commonly known — in the 1980s. The system was never developed due to cost and technological limitations. In his order called "an Iron Dome for America", Trump called for a multilayer missile defence system capable of countering an array of threats to the US, to include development and deployment of space-based interceptors. At least 8,200 troops were forced out of the military in 2021 for refusing to obey a lawful order when they declined to get the vaccine. Notices advising them they could return were sent out in 2023, but just 113 have reenlisted.

# Tariff threat sways Colombia, but risks rise with Canada, Mexico

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

Having already forced Colombia to accept deportees by threatening a 25 per cent tariff, President Donald Trump is readying the same move against Canada and Mexico as soon as Saturday. But this time, the stakes are higher and many economists surveying the possible damage doubt Trump would be comfortable with what they say would be self-inflicted wounds from the tariffs. "The potential for such sizable economic impacts ought to act as enough of a deterrent that Trump will not end up implementing these higher tariffs," said Matthew Martin, senior US economist at the consultancy Oxford Economics. Trump has repeatedly insisted that tariffs are coming on Canada and Mexico, despite both countries seeking to address his stated concerns about illegal border crossings and the smuggling of fentanyl. But the Republican president is also motivated by the idea that tariffs would force other countries to "respect" the United States. "We're going to immediately install massive tariffs," Trump said in a Monday speech, adding, "Colombia is traditionally a very, very strong-willed country," but it backed down rather than face import taxes. Multiple economic analyses show

that universal tariffs against Canada and Mexico risk more inflation and an economic slowdown. It's a much larger play than Trump's moves against Colombia, which accounts for roughly 0.5 per cent of US imports. By contrast, nearly 30 per cent of all US imports hail from Canada and Mexico, amplifying the risk that tariffs could fuel inflation and undermine Trump's campaign promises to get prices under control. Trump's director of the White House National Economic Council, Kevin Hassett, dismissed these concerns. He said the sceptical analyses of tariffs don't look at the totality of Trump's promises. "When the people who are trying to cause panic over President Trump's trade policy simulate what it's going to do, they don't account for all the other policies," Hassett said in a Monday interview on the Fox Business Network. "So President Trump is drill, baby, drill, and deregulate and tax cuts and reduce spending." After Trump's initial threat of 25 per cent tariffs in November, Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum suggested Mexico could retaliate with tariffs of its own. Since then, she has been more measured, choosing to emphasize the strong bilateral relationship and willingness to engage in dialogue as the number of detentions at the US-Mexico border has plunged.

Sheinbaum pointed out in November that drugs were a US problem, but in December the Mexican military seized more than a ton of fentanyl pills in two raids, calling it the biggest catch of synthetic opioids in Mexico's history. On Monday, Sheinbaum applauded the agreement reached by the Trump administration and Colombia. "I believe the important thing, as I said on the first day, is to always act with a cool head, defending each country's sovereignty and the respect among nations and peoples," she said. Top Canadian ministers said last week that Canada was prepared to retaliate if Trump imposed import taxes, even as Canadian Foreign Minister Melanie Joly said they "will continue to work on preventing tariffs". The working theory in Canada appears to involve being ready for anything that the US president might do. On Monday, the economics division of the insurance company Nationwide estimated that Trump's proposed tariffs on Canada and Mexico would increase inflation by as much as 0.5 percentage points and pull down growth by 0.7 percentage points. The analysis noted it did not "account for potential retaliatory tariffs from Canada or Mexico, which could amplify the deleterious impact on inflation and GDP growth".

# Serbia's PM resigns as anti-corruption protests grow

PTI ■ BELGRADE

Serbia's populist Prime Minister Milos Vucovic resigned Tuesday in an attempt to calm political tensions and pressure roiled by weeks of massive anti-corruption protests over the deadly collapse of a concrete canopy. The canopy collapse in November, which killed 15 people in the northern city of Novi Sad, has become a flashpoint reflecting wider discontent with the increasingly autocratic rule of Serbia's populist President Aleksandar Vucic. He has faced accusations of curbing democratic freedoms in Serbia despite formally seeking European Union membership for the troubled Balkan nation. "It is my appeal for everyone to calm down the passions and return to dialogue," Vucovic told a news conference announcing his resignation. Novi Sad Mayor Milan Djuric also stepped down on Tuesday. Vucovic's resignation could lead to an early parliamentary election. The resignation must be confirmed by Serbia's parliament, which has 30 days to choose a new government or



call a snap election. Pro-government media said President Vucic will attend a Cabinet session on Tuesday evening to decide whether a new prime minister-designate will be appointed or an early election called. Opposition parties have said they would insist on a transitional government that would create conditions for a free and fair election. Vucic's populists have faced accusations of irregularities during past elections. Vucovic became the prime minister in April 2024, after the Serbian Progressive Party won most votes in an election

marred by tensions. "They (ruling party) have been in a free fall since the Novi Sad tragedy," journalist Slobodan Georgiev said on N1 television, adding that Vucic was seeking a "buffer" with the prime minister's resignation. Vucic in the past had managed to cushion the impact of anti-government street protests, but the current student movement has garnered widespread support from all walks of life, including actors, farmers, lawyers and judges. The students' call for justice has resonated in a country where corruption is widespread and few feel that the state institutions work in the interests of citizens. Branimir Jovancevic, professor at the Faculty of Chemistry in Belgrade, expressed hope that Vucovic's resignation is a first step toward further political changes in Serbia, where power is concentrated in the hands of the president although his constitutional role is largely ceremonial. "If the president thinks that by replacing one, essentially, unimportant figure... will solve the problem... he is deeply mistaken," said Jovancevic. "This

must lead to total political changes because autocracy and dictatorship in Serbia, in the heart of Europe, must be stopped." On Monday, tens of thousands of people joined striking university students in a 24-hour blockade of a key traffic intersection in the Serbian capital. Serbia's students are demanding accountability for the canopy collapse that critics have blamed on rampant government corruption. Classes at Serbia's universities and dozens of schools have been blocked for two months with students camping inside their faculty buildings. In another attempt to defuse tensions, Vucic, Vucovic and Parliament Speaker Ana Brnabic on Monday evening urged dialogue with the students, who have so far rebuffed such invitations. They say Vucic shouldn't be the one holding talks with them but that government institutions such as police and the judiciary should do their job. Vucovic said the immediate cause for his quitting was an attack on a female student in Novi Sad early Tuesday by assailants allegedly from the

ruling Serbian Progressive Party. Vucovic said that "whenever it seems there is hope to return to social dialogue, to talk... it's like an invisible hand creates a new incident and tensions mount again." But the outgoing prime minister also said that the street protests "undoubtedly" have been organized from abroad "with an aim to directly jeopardize Serbia as a state." Vucovic offered no evidence for his claims that echoed earlier similar statements by Vucic. "I can never justify or understand any of these protests, blockades of lives, of roads and the freedom of movement of other citizens," he said. Students in Novi Sad said they were horrified by the assault they said was carried out by thugs with baseball bats. They attacked two groups of students and chased them in their car, the students said. Prosecutors later said that four people have been detained. "We are horrified over the state of our society where such a situation is possible," the students said in an Instagram post. "We have had enough of blood." The students called a big rally

in Novi Sad later Tuesday in response to the attack. Serbia's prosecutors have filed charges against 13 people, including a government minister and several state officials for the November canopy collapse. But the former Construction Minister Goran Vesic, who had resigned shortly after the canopy crash, has been released from detention, fuelling doubts over the investigation's independence. The main railway station in Novi Sad was renovated and inaugurated twice in recent years as part of a wider infrastructure deal with Chinese state companies and a fast railway link with neighbouring Hungary. Several incidents have marred the street demonstrations in the past weeks, including drivers ramming in to the crowds on two occasions, when two young women were injured. Students and others have been holding daily 15-minute traffic blockades throughout Serbia at 11:52 am, the exact same time the concrete canopy crashed down on Nov 1. The blockades honour the 15 victims, including two children. The blockades were also held on Tuesday.

# Russian govt delegation makes first official visit to Syria since Assad's fall

PTI ■ DAMASCUS

A delegation of Russian officials arrived in Damascus on Tuesday, Russian state news agency RIA Novosti reported. It is the first such delegation to visit Syria since the fall of former President Bashar Assad, an ally of Moscow, in December in a lightning rebel offensive. Assad took refuge in Russia after his ouster. The report said the delegation included Russian deputy foreign minister Mikhail Bogdanov and the Russian president's special envoy for Syria, Alexander Lavrentyev. RIA Novosti didn't offer any other details of the visit. There was no official comment from Syria's interim government, but the semi-official Al Watan newspaper reported that the Russian delegation would meet with the country's de facto leader, Ahmad al-Sharaa, and with its foreign minister.

Moscow's scorched-earth intervention in support of Assad once turned the tide of Syria's civil war. Syria's new authorities have not cut off relations with Moscow or forced a complete exit of Russian military forces from bases in Syria, but earlier this month, Al Watan reported that a contract with a Russian company to manage the port in Tartous had been cancelled. Following Assad's downfall, Russia relocated its troops and assets from all over Syria to its main hub at the Hmeimim air base near Latakia. There has been no indication that Moscow was preparing to evacuate the Hmeimim base or the naval facility in Tartous altogether. The termination of a contract for a Russian company to modernise the Tartous commercial port did not directly impact the Russian naval facility, which was leased under a separate deal.



A boy lights incense inside Dongyue Temple ahead of Lunar New Year in Beijing on Tuesday.

# Protesters attack embassies in Congo's capital

PTI ■ GOMA

Dozens of demonstrators attacked several foreign embassies, including those of Rwanda, France and Belgium, on Tuesday demanding that they oppose the advance of Rwanda-backed M23 rebels into a major city in the country's conflict-battered east. Police fired teargas at the protesters as they marched to the embassies in Kinshasa, looting and setting fires to parts of the buildings. The embassies of Kenya and Uganda were also attacked, according to Associated Press journalists at the scene. Congo's security forces were attempting to slow the rebels, who advanced into Goma, a key eastern city, in a major escalation of the decades-long conflict. The M23 rebels are one of about 100 armed groups vying for a foothold in the mineral-rich region in the conflict, one of Africa's

largest. The protesters demanded that the international community pressure Rwanda over the rebel advance. "We denounce the hypocrisy of the international community," said Timothée Tshishimbi, one of the protesters. "They must tell Rwanda to stop this adventure." Residents reported gunfire overnight in Goma, a city of 2 million people which the rebels claimed to have captured on Monday. Explosions and gunfire were heard near the now-shut Goma airport. Goma is a regional trade and humanitarian hub holding hundreds of thousands of the more than 6 million people displaced by eastern Congo's prolonged conflict over ethnic tensions that have resulted in one of the world's largest humanitarian crises. The M23 rebels temporarily took over Goma in 2012 before being forced to pull out under international pres-

sure, and resurfaced in late 2021 with increasing support from Rwanda, according to Congo's government and United Nations experts. Rwanda has denied such support. It was unclear how much of Goma is controlled by the rebels, who marched into the city early Monday to both fear and cheers among several residents. It was the culmination of weeks of fighting during which the rebels captured several towns in a shocking advance. "Since morning we have heard bomb explosions and crackling bullets," said Sam Luwawa, a resident of Goma. "So far we cannot say who really controls the city." Three South African peacekeepers were killed on Monday when the rebels launched a mortar bomb toward the Goma airport which landed on the nearby South African National Defence Force, while a fourth soldier succumbed to injuries

sustained in fighting days ago, the South African Department of Defence said Tuesday. That makes 17 peacekeepers and foreign soldiers who have been killed in the fighting, according to UN and army officials. The humanitarian situation in Goma "is extremely, extremely worrying, with a new threshold of violence and suffering reached today," Bruno Lemarquis, the United Nations humanitarian coordinator for Congo, told reporters in a video news conference on Monday. He said hundreds of thousands of people were attempting to flee the violence. There were active combat zones in all areas of the city, with civilians taking cover and heavy artillery fire directed at the city centre on Monday, Lemarquis said. He said several shells struck the Charité Maternelle Hospital in central Goma, "killing and injuring civilians, including newborns

and pregnant women." "What is unfolding in Goma is coming on top of what is already one of the most protracted, complex, serious humanitarian crises on Earth, with close to 6.5 million displaced people in the country, including close to 3 million displaced people in North Kivu," Lemarquis said. Aid groups are reporting they are unable to reach displaced people who rely on them for food and other necessities. "Key roads surrounding Goma are blocked, and the city's airport can no longer be used for evacuation and humanitarian efforts. Power and water have reportedly been cut to many areas of the city," said David Munkley, head of operations in eastern Congo for the Christian aid group World Vision. In addition to the UN, several countries including the United States, United Kingdom and France have condemned Rwanda for the rebel advance.

# 1975 was International Women's year; 50 years on, the fight continues

PTI ■ SYDNEY

In December 1972, the same month the Whitlam government was first elected, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed 1975 as International Women's Year (IWY). This set in train a series of world-changing events, in which Australia was to play a significant part. The aim of IWY was to end discrimination against women and enable them to participate fully in economic, social and political life. Fifty years later, such participation has become an indicator of development and good governance. But the full promise of International Women's year has yet to be fulfilled, hampered by pushback

and the scourge of gender-based violence. "The greatest consciousness-raising event in history" Dubbed "the greatest consciousness-raising event in history", the UN's first World Conference on Women took place in Mexico City in June 1975. Consciousness-raising had been part of the repertoire of women's liberation. Now it was taken up by government and intergovernmental bodies. The Mexico City conference was agenda-setting in many ways. The Australian government delegation, led by Elizabeth Reid, helped introduce the world of multilateral diplomacy to the language of the women's movement. As Reid said: "We argued that, whenever the words "racism",

"colonialism" and "neo-colonialism" occurred in documents of the conference, so too should "sexism", a term that had not to that date appeared in United Nations documents or debates." Reid held the position of women's adviser to the prime minister. In this pioneering role, she had been able to obtain government commitment and funding for Australia's own national consciousness-raising exercise during IWY. A wide range of small grants promoted attitudinal change — "the revolution in our heads" — whether in traditional women's organisations, churches and unions, or through providing help such as Gestetner machines to the new women's centres.

grants explicitly did not include the new women's services, including refuges, women's health centres and rape crisis centres. Their funding was now regarded as an ongoing responsibility for government, rather than suitable for one-off grants. IWY began in Australia with a televised conversation on New Year's Day between Reid and Governor-General John Kerr on hopes and aspirations for the year. On International Women's Day (March 8), Prime Minister Gough Whitlam's speech emphasised the need for attitudinal change: Both men and women must be made aware of our habitual patterns of prejudice which we often do not see as such but whose existence manifests itself

in our language and our behaviour. The Australian postal service celebrated the day by releasing a stamp featuring the IWY symbol, showing the spirit of women breaking free of their traditional bonds. At Reid's suggestion, IWY materials, including the symbol, were printed in the purple, green and white first adopted by Emmeline Pankhurst in 1908 and now known as the suffragette colours. Inside government, Reid had introduced the idea that all Cabinet submissions needed to be analysed for gender impact. After the Mexico City conference, this idea became part of new international norms of governance. Following the adoption at the

conference of the World Plan of Action, the idea that governments needed specialised policy machinery to promote gender equality was disseminated around the world. Given the amount of ground to be covered, IWY was expanded to a UN Decade for Women (1976–85). By the end of it, 127 countries had established some form of government machinery to advance the status of women. Each of the successive UN world conferences (Copenhagen 1980, Nairobi 1985, Beijing 1995) generated new plans of action and strengthened systems of reporting by governments. The Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing was a high point. Its "platform for action" provided further impe-

tus for what was now called "gender mainstreaming". By 2018, every country recognised by the UN except North Korea had established government machinery for this purpose. The global diffusion of this policy innovation was unprecedented in its rapidity. At the same time, Australia took the lead in another best-practice innovation. In 1984, the Commonwealth government pioneered what became known as "gender budgeting". This required departments to disaggregate the ways particular budgetary decisions affected men and women. As feminist economists pointed out, when the economic and social division of labour was taken into account, no bud-

getary decision could be assumed to be gender-neutral. Governments had emphasised special programs for women, a relatively small part of annual budgets, rather than the more substantial impact on women of macro-economic policy. Standard-setting bodies such as the OECD helped promote gender budgeting as the best way to ensure such decisions did not inadvertently increase rather than reduce gender gaps. By 2022, gender budgeting had been taken up around the world, including in 61 per cent of OECD countries. Now that it had become an international marker of good governance, Australian governments were also reintroducing it after a period of abeyance.





# Banking stocks rises after RBI's liquidity boost

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Banking stocks were in the limelight on Tuesday, with Axis Bank and HDFC Bank climbing three per cent after the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) announced measures to inject liquidity of ₹1.5 lakh crore into the banking system. According to market experts, these measures are anticipated to ease liquidity conditions and increase the likelihood of an interest rate cut at the upcoming RBI policy meeting in February, offering relief to the banking sector amid concerns over high liquidity deficits. The scrip of Axis Bank rose 3.20 per cent to trade at ₹978.20 apiece, HDFC Bank shares advanced 3.09 per cent to ₹1,680, ICICI Bank by 2.15 per cent to ₹1,254.40 and IndusInd Bank went up 1.98 per cent to ₹944.25 per piece on the BSE. Bank of Baroda stock went up by 0.64 per cent to ₹221 apiece, State Bank of India appreciated by 0.28 per cent to ₹751.30 and Kotak Mahindra Bank increased 0.13 per cent to ₹1,883.05 apiece on the bourse. However, Federal Bank scrip plunged 4.97 per cent to ₹181.70 per piece, Yes Bank fell 1.51 per cent to ₹118.22 and Canara Bank decreased



1.20 per cent to ₹90.75 per piece. Axis Bank, HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank and IndusInd Bank were among the top gainers in the 30-share Sensex pack. Led by the gains in these stocks, the BSE bankex index climbed 905.14 points or 1.65 per cent to 55,608.43. Meanwhile, the 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 595.57 points or 0.79 per cent to quote at 75,961.74 in the morning trade. On Monday, the Reserve Bank of India said it will purchase government securities worth ₹60,000 crore in three tranches and announced several other steps to inject liquidity into the banking system. As part of measures to manage liquidity

conditions, the central bank also announced a USD/INR Buy/Sell Swap auction of USD five billion for a tenor of six months to be held on January 31, 2025. To inject liquidity, RBI said open market operations (OMO) purchase auctions of Government of India securities for an aggregate amount of ₹60,000 crore in three tranches of ₹20,000 crore each will be held on January 30, February 13, and February 20. Besides, a 56-day Variable Rate Repo (VRR) auction for a notified amount of ₹50,000 crore will be held on February 7. "The Reserve Bank will continue to monitor evolving liquidity and market conditions and take measures as appropriate to ensure orderly liquidity conditions," the RBI said on Monday. According to Geojit Financial Services' Chief Investment Strategist V K Vijayakumar, the RBI's announcement of measures to boost the liquidity in the banking system by around ₹1.5 trillion is positive for the market. This raises the prospects of an interest rate cut by the RBI's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) in the February policy meeting, Vijayakumar said.

# Hyundai faces 19 per cent plunge in Q3 profits, amid geopolitical factors

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Hyundai Motor India on Tuesday said its consolidated profit after tax declined 19 per cent to ₹1,161 crore for the third quarter ended December 31, 2024, hit by subdued demand and geo-political factors. The auto major had reported a Profit After Tax (PAT) of ₹1,425 crore in the October-December period of last fiscal. Total revenue from operations declined to ₹16,648 crore in the third quarter as against ₹16,875 crore in the year-ago period. The decline in margins was mainly due to subdued demand and geo-political factors, the company said. "While the challenges persist in the overall market due to global factors, our business fundamentals remain strong, and we remain confident in our ability to leverage our strengths and actively explore potential opportunities to improve our volumes and profitability," Hyundai Motor India Managing Director Unsoo Kim said. The company said it sold a total of 1,86,408 units of passenger vehicles during the third quarter, a dip of two per cent as compared with



1,90,979 units in the same period of last fiscal. The sales in the third quarter of this fiscal include 1,46,022 units in the domestic market with a strong contribution from the SUV segment, it added. Hyundai said it has achieved its highest-ever CNG penetration during the quarter, reaching 15 per cent which was 12 per cent in the third quarter of the previous year. During the quarter, the automaker said it has demonstrated robust growth in rural penetration reaching 21.2 per cent compared to 19.7 per cent in the same

# SEBI cracks down on Front Running: Bans two from securities trading

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Markets regulator Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) on Tuesday restrained two persons from the securities market for six months and directed them to disgorge ₹34.26 lakh "wrongful gains" made by them through their involvement in front-running activities. Additionally, the regulator has imposed a penalty of Rs



five lakh each on the two persons - Mandar Uhas Bhatkar and Vikrant Bhimrao Kadam. Front-running refers to an illegal practice in the stock market where an entity trades based on advanced information from a broker or analyst before the information has been made available to its clients. The findings came after the SEBI conducted an investigation into the trading activities of Bhatkar and certain other entities related to him, during the period November 2020 to September 2021. The investigation was carried out in order to ascertain as to whether there was any possible violation of the provisions of the PFUTP (Prohibition of Fraudulent and Unfair Trade Practices) rules. In its investigation, SEBI found suspected front running of trades of SVI Consolidated Pvt Ltd (Big Client) in the cash market

# TVS Credit records 40 per cent rise in Q3 PAT

PTI ■ CHENNAI

TVS Credit Services Ltd, a leading non-banking financial company, has registered a 40 per cent growth in its profit after tax for the October-December 2024 period at ₹240 crore following healthy growth in consumer loans and vehicle financing segments, the company said on Tuesday. The company registered a profit after tax of ₹172 crore during the corresponding quarter of the last financial year. For the nine months ending December 31, 2024, the profit after tax grew by 28 per cent to ₹541 crore, from ₹424 crore registered in the same period, a year ago. "In Q3 FY25, credit demand increased, driven by festive fervour, increased consumption and attractive consumer offers. TVS Credit witnessed healthy growth during this period, particularly in consumer loans and vehicle finance with an improvement in market share," a company statement said here. The total income during the



quarter under review rose by 12 per cent to ₹1,710 crore, from ₹1,527 crore registered in the year-ago period. For the nine months ending December 31, 2024, the total income went up by 16 per cent to ₹4,956 crore when compared to ₹4,276 crore registered a year ago. "In Q3 FY25, TVS Credit witnessed its highest ever quarterly growth in customers, disbursing loan

# Bosch reports 12 per cent decline in Q3 net profit

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Auto components maker Bosch on Tuesday said its consolidated net profit declined by 12 per cent to ₹458 crore for the third quarter ended December 31, 2024. The company had reported a net profit of ₹518 crore in the October-December period of the last fiscal. Its revenue from operations rose to ₹4,466 crore for the third quarter compared to ₹4,205 crore in the year-ago period, Bosch said in a regulatory filing. "This quarter, Bosch generated growth through the development of advanced automotive components and customer-focused solutions. Increased service income from major OEMs testifies to their continued trust in us and our expertise," Bosch Ltd MD Guruprasad Mudlapur said. The performance further reinstates the company's strategic ability to stay cognizant of market needs and deliver successfully, he added. As part of the realignment of its Building Technologies division globally, the company said it will be carving out and transferring the Video, Access and Intrusion, and Communication systems business to Keenfinity India, a subsidiary of Bosch Security Systems BV Nederland. The company's board, based on the recommendations of the audit committee, have approved the transfer of the business at a value of not less than ₹595 crore, it added. Shares of Bosch on Tuesday ended 0.13 per cent up at ₹29,753 apiece on BSE.

# Stock markets snap two-day falling streak

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Snapping the two-day decline, benchmark stock indices and Nifty rebounded on Tuesday following intense buying in banking and rate-sensitive stocks as the RBI decided to inject liquidity into the financial system. The 30-share Sensex climbed 535.24 points or 0.71 per cent to settle at 75,901.41. During the day, the benchmark surged 1,146.79 points or 1.52 per cent to hit a high of 76,512.96. The broader 50-share NSE Nifty appreciated by 128.10 points or 0.56 per cent to close at 22,957.25. In the intraday session, the 50-share NSE Nifty climbed 308.8 points or 1.35 per cent to 23,137.95. "The national benchmark indices demonstrated optimism today, primarily driven by gains in the banking sector following the RBI's announcement of open market interventions to address liquidity concerns. "Large-cap stocks outperformed, as their valuations have now reached fair levels and are further supported by expectations that the market correction is nearing its bottom," Vinod Nair, head of research, Geojit Financial Services, said. Among the Sensex shares, Bajaj Finance, Axis Bank, Bajaj Finserv, HDFC Bank, Tata Motors, Tata Steel, ICICI Bank, Mahindra & Mahindra, Zomato, IndusInd Bank, Maruti Suzuki India and Bharti Airtel were the major gainers. Sun Pharmaceutical, Larsen & Toubro, ITC, HCL Technologies, NTPC, Power Grid, Nestle India, Tata Consultancy Services, and



Asian Paints were among the laggards. "Markets witnessed a relief rally after the recent weakness, but undertone remained bearish as most of the sectors ended in red which pulled down benchmark indices from the day's high levels," Prashanth Tapse, Senior VP (Research), Mehta Equities Ltd, said. Investors remain cautious due to growing global uncertainty and disappointing domestic economic indicators. However, optimism in banking, auto and realty aided sentiment even as worries over Trump's trade policies and fading chances of any rate cut in next month's credit policy weighed, Tapse added. Among the sectoral indices, Bankex climbed the most by 1.49 per cent, Financial Services by 1.45 per cent, Realty by 1.27 per cent, Auto by 1.16 per cent, and Consumer Discretionary rose by 0.23 per cent. Healthcare, Industrials, Utilities, Capital Goods, Power, Oil and Gas, Energy,

# Cipla Q3 net profit rises 49 per cent to ₹1,571 Crore

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Drug major Cipla on Tuesday said its consolidated net profit increased by 48.73 per cent to Rs 1,570.51 crore for the third quarter ended December 31, 2024, riding on the back of growth across markets. The company had reported a net profit of Rs 1,055.9 crore in the October-December period of last fiscal. Revenue from operations rose to Rs 7,072.97 crore as against Rs 6,603.81 crore in the year-ago period. "In Q3FY25, we delivered growth across all our various geographies, despite a supply challenge in the US," Cipla MD and Global CEO Umang Vohra said. The company recorded a revenue growth of 8 per cent



over last year with a highest-ever EBITDA margin of 28.1 per cent, driven by mix and other operational efficiencies, he added. "Our One-India business grew at a healthy 10 per cent year on year. Key therapies in

prescription business continued to outpace the market growth, trade generics business growth trajectory is back on track and anchor brands of consumer health business maintained leadership position," Vohra said. With positive traction in our differentiated assets, the US business posted a revenue of USD 226 million, he stated. In South Africa, the drug maker recorded a solid growth of 21 per cent year on year in local currency terms, Vohra said. Emerging markets and Europe delivered a substantial revenue growth of 20 per cent year on year on the back of deep market focus strategy, he added. "Going ahead, the focus will be on growing our key markets, further building our flagship brands, investing in future pipeline as well as focusing on resolutions on the regulatory front," Vohra said. Shares of the company closed 2.16 per cent higher at Rs 1,426.10 apiece on BSE.

# Rupee falls 25 paise to close at 86.56 against USD

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The rupee depreciated 25 paise to close at 86.56 (provisional) against the US dollar on Tuesday, as global risk sentiments were dampened amid tariff threats by the US President Donald Trump. Forex traders said the rupee continued to face pressure due to sustained foreign fund outflows and the strength of the American currency in the overseas market amid unabated dollar demand from oil importers and weak risk appetite. At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened on a weak note at 86.53, and during the day touched a high of 86.50 and a low of 86.57 against the American

currency. The local unit settled for the day at 86.56 (provisional), registering a fall of 25 paise over its previous close. On Monday, the rupee depreciated nine paise to close at 86.31 against the US dollar. "The Indian rupee declined as global risk sentiments were dampened amid tariff threats by the US President Donald Trump. This impacted the Chinese Yuan, which also led to strengthening of the US dollar," said Anuj Choudhary, Research Analyst at Mirae Asset Sharekhan. Choudhary further said a surge in US treasury yields and Foreign Institutional Investors (FII) outflows also

pressurised the rupee. However, a decline in crude oil prices cushioned the downside. "We expect the rupee to trade with negative bias on a strong US dollar and persistent foreign fund outflows. Importer demand for dollars and uncertainty over tariffs by the US administration may further weigh on the rupee," Choudhary said. The United States will impose tariffs on the countries that "harm" America, President Trump has said, as he named China, India and Brazil as high-tariff countries. "We're going to put tariffs on outside countries and outside people that really mean harm to us. Well, they mean us harm, but they basically want

to make their country good," Trump told House of Representatives at a Florida retreat on Monday, the first after he became the president for the second term last week. However, overall weakness in crude oil prices and central bank intervention may support the rupee. Investors may remain cautious ahead of the Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) meeting outcome this week. The Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) announcement of the Open Market Operations (OMO) may also support the rupee at lower levels. The RBI on Monday said it will purchase government securities worth ₹60,000 crore in three tranches and announced several other

steps to inject liquidity into the banking system. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 0.52 per cent higher at 107.89. Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, rose 0.52 per cent to USD 77.48 per barrel in futures trade. In the domestic equity market, the 30-share BSE Sensex settled 535.24 points, or 0.71 per cent, up at 75,901.41 points, while the Nifty rose 128.10 points, or 0.56 per cent, to close at 22,957.25 points. FII offloaded equities worth Rs 5,015.46 crore in the capital markets on a net basis on Monday, according to exchange data.

# Saudi Arabia club Al-Hilal terminates contract with Neymar

PTI ■ RIO DE JANEIRO

Saudi Arabia club Al-Hilal said it reached an agreement with striker Neymar to terminate his contract by mutual consent. Neither side confirmed details of the termination after the 32-year-old Brazilian, once hailed as one of the world's best players, played only seven matches for the club, with only one goal and two assists. Despite being sidelined since October 2023 due to an ACL injury, former Barcelona and Paris Saint-Germain star Neymar was part of the squad that won last season's Saudi league. Their deal was due to expire after Al-Hilal's participation in this year's FIFA Club World Cup, which will be played between June 15 and July 13 in the United States. The club said in a statement published on its social media channels on Monday that it "expresses its thanks and appreciation to Neymar for what he has provided throughout his career with Al-Hilal." The striker joined the Saudi club

from Paris Saint-Germain in August 2023 for 90 million euros (USD 94 million), in one of many transactions that placed the Arab country as one of the new big soccer markets in the world. But Neymar picked up his ACL injury, the most serious of his career, playing for Brazil only months after he joined Al-Hilal. Neymar returned in October and had his most recent appearance for the Saudi club in November. The Brazilian said in different interviews there were doubts on whether coach Jorge Jesus would count on him for the rest of the season. Day Crespo, a spokeswoman for Neymar in Brazil, told The Associated Press that the player will comment on his future at a later date. Local media reported that the footballer was still waiting for documents of the termination before he announces his departure. Brazilian media has also reported that Neymar and his father are interested in a six-month return to his boyhood club Santos, where he achieved national fame and his first caps for Brazil before he joined Barcelona in 2013.



Neymar's comeback is largely expected by Santos fans. Since last week, they featured a video of a man with the voice of legendary three-time World Cup winner Pelé, who died in 2022, asking Neymar to return and wear his historic No. 10 shirt. Neymar won six titles at Santos, including the Brazilian Cup in 2010 and the prestigious Copa Libertadores in 2011. In June, during a visit to one of his social projects in Brazil, the striker denied he was eyeing a return to the club. "No (chance to return to Santos). This is a total lie, there's no plans.

I have another year in my contract with Al-Hilal. I hope to play a great season there. I didn't play the last one. We need to live day to day, there's a long time ahead," Neymar told media then. "Obviously Santos is the club in my heart, one day I do want to come back. But there's no plan in my head." On January 17, Neymar said in a different interview he was once again considering playing in Brazil, as he denied he had any intention to play in the United States in the near future. Besides Santos, he also named Flamengo, the country's most popular club. "I always said I want to play for Flamengo because of everything that involves Flamengo. But Santos is my boyhood love, my home," he said. Santos executives have repeatedly said they would like Neymar to return, but denied media reports about he and his father allegedly trying to buy the club's soccer department, as is allowed in Brazilian law. Other big clubs of the South American nation, such as defending Copa Libertadores champion Botafogo, owned by American mogul John Textor,

have bid for titles after such a move. Brazil national team coach Dorival Júnior has said since the end of last year that Neymar is not fully recovered for international soccer either. In March, his team will play against Argentina in South American World Cup qualifying, and Neymar is once again unlikely to play. Earlier in January, Neymar made news for his comments about his former Paris Saint-Germain teammate Kylian Mbappé, now at Real Madrid. Speaking in a podcast hosted by World Cup winner Romário, Neymar said the Frenchman became "a little jealous" after superstar Lionel Messi joined the French club in August 2021 in a free transfer. He also added that big egos affected the performances of PSG in big matches. Neymar, Brazil's all-time top goal scorer with 79 goals in 125 matches, also said he is focused on getting more playing time so he can best prepare for the World Cup in North America next year, in what could be his last shot at winning the tournament.

# PM Modi in attendance as 38th National Games kick off

PTI ■ DEHRADUN

A modest but colourful opening ceremony showcasing Uttarakhand's religious heritage and biodiversity kicked off the 38th National Games here on Tuesday with guest of honour Prime Minister Narendra Modi reiterating his commitment to bring the 2036 Olympics to India during his address. Around 10,000 athletes are gearing up to compete for podium finishes across 32 disciplines in the Games that will run till February 14. Events will be held across seven cities of the hill state with Dehradun being the main venue. Around 450 gold medals, and a similar number of silver and bronze medals are at stake. Modi declared the Games open after the teams marched in and he was presented the flame at the ceremony. "It is our endeavour to enhance your capabilities and we are focused on supporting you. We consider sports an



essential aspect in development of country," Modi told the gathered athletes at the ceremony. "It is a beautiful portrait of 'Ek Bharat, Sreshth Bharat'," Modi said referring to the Games. The Prime Minister also used the opportunity to pass some health tips, urging youngsters to fight the growing menace of obesity by cutting down the oil in their food and adding more walks and exercise to their daily routines. The ceremony started with a performance of 'Tandav', a

memento containing replicas of Games mascot 'Mauli' and the medals. An estimated 25,000 spectators have packed the Rajiv Gandhi International Cricket Stadium despite the chilly weather to catch the ceremony live. The PM had also opened the last two editions of the Games in 2022 (Gujarat) and 2023 (Goa). Uttarakhand Governor Lieutenant General Gurmit Singh, Union Minister of State for Sports Raksha Khadse, and Uttarakhand Sports Minister Rekha Arya were the dignitaries present on the occasion. Indian Olympic Association President PT Usha and Commonwealth Games Federation chief Chris Jenkins were also in attendance at the ceremony. Uttarakhand's own Lakshya Sen, a world championships medal-winning shuttler, brought the Games torch and handed it over to Modi, who placed it in its designated place.

During the Athletes' Parade, Uttarakhand expectedly received the loudest cheer. Almora's Sen and distance runner Ankita Dhyani were Uttarakhand's flag-bearers in the parade. Sen later took oath on behalf of the participating athletes. Under IOA's objective of inclusivity, the National Games also following established norms of having a male and a female flag bearer leading each team. Hosting the National Game holds a special significance for Uttarakhand as the state is celebrating the 25th year of its creation. 'Mauli', inspired by Uttarakhand's state bird 'Monal', is the Games mascot, symbolising the region's unique natural beauty, diversity and cultural heritage. Most of the established sporting stars of the country such as javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra, shuttler PV Sindhu, shooter Manu Bhaker are giving it a miss, leaving the stage for other athletes to make a mark.

# Virat declines captaincy; BCCI set to live stream

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Just like Rishabh Pant did in the last game against Saurashtra, legendary Virat Kohli has politely declined to captain Delhi in their last Ranji Trophy home game against Railways as he wanted Ayush Badoni to continue leading the side. "Virat was asked if he would like to captain but he has also said that he would like Ayush to continue leading the side," a DCCA official told PTI on conditions of anonymity. Meanwhile, the BCCI and domestic broadcasters JioCinema have decided to live-stream the match, given the immense fan interest sparked by Kohli's presence. The general norm is BCCI has one premier match which is aired both on TV and streaming app and for this round it is Karnataka versus Haryana as the star attraction of that game is KL



Rahul. The other two games that were supposed to be only live streamed were Punjab vs Bengal at the Eden Gardens and Baroda vs Jammu and Kashmir in Baroda. The roster was decided well in advance and had this match not involved Kohli, there was no chance of any deviation from it.

# 15-year-old Kargil girl inspires women ice hockey players in Ladakh



PTI ■ KARGIL

A pair of skiing boots lying idle in her house turned into a catalyst for 15-year-old Kargil girl Samina Khatoon to become the first female from a non-descript village Trespone to pursue ice-hockey. Despite fierce opposition from her mother, Samina could not resist the temptation of putting on the pair, which was originally gifted by her uncle to her elder brother, who had no interest in skiing. The same pair proved to be her glide to glory. On Monday, the youngest player of Ladakh team, she scored in her team's 4-0 in her team's gold medal match against arch-rivals ITBP at the Khelo India Winter Games 2025, which concluded in Leh. Now her parents Mohammad Younus and Fatima Bano are proud of their little daughter's achievements. "I have a lot to learn and a long way to go," Khatoon said. The event is split into two phases -- one held in Ladakh from January 23 to 27, and the second in Gulmarg from February 22 to 25.

The ninth standard student at Mutahhary Public School, Baroo (Kargil), did not want to give up the opportunity and so juggled between school and practice, 2020 onwards, and won her parents' approval along the way. Her classmates envied her. However, they helped her catch up with missed class notes, lectures and assignments. Samina's toil paid off as she made it to Ladakh's women's ice-hockey team, making her the youngest player to participate in this year's edition of the games. Prior to this, she played for clubs from Kargil and went on to play in tournaments such as the LG Cup, CEC cup. In the CEC cup of 2024-25, she scored six goals while representing downhill Kargil adventure sports club and was declared the player of the series. In Kargil, communities have opened their doors to opportunities for the new generation sans any gender bias. Women are now being supported and encouraged by

their families and society at large to pursue professions of their choice. District Youth Services and Sports Officer, Kargil Abid Ali said he has witnessed this positive change take over in the recent years, highlighting that this progress is a part of an ongoing initiative to ensure that more girls take up sports, especially male-dominated ones such as ice hockey, which is considered to be physically taxing. There are six women's ice hockey clubs in Kargil district aloe -- from Kukshow, Chiktan, Bodkharbu, Mulbek, Drass and Kargil. To promote participation, Ali said players are being provided with gears and equipment at subsidized rates. Moreover, the clubs were last year provided with equipment free of cost under the UT administration's special development package, he said. He added that under a similar package, ice-skating rinks are also being developed across Kargil. Ladakh Women's Ice Hockey Foundation, founded in 2016 has been travelling to rural

regions of Ladakh and providing coaching to young children. During the visits the foundation realised the willingness and eagerness amongst the girls to play ice hockey and have, therefore, continued with their endeavour. "We have come a long way in

making a mark and we take it upon ourselves to ensure that fresh and competent players are identified for the team," Noor Jahan, goalkeeper of the Ladakh's women team, said. Taking note of the success of such endeavours, a similar coaching programme has also been initiated by the Youth

Services and Sports department in Kargil which provides basic ice hockey coaching for children under 14 years in different zones across Kargil. Ali states that out of a registration of approximately 200 children, almost 40 per cent are girls.

**कार्यालय नगर परिषद लिधौराखास जिला-टीकमगढ़ ( म.प्र. )**

क्रमांक./92/न.परि./निविदा/2025 लिधौराखास, दिनांक 24.01.2025

**ऑनलाइन निविदा आमंत्रण सूचना**

निम्नलिखित कार्य हेतु केन्द्रीयकृत प्रणाली में पंजीकृत टेक्रेटारों से ऑनलाइन निविदायें आमंत्रित की जाती है। निविदा का विस्तृत विवरण <http://mptenders.gov.in> पर देखा जा सकता है।

क्र.	टेंडर आई. डी.	कार्य का नाम	कार्य की समाप्ति एवं लागत	निविदा प्रपत्र का मूल्य एवं (EMD)	निविदा की अंतिम तिथि
1	2025_UAD_398574_1	मुख्यमंत्री अघोसंरचना (शहरी) चतुर्थ चरण	180 दिवस	12500	03.03.2025
	28.01.2025	योजनागत वाई क्रमांक 09 में वाईपास रोड से नैयुवा मंदिर की रास्ता में सी.सी. रोड निर्माण कार्य।	13133518	65700	सायं 05:30 बजे तक
2		मध्यप्रदेश शासन नगरीय विकास एवं आवास विभाग मंत्रालय का पत्र क्र.एफ.237/2024/18-2 भोपाल दिनांक 09.09.2024 प्रभावशाली रहेगा जो कि निविदा एवं अनुबंध का भाग है।			

नोट :- निविदा से संबंधित किसी भी प्रकार के संशोधन का प्रकाशन ऑनलाइन की वेबसाइट पर ही किया जावेगा पृथक से समाचार पत्र में प्रकाशन नहीं किया जावेगा।

मुख्य नगर पालिका अधिकारी  
नगर परिषद लिधौराखास  
जिला-टीकमगढ़ ( म.प्र. )

**WEST CENTRAL RAILWAY**

DRM's OFFICE, TRD BRANCH, BHOPAL-24.  
No. BPL/TRD/DRG/WC/440, 428RT4 A & B, Date 27.01.2025  
Open E-Tender Notice

Senior Divisional Electrical Engineer/Traction Rolling Department/West Central Railway, Bhopal, acting for and on behalf of the President of India, invites E-Tenders against following works, upto on the dates & time, mentioned against each tender. The complete tender documents and detailed information regarding tender is available on the website <http://www.treps.gov.in>. Manual offers are not allowed against these tenders. For any correction in this tender, if necessary, corrigendum will be uploaded on website prior to tender opening date which may be seen upto the date of tender opening. **Tender No.:** BPL/TRD/DRG/WC/440. **Description of work:** Bhopal Division: OHE alteration work due to construction of ROB in lieu of LC No. 199 at KM 650/16-20 between Khirkia - Bhingri station of Itarsi - Khandava section (Electrical TRD work). **Completion Period:** 04 Months. **Estimated Cost:** ₹ 8,53,039.26. **EMD:** ₹ 17,100/-. **Closing Date and Time for Submission of Tender:** 13.02.2025 at 11.00 Hrs. **Tender No.:** BPL-TRD-DRG-WC-428RT4A. **Description of work:** OHE alteration work due to provision of ROB in lieu of LC No. 208, 195, 246 and 241 of Bhopal Division (Electrical TRD work). **Completion Period:** 12 Months. **Estimated Cost:** ₹ 39,40,149.05. **EMD:** ₹ 78,800/-. **Closing Date and Time for Submission of Tender:** 18.02.2025 at 11.00 Hrs. **Tender No.:** BPL-TRD-DRG-WC-428RT4B. **Description of work:** OHE alteration work due to provision of ROB in lieu of LC No. 47, 17, 255 and 003 of Bhopal Division (Electrical TRD work). **Completion Period:** 12 Months. **Estimated Cost:** ₹ 37,34,943.30. **EMD:** ₹ 74,700/-. **Closing Date and Time for Submission of Tender:** 18.02.2025 at 11.00 Hrs.

स्वच्छ भारत अभियान - एक कदम स्वच्छता की ओर

**यूनियन बैंक Union Bank of India**

Regional Office, Russell Chowk, Nagpur Town, Jabalpur - 482001  
Mob: 9326079130 | E-mail: [crld.jabalpur@unionbankofindia.bank](mailto:crld.jabalpur@unionbankofindia.bank)

**SALE NOTICE FOR SALE OF IMMOVABLE PROPERTIES**

E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 8 (6) 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 property mortgage/charged to the Secured Creditor, the possession of which has been taken by the Authorised Officer of Union Bank of India Secured Creditor, will be sold on "As is where is", "As is what is", and "Whatever there is" on 14.02.2025 between 12:00 pm to 5:00 pm for recovery of below mentioned amount plus interest till the date of realization and costs, charges and expenses due to the Union Bank of India Secured Creditor from below mentioned borrowers & Guarantor details are here under:

No.	Name of the Borrower/Guarantor	Description of the properties	Total dues (in Rs.)	Reserve Price		Contact Person / Contact No.
				EMD	Bid increase Amt. (In Rs.)	
1.	<b>Borrower : M/S Amit Enterprises</b> <b>Proprietor - Mukesh Kumar Jain S/O Phool Chand Jain</b> Address - Ward No-2 Block Number -22 Garha Colony, Guna, M.P., Pin-473001 <b>Guarantor : Kamli Jain W/O Kamalash Jain</b> Address - Old ward no - 2MM No-1072, Annapurma Colony, Guna, M.P., Pin-473001	All the piece and parcel of Three story residential house including land plot no 25 area 50 X 30 = 1500 sq ft Survey No 11 PH NO 76 Block NO 25 Annapurma colony near Dalvi colony, Guna(M.P)	Rs. 1,16,16,977.89/- with further Interest, cost & expenses	Rs 85,00,000/-	Rs 50,000/-	
2.	<b>Borrower : M/S Rishi Enterprises</b> <b>Proprietor-Anita Jain W/O Mukesh Kumar Jain</b> Address - Ward No - 2 Block Number -22 Garha Colony, Guna, M.P., Pin - 473001 <b>Guarantor : Mukesh Kumar Jain S/O Phool Chand Jain</b> Address - Ward No-2 Block Number -22 Garha Colony, Guna, M.P., Pin-473001	All the piece and parcel of Three story residential house including land plot no 22 area 50 X 30 = 1500 sq ft Survey No 99 min, PH NO 76 new 65 Ward no 2 situated at Garaha Colony, Guna (M.P)	Rs. 65,87,276.20/- with further Interest, cost & expenses	Rs 1,09,00,000/-	Rs 10,90,000/-	<b>SANTOSH KUMAR AGRAWAL</b> 982895959

For Registration and Login and Bidding Rules <https://baanknet.com> and <https://www.unionbankofindia.co.in/auction-property/view-auction-property.aspx>

Place: Guna Date: 29.01.2025 For More information Contact: Mr. Mohan Kumar - 9326079130

Authorised Officer : Union Bank of India

# Bumrah named ICC men's Cricketer of the Year

PTI ■ DUBAI

India pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah on Tuesday won the prestigious Sir Garfield Sobers Award for ICC men's Cricketer of the Year after delivering "a master-class in skill, precision, and relentless consistency" across formats in a record-shattering 2024. The 31-year-old was adjudged the ICC's Test Cricketer of the Year on Monday and was also named in the Test Team of the Year last week. "Jasprit Bumrah has been honoured with the prestigious Sir Garfield Sobers Award for ICC Men's Cricketer of the Year at the ICC Awards, recognising his extraordinary 2024, in which he dominated opponents in the longest as well as the shortest format of the game," the ICC said. Bumrah played a key role across formats for India as he became the fifth winner of the award from the country after Rahul Dravid (2004), Sachin Tendulkar (2010), Ravichandran Ashwin (2016) and Virat Kohli (2017, 2018). "The pacer's brilliance was reflected in his ICC Test Bowling Rankings, where he crossed the elusive 900-point mark, ending the year with a record-breaking 907 points — the highest for



any Indian bowler in history," the governing body stated in its tribute. "Across formats, Bumrah's 2024 exploits were a masterclass in skill, precision, and relentless consistency, as he shattered record after record and cemented his place as the world's premier fast bowler," it added. Bumrah had a stellar year 2024 in which he played a decisive role for India with 15 wickets in their title-winning campaign in the T20 World Cup in the Americas and also became the fastest Indian pacer to reach 200 Test wickets with a bowling average of

sub-20, which is also the best in history. "I'm very happy with the honour, but I don't let myself get too high. My feet are on the ground and I'm really happy with the accolades that I get," the amiable bowler from Gujarat said in a video statement. At the T20 World Cup, his 15 wickets came at an astonishing average of 8.26 and an economy of just 4.17, making him the Player of the Tournament. He also garnered 900 points in ICC Test bowling rankings and ended the year with 907 points, which is the highest for any Indian bowler in history. In Tests, Bumrah finished the year with 71 wickets in only 13 matches at an average of 14.92, which was also the second best among fast bowlers to former India captain Kapil Dev's 100 wickets in 1983. The right-arm pacer was at the peak of his performance in the Border-Gavaskar Trophy Down Under towards the end of 2024, snaffling 32 wickets in five Tests. Overall, Bumrah claimed 77 wickets in the World Test Championship points table for India but the two-time finalists failed to make a third appearance in the summit clash for the 2023-25 cycle.



## Paarl Royals defeats Durban's Super Giants

PTI ■ PAARL

Paarl Royals registered a thrilling six-wicket victory over Durban's Super Giants to complete a historic five-game 100 per cent home record at Boland Park in the SA20 here. It is the first time any team has gone unbeaten at home throughout the league phase of the competition with the previous best being Joburg Super Kings' four victories and one washout at the Wanderers in the maiden season. Durban's Super Giants have now been eliminated as last season's runners-up can now no longer qualify for the playoffs. The cream of South Africa's young talent Luhan-dre Pretorius and Kwen Maphaka played a major role in the Royals maintaining their stranglehold on top of the Betway SA20 table. The Royals moved to 28 points. The teenage duo did the double act with Maphaka delivering his best performance of the competition thus far with fine figures of 2/22 to restrict DSG to 143/7 before Pretorius clubbed 43 off 29 balls (5x4s, 1x6) in the successful run-chase. Pretorius reclaimed the top run-scorer position from his opening partner Joe Root, who was trapped LBW off the first ball of the innings on Monday evening, by becoming the first batter to pass the 300-run mark in the ongoing season. Royals have certainly unearthed new young batters this season and Rubin Hermann also continued his dream debut SA20 season with a superb 59 off 51 balls (4x4s, 2x6s) to set up the chase. Hermann showed great innovation, particularly against the spinners as he swept and reverse-swept with confidence. But it was left to all-rounder Dayyaan Galiem to smash the winning six with just two balls remaining to take the Royals over the line. Maphaka delivered his best performance of the competition thus far with the teenager striking upfront and at the death. He sent down a peach that burst through Brandon King's defence upfront before flummoxing Heinrich Klaasen with a slower ball. Super Giants will be ruing a season where luck has deserted them with Keshav Maharaj's team not finding form when they needed it most. Australian T20 World Cup winner Marcus Stoinis tried his best to make an impact with his maiden SA20 half-century off just 35 balls (4x4s, 2x6s). He finished unbeaten on 55 and partnered with Kane Williamson (45 off 36 balls) in a 53-run partnership to lift DSG to 143/7. Stoinis was particularly severe on Root taking 24 runs off 11 deliveries sent down by the off spinner, including two maximums in the 18th over. Royals' only concern will be the fitness of captain David Miller, who left the field during DSG's innings and did not come out to bat in the run chase.



## Trisha scores first ever century in women's U19 T20 World Cup

PTI ■ KUALA LUMPUR

Opener Trisha Gongadi etched her name in the record books by scoring the first ever century in women's U-19 T20 World Cup that powered India into the semifinals with a 150-run victory over Scotland here on Tuesday. Trisha, who was deservedly adjudged player of the match, slammed 110 not out off just 59 balls with the help of 13 boundaries and four maximums after India were sent in to bat by Scotland at toss. The Indians will next face England in the first semifinal on January 31. She was ably supported by fellow opener and wicketkeeper Kamalini G (51 off 42 balls) and Sanika Chalke, who remained unbeaten on 29 off 20 balls as India scored 208 for 1 in 20 overs. In reply, Scotland cut a sorry figure as they were bowled out for 58 in 14 overs. For Scotland, openers Pippa Kelly (12) and Emma Walsingham (12) were joint top-scorers. Left-arm orthodox spinner Ayushi Shukla was the star for India with the ball returning with figures of 4 for 8, while left-arm Vaisnavi Sharma (3/5) and Trisha (3/6), after her exploits with the bat, also performed with the ball in hand. The 19-year-old Trisha, who hails from Telangana, has been in tremendous form in the tournament and notched up two 40-plus scores before the big knock on Tuesday. Meanwhile in other matches of the day, Bangladesh finished their campaign in style with an easy 10-wicket victory over the West Indies. The Asian side performed well with the ball to restrict the West Indies to just 54 for 6 from their 13 overs and cruised past the victory target inside nine overs on the back of an unbeaten 25 not out from opener Juairiya Ferdous. Bangladesh won the toss and elected to bowl at Bayemas Oval after tireless effort from ground staff in the nation's capital, with spinner Nishita Akter Nishi collecting three wickets. Anisa Akter Soba claimed a pair of wickets as the West Indies struggled in the conditions and Bangladesh eased home to move up to third place on the Group 1 standings. In another Group 2 match, no play was possible in Sarawak, with heavy rain leaving the Super Six contest between South Africa and the USA abandoned without a ball being bowled. South Africa had already qualified for the semi-finals of the event, while USA picked up a point to move to third in Group 2.

## Hobart Hurricanes wins Big Bash

PTI ■ HOBART

Mitchell Owen hit the fastest century in Big Bash League history as he rushed the Hobart Hurricanes to their first Australian Twenty20 domestic title. Owen's 39-ball ton on Monday tied Craig Simmons' century on balls from 2014. He had a chance to break it but a boundary fell just short of the rope. After a shift up the order to opener, the 23-year-old Owen has become one of the brightest Australian prospects in short-form cricket. He raised his bat for a half-century in just the fourth over, powering on with 11 sixes — a BBL final record — and six fours. "That was next-level hitting that made it pretty easy for us at the end," teammate Matthew Wade said. The sellout crowd of 15,706 at Bellerive Oval chanted Owen's name as the run-rate required ticked down. "That was super special," Owen said. "The most special thing is hearing everyone in the crowd enjoying it. And I'm so grateful, I'm so proud that we could bring this trophy to Tassie (Tasmania)." Midway through his innings, Owen became the BBL's leading run-scorer for the season, overtaking David Warner. Owen was out for 108 off 44 balls in the 11th over at 139-3. Chasing 183 to win against



the Sydney Thunder, Hobart reached 185-3 with 35 balls to spare and won by seven wickets. Hobart's success in the 14th BBL left the Melbourne Stars as the only side yet to win the title.

## French club Lyon to hire Paulo Fonseca as its new coach

PTI ■ LYON (FRANCE)

Lyon will hire Paulo Fonseca as its new coach, a person with direct knowledge of the deal has told The Associated Press. The person requested anonymity because the deal has yet to be announced officially. Fonseca will replace Pierre Sage, who was fired despite leading the French league club out of a crisis last season and having the team within reach of a Champions League place in this campaign. Sage's dismissal on Tuesday followed a 1-1 draw with Nantes in Ligue 1 over the weekend and left many observers baffled. Sage had rapidly become a fans' favorite after guiding Lyon from the bottom of the standings to a sixth-place finish last season. And after 19 matches this season, Lyon is sixth in the



league — just four points off a Champions League spot — and in a good position to qualify for the knockout stage of the Europa League. Lyon, however, said the decision to part ways with Sage was a "sporting choice." Lyon is owned by American businessman John Textor, who visited the club in person this week. Textor, a 59-year-old digital media and entertainment

## Mumbai announce 16-member squad for clash against Meghalaya

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Defending champions Mumbai announced their 16-member squad sans India stars Rohit Sharma, Yashasvi Jaiswal and Shreyas Iyer to take on Meghalaya in their must-win Ranji Trophy Elite Group A clash starting here on Thursday. Angkrish Raghuvanshi, Suryansh Shedge and Atharva Ankolekar have been called back. Mumbai, who are coming off a five-wicket defeat against Jammu and Kashmir last week, will be without the India stars Jaiswal, Iyer and Rohit, who all have joined the Indian team for the upcoming ODI series against England starting on February 6. These three players had featured in the sixth round game here at the BKC Ground, with Rohit and Jaiswal following the BCCI diktat to play domestic cricket regularly.



Iyer, on the other hand, has been a vital cog in Mumbai side for domestic competitions across formats this year. The trio is also a part of the Indian squad for the Champions Trophy next month. Karsh Kothari, who also featured in Mumbai's playing XI against Jammu and Kashmir, was not picked. The defeat against Jammu and Kashmir has dented Mumbai's title defence as the Ajinkya Rahane-led side will now be required to record a big victory — with a bonus point — against Meghalaya and hope that Baroda beat the table-toppers Jammu and Kashmir in their backyard. Mumbai squad: Ajinkya Rahane (c), Ayush Mhatre, Angkrish Raghuvanshi, Amogh Bhatkal, Siddhesh Lad, Akash Anand (wk), Hardik Tamore (wk), Suryansh Shedge, Shardul Thakur, Shams Mulani, Tanush Kotian, Mohit Avasthi, Sylvester D'Souza, Royston Dias, Shreyas Gurav, Atharva Ankolekar.

# Virat Kohli checks in at Kotla for training with Delhi team

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

At exactly 9am when his jet black Porsche zoomed in through the Feroz Shah Kotla ground's 'Virender Sehwaig Gate', it was homecoming for Delhi's very own Virat Kohli, who checked in for a training stint with his first-class team after more than 12 years. Save for pacer Navdeep Saini, all other 18 members of Delhi's squad had only seen him on TV and grown up listening to the tales of how 'Cheeku', the cherubic talent, became the 'King' of Indian cricket. In the last 15 years, Delhi's 'Cheeku' became a hazy memory as he turned into the most commercially viable brand in global cricket, the face that ICC sold in its Olympic bid presentation. On Monday, he was at his home ground for around three hours and had everyone in his vicinity hypnotised. Whether the young impressionable players, or seasoned head coach Sarandeep Singh or batting coach Bantu Singh — all of them evidently wanted to be close to him. Though courteous with all, the former India skipper seemed more comfortable with his former U-19 coach Mahesh Bhati, who is also the administrative manager of this team. "Woh badlaa nahi hain. Usko chhole-poori pasand hai aur humne mangaake rakha tha. Usne bola chole puri nahi khawoonga (He loves chhole poori, we made arrangements for him but he said he didn't want it)," a senior DDCA (Delhi and Districts Cricket Association) official told PTI. What he did seek out after practice ahead of his first Ranji appearance in 12 years from January 30 was also an old favourite. "Practice ke baad purane time ki tarah kadhi chawal khaya sabke saath (He had kadhi chawal with everyone)," revealed the official. Everyone shadowed the icon like it was an event. Ranji Trophy matches are covered by a select bunch of domestic cricket faithfuls but on Monday, the numbers



trebled. Every move by the 'King' was followed. The two coaches -- Sarandeep and Bantu -- were by his side throughout and it would be difficult for photographers or videographers to edit them from the frame. "I remember it was Ajit Chaudhary, the erstwhile manager of the Delhi Ranji team, who nicknamed him 'Cheeku' back in 2006-07," DDCA secretary Ashok Sharma, fondly called 'Mama', recollected as if it was yesterday. He has seen Kohli since he first came here for U-15 trials. **The Training**

It was an occasion to remember for the Sanat Sangwans, Arpit Ranas and Siddhant Sharmas but for Kohli it was business as usual. It seemed he had left the star outside the ground and had turned up as their very own 'Virat Bhaiya'. The 35 minute warm-up before an inconsequential final game against the Railways was the longest that the senior team has spent to loosen up prior to net session. There was a 15-minute game of football and he had some sprints down the wide right, also enjoying a laugh or two. But once the net session started, the game face was on. He quietly walked to the nets where skipper Ayush Badoni was batting. Seeing Kohli walk towards the nets, Badoni was visibly conscious before Kohli told him: 'Ayush tu batting karle, phir dono switch karke karenge (Ayush you keep batting. After sometime, we will take turns to bat.)' He spent close to an hour at the nets. At first, he took throw-downs where he kept playing the pull shot.

Once he had done enough knocking, Kohli entered the spinners' nets where he faced left-arm spinners Harsh Tyagi and Sumit Mathur. A few balls did grip and stop but there wasn't much bite in their bowling. Ditto for pacers Navdeep Saini, Money Grewal, Rahul Gehlot and Siddhant Sharma. Unlike India nets, Kohli hardly looked troubled although he did practice leaving a lot of deliveries. With the Champions Trophy round the corner, Kohli was seen trying to play a lot beside the line of deliveries. Of late, he is concentrating on back-foot play and trying to increase his range of shots square of wicket. Obviously, before trying out in Champions Trophy, domestic cricket is good ground for a 'Pilot Episode'. "He was very happy with the surfaces. He said, practice wicket, centre strip everything is of top quality. I told him credit to our young curator Ankit Datta. He said, 'Bhaiyya mazaa aa gaya batting karke. Kal phir aaonga

batting karne,' Bhati said. Advice for little Kabir and his teammates A chubby fourth standard student Kabir had come with a sketch of 'Uncle Virat', who once played Delhi U-17 and U-19 cricket with his father Shavez back in the day. "We had a bat contract with BDM and would go together to pick bats. We have been friends for long," Shavez said. When Kabir was asked about his conversation with Kohli, he said: "I asked him how can I play for India? He said, 'You have to practice hard. And it shouldn't be your Papa telling you to go to practice. You should tell Papa, I have to go to practice.'" And for his young Delhi colleagues, the advice was vintage Kohli. "Delhiwaale ho, dum dikhaao. Shuruat accha kiya phir thande padh gaye. Positive khelo jaise Delhiwaale khelte hain," he said referring to Delhi's inconsistent season. In Form or out-of-form, 'King' will remain a 'King'.