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DEHRADUN, SATURDAY JANUARY 18, 2025; PAGES 12 ₹3

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

FREEFALL OF FREEBIES

SAUMYA SHUKLA ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP on Friday launched the first part of its 'Sankalp Patra' for the upcoming Delhi assembly elections, surpassing all 'freebies' expectations with the announcement of six poll promises, including Rs 21,000 for pregnant women, Rs 2,500 under the 'Mahila Samridhi Yojana', LPG cylinders at Rs 500, and Rs 3,000 pension for senior citizens aged over 70 years. However, shortly after the announcement, AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal sharply reacted to the BJP's manifesto, calling it a 'Kejriwal Patra' instead of 'Sankalp Patra'. He accused the BJP of 'copying' his party for announcing several 'revis' (freebies) in its 'Sankalp Patra', stating that Prime Minister Narendra Modi won't approve of the 'freebies' promised by the BJP. "The BJP has repeatedly said that Kejriwal gives away free handouts, but today the BJP's national president announced that they too will provide free handouts to the people of Delhi," Kejriwal said. "I want to tell them that they should acknowledge that Prime Minister Modi was wrong when he said the things he did about us. They should also accept that free handouts are not wrong—they are a gift from God and good for the country. He should come forward and assure that he consents to these (BJP) promises. He should tell us that I was right in providing free handouts," Kejriwal added. Releasing the first part of the manifesto, BJP President Nadda said that women's empowerment has been a priority area for Prime Minister Narendra Modi. He added that BJP-ruled states, including Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, and Haryana, are already providing financial aid to women. The second promise of the BJP is to provide LPG cylinders for Rs 500 to women from poor families and one free cylinder each on the occasions of



BJP National President JP Nadda along with Delhi BJP President Virendra Sachdeva and others leaders during addresses the media during the launch of 'BJP Sankalp Patra Part-I' for Delhi Assembly elections, in New Delhi

AAP promises, BJP dismisses

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

In another move to target youth voters, former Chief Minister and AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal, seeking re-election in the assembly polls, announced a major guarantee providing free bus travel to all school and college students in Delhi. Additionally, Kejriwal proposed a 50 percent concession on metro fares for students, urging the Central government to collaborate with the Delhi government in sharing the cost of this initiative. Terming it an irresponsible move, Congress leader Sandeep Dikshit slammed Kejriwal's proposal, saying that the AAP promises what it cannot deliver financially and would eventually accuse the national authorities of obstruction. In his letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the AAP convenor



said, "Delhi's students rely on the Delhi Metro for commuting to schools and colleges to a large extent. To reduce the financial burden on them, I propose a 50 percent concession to students in Delhi Metro. Delhi Metro is a joint venture between the Central and Delhi governments. The expenditure on this scheme will have to be borne by both." Kejriwal's request to Prime Minister Modi came on the day

ahead of the release of the BJP's 'Sankalp Patra' manifesto for the Delhi elections 2025. Notably, Delhi Metro is operated in collaboration between the Delhi and Central governments. The announcement, however, cannot be implemented immediately due to the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) currently in place in Delhi. Kejriwal assured that the scheme would be a priority for his government if re-elected. "The metro fares are expensive for students. I have requested PM Modi to introduce this scheme, and we are ready to bear half the cost," Kejriwal said at the press conference, adding that the initiative could be rolled out after the elections.



Mystery deepens in Saif Ali assault

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

More than 40 hours after a gruesome attack on Bollywood actor Saif Ali Khan, the Mumbai police had not achieved any breakthrough in the sensational case as of late Friday evening. Meanwhile, the actor was making a rapid recovery from the grievous wounds he sustained in the knife attack by an intruder early Thursday. On Friday, Saif, 54, was moved from the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) to a special room at Lilavati Hospital. The police detained one suspect in connection with the attack, but released him after questioning, finding that he had no connection to the case. "The person who was brought to the Bandra police station is not related to the Saif Ali Khan case. We released him after questioning. No one has yet been arrested in connection with yesterday's incident," a senior police officer said. Meanwhile, doctors attending to Saif at Lilavati Hospital expressed satisfaction with his

progress. "Saif Ali Khan is doing excellently. We made him walk, and he can walk well. There is no problem and not much pain," said Dr. Nitin Dange of Lilavati Hospital. The actor had sustained six stab wounds, including one to his spine, while grappling with an intruder who had broken into his 12th-floor apartment in the posh "Satguru Sharan" building located at the junction of 29th and 24th Roads in Bandra (W), northwest Mumbai. The knife attack occurred between 2 a.m. and 2:30 a.m. Thursday, following a failed burglary attempt by the yet-to-be-identified intruder. After his admission to Lilavati Hospital, Saif underwent surgery to remove a knife lodged in his spine and to seal a spinal fluid leakage. "The actor was brought to our hospital with six injuries, two of which were deep. We carried out a surgery near his spine and removed a 2.5-inch piece of knife from the spine," said Dr. Niraj Uttamani, Chief Operating Officer of Lilavati Hospital, on Thursday.

Imran Khan convicted



PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

A Pakistani court on Friday sentenced jailed former prime minister Imran Khan and his wife Bushra Bibi to 14 and seven years in prison respectively after finding them guilty of corruption in the 190 million pounds al-Qadir Trust case. Judge Nasir Javed Rana of the anti-corruption court announced the verdict in a makeshift court set up in Adila jail where Khan is currently lodged. Khan is facing dozens of cases after he lost a trust vote in Parliament in 2022. Khan has been convicted for "corrupt practices" and "misuse of authority", while his wife has been convicted for "involvement in illegal activities". Khan, who has been jailed since August 2023, was also fined Rs 1 million and Bibi half a million rupees. Failure to pay the fine will entail an additional six months of

imprisonment for Khan and three months for Bibi. The court also ordered the confiscation of the land of Al-Qadir University set up by them. Bibi was arrested from the court after the sentencing. Supporters and leaders of Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party staged a protest outside Parliament House, held placards, and chanted slogans, demanding his release. "Today's verdict has tarnished the reputation of the judiciary. In this case, neither I benefited nor the government lost. I don't want any relief and will face all cases," Khan was quoted as saying by his party. "A dictator is doing all this," he said. PTI leaders strongly denounced the verdict, terming it "unjust", "shameful", and a case of "political victimisation". PTI chairman Gohar Khan said, "The behaviour of the court has been unjust. Khan sahib has not benefitted from a single rupee from this matter." PTI lawyer Faisal Chaudhry termed the decision "political use of the National Accountability Bureau". Another party leader, Shibli Faraz, argued that Khan and Bibi were not beneficiaries of the alleged transactions. He contended that they were being punished for founding the Al-Qadir University, which aimed to promote the teachings of the Prophet. "Those who looted the country walk free, while sincere leaders face jail," said Faraz, while reaffirming to challenge the verdict. Khan can appeal against the judgment in the High Court and if needed in the Supreme Court.



Israel-Hamas limp towards normalcy

PTI ■ JERUSALEM

Israel's security Cabinet on Friday recommended approval of a ceasefire deal after Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu confirmed an agreement had been reached that would pause the 15-month war with Hamas in Gaza and release dozens of hostages held by militants there. Mediators Qatar and the US announced the ceasefire on Wednesday, but the deal hung in limbo for more than a day as Netanyahu insisted there were last-minute snags he blamed on Hamas. The militants maintained they were "committed" to the deal, while residents of Gaza and families of the hostages anxiously waited to see if it would materialise. The deal now goes to the full Cabinet of ministers for final sign-off. It is expected to 'OK' the ceasefire, which could start as soon as Sunday, even though it has drawn fierce resistance from Netanyahu's far-right coalition partners. Their objections could destabilise his government, however. Hamas triggered the war with its October 7, 2023, cross-border attack into Israel that killed some 1,200 people and left some 250 others captive.

Bharat on Auto Mobility

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

India has emerged as a major automobile hub in the world and number of cars sold in the country annually surpasses the population of many countries, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said here on Friday. Underlining this, he also said future of mobility belongs to India that saw an unprecedented sale of 2.5 crore vehicles a year, and attracted USD 36 billion foreign direct investment in just four years. Addressing a gathering after inaugurating the Bharat Mobility Global Expo 2025 at Bharat Mandapam, the prime minister also emphasised that India stands as an outstanding destination for every investor looking to shape one's future in



Prime Minister Narendra Modi during the Bharat Mobility Global Expo 2025 at Bharat Mandapam, in New Delhi

chain of the mobility ecosystem — from automobile manufacturers to components, electronics parts, tyre and energy storage makers, and automotive software firms and material recyclers — under a single umbrella. Modi said the automotive industry was driven by innovation and technology and stressed that the future belongs to the East, Asia, and India. "India is an excellent destination for every investor looking to see their future in mobility," he said while reassuring everyone that the government is fully supportive and encouraged everyone to continue advancing with the mantra of 'Make in India, Make for the World'.

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CM Dhama undertakes intensive campaign for ULB polls

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhama has plunged himself headlong in the campaign for the upcoming elections of the urban local bodies in the State. On Friday the CM held road shows and addressed public meetings in Tehri, Kotdwar, Haridwar and Dehradun in support of BJP candidates. Addressing a public meeting in Tehri in the support of BJP candidate for the post of chairperson of the municipal council, Masta Singh Negi, the CM said that the State government is working to promote adventure tourism in Tehri and surrounding areas.



Dhama also addressed a well-attended public meeting in Kotdwar in support of Mayoral candidate of the party Shailendra Singh Rawat. Here the CM said that the BJP government fulfils whatever it promises. Dhama said that he has laid

the foundation stone of Satpuli lake and expressed confidence that the lake will be inaugurated by him as well. Launching an attack on the Congress party, the CM said that the leaders of Congress give priority to personal interests over national interests. He said that the BJP government of the State is working untiringly for the development of the State. Raising the issue of abrogation of article 370 in a public meeting in Haridwar later in the

day, the CM said that the Congress supports those who want that the article 370 is reinstated in Jammu and Kashmir.

The CM exhorted the people to vote for the BJP candidates in the ULB polls. He said the victory of BJP in ULB elections will set up a triple engine government in the State and the engine of development will chug forward with a speed which is three times more than the current one.

BJP set to win most ULB seats in State, claims Bhatt

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The Bharatiya Janata Party State president Mahendra Bhatt has claimed that the party is set to win most of the seats in the urban local body elections. He also appealed to the public to vote for a 'triple-engine' government in order to bring uniformity in the pace of development across the State.

Addressing party workers while touring the Garhwal region during the ULB poll campaign, the BJP State chief said that the people have decided to vote for the BJP and

that the party only has to communicate its message to them. The manner in which Prime Minister Narendra Modi is facilitating development of the nation, chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhama is taking the State forward, he said. "The people have experienced the pace of development under the triple-engine government wherever our municipal heads and councilors were in office. Even in the local bodies where we were not in a decisive position, the double-engine government undertook unprecedented

works. In these ULB elections, we have to form the third government at the local level of the BJP so that the entire State moves forward on the developmental path at the same pace to achieve the vision of a developed Uttarakhand soon," Bhatt said. During the campaign in Chamoli district, he attended programmes in Tharali and Nandanagar areas. Bhatt held road shows, public outreach programmes and organisational meetings to appeal to the public to vote for the party candidates.

Ballot papers reach districts, Govt machinery to ensure free & fair ULB polls

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Ballot papers have reached all the districts for the urban local body elections to be held on January 23. State election commissioner Sushil Kumar said this while chairing a video conference with all district magistrates and superintendents of police to review preparations for the polls on Friday. He directed that all the departments concerned should work in coordination to ensure successful conduct of the elections. Kumar said that implementa-

tion of the model code of conduct should be ensured till the conclusion of the polling process. Necessary tasks should be completed on time for delivering the ballot papers to the polling booths. Further, all necessary training to the polling personnel for polling, counting of votes and other tasks should also be done on time, he said. As it takes time for the polling parties to return after polling, they face problems in returning home. Considering this,

payment based transport should be arranged for them after they deposit the ballot boxes, Kumar said. He stressed on evaluation and deployment of security personnel in polling stations marked sensitive and very sensitive. The State election commissioner also directed the police and administration officials to consistently tour their areas while ensuring proper arrangements at the polling stations and polling booths.

Light rain likely in parts of State, Doon to be warmer

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The State Meteorological Centre has forecast that very light to light rain is likely to occur at isolated places in Uttarkashi, Chamoli, Rudrapur, Bageshwar and Pithoragarh districts on Saturday. Apart from this, dry weather is likely to prevail in the remaining districts of the State.

The provisional State capital Dehradun is forecast to witness a mainly clear sky with the maximum and minimum temperatures likely to be about 25 degrees Celsius and

nine degrees Celsius respectively today.

Meanwhile, Dehradun and other parts of the State witnessed above normal temperatures on Friday. The maximum and minimum temperatures were 24.6 degrees Celsius and 7.3 degrees Celsius respectively in Dehradun, 24.1 degrees Celsius and 6.2 degrees Celsius in Pantnagar, 14.4 degrees Celsius and 1.4 degrees Celsius in Mukteshwar and 16.6 degrees Celsius and 2.6 degrees Celsius in New Tehri.

Organisations seek planning rights for municipal corporations in U'khand

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The Society of Pollution and Environmental Scientists (SPECS) and other social organisations have emphasised that municipal corporations in Uttarakhand should have planning rights. Addressing the media ahead of the ULB polls here on Friday, Brij Mohan Sharma of SPECS stated that two acts were established many years ago for the Panchayat and municipal corporations. Though 18 responsibilities were designated to municipal corporations, only 14 of these have been assigned. As a result, municipal corporations lack the necessary planning rights, leading to deficiencies in sustainable development and other essential services across the State. He stressed that to foster development, the government must grant planning rights to the corporations. With the ULB elections approaching, SPECS and other social organisations aim to present

demands that they believe the elected candidates should address. Sharma said that they have been actively working on critical issues like food adulteration, water quality, rainwater harvesting, energy efficiency, solar electricity, air pollution, river pollution, accessible footpaths for seniors and children, the construction of cycling lanes and promoting urban afforestation. Considering the municipal elections, they appeal to all political parties to recognise the gravity of these issues and incorporate them into their election agendas. Sharma commented on the demands made to the political parties, stating that they should develop specific plans for each ward. He emphasised the need for strict action against food adulteration and called for improvements in water quality. Sharma urged elected mayoral candidates to promote rainwater harvesting, invest in energy-efficient buildings and implement measures to

tackle air pollution. He also suggested providing safe footpaths, developing dedicated cycling lanes to encourage environmentally friendly transportation and ensuring that road elevations are adjusted appropriately during construction. Sharma urged all political parties to take these issues seriously and work towards building a sustainable, healthy and inclusive future for the people of Uttarakhand.

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PUBLIC NOTICE

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IN BRIEF

BJP to face Ravan's fate: Rawat

HALDWANI: With the campaign pitch intensifying for the Jan 23 for the civic body election in Haldwani, the former chief minister Harish Rawat hit the campaign trail and canvassed votes for the party's mayoral contender Lalit Joshi. He said that power had gone into the saffron party's head, leaving them arrogant and indifferent. He warned that the party would bite the dust in this election with the people having resolved to teach them a hard lesson. The Congress' Haldwani MLA Sumit Hridayesh also addressed meetings and urged the people to throw BJP out.

He said that development had stalled under the BJP regime. Whatever development happened in Haldwani had happened during the Congress rule, he said.

Liver transplant unit to start at VIMS soon

DEHRADUN: A renowned liver cancer surgeon and director, Liver Transplant Department of Sir Ganga Ram Hospital, New Delhi, Dr Suresh Singhvi agreed to start a liver transplant unit at Venkateshwara Institute of Medical Sciences (VIMS). Informing this on Friday, the vice-chancellor of Shri Venkateshwara University, Rajeev Tyagi said that it would help fulfil Shri Venkateshwara University's goal of ensuring access to affordable and world-class healthcare services to the poorest sections of the society. The chairman of the Venkateshwara Group of Institutes Sudhir Giri expressed happiness over the development. In his address, Singhvi said that the liver transplantation unit would be launched soon, adding that it would help the people of western UP, particularly Meerut and Moradabad districts, a lot. "They will no longer rush to Delhi and Gurugram for treatment and surgeries for liver and pancreas cancer," he added.

District hospital's pharmacy officer now child development project officer

NAINITAL: A pharmacy officer working at the Government BD Pandey District Hospital in Nainital has been promoted to the post of child development project officer in the Women Empowerment and Child Development department. He has also taken charge at the directorate of the department in Dehradun. Notably, he was first appointed as a pharmacist in CHC, Betalghat in January 2006, and then in December 2016, he joined the Government B D Pandey District Hospital, Nainital.

ITBP honours martyr's family

UTTARKASHI: The 12th Battalion Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP), Matli, Uttarkashi honoured the family of the martyr Anil Rana who had died in the line of duty in Arunachal Pradesh in 2018. Representatives of Commandant, 12th Battalion Sachin Kumar were present on the occasion. Rana had been recruited as a constable in ITBP in March, 2009. Posted with the 49th Battalion, when he was going to the Transport Camp at Likabali for duty, a heavy stone fell on the government vehicle he was driving. He later succumbed. Remembering his sacrifice, ITBP celebrated the birthday of his children at his residence and the jaws assured the family of all help.

Governor stresses on promotion of soldier welfare schemes in remote areas

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Governor lieutenant general (ret'd) Gurmit Singh emphasised the importance of promoting soldier welfare schemes in remote areas to ensure that more beneficiaries can take advantage of them. He made this statement during a courtesy visit by the secretary of the Kendriya Sainik Board brigadier Digvijay Singh Basera on Friday. During the meeting, Basera updated the governor on the various activities and schemes being implemented by the Kendriya Sainik Board. He noted that Uttarakhand is one of the leading States in the country in implementing welfare schemes for ex-servicemen and that other States are also beginning to adopt these initiatives. Basera highlighted that the board consistently coordinates with State governments to ensure that the central schemes reach every eligible beneficiary.

Further, Singh voiced pride in the State's model serving as an example for other States. He commended the digitalisation efforts within the board, calling them essential for enhancing transparency and efficiency. He also stressed the necessity of similar digital initiatives at the state level. Additionally, Singh reiterated the need to promote soldier welfare schemes in remote regions, ensuring that the families of servicemen in mountainous

and inaccessible areas have access to these services.

NORTHERN RAILWAY

E-TENDER NOTICE

Sr.DEN/IV/MB acting for and on behalf of The President of India invites E-Tenders against following Tender Notice, closing date & time are mentioned against each column. Bidders will be able to submit their original/revised bids up to closing date and time only. Manual offers are not allowed against this tender, and any such manual offer received shall be ignored. Contractors are allowed to make payments against this tender towards tender document cost and earnest money only through payment modes available on IREPS portal like net banking, debit card, credit card etc. Manual payments through Demand draft, Banker's cheque, Deposit receipts, FDR etc. are not allowed.

Tender No.	302-DRM-MB-24-25 Dt. 14.01.2025	307-DRM-MB-24-25 Dt. 16.01.2025
Name of Work	CTR(S) = 0.799 Km and TRR(S) = 10.206 Km and other miscellaneous track activity under SR.DEN/IV/MB.	Provision of EI Building for common loop line/ Ballast siding at HZR in the section of ADEN/HPU.
Tender Closing Date	11.02.2025	11.02.2025
Tender Closing Time	16:00	16:00
Advertised Value (Rs.)	77,57,288.18	60,82,152.79
Earnest Money (Rs.)	1,55,200.00	1,21,700.00
Period of Completion	8 Months	8 Months
Bidding Start Date	28.01.2025	28.01.2025

Tender No.: Sr. DEN-IV/Publication/24-25 Dt. 17.01.2025 199/2025

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Advertisement No. 98/2024

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Online applications are invited from eligible Indian Citizens for Recruitment to various Group-B & C posts on the behalf of all participating Institutes/Hospitals with following schedules.

Online Registration for applications	
Start Date	7 th January, 2025
Close Date	31 st January, 2025
Date of Recruitment Examination	
Date of issuing of Admit Card	Three days before the examination
Intimation of exam city of examination centre	One week before the examination
Date of Exam	26 th to 28 th February, 2025

APPLICATION FEES:

A) General/OBC Candidates : Rs.3000/- (Rupees Three Thousand only)

B) SC/ST Candidates/EWS : Rs.2400/- (Rupees Twenty-Four Hundred only)

C) Persons with Disabilities : Exempted

- The candidate can pay the prescribed application fee through DEBIT CARD/CREDIT CARD/NETBANKING. Transaction / Processing fee, if any, as applicable, will be payable to the bank by the candidate.
- Application fee, once remitted, shall not be refunded under any circumstances.
- Applications without the prescribed fee would not be considered and summarily rejected.
- Application Fees of SC/ST candidates who appear in the Examination will be refunded after the declaration of results in due course of time.

Important: For detailed information please visit the website www.aiimsexams.ac.in or respective participating Institute/Hospital.

- Status of application and Admit cards of eligible candidates will only be uploaded on AIIMS website www.aiimsexams.ac.in. If any candidates feel difficulty during submission of application may raise a query by login with credentials on My Page (Dashboard)
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NORTHERN RAILWAY

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The bids are invited from the registered entities on IREPS by Sr.DCM/Chg./MB(ACO) through e-auction on 07.02.2025 against Installation and Operation of Water Vending Machine On Stand Alone Basis at Railway Stations Over Moradabad Division. The catalogue have already been published on IREPS website www.ireps.gov.in and detail of e-auction are Available at website www.ireps.gov.in

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE 190/25

NORTHERN RAILWAY

Tender Notice

Sr.DEN/III/MB acting for and on behalf of The President of India invites E-Tenders against following tender bidders will be able to submit their original/revised bids upto closing date and time only. Manual offers are not allowed against this tender, and any such manual offer received shall be ignored. Contractors are allowed to make payments against this tender towards earnest money only through online payment modes available on IREPS portal like net banking, debit card, credit card etc. Manual payments through Demand draft, Banker's cheque, Deposit receipts, FDR etc are not allowed.

Tender No. Date	304-DRM-MB-24-25 Dt : 17.01.2025	
Name of Work	Heavy Repair of Staff Quarters at Way side Stations from BTO to MPH (Excluding RMU Station) with Drains, Septic Tank, Manhole, Floor, Plaster and Door Window and other Misc. Works under ADEN/BE	
Tender Closing Date Time	10.02.2025 16:00	
Advertised Value (Rs.)	7498506.25	
Earnest Money (Rs.)	150000.00	
Bidding Start Date	27.01.2025	
Validity of Offer (Days)	60 Days	
Period of Completion	08 Months	

No. 75-W/2/3/WA/Publication/25 Dt.: 17.01.2025 187/2025

Serving Customers With A Smile

Government of India

Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare

Department of Agricultural Research & Education

Call for applications/nominations for the post of Secretary, Department of Agricultural Research & Education (DARE)-cum-Director General, Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR)

Job Description:

In the capacity of Secretary, Department of Agricultural Research & Education, she/he is the principal officer advising the Government on all policy matters relating to agricultural research and education. The incumbent, in her/his capacity as Director General, ICAR, heads the apex national organization for conducting and coordinating research and education in agriculture including animal sciences and fisheries. The ICAR has more than 100 Institutes located all over the Country, Besides, she/he also plays a major role in guiding, coordinating and monitoring higher education and research in agriculture through the State Agriculture Universities.

Skills and Competencies: The person is expected to have the following:-

- Outstanding scientific achievement to her/his credit in the field of agriculture.
- Record of successful administration and management of science preferably of agricultural research at a higher level.
- Modern and forward looking approach with broader scientific perspective particularly in the field of agricultural research.
- Vision and proven leadership qualities to communicate and inspire confidence of scientists and administrators.
- Initiative and innovative abilities,
- Wide perspective and understanding of global issues.
- Experience of interaction with International Organizations.

Eligibility

Age Limit: Preferably under the age of 57 years as on 01 March 2025.

Educational Qualifications and Experience:

- The person is expected to have a Ph.D. degree in agriculture or allied sciences.
- He should have at least 25 years' experience in the field of agricultural research/education, out of which at least 5 years' experience should be in research management position.
- The person should be in the pay scale of Additional Secretary to the Government of India or equivalent if employed under Government or in the scale of Vice-Chancellor of a University in UGC pay scales or in an equivalent pay scale if employed in University.

Emoluments: The post carries emoluments and perks and privileges as admissible to Secretary to the Government of India.

Procedure for selection: The appointment shall be made by the Central Government on the recommendation of the Search-cum-Selection Committee set up for this purpose. The Search-cum-Selection Committee reserves the right to suitably modify the eligibility & other criteria, if considered necessary and also to consider outstanding candidates, who have not applied for the post.

Important Note:

- Last date for receiving applications/nominations is 17th February 2025.
- Address for receiving applications: Applications/nominations may be sent to secy.icar@nic.in Application Nomination sent by post may be addressed to the Secretary, Indian Council of Agricultural Research, Krishi Bhawan, New Delhi-110001, superscripting 'Application Nomination for the post of Secretary, DARE' and marked confidential.

PROFORMA

Application for the post of Secretary, Department of Agricultural Research and Education (DARE)-cum-Director General, Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR)

- Name (in block letters):
- Date of Birth:
- Age as on 01.03.2025:
- Service to which belongs:(in case of Government servants)
- Present pay and scale of pay:
- Address:
- (a) Telephone No. (Off./Resi.):
- (b) Mobile No.:
- (c) e-mail ID:
- Educational Qualifications (in reverse chronological order):

Name of University	Degree	Year of Passing	Division/% of marks obtained	Academic Distinction	Subject/ Specialization

- Details of experience and brief service particulars (in reverse chronological order starting with the present post):

Name and address of employer	Designation and scale of Pay	Period of service		Nature of work experience
		From	To	

- Publications, if any, in journals of national/international repute, with citation and index:
- Awards/honours, if any
- Brief write-ups on each of the following (maximum 500 words each):
 - Five exceptional contributions made during the service,
 - Two noteworthy achievements in past two years;
 - Vision for tenure as Secretary, DARE-cum-DG, ICAR.

Date: _____

Place: _____

CBC - 01302/11/0010/2425 (Signature of the candidate)



Health Dept deploys 18 doctors in Pauri district hospital

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Following the flak it received for lack of doctors and facilities when the injured passengers of Pauri bus mishap were taken to the Pauri district hospital, the State Health department has deployed 18 doctors including nine specialists in the hospital. The Health minister Dhan Singh Rawat said that on the complaints received from the general public the Health department has taken over the control of the Pauri district hospital in its hands.

The hospital was being operated under the Public Private Partnership (PPP) mode till December 30 last year. The minister said the department has now deployed surgeon, paediatrician, gynaecologist,

pathologist, anaesthetist and ophthalmologist in the district hospital of Pauri. He claimed that all the newly appointed doctors have taken charge. Rawat said that apart from doctors 34 other employees including nursing officers, lab technicians, X-ray technicians have also been deployed in the hospital.

The minister said that with the deployment of radiologist, the hospital has started providing the facility of x-ray and ultrasound. He said that soon four more specialist doctors would be deployed in the hospital. The minister added that if needed, more specialist doctors will be deployed in the Pauri district hospital under the National Health Mission

(NHM). The director general health has been asked to conduct walk-in interviews of the doctors.

He averred that the State government is working consistently to strengthen the health services in the State. The minister added that the health department is trying to remove the paucity of doctors by conducting recruitment drives of health officers and specialist doctors.

It is pertinent to mention here that after complaints of lack of doctors and other facilities after the Pauri bus accident the chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhami had sought a report on the district hospital from the district magistrate of Pauri.

U'khand inks MoU with Iceland to harness geothermal energy

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

In a major initiative to tap geothermal energy of the tectonically active Himalayan belt of the State, the Uttarakhand government has entered an agreement with Iceland. The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for exploration of geothermal energy was inked between the State government and Verkis Consultancy Engineers, a company based in Iceland on Friday at the State secretariat. Chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhami who attended the ceremony in the virtual mode, said that the MoU will prove to be a milestone in the field of energy security and sustainable development of Uttarakhand. He said that through this MoU of geothermal energy, not only the goal of clean and renewable energy will be achieved but the path of inclusive development will also be paved while ensuring environmental safety. Dhami said that Iceland is a leading country in the field of geothermal energy and with its technical cooperation and

experience, Uttarakhand will emerge as an important state in the field of geothermal energy. He said that necessary clearances have been received from the union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Ministry of Renewable Energy and

Himalayan Geology, Dehradun have identified about 40 sites in Uttarakhand, where geothermal energy can be harnessed. Chief secretary Radha Raturi, secretaries R

Meenakshi Sundaram, Dilip Jawalkar and Dipendra Chaudhary, resident commissioner of Uttarakhand Ajay Mishra, additional secretary Ranjana Rajguru, managing

director UJVN Limited Sandeep Singhal, PTCUL MD PC Dhyani, Hanker Haroldson from Verkis Company and members of Iceland embassy were present on the occasion.



Ministry of External Affairs for the MoU on geothermal energy. Dhami said that the cost of studying the feasibility of geothermal energy in the state will be borne by Iceland. He said that the successful exploration and use of the geothermal energy will also be helpful in India's resolve to become carbon neutral by 2070. It is pertinent to mention here that the Geological Survey of India and the Wadia Institute

SYMBOLIC POSSESSION NOTICE

ICICI Bank Branch Office: ICICI Bank Ltd., Plot No. 23, Shal Tower, 3rd Floor, New Rohtak Road, Karol Bagh, New Delhi- 110005

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

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

Sr. No.	Name of the Borrower(s)/Loan Account Number	Description of Property/ Date of Symbolic Possession	Date of Demand Notice/ Amount in Demand Notice (Rs)	Name of Branch
1.	Rajeev Kumar/ Jyoti Gangwar/ Girish Chandra Saxena/ LBRUD00006273001	Plot No. 61 And 60 With Roof Rights, Part of Khata No. 000656, Khet No. 26 Minjumla, Situated At Village Fulsungi, Tehsil Rudrapur, District Udham Singh Nagar, Uttarakhand- 263153/ Jan-15-2025	September 25, 2024 Rs. 12,15,543.26/-	Udham Singh Nagar/ Pilibhit / Kanpur
2.	Rajeev Kumar/ Jyoti Gangwar/ LBRUD00006277104	Plot No. 61 And 60 With Roof Rights, Part of Khata No. 000656, Khet No. 26 Minjumla, Situated At Village Fulsungi, Tehsil Rudrapur, District Udham Singh Nagar, Uttarakhand- 263153/ Jan-15-2025	September 25, 2024 Rs. 83,860.06/-	Udham Singh Nagar/ Pilibhit
3.	Ramesh Singh Mehta Premamehta/ LBRUD00005195947 LBRUD00005195957	Plot No. 68 And Part of 1/2, Khet No. 76 Minjumla, Gram Fulsungi, Tehsil Rudrapur, District Udham Singh Nagar, Uttarakhand- 263153/ Jan-15-2025	August 23, 2024 Rs. 11,67,785.20/-	Udham Singh Nagar

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

Date: January 18, 2025
Place: Udham Singh Nagar
Sincerely Authorised Signatory For ICICI Bank Ltd.

Maharaj urges CM to ensure presence of doctors at Pauri district hospital

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Cabinet minister Satpal Maharaj urged chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhami to ensure the presence of doctors at the Pauri district hospital. During a phone conversation on Friday, Maharaj highlighted his concerns regarding the availability of medical professionals and the insufficient facilities at the district hospital. He urged the CM to

ensure that specialist doctors are adequately available and to arrange for essential and emergency medical services. Maharaj emphasised that all necessary health services, medications and medical personnel must consistently be accessible at the district hospital to provide appropriate care for critically ill and injured patients.

MDDA forms six-member team to act against disinformation on social media

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The Mussoorie Dehradun Development Authority (MDDA) will take action against those spreading disinformation on social media. In addition to this, it will also upload details on a daily basis on social media. The MDDA is preparing to take action against those spreading misleading information related to plotting, getting construction layouts passed, sale of flats and other related aspects on social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, X and YouTube, among others. The MDDA vice chairman Banshidhar Tiwari chaired a meeting with officials on this issue here on Friday. A six-member team was formed for this purpose in the meeting. This team will track persons spreading misinformation on social media and also work to share the correct information with the public from the authority's official social media pages and handles. Officials said that with a large number of people being active on social media, some unscrupulous elements are trying to take advantage of the situation. Such persons publicise attractive advertisements and

propaganda on social media to attract people who ultimately fall prey to fraud. Taking cognisance of the situation, the authority has decided to take action against such persons. The MDDA vice chairman informed that the authority has formed a six-member team to take action against persons spreading disinformation on social media. This team includes assistant engineer Sudhir Kumar Gupta, under secretary Ekta Arora, additional engineers Pravesh Nautiyal and Nancy Sharma along with assistant clerk Kalam Singh Bisht and programmer Neeraj Semwal. Tiwari said that this team will track those who are spreading disinformation on social media. This team will also provide a weekly report on its task. The team has also been accorded the responsibility of regularly posting information about the MDDA's daily activities including sealing of constructions, demolition of encroachments and other tasks on the authority's website and social media pages, the MDDA vice chairman added.

Employee associations welcome Modi cabinet's decision on pay commission

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The employee organisations of the State have welcomed the decision of the Union cabinet to approve the 8th pay commission for the employees. The employees of the State government have expressed hope that the Uttarakhand government will also give the benefit from the new pay commission to its employees. The president of the State employees' joint federation Arun Pandey said that the union government should change the income tax slabs and increase the limit of deductions to save tax. He said if change in income tax rates is not done then a major portion of the increased income of the employees will be deducted as tax. Pandey said that the new pay commission should pay special attention to protecting the interests of the employees.

The general secretary of IRDE employees association, Hemant Kumar said that the association had been demanding a new pay commission for the last two years. Appreciating the decision of the cabinet he expressed hope that the union government will also heed the demand of the employees on restoration of the old pension scheme (OPS) as well.

The president of the Uttaranchal federation of ministerial services association, Purmanand Nautiyal said that the pay committee constituted by the government should also hold interaction with the employee association. He said that the government should also ensure that the committee submits its report in a time bound manner.

Meri Sampatti, Mera Adhikar

Government of India

Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi

will distribute **65 lakh** Property Cards under SVAMITVA Scheme in **50,000+** villages and interact with the beneficiaries of the Scheme

(Through Video Conferencing)

Date: 18th January 2025 (Saturday) Time: 12:30 PM

Through SVAMITVA Scheme...

- 2.25 crore Property Cards have been issued in 1.5 lakh villages so far
- SVAMITVA card ensures property ownership in villages
- Mapping of rural abadi properties is being done through drones
- Property Card makes it easy to take a loan from the bank
- Economic valuation of property has become possible
- Cases of property disputes and encroachments controlled

Watch the live telecast on DD News

Rajnath underlines need to strengthen India's offensive and defensive responses

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Friday here underlined the need to strengthen India's offensive and defensive responses in view of the turmoil being witnessed in the rules-based international order. Addressing an event, organised to commemorate 2024 as the Year of Naval Civilians, he highlighted the increasing complexities for the Armed Forces due to the tense geopolitical security scenario and pitched to increase the critical capability of the country at the earliest.

"If we assess the entire decade from a defence and security perspective, we can say that it has been a volatile decade. We are witnessing conflicts and wars in different regions across

the world. Keeping these things in mind, we need planning, resourcing and budgeting for our security. There is a need to adopt a consultative approach. We need to take inputs from all the stakeholders on how to face future challenges. Our forces should be equipped and ready according to the changing times," Rajnath Singh said emphasising that the civilian workforce, an integral part of the Armed Forces, will play a crucial role in the planning process. He stressed that the military is surging forward with a big mandate and complex structure and the civilian workforce "soldiers without uniforms" play a pivotal role as they work behind-the-scenes to provide significant strength to the troops.

In view of India's strategic



location and its geopolitical situation in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR), defence minister reiterated the resolve of the Government to strengthen the Navy, terming it as a necessity in today's times. He termed the ships as a symbol of India's empowerment.

"India's economic prosperity is linked to maritime security. It is, therefore, necessary to protect our territorial waters, ensure freedom of navigation, and keep sea routes, which are our maritime highways, safe. In recent years, major naval powers have reduced their presence in IOR, while the Indian Navy has increased it. There is a possibility of increase in threats in the Gulf of Aden, Red Sea and the sea areas adjacent to East African countries. In view of this, the Indian Navy is working towards increasing its pres-

ence further," he said. Rajnath Singh described cyber security as an important aspect of maritime security in today's times, stating that ignoring cyber attacks can prove to be detrimental/fatal. He laid stress on the need to run a special awareness campaign on cyber security in the Armed Forces. In his welcome address, Navy chief Admiral Dinesh K Tripathi acknowledged the critical role that the Naval Civilians play in supporting various facets of the Indian Navy's operations including technical assistance, administrative management and logistics support. Their support is essential to the Navy's combat readiness and operational success, he said. The event commenced with a special photo and painting exhibition that displayed the artistic talents and achieve-

ments of Naval Civilians. The artworks depicted scenes of life at workplace and various contributions of civilians in the operational support of the Navy. A special moment of the ceremony was the introduction of the recipients of Prime Minister's Shram Awards to the defence minister. The Shram Awards are presented annually to the individuals who have shown extraordinary devotion and outstanding contributions in their respective roles. In recognition of exemplary service and contributions, Rajnath Singh presented nine meritorious awards and 16 cash awards to Naval Civilians who have demonstrated outstanding dedication and professionalism in their line of duty.

Private bodies providing essential public services have to be under RTI Act, says CIC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Advising the Delhi government to stop ex post facto renewal of licences of private hospitals, the CIC has said private entities providing essential public services have to be brought under RTI Act in a state-specific amendment of the transparency law. Information Commissioner Vinod Kumar Tiwari made these observations while hearing the case of an RTI applicant who was allegedly given "exorbitant bills" by a private hospital for the treatment of his wife in 2023.



RTI applicant Sanjeev Kumar had approached Delhi government's Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) seeking details of licence issued to Artemis Hospital, where his wife underwent treatment, among other information in a 12-point application. Not getting satisfactory response, he approached the Central Information Commission with his case. "...Core contention of the appellant in the instant appeal was non-receipt of correct and accurate information from the PIO and also arbitrary practice adopted by the Artemis Hospital in raising unjustified demands/ bills during hospitalisation which gets facilitated by respondent's (DGHS) clandestine practice of renewing the licence with retrospective effect as a matter of routine," Tiwari noted. Artemis being a private hospital is not covered under the provisions of the RTI Act. "Entities providing Public Services being essential for the citizens have to be included in the definition of the 'Public Authority' by bringing in a state-specific amendment of the RTI Act which is a concurrent list subject," Tiwari said. During the hearing, Kumar had alleged that the recognition certificate dated August 01, 2023 of Artemis Hospital provided to him by DGHS, in response to his RTI application shows that the hospital had no valid license on dates of hospitalization of his wife on April 07-08, 2023. "...It is noted from the oral submission of the respondent (DGHS) that registration of hospitals is being renewed retrospectively, which essen-

tially means that private hospitals have an option to withdraw renewal requests should they get caught in malpractices," Tiwari pointed out. He said despite repeated directions from the Commission during pendency of this case, DGHS has not uploaded the relevant legal/executive order authorizing such a back dated/ex post facto issuance. "...The fact remains that allegation of appellant regarding exorbitant prices/bills raised by the Artemis Hospital cannot be ruled out in entirety as the respondent as well as the third party i.e. Artemis Lite Hospital have failed to file any counter submission to buttress the arguments of the appellant, therefore, the balance of convenience favours the appellant," Tiwari said. The DGHS claimed that the plea that Artemis Hospital did not possess valid registration certificate at the relevant time is not acceptable since as per their normal practice the registration certificate under process is "deemed to be considered as a fact that registration of Hospital is still valid". "The Commission considering the submission of the parties concluded that the reply furnished by the PIO in the first instance and the submission given during the course of hearing are contradictory. This casual conduct of the PIO causes unwarranted obstructions to the appellant's right to information and is a grave violation to the provisions of the RTI Act," the CIC noted while issuing a show cause notice to the CPIO. The CIC imposed a penalty of

Rs 15000 on the CPIO Sandeep Kumar Agarwal and awarded a compensation of Rs 45000 to Kumar for the hardships to be paid by DGHS. Tiwari said Kumar was made to suffer mental and financial harassment by making him to run from pillar to post at this very old age for the treatment of his wife by imposing exorbitant medical bills merely for the purpose of generation of profits. "In view of the above, an advisory under Section 25(5) of the RTI Act is issued to the Respondent Public Authority (DGHS) to amend the applicable regulations governing renewal of licenses of private hospitals so as to afford an opportunity of hearing to the citizens affected by the deeds of the hospitals besides stopping the practice of issuing ex post facto renewal of license," Tiwari said in the order, a copy of which was also marked to Delhi Health Secretary. He said many state governments are bringing the Right to (Public) Services Act to ensure delivery of public services to ensure entities providing services are held accountable for deficiencies. "Such legislations are complementarity to the Right to Information Act because they rely on flow of information to determine deficiencies," Tiwari said. He said, in contrast to it, DGHS by declaring hospital running under them as private entities and hence, being outside the purview of the RTI Act has defeated the very purpose of such social welfare arrangement and the Act.

PM Modi to distribute more than 65 lakh SVAMITVA property cards today

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will on Saturday distribute more than 65 lakh property cards under the SVAMITVA Scheme, the Panchayati Raj Ministry said. According to senior officials of the ministry, beneficiaries from more than 50,000 villages in 10 states -- Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Mizoram, Odisha, Punjab, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh -- and two Union Territories -- Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh -- will receive the cards. SVAMITVA, a scheme of the Ministry of Panchayati Raj, provides a 'Record of Rights' to village household owners with the issuance of legal ownership cards to the property owners by mapping land parcels using drone technology, it said. The prime minister will preside over the event through video-conferencing, where he will interact with selected beneficiaries and also deliver a nationwide address, the ministry said in a statement. This event will mark a major milestone of crossing more than 2.24 crore property cards preparation and distribution under the Survey of Villages and Mapping with Improved Technology in Village Areas (SVAMITVA) scheme and distribution of about 65 lakh property cards in a day. Union Minister of Panchayati Raj Rajiv Ranjan Singh 'Lalan,' Union Minister of State for Panchayati Raj S P Singh Baghel, and Secretary, Ministry of Panchayati Raj Vivek



Bharadwaj will be present at the event. It will be attended virtually by several chief ministers, Union ministers, ministers in the concerned states, and Panchayat representatives, the ministry said. Events are also being organised in more than 230 districts for the physical distribution of property cards. It is expected that around 13 Union ministers will physically join from designated locations to oversee the distribution ceremonies. Training-cum-orientation programmes and distribution pro-

grammes will also be conducted in more than 25,000 Gram Panchayats across these 12 states and Union Territories, highlighting the scheme's impact and reinforcing its role in empowering rural communities. Ministry officials said under the scheme, over 90 per cent of the drone mapping has been done, covering around 3.17 lakh of the over 3.44 lakh villages that were the target. This includes full saturation in the Union Territories of Lakshadweep, Ladakh, Delhi, Daman and Nagar Haveli and Diu, as well as the states of Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, and Chhattisgarh. In addition, property cards have been generated for all inhabited villages in Haryana, Uttarakhand, Puducherry, Tripura, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Goa, and Tripura, highlighting significant advancements in implementation. The scheme's targets are likely to be achieved by 2026. A survey of rural land in India

for Settlement and record of rights had last been completed many decades back. Moreover, 'abadi' (inhabited) areas of villages were not surveyed in many states. Hence, no 'Record of Rights' could be created for the village 'abadi' areas. The scheme aims to provide an integrated property validation solution for rural India. The demarcation of inhabited land in rural areas would be done by the use of drone technology with the collaborative efforts of the Ministry of Panchayati Raj, State Revenue Department, State Panchayati Raj Department, and Survey of India. The outcome would include creating and updating the 'Record of Rights' in the revenue registers and issuance of property cards to the owners. So far, 31 states and Union Territories have joined the scheme. Of these, Sikkim, Telangana and Tamil Nadu had participated only in the pilot phase. West Bengal, Bihar, Nagaland, and Meghalaya have not joined the scheme.

Wildlife Department to serve notices to illegal constructions surrounding Sultanpur Bird Sanctuary

PARVESH SHARMA ■ GURUGRAM

The Wildlife Department will soon serve notices to over 100 illegal construction owners who built illegal structures in the restricted area of Sultanpur Bird Sanctuary in Gurugram. For this, the department has written a letter to the Tehsildar and sought information about all the people doing illegal construction. After getting the information, notices will be issued to everyone to remove the illegal construction within 15 days. After this, a demolition drive will be conducted. Notable, any kind of construction work is banned within a 5 km radius of Sultanpur Bird Sanctuary located on Jhajjar-Farrukhnagar Road. Despite this, builders and dealers have illegally built over 100 illegal constructions farmhouses and societies. Last year, a survey was conducted by the Department. It was revealed that over 100 constructions have been done without the permission of the Ministry of Environment within the 5 km restricted area of Sultanpur Bird Sanctuary. These include nine societies



mos, most of the farmhouses and a school. The central government has declared Sultanpur Bird Sanctuary as an Eco-Sensitive Zone-1 (environmentally sensitive area). In such a situation, construction within a radius of 5 km has been completely banned. The Town and Country Planning (TCP) Department has issued licenses to nine builders to build group housing societies. The license has a condition that they have to obtain a no objection certificate (NOC) from the Ministry of Environment. But without taking prior permission few builders made construction in the restricted zone. The survey has also revealed

the collusion of the officials of the concerned department. Nine societies have been built within this area. It is being said that the TCP Department approved the maps of these societies without checking the NOC. Occupancy certificates were even issued to most of the societies. Now, about 7,000 families have started living in the flats built in these societies. However, after the survey conducted by the Wildlife Department, the construction work of the two societies has been stopped. These societies are being built under the Affordable Housing Policy, which has about 1500 flats. These societies have been built in villages Dhorka, Wazirpur and Gopalpur.

Law officer censures ED for 'half-baked' reply, says miscommunication later in SC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

In an unusual turn of events in the Supreme Court, a law officer criticised the ED for filing a "half-baked" reply in a bail matter and later termed it a miscommunication while urging the court to proceed with the hearing. A bench of Justices Abhay S Oka and Ujjal Bhuyan was hearing an appeal of Arun Pati Tripathi, an Indian Telecom Services officer, challenging the October 25, 2024 order of the Chhattisgarh High Court denying him bail in connection with the high-profile Chhattisgarh liquor scam. Additional solicitor general SV Raju, appearing for the Enforcement Directorate (ED), said, "There is something hanky-panky as far as my department is concerned. Without consultation, a half-baked affidavit has been filed even before we made an appearance." Taking note of the shocking submission, the bench expressed dissatisfaction on the situation, calling it a "serious matter" questioning the accountability of ED and the agency's advocate-on-record (AoR).



"The counter must have been filed by your AoR," Justice Oka said to which Raju said the AoR could not be blamed for the oversight. Subsequently when the matter was taken up for hearing, the bench asked Raju, "You (ED) have filed a counter affidavit. Can you disown it now? What is going on?" He responded, "I am not disowning. I am only saying it was filed without proper vetting so I will have to verify." The bench termed it a "sad thing" and said it was like casting an aspersion on the AoR. "I am not casting any aspersion. Some miscommunication has happened," said the law officer, insisting the AoR was not to be blamed. Raju then requested the bench to proceed with the matter, but the court posted the hearing on February 5.

Political parties give multitude of reasons for selecting candidates with criminal records: ADR data

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Political parties have given reasons, such as "strong administrative capacity", "commitment to public service" and claims of cases being "politically motivated", for selecting candidates with criminal records in the 2024 Maharashtra and Jharkhand Assembly elections, poll rights body Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) said on Friday. In many cases, the parties dismissed alternative candidates as lacking experience or the ability to connect with voters, using these explanations to side-step questions about their choices, ADR said. It has analysed the Form C7 of 1,286 candidates, who contested the Maharashtra and Jharkhand Assembly polls.

Form C7 requires candidates to declare their criminal antecedents, if any. An ADR report revealed that such reasoning often failed to meet the Supreme Court's directive requiring detailed, merit-based justifications for selecting candidates with criminal backgrounds. Instead, statements like "the candidate is young and energetic" or "cases were filed due to public agitation" were repeatedly used. Despite these assertions, 29 per cent candidates in Maharashtra and 20 per cent in Jharkhand had no justification published for their selection, a direct violation of the Supreme Court's orders. For instance, in Maharashtra, Digamber Rohidas Aagwale of the Rashtriya Samaj Paksh, facing 35 criminal cases, was described as an "influential



leader" dedicated to the poor, with no viable explanation for bypassing candidates without criminal records. Similarly, the selection of Congress's Sanjay Chandukaka Jagtap and Bunty Baba Shelke, facing 27 and 26 cases respectively, as candidates was justified on grounds of administrative experience and alleged political victimisation. The report also highlighted non-compliance with mandatory disclosures. In Maharashtra, the NCP-Sharadchandra Pawar faction and the Shiv Sena (Uddhav Balasaheb Thackeray) failed to provide justifications for any of their candidates with criminal cases. Similar lapses were noted in Jharkhand, where the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) did not disclose reasons

for selecting any of its candidates with criminal records. The ADR has called for urgent reforms, including deregistration of the non-compliant parties, disqualification of candidates with serious criminal charges and stricter monitoring by the Election Commission (EC). In Maharashtra, 48 per cent of the analysed candidates (503 out of 1,052) declared criminal cases, with 32 per cent facing serious charges. In Jharkhand, 45 per cent candidates (105 out of 234) declared criminal cases, with 35 per cent facing serious charges. Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) candidate Babul Marandi, facing 15 cases, was praised for his social service credentials and allegations against him were dismissed as politically driven.

The report criticised political parties for prioritising "winnability" over integrity and accused the EC of failing to enforce compliance effectively. The ADR report also revealed significant non-compliance with disclosure requirements. It pointed out that in Maharashtra, 83 per cent of such candidates were crorepatris, including the BJP's Prashant Ramshekhar Thakur, who declared assets worth Rs 475 crore. In Jharkhand, Congress candidates dominated the list of the wealthiest, led by Krishnan Nand Tripathi, who declared assets of Rs 70 crore. The ADR emphasised that systemic reforms are essential to address the deep-rooted nexus between money, muscle power and politics.

Hounded by media, IIT Baba leaves Maha Kumbh

BISWAJEET BANERJEE
MAHAKUMBH NAGAR

Hounded by the media, Abhay Singh, famously known as IIT Baba, has abruptly left the Maha Kumbh and the Shri Panchdasham Juna Akhara in Prayagraj. His departure on Thursday night has left both the ashram sadhus and his family in a state of concern, as his current whereabouts remain unknown. Abhay's parents, including his father Karan Singh—an advocate and former head of the Jhajar Bar Association—arrived at the Ashram the same night searching for him, only to discover he had already departed. According to ashram sadhus, Abhay was struggling with increasing mental stress caused by continuous media interactions and controversies over some of his statements. Unable to cope, he decided to leave the ashram, switching off his phone and cutting contact with devotees and media personnel. Abhay Singh, a resident of Jhajar, Haryana, is an aerospace engineering graduate from IIT



Bombay. After a stint working at an airplane manufacturing company in Canada, he returned to India and subsequently disappeared from his family's sight. His family first learned of his spiritual journey through viral videos from the Maha Kumbh, where he was seen explaining spiritual concepts with the help of pictures and diagrams. Despite gaining popularity as Engineer Baba, the media spotlight and associated pressures ultimately led to his departure. Abhay Singh, nicknamed Engineer Baba, gained attention at the Maha Kumbh for his unique approach to spirituality. An alumnus of IIT Bombay, he earned a degree in aerospace engineering and later became a sanyasin associated with the Juna Akhara. Known for simplifying complex spiritual concepts for devotees, he used visual aids to communicate his insights. However, his journey highlights the challenges of adapting to a spiritual life while under intense public scrutiny. Abhay Singh's sudden exit from the Maha Kumbh has added to ongoing discussions about the mental and emotional challenges faced by individuals transitioning into spiritual roles. His story underscores the impact of media attention on the sanctity and personal struggles of modern-day ascetics, raising questions about the pressures associated with public expectations in deeply traditional spiritual settings.

The making of Naga Sadhus begins at Maha Kumbh

BISWAJEET BANERJEE
MAHAKUMBH NAGAR

The process of initiating new Naga Sadhus has commenced at the Akharas along the banks of the Sangam as part of the preparations for Mauni Amavasya during the Maha Kumbh. Both Udasi Akharas and the seven Shaivite Akharas, including Juna, Mahanirvani, Niranjani, Atal, Agni, and Awahan, are set to welcome more than 1,800 new Naga Sanyasis into their fold. The intricate rituals began today at Juna Akhara and will culminate in the Tang Tod (breaking of ties) ceremony within 48 hours. For the Akharas, the Kumbh Mela is not only an occasion for the holy Amrit Snan but also a crucial opportunity for expansion and spiritual renewal. The initiation of new Naga Sanyasis is a significant event, especially during the Maha Kumbh, which holds immense importance for trainee ascetics. Mahant Ramesh Giri of Juna Akhara shared that the rituals began on January 17 with a 24-hour period of dhawaja under the Dharma Dhawaja (religious flag), during which the aspirants abstain from food and water. Following this, the candidates are led to the Ganga banks by the Akhara Kotwal to commence the initiation



process. The initiation begins with the aspirants taking 108 dips in the sacred Ganga, symbolizing purification. This is followed by a head-shaving ceremony and the Vijay Havan (victory offering). The Acharya Mahamandleshwar of the Akhara leads the Sanyas Diksha (renunciation initiation), wherein five senior gurus bestow essential items upon the aspirants. The final rituals will take place on the morning of

January 19, when the aspirants will shed their loin cloths and fully embrace their new identities as Naga Sanyasis. While some may choose to remain Digambar (clothed only by the sky), others are given the option to retain clothing but participate in the Amrit Snan as Nagas. Two key rituals define the transformation into a Naga Sadhu. First is the cutting of the braid, which symbolizes the severing of all social ties. Once

this ritual is performed, the individual cannot return to worldly life. The second is Tang Tod, the final ritual signifying the breaking of all earthly attachments. Unlike other ceremonies, this is performed by a fellow Naga Sadhu under the Guru's guidance, cementing the initiate's commitment to asceticism. Akhara Hierarchy and Responsibilities: Becoming a Naga Sadhu is essential for assuming leader-

ship roles within the Akharas. Positions such as General Secretary, Secretary, Shrimahant, Mahant, Thanapati, Kotwal, and Pujari are reserved exclusively for Nagas. The Akhara's internal committee thoroughly evaluates each candidate before bestowing this responsibility. Mahant Yamuna Puri of Mahanirvani Akhara revealed that while their exact dates for initiation are undecided, the rituals will be completed before Mauni Amavasya. Similarly, Udasi Akharas are preparing for their initiation ceremonies. The initiation of over 1,800 new Naga Sadhus during Maha Kumbh 2025 highlights the enduring significance of this ancient spiritual tradition. The newly initiated Nagas will participate in their first Amrit Snan alongside their respective Akharas on Mauni Amavasya, marking the culmination of their transformative journey. For the Akharas, these rituals reinforce their spiritual legacy and expand their cadre of ascetics who bear critical administrative and financial responsibilities. As the Sangam witnesses this sacred event, the Maha Kumbh continues to uphold its reputation as a confluence of faith, tradition, and renewal.

BJP felicitates sanitation workers at Maha Kumbh

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
MAHAKUMBH NAGAR

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leaders in Uttar Pradesh distributed copies of the Constitution to sanitation workers at the ongoing Maha Kumbh Mela, calling the religious congregation a 'great celebration of unity' that reflects the principles enshrined in the Indian Constitution. The initiative is part of the BJP's nationwide 'Samvidhan Gaurav Abhiyan' campaign to celebrate 75 years of the Indian Constitution. As part of this outreach, the party is felicitating Dalits and Other Backward Classes (OBCs) across the state. After garlanding sanitation workers and handing them copies of the Constitution, Uttar Pradesh BJP secretary Abhijit Mishra remarked, "We came here to honor those who were reduced to a mere vote bank by non-BJP parties and

governments. Now, with a strong and sensitive leader at the nation's helm, we are witnessing transformative change." Talking to reporters, Mishra further claimed, "Other political parties have always treated Dalits and OBCs as vote banks. In contrast, our party reveres and empowers them. The Maha Kumbh is a grand celebration of unity, a principle the Constitution guarantees. By distributing copies of the Constitution, we aim to reinforce the vision of unity that our founding fathers had, which our opponents often seek to undermine." The BJP's initiative comes in the backdrop of political sparring with the opposition. During the last Lok Sabha elections, the opposition accused the BJP of pursuing a massive mandate to alter the Constitution—an allegation the ruling party has vehemently denied. Despite falling short of its "400 paar" tar-



get, the BJP managed to form the government with support from regional allies. Meanwhile, the opposition INDIA bloc made surprising gains, bolstering its presence in the Lok Sabha. Adding to the political dynamics, the Samajwadi Party (SP) recently announced plans to install a bust of its founder and prominent OBC leader, late Mulayam Singh Yadav, at the Maha Kumbh. The Congress, on the other hand, is set to launch its 'Jai Babu, Jai Bhim, Jai Samvidhan' rally on January 27, aiming to corner the BJP over its alleged stance on the Constitution. Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) chief Mayawati, who has been striving to regain her political foothold, is also engaging in outreach efforts, criticizing the BJP over alleged denigration of Constitution framers and Dalit icon BR Ambedkar. In 2019, during the previous

Kumbh Mela, Prime Minister Narendra Modi famously washed the feet of sanitation workers as a gesture of respect. Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath also initiated educational programs for the workers that year. This year, Modi described the Maha Kumbh as "Ekta ka Mahakumbh" (a Maha Kumbh of unity) during a recent visit to Prayagraj. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath echoed this sentiment, referring to the congregation as "Samajik Samta Ka Mahaparv" (a mega festival of social equality). The government has also unveiled a giant statue of Lord Ram embracing Nishad Raj, a king revered by the politically significant Nishad community, at Shringverpur's Nishad Raj Park. The gesture is seen as an attempt to woo the OBC riverine community, which has been pushing for Scheduled Caste (SC) status. A senior RSS leader

downplayed the political undertones, stating, "You can draw your own political narratives, but we stand for unity. The Maha Kumbh is a classic example of caste harmony, where all differences are bridged. That is the unity the prime minister must have been referring to." Political analyst Sudhir Panwar, who once contested elections on an SP ticket, noted, "The BJP faces a dilemma over the issue of caste census, which has united opposition parties and many of its OBC allies. While it has performed well in recent by-polls, the shock loss of the Faizabad Lok Sabha seat lingers. Measures like the community outreach at Maha Kumbh are part of its strategy to regain lost ground." As the Maha Kumbh unfolds, the event not only remains a spiritual hub but also a platform for political narratives, reflecting the interplay of faith and electoral strategies.

VHP to push for 'liberation of temple' at Maha Kumbh congregation



BISWAJEET BANERJEE
LUCKNOW

The ongoing Maha Kumbh Mela has become a focal point for diverse discussions ranging from spirituality to socio-political issues. Adding to its significance, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) has announced a high-profile meeting of its Margdarshak Mandal, where saints and spiritual leaders will deliberate on key issues including the "liberation of temples" from government control and Hindu claims over historical sites. This four-day congregation, scheduled from January 24 to 27, is expected to see robust participation from saints across the nation. According to VHP spokesperson Vinod Bansal, "Freeing temples from government control will be the primary agenda, as it directly impacts the sanctity and autonomy of our religious institutions." The VHP is currently running a nationwide campaign advocating for temple autonomy. Bansal elaborated, "The Margdarshak Mandal baithak will not only address temple-related concerns but also deliberate on contemporary

issues affecting the Hindu community, such as 'love jihad,' 'ghar wapsi,' and religious conversions. These discussions aim to foster unity among Hindus, transcending caste and regional barriers." In addition, the VHP's Pranyas Mandal, its Board of Trustees, will meet after the Margdarshak Mandal session to further refine and implement decisions made during the gathering. "The Maha Kumbh is a perfect backdrop for fostering unity and social harmony," Bansal noted. Highlighting the symbolism of the Kumbh, he added, "It is here that people from all walks of life gather, setting aside social and economic differences. This unity is what our community and nation need to overcome the challenges posed by our colonial past, including the entrenched caste system." A key focus of the discussions will be countering what the VHP calls the "divisive politics" of caste-based narratives. "Our goal is to build a united Hindu society that stands strong against such political agendas," Bansal said. The meeting coincides with

growing tensions over Hindu claims to certain historical sites. In recent months, petitions have been filed regarding the Shahi Jama Masjid in Sambhal, Uttar Pradesh, and the Ajmer Sharif Dargah in Rajasthan. These claims have sparked legal and social debates, with some incidents escalating into violence. A senior RSS leader, speaking on the condition of anonymity, remarked, "The Maha Kumbh represents the essence of unity, bridging divides of all kinds. While narratives can be drawn politically, the event's true purpose lies in fostering harmony and reinforcing our cultural ethos." The VHP's initiatives also come against the backdrop of heightened political activity. The opposition has been vocal about caste-based census demands, which have garnered support from several of the BJP's allies. Political analyst Sudhir Panwar observed, "The BJP faces challenges in maintaining its support base among OBCs, especially after recent setbacks like the Faizabad Lok Sabha loss. Initiatives like this are part of its strategy to consolidate its standing."

Fake bank accounts: Gurugram police arrest two criminals

STAFF REPORTER
GURUGRAM

The Gurugram police have arrested two criminals for allegedly opening fake bank accounts in the name of 'Jan Dhan Yojana' and making them available to cyber thugs, police said. The suspects have been identified as Shaun, a resident of village Kiranki, Gurugram and Azharuddin alias Azru, a resident of Punhana, Nuh. The police have also recovered five bank pass book, fake rent agreement and electricity bills from them. The complainant told the police on Monday that he had met two persons who told him that they opened bank accounts



under 'Jan Dhan Yojana', of which Rs 7,000 is given by the government every month. After this, the accused opened a bank account for the victim. After opening the bank account, he took the victim's

ATM cards and mobile numbers registered in the bank account and said that after going to the government office and registering under 'Jan Dhan Yojana', they would get their ATM cards and mobile

numbers back. "When the bank did not return the victim's ATM card and mobile number for several days, he went to the bank and enquired, and then he came to know that a lot of money had been transacted from his bank account," Priyanshu Diwan, ACP, cyber crime said. Based on the victim's complaint, a case was registered under the relevant sections of the IT Act at the cyber police station (west), Gurugram. During the investigation, the police team led by Inspector Sandeep, SHO of the said police station nabbed the accused from Sector-10 on Wednesday. During police interrogation, it was found that both the accused used to open bank

accounts under 'Jan Dhan Yojana' by telling people that the government would deposit money in these accounts. "To open a bank account, the accused used to get fake agreements and electricity bills prepared. After opening the bank account, they used to take the bank ATM card and registered mobile number from the bank account holder in the name of registering the bank account in the government office. After that, they used to sell those bank accounts to another accused for Rs 10,000," he said. Accused Sahun has been taken on one day of police custody and remanded from the Court for further interrogation and recovery, police said.

12 Naxalites neutralised in fierce encounter with security forces in Bijapur

PTI ■ BIJAPUR

The 12 Naxalites neutralised in a fierce encounter with security forces in Chhattisgarh's Bijapur district on Thursday were from the Maoist organisation's strongest unit in the Bastar region, police said on Friday. The identity of the killed Naxalites is yet to be ascertained but preliminary information suggests they belonged to Maoists' People's Liberation Guerilla Army (PLGA) battalion no. 1 and Central Regional Committee company, a police official said. PLGA is the armed wing of the outlawed Communist Party of India (Maoist). According to police, the PLGA battalion no. 1 is considered the strongest formation of the Maoists in the tribal-dominated Bastar region and is headed by Deva. It has orchestrated several deadly attacks on security personnel in south Bastar in the past. Previously the formation was headed by Hidma, believed to



be the man behind many big strikes against security forces in the Bastar region, which comprises seven districts. Twelve Naxalites were killed in an encounter with security forces in the dense forest of the Pamed-Basaguda-Usoor axis of Bijapur district on Thursday. Besides the bodies, weapons were also recovered from the site, he said. A search operation is still underway in the area and the security forces are likely to return to their bases on Friday evening, the official said. Personnel belonging to the

District Reserve Guard (DRG) from three districts, five battalions of CRPF's elite jungle warfare unit CoBRA (Commando Battalion for Resolute Action) and the 229th battalion of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) are involved in the operation, he said. During the same operation, two CoBRA commandos were injured when a pressure improvised explosive device planted by Naxalites went off near the Putkel CRPF camp under Basaguda police station limits on Thursday, police said.

18-year-old NEET aspirant hangs himself in hostel room

PTI ■ KOTA

An 18-year-old NEET aspirant from Odisha allegedly hanged himself in his hostel room here, police said on Friday. Officials said that no suicide note was recovered from the room. The incident occurred in Ambedkar Colony, Vigyan Nagar area on Thursday night. According to police, Abhijeet Giri, hailing from Mayurbhanj district in Odisha, had been preparing for the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET) at a coaching institute since April, 2024. The incident came to light when around 8 pm when a mess worker went to deliver food to Abhijeet's room, a police officer said. Upon receiving no response, the mess worker along with a few hostellers forcibly opened the door and found him hanging from the ceiling fan, Assistant Sub-Inspector (ASI)

Lal Singh Tanwar said. A police team reached the spot and sent the body for post-mortem, which will be conducted after his family arrives. They have been informed about the incident, the ASI added. He said that no suicide note was recovered from the room and the reason behind the suicide is yet to be ascertained. The ceiling fan in the hostel room was not equipped with suicide prevention device, mandated by the district administration to prevent suicides in student accommodations, the officer said. Preliminary investigations suggest that Abhijeet was good in studies and attended his coaching classes regularly, he said. This is the third suicide by a coaching student in Kota this year. The city, a prominent hub for coaching institutes, saw 17 such cases in 2024.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Bonanza before budget

The Cabinet has greenlit the 8th Pay Commission, setting the stage for a revision of salaries of central govt employees

The Union Cabinet's approval of the 8th Pay Commission ahead of the budget marks a significant step toward revising the salary and pension structure for over 49 lakh central government employees and nearly 65 lakh pensioners. Chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the decision emphasises improving quality of life and stimulating economic activity through enhanced consumption. The 8th Pay Commission will be tasked with revising salaries, allowances and pensions for central government employees and pensioners. Consultations will be held with central and state governments and other stakeholders before finalising its recommendations. The Commission's chairman and two members are to be appointed shortly, and its findings will replace the existing 7th Pay Commission framework, whose term ends in 2026. Historically, pay commissions are constituted every decade to address inflation, economic growth and employees' changing financial needs.



Prime Minister Modi underscored that the revised pay structure will boost consumption by increasing disposable incomes. Higher salaries and pensions are expected to lead to increased spending on goods and services, driving demand in sectors such as retail, real estate, and automobiles.

This consumption surge could further stimulate production and employment, creating a positive feedback loop in the economy. The Commission's recommendations are expected to address the rising cost of living and improve the financial wellbeing of central government employees and pensioners. While the revisions will inject liquidity into the economy, they will also impose a significant financial burden on the exchequer. Increased salary outlays may necessitate budgetary adjustments, potentially impacting allocations for other sectors like infrastructure and welfare. Although PSU and state government employees are outside the direct purview of central pay commissions, the 8th Pay Commission's recommendations often set a benchmark. Many state governments and PSUs align their pay scales with central government standards, amplifying the financial impact across the broader public sector. This could also have adverse effect on the economy. Higher disposable incomes could lead to demand-pull inflation, particularly in essential goods and services. Managing inflation will require a balanced monetary policy. Besides, the exclusion of PSU employees and 'gramin dak sevaks' from central pay commission benefits may intensify demands for similar revisions, potentially leading to unrest and political pressure. Increased spending on salaries and pensions may constrain the government's ability to invest in capital-intensive projects, potentially slowing long-term economic growth. Despite challenges, it can serve as a catalyst for the economy by generating demand and boosting production.

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PICTALK



Tourists at Mall Road amid snowfall, in Manali

A spectacle of faith, unity and cosmic significance

The Kumbh Mela highlights the blend of tradition and modernity. It links cosmic phenomena with earthly rituals while fostering community feeling



RAJDEEP PATHAK

The grand Maha Kumbh Mela, one of the most magnificent spiritual gatherings in the world, is here. The Uttar Pradesh government has meticulously prepared to host this sacred festival – happening once every 12 years – with Prime Minister Narendra Modi personally monitoring the developments. Began on January 13, 2025, the Maha Kumbh is anticipated to draw an awe-inspiring congregation of over 45 crores – a footfall of around 450 million pilgrims, saints, ascetics and tourists – devotees.

At the heart of this divine celebration, is the (coming together) 'Sangam' – the sacred confluence of the Ganga, Yamuna, and the mystical Saraswati rivers. Millions of devotees will come together to take a holy dip, seeking spiritual cleansing and blessings. The Maha Kumbh is a timeless testament to faith, unity, and the eternal connection between humanity and the divine, that owes its origins to mythology and history. Devotees believe that a dip during the auspicious planetary alignments cleanses sins and paves the way for Moksha (liberation). Swami Sivananda, the Yoga Guru, and a proponent of Vedanta, rightly pointed out that "The holy dip at the Kumbh Mela is not just a ritual; it is a profound surrender to the divine." Mythologically connected, the legend of 'Samudra Manthan', or the Churning of the Ocean, is the cornerstone of its mythological significance. According to ancient scriptures, gods and demons churned the ocean to obtain the nectar of immortality (Amrit). As the Gods carried away the nectar, a few drops fell at four locations – Haridwar, Prayagraj, Nashik and Ujjain – and these places became sacred. Thus began the tradition of the Kumbh Mela. Scholar Diana Eck, professor of Comparative Religion and Indian Studies at Harvard University notes that "The Kumbh Mela reflects the Indian ethos of integrating mythology with geography, turning the mundane into the sacred." References to Kumbha appear in Vedic texts like the Rigveda,



Yajurveda, Samaveda, and Atharvaveda. It is also linked to the zodiac sign Aquarius, an astrological interpretation influenced by Greek ideas in the late 1st millennium CE. 'Mela' means "assembly" or "gathering" and signifies fairs or communal celebrations, as found in ancient Hindu texts. Together, Kumbha Mela refers to a "gathering centered around water or the nectar of immortality." Historically, the first recorded mention of the Kumbh Mela can be traced back to the writings of the Chinese traveller Hiuen Tsang in the 7th century CE. Hiuen Tsang documented several key events during Harsha's (Harshavardhana ruled over much of northern India from 606 to 647 AD and his reign is regarded as one of relative peace and prosperity) reign. Tsang also documented the Kumbh Mela festival in Prayag which Harsha attended. Over centuries, the festival evolved from a modest gathering of ascetics to a colossal event that attracts millions. The historical transformation of the Kumbh Mela underscores its resilience and adaptability, blending spiritual fervour with societal changes. A defining feature of the Kumbh Mela is the presence of saints, seers, and spiritual leaders



REFERENCES TO KUMBH APPEAR IN VEDIC TEXTS LIKE THE RIGVEDA, YAJURVEDA, SAMAVEDA, AND ATHARVAVEDA. IT IS ALSO LINKED TO THE ZODIAC SIGN AQUARIUS, AN ASTROLOGICAL INTERPRETATION INFLUENCED BY GREEK IDEAS IN THE LATE 1ST MILLENNIUM CE

who guide the masses. Various 'Akharas' (monastic orders) play a pivotal role in preserving and propagating Sanatan Dharma. The ascetics, often clad in saffron robes or ash, symbolise the renunciation of worldly desires. The ritual bath in the rivers further holds deep symbolic meaning. It signifies the washing away of one's ego and sins, allowing a fresh spiritual beginning. Historian William Dalrymple observes, "The saints at the Kumbh Mela are the custodians of India's timeless spiritual heritage." The Kumbh Mela beautifully embodies the fusion of religion and science. Its timing, rooted in precise astronomical calculations, reflects the profound significance of Hindu cosmology. When Jupiter enters Aquarius and the Sun moves into Aries, planetary alignments create an auspicious period for spiritual connection. This sacred festival links cosmic phenomena with earthly rituals, highlighting the deep interconnection between the universe and human spirituality. Aryabhata's pioneering work in celestial phenomena, including planetary motion and eclipses, continues to influence the Kumbh's timing. The Kumbh Mela is also a melting pot of cultures,

philosophies, and humanity. Participants range from reclusive ascetics to common people and even international visitors. This diversity underscores the universality of the quest for spiritual enlightenment. Sociologist Sudhir Kakar once wrote that the "Kumbh Mela is not merely a religious event but a grand celebration of human interconnectedness." The exchange of ideas, rituals, and philosophies at the Mela fosters a unique sense of global unity. Hosting millions of pilgrims at the Kumbh Mela demands meticulous planning, leveraging cutting-edge technologies like AI-powered crowd management systems, drone surveillance for security, and mobile health clinics to handle medical emergencies. Mobile apps and live-streaming services ensured smooth communication and global accessibility for devotees. The 2025 Kumbh will span an expanded area of 800 hectares, featuring 1.8 lakh tents and 101 smart parking facilities for five lakh vehicles daily. Despite the challenges, the event seamlessly blends tradition and modernity. (The writer is Programme Executive, Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Samiti; views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

ISRO'S DOCKING MISSION SUCCESSFUL

Madam — ISRO docking two fast-moving spacecraft in space is a highly complex operation with numerous benefits. Docking enables the assembly of modular space stations, telescopes, or other large structures in orbit that cannot be launched in one piece. Example: Docking was essential in constructing the International Space Station (ISS). Docking allows for the transfer of astronauts and cargo between spacecraft or from a spacecraft to a space station. This supports long-term missions, resupply and the exchange of crew. This extends the operational life of expensive assets like communication or scientific satellites. Docking technology allows spacecraft to refuel in space, enabling longer missions or supporting reusable spacecraft. This is crucial for deep space exploration missions. Docking is a critical step for assembling spacecraft or transferring crew for missions to the Moon, Mars, or beyond. Modular spacecraft for such missions often require multiple launches and dockings to combine their components. Docking facilitates international cooperation, as different countries can launch modules or experiments that dock with a shared platform, like a space station. Docking provides a means for evacuation or rescue in case of emergencies aboard a spacecraft or space station. Spacecraft like crew capsules (e.g., SpaceX Dragon, ISRO's Gaganyaan) rely on docking to connect with orbital stations, making them reusable and cost-effective. Successfully executing docking operations demonstrates technological prowess, boosts national pride, and establishes the country as a leader in space exploration. Docking operations are a cornerstone of space exploration and mission sustainability, enabling long-term presence and work in space. This achievement has placed India in the exclusive and elite league of the US, Russia, and China! This docking was successful on January 16, 2025!

Gopalaswamy J | Chennai

India strengthens its naval fleet



After two days of the inauguration of the strategically important Z-Morh or Sonamarg Tunnel in Jammu and Kashmir, Prime Minister Narendra Modi dedicated to the nation three frontline naval combatants—the destroyer INS Surat, the frigate INS Nilgiri and the Scorpene-class submarine INS Vaghsheer on their commissioning at the Naval Dockyard in Mumbai on the occasion of Army Day on

Wednesday. It is for the first time that all three frontline platforms have been indigenously developed in the country. The simultaneous commissioning of these vessels is a shot in the arm for the Indian Navy, which is preparing itself to challenge China's hegemony in the Indo-Pacific region. Equipped with the advanced technology, all three vessels have boosted the Indian Navy's capabilities to respond to various maritime challenges more effectively. In fact, public sector shipyards such as GRSE Kolkata, MDL Mazgaon, CSL Kochi, GSL Goa and HSL Vizag Besides immense contributions to defence preparation, the Indian Navy has contributed immensely to boosting operational preparedness of the Indian Navy by completing various shipbuilding projects in a very efficient and time-bound manner.

Manoj Parashar | Ghaziabad

ACTOR SAIF ALI KHAN ATTACKED

Madam — Bollywood actor Saif Ali Khan was stabbed six times after confronting an intruder, who had a confrontation with Khan's maid before the actor intervened, resulting in a physical struggle, in his Bandra residence early Thursday morning. The intruder fled after a violent altercation, and Khan was rushed to Lilavati Hospital by his son, Ibrahim and a caretaker, where he has successfully emerged from surgery and is now out of danger. The actor is currently recovering, with doctors closely monitoring his condition. People wonder how an intruder can enter the building and reach the 11th floor in a high-profile building that is well guarded and then escape also. Moreover, all in Bandra. An area that has the highest concentration of celebrities, which is supposed to have adequate security. No doubt 54-year-old Saif is a fit person, so he could face the intruder. Wishing Saif Ali Khan a speedy recovery, trusting that the law will take its course and those responsible will be held accountable.

Bidyut Kumar Chatterjee | Faridabad

HAMAS-ISRAEL TRUCE DECLARED

Madam — The ceasefire accord emerged after mediation by Qatar, Egypt and the US to stop the war that began with deadly Hamas attacks on Israel and saw Israeli forces kill tens of thousands of Palestinians and devastate Gaza. It is a welcome move. As per the deal, Israel and Hamas have agreed to halt the war in Gaza and see the release of Israeli hostages and Palestinian prisoners. It is the most significant breakthrough in 15 months of war that began in October 2023. Firstly, hostages in Gaza and Palestinian prisoners in Israel would be freed, and Gazans who have been displaced would be allowed to start returning home. During this period, Israeli troops would pull out of all populated areas in Gaza while the Palestinians would also return to their neighbourhoods in all the areas of Gaza. The second stage would be a permanent end to the war, according to Biden.

P Victor Selvaraj | Tirunelveli

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

The silent struggles of a daughter-in-law: A call to change

Allowing a daughter-in-law to flourish in her own right doesn't diminish the family's unity—it strengthens it

Living in a joint family is rarely simple, but for a daughter-in-law, it may be a delicate balancing act filled with judgement and criticism. In many households, the role of a daughter-in-law is laden with unspoken expectations, leaving little room for her individuality. It's time we acknowledge these silent struggles and push for a more inclusive and empathetic family dynamic. A daughter-in-law often steps into a household as an outsider, expected to adapt seamlessly to a new way of life. From changing her surname to understanding the intricacies of family traditions, she embarks on a journey of transformation. Yet, the term "in-law" itself can feel like a trap—a constant reminder of her peripheral status in the family. For many, this word symbolises the invisible cage of societal expectations and sacrifices that are seldom reciprocated. "It feels as though I'm constantly being watched," shares Anonymous, 37, who recently relocated to live with her in-laws following her marriage. "It can be exhausting to sense scrutiny at every corner,



whether it's about your outfit or your manner of speaking." These tales are not one of a kind. Across the nation, countless women grapple with the challenge of fulfilling the expectations of others while striving to maintain their sense of self. Some of my friends and cousins have admitted to bending the truth just to carve out a little time for themselves—a brief coffee catch-up or a quick getaway to relax with friends. Some even refer to it as a means of 'escaping' the steadfast pressures of family life. But why should it come to this? Why must a daughter-in-law justify her need for a breather?

The narrative that has been perpetuated for generations—that she must be the glue holding the family together—needs an overhaul. Living in a joint family should not mean sacrificing one's freedom or sense of self. It's high time families rethink the dynamics and extend the same courtesy of individuality and space to their daughters-in-law that they offer their sons.

Empathy and equality within a household aren't luxuries; they are necessities for harmony. Allowing a daughter-in-law to flourish in her own right doesn't diminish the family's unity—it strengthens it. Moreover, it sets an exam-

ple for future generations, teaching them to prioritise respect over rigid roles. Transformation begins with dialogue. It is essential for families to recognise the contributions a daughter-in-law makes and to foster open communication regarding shared responsibilities. Partners also hold a crucial position in connecting their spouses with their families, making certain that everyone feels appreciated and heard. At its core, a family is about mutual love, respect, and support. Let's replace the stifling word "in-law" with something more inclusive—perhaps "in-love," symbolising acceptance and belonging. After all, isn't that what a family should truly be about? For daughters-in-law across the world, the message is clear: You are not alone in your struggle. For families, the challenge is to listen, adapt, and foster a space where everyone, regardless of their title, feels at home. It's not just about rewriting roles—it's about rewriting the narrative for a more equitable tomorrow. (The writer is a freelance writer; views are personal)



RACHNA LAKHPATRI

FIRST COLUMN

OUR ACTIONS
SHAPE OUR LIVES

Karmaphalas—the results of our actions—are an undeniable force shaping our lives



AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

We all should know about karmaphalas. These are the results of both good and bad karma (acts) done by us in the past with our minds, words and bodies. I have mentioned minds separately from bodies because karmas done by the mind are subtle. And they can be quite lethal. What is a mental disease? You have guessed right; it is caused by our minds. Similarly, words are no less dangerous. Yes, words can be very deadly, as experienced by all of us, when we choose to speak foolishly. And these bad karmaphalas can manifest at any age but they hurt the most in old age when we are weak and not left with many options.

This is when a person laments about his bad luck and there are not many sympathisers. Aren't we written off as we age? This article describes what we can do about it. We are not so helpless after all. The first step is to stop doing all bad acts right from this moment. And we know what these are. Goodness has to increase in us by doing all acts of goodness.

We must speak pleasantly; we should see goodness programmes; we should stick to foods in goodness; and so on. What this will do is protect us from the ill effects of our present acts, to begin with. Controller mental must be curbed; one must become realistic because there is only one controller and that is God. If it wasn't so we will obtain whatever we desire, which hardly even hap-



pens. The ego must be curbed because there is only one superior entity, which is God. All our lives we try to prove our superiority and what happens? We become very unpopular with others, especially with our family members, whom we desperately need in our old age. Spiritual practices must be started in the right earnest. They will make a lot of sense if we realise that we are souls, parts of God.

Shouldn't parts be dependent on the whole? Should we not be respectful towards God, just like a son is supposed to be towards his father? Don't we thank others when they do us some favour? God is forever doing us many favours. To begin with, He has provided all essentials free like the light of the sun, water, air containing oxygen, etc. God has to help ultimately because fate cannot be changed by anyone else. He also doesn't, but helps to deal with bad karmaphalas; we won't end up badly. (9.31) This is a very big 'kripa' but more important is His mercy in protecting us from our good karmaphalas, when we are most likely to hurt ourselves badly. Because it is hard to tolerate good times. And God and only God can help in improving our nature, which is also part of our fate. Doesn't our nature let us down time and again? We see people destroying themselves by angry acts, lusty behaviour, envious attitudes, etc. God protects us from foolish acts, if we remain in His shelter. I am very scared about the prospect of ill fate in my old age when I am already weak. God has to protect me.

I am not taking any chances; I have taken God's shelter. Only God is the one who can help, being the owner and controller. God can intervene and God does for His devotees. (The Bhagavad-Geeta 18.58) Wouldn't this make us peaceful? It has made me gradually as my connection with God is getting strengthened by my spiritual practices. Please don't take chances.

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

Reverse brain drain: A game-changer for growth



WASEEM JAVED

By harnessing the knowledge, networks and expertise of these returnees, India is laying the foundation for a resilient and competitive economy

India has witnessed a mass exodus of talent for decades, as highly skilled professionals and students left the country in search of better opportunities abroad. This phenomenon, known as 'brain drain', has historically deprived the country of its brightest minds. However, the tide is reversing, with individuals returning to their home country, as seen in the recent past. With acquired skills and rich experience, the 'reverse brain drain' is increasingly becoming a powerful force in India's economic growth and development. This comes against the backdrop of India's fast-paced economic growth, combined with government initiatives and an evolving entrepreneurial ecosystem that has made the country an attractive destination for global talent, including those who once left its shores. This shift is not about just people coming back; it's about knowledge transfer, innovation, and global networks essential to building a competitive and resilient economy.

Economic and Entrepreneurial Opportunities Driving Return

In most cases, what has caused this reverse brain drain is the prospect of available opportunities in India. The growth pattern of India as a country with an upward economic trajectory brings with it demand for science, technology, and innovation skills from professionals in their fields.

Returnees easily get absorbed in suitable roles since their international experience puts them on top of the sought-after candidates at startups, large multinational companies, and research centres. Government initiatives like Make in India, Startup India, and Atmanirbhar Bharat have further made India more attractive. These initiatives encourage entrepreneurship, self-reliance, and innovation by offering financial incentives, regulatory support, and access to infrastructure. Thus, many Indian professionals who had earlier worked in global hubs such as Silicon Valley are returning to start their startups or take up leadership roles in Indian enterprises.

For example, several Indian entrepreneurs who have returned from the United States or the United Kingdom are at the helm of billion-dollar startups in India today. They cut across fintech, e-commerce, health tech, and renewable energy among other sectors that create jobs and spur economic growth. Their global networks and access to venture capital give them a competitive edge that will allow them to scale their businesses quickly and effectively.

The Role of Overseas Education in Shaping Talent

Education in foreign lands serves as the core of the reverse brain drain. In 2024, more than 13.35 lakh students from India pursued education abroad, of which the USA, Canada, the UK, Australia, and Germany were among the top destinations. In general, courses in engineering, business management, medicine, and technology attract Indian students with promising career avenues. This international education equips students with advanced knowledge, technical skills, and a global perspective. Many also gain valuable work experience abroad before deciding to return to India.

A key facilitator in this journey has been the rise of AI-powered consultancy plat-



GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES LIKE MAKE IN INDIA, STARTUP INDIA, AND ATMANIRBHAR BHARAT HAVE FURTHER MADE INDIA MORE ATTRACTIVE. THESE INITIATIVES ENCOURAGE ENTREPRENEURSHIP, SELF-RELIANCE, AND INNOVATION BY OFFERING FINANCIAL INCENTIVES, REGULATORY SUPPORT AND ACCESS TO INFRASTRUCTURE

forms that streamline the process of studying abroad. These platforms help students identify the best courses, universities, and countries based on their aspirations and career goals.

They also help with visa processes, and education loans, and even offer post-admission help, so everything goes off smoothly. These consultancies not only empower students in terms of succeeding abroad but also lay the groundwork for their potential contributions upon returning to India while bridging the gap between students and global education systems.

Benefits of Reverse Brain Drain for India

The reverse brain drain is an economy-changing force for India, bringing skilled professionals back to drive progress across sectors. In the case of technology, returnees provide cutting-edge expertise in areas like artificial intelligence, biotechnology, and clean energy, which ensure that India is not left behind globally.

The knowledge that these returnees provide creates technological advances that benefit both industries and society. Entrepreneurship and innovation also pick up pace as returnees start new ventures, create jobs, and develop innovative products and services that address local and global challenges. This not only increases employment but also makes India a creative solutions hub.

Furthermore, these professionals enhance scientific collaboration by connecting Indian institutions with international research networks, thereby facilitating the exchange of ideas and resources in areas such as healthcare and renewable energy. The economic impact is equally strong as the

reverse brain drain strengthens productivity, draws in foreign investment, and propels GDP growth.

Key Challenges and the Way Forward

Although reverse brain drain promises to boost Indian growth immensely, bureaucratic red tape, infrastructural inadequacies, and differing work environments in India versus the developed world will still prevent most professionals from coming back. This will only come true when registration procedures, tax regimes, and the regime for intellectual property become more simplified, paving the way for returnees to establish enterprises or meaningfully contribute to organizations. To tap into returning talent effectively, India must improve its infrastructure: world-class research facilities, modern educational institutions, and strong health care. More competitive incentives to attract international talent include tax breaks, grants for research, and easier access to funding. Only then will the reverse brain drain convert into practical input toward the nation's economic growth and innovation.

Government Initiatives and Policy Support

The Indian government has been proactively capitalising on reverse brain drain. By setting up innovation hubs, funding startup companies, and collaborating with world-class research institutes, the country is attracting much-needed talent as well as fostering innovation. Many countries have implemented policies and incentives to encourage skilled professionals to return to their home countries. For example, Taiwan created the Hsinchu Science Park and offered tax cuts to encourage the development of high-tech industries. Such poli-

cies not only encourage the return of skilled professionals but also provide them with a platform to flourish.

The Global Context and Its Implications

Interestingly, reverse brain drain is not an Indian phenomenon alone. Developed countries like the United States and the United Kingdom are losing talent due to restrictive immigration policies and limited opportunities for career advancement. For example, America's flawed immigration policies have inadvertently driven away skilled professionals who are now contributing to India's growth.

This shift points to a wider paradigm wherein developing countries are transforming centres of innovation and economic activity. It could also help India emerge as a global leader in sectors ranging from technology to healthcare.

A Bright Future for Reverse Brain Drain

The reverse brain drain represents a new paradigm in India's journey to become a global economic superpower. In this new scenario, talent can be an asset to the country by nurturing innovation and fostering collaboration. With government support, private sector participation, and an emphasis on developing world-class infrastructure, the country is poised to turn reverse brain drain into a sustained growth driver. In doing so, this movement is not only for India but reshapes the global talent landscape with a new reality of importance— inclusive and dynamic economies in a more integrated and interconnected world.

(The writer is the founder and CEO of EduVib; views are personal)

Andhra Pradesh's journey towards zero hunger and inclusive education

The Dokka Seethamma Mid-Day Meal scheme is a testament to the State's commitment to inclusivity and reforming the education system

Since Independence, food security has been a significant concern in India. Despite notable progress toward achieving Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 2: Zero Hunger, India still grapples with the challenge of undernutrition.

According to a United Nations report, the country accounts for nearly 195 million undernourished individuals, with children constituting 43 per cent of this population. Various initiatives, such as the Public Distribution System (PDS) and the PM Poshan Mid-Day Meal scheme, have been implemented to address this pressing issue.

Historical Roots of Mid-Day Meal Schemes

The origins of the Mid-Day Meal scheme in India can be

traced back to the colonial era. In 1925, the Madras Presidency proposed the first-ever Mid-Day Meal initiative for underprivileged children. Tamil Nadu became the first state to implement this idea, with Sourashtra Boys Higher Secondary School in Madurai serving meals to children in 1955.

By the 1980s, this programme gained widespread acceptance, particularly with the introduction of the "Nutritious Noon-Meal Scheme" by Tamil Nadu's then Chief Minister, M G Ramachandran. This initiative aimed to provide food to 6.8 million malnourished children in the state. Over the years, the programme has demonstrated the strong correlation between nutritious meals and improved educa-



T V KATTIMANI

tion. For children in tribal and socio-economically disadvantaged communities, the scheme has proven to be a lifeline. Many of these children, previously engaged in household activities or income generation due to food insecurity, could now attend school and pursue their right to education. The programme also had a transformative impact on children from Socio-

Economic Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs), including Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, De-notified Tribes, Nomadic Tribes, and girl children.

Dokka Seethamma Mid-Day Meal Scheme

In a significant step forward, the Andhra Pradesh government recently launched the "Dokka Seethamma Mid-Day Meal Scheme." This initiative, named after Dokka Seethamma—revered as Aparna Annapuram—provides free meals to students in junior colleges across the state. Seethamma, born in 1841 in Mandapet village, was renowned for her compassion and dedication to serving the needy. Despite limited formal education, she imbibed strong moral values through



stories and songs from her childhood. Along with her husband, Dokka Joganna, she provided food and shelter to travelers and disaster-stricken communities near the Godavari River. Her legacy of humanitarian service remains a beacon of inclusivity and maternal love.

The Dokka Seethamma scheme is the first of its kind in India, targeting intermediate students. Benefiting 148,419 students across 475 government junior colleges in Andhra Pradesh, the pro-

gramme aims to reduce dropout rates, enhance academic focus, and improve overall student health. By lessening the financial burden on low-income families, the initiative also promotes greater equity in education. It sets a model for other states to emulate, addressing hunger while fostering a nurturing environment for academic and personal growth.

Complementary Initiatives for Inclusivity

In addition to the Dokka Seethamma scheme, Andhra Pradesh has revived the "Anna Canteens" initiative. This program offers wholesome meals at just Rs 5 to economically disadvantaged individuals, significantly alleviating hunger and improving living standards. By ensuring affordable

access to food, the state aims to bridge socioeconomic disparities and support marginalised communities.

For tribal students, particularly girls, the Dokka Seethamma scheme has been a game-changer. Tribal communities often face acute food insecurity due to geographical remoteness and limited resources. Free nutritious meals enable tribal children to focus on their education instead of household chores or income generation. The scheme also addresses educational inequity by encouraging families to prioritise their children's schooling. For tribal girls, the program has a transformative impact. Social and financial pressures often force girls to leave school prematurely, but free meals reduce fam-

ily burdens and promote their continued education.

A Vision for a Better Future

The Mid-Day Meal scheme and similar initiatives signify more than just food distribution—they represent a commitment to empowering the marginalised and uplifting the underprivileged. These programs not only ensure access to nutritious meals but also encourage higher education, better living standards, and healthier lifestyles. By fostering cooperation among teachers, students, and staff, the scheme revives the ancient "Gurukula" system of holistic education, emphasising both mental and physical wellbeing.

(The writer is Vice Chancellor of Central Tribal University of Andhra Pradesh; views are personal)

How long will it take and how much will it cost to rebuild Gaza?

PTI ■ GAZA CITY

Palestinians in the Gaza Strip are eager to leave miserable tent camps and return to their homes if a long-awaited ceasefire agreement halts the Israel-Hamas war, but many will find there is nothing left and no way to rebuild. Israeli bombardment and ground operations have transformed entire neighbourhoods in several cities into rubble-strewn wastelands, with blackened shells of buildings and mounds of debris stretching away in all directions.

Major roads have been plowed up. Critical water and electricity infrastructure is in ruins. Most hospitals no longer function. The agreement for a phased ceasefire and the release of hostages held by Hamas-led militants does not say who will govern Gaza after the war, or whether Israel and Egypt will lift a blockade limiting

the movement of people and goods that they imposed when Hamas seized power in 2007.

The United Nations says it could take more than 350 years to rebuild if the blockade remains. The full extent of the damage will only be known when the fighting ends and inspectors have full access to the territory. The most heavily destroyed part of Gaza, in the north, has been sealed off and largely depopulated by Israeli forces in an operation that began early October.

Using satellite data, the United Nations estimated last month that 69 per cent of the structures in Gaza have been damaged or destroyed, including over 245,000 homes.

The World Bank estimated USD 18.5 billion in damage — nearly the combined economic output of the West Bank and Gaza in 2022 — from just the first four



the size of the Great Pyramid of Giza. With over 100 trucks working full time, it would take over 15 years to clear the rubble

away, and there is little open space in the narrow coastal territory that is home to some 2.3 million Palestinians. Carting the debris away will

also be complicated by the fact that it contains huge amounts of unexploded ordnance and other harmful materials, as well as human

remains. Gaza's health ministry says thousands of people killed in airstrikes are still buried under the rubble. The rubble clearance and eventual rebuilding of homes will require billions of dollars and the ability to bring construction materials and heavy equipment into the territory — neither of which is assured. The ceasefire agreement calls for a three to five-year reconstruction project to begin in its final phase, after all the remaining 100 hostages have been released, and Israeli troops have withdrawn from the territory. But getting to that point will require agreement on the second and most difficult phase of the deal, which still must be negotiated. Even then, the ability to rebuild will depend on the blockade, which critics have long decried as a form of collective punishment. Israel says it is needed to prevent Hamas from

rebuilding its military capabilities, noting that cement and metal pipes can also be used for tunnels and rockets. Israel might be more inclined to lift the blockade if Hamas were no longer in power, but there are no plans for an alternative government. The US and much of the international community want a revitalised Palestinian Authority to govern the West Bank and Gaza with the support of Arab countries ahead of eventual statehood. But that's a nonstarter for Israel's government, which is opposed to a Palestinian state and has ruled out any role in Gaza for the Western-backed authority. International donors are unlikely to invest in an ungoverned territory that has seen five wars in less than two decades, which means the sprawling tent camps along the coast could become a permanent feature of life in Gaza.

'Elon Musk's support for European far-right completely unacceptable'

PTI ■ BERLIN

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz said Friday that Elon Musk's support for the far-right in Europe is "completely unacceptable", adding to his previous criticism of Musk's interventions in the German election campaign. Musk has said over the past month that only the far-right party Alternative for Germany, or AfD, can "save Germany".

Last week, the tech billionaire livestreamed on his social media platform X a chat with Alice Weidel, the party's candidate for chancellor in Germany's February 23 election, amplifying its message ahead of the vote.

His interest in Germany and politics elsewhere in Europe, after he poured money and energy into helping Donald Trump win the US election, has set off alarm bells among politicians across the continent.

The Tesla and SpaceX chief executive has also demanded the release of jailed UK anti-



Islam extremist Tommy Robinson and called British Prime Minister Keir Starmer's government "tyrannical", claiming Starmer should be in prison. Scholz has said it's important to "stay cool" over personal attacks, but that Germany's way forward "will not be decided by the owners of social media channels" but by German voters. Asked on Friday about Musk's interventions, he said it's important to "criticise the

right thing." "What we must criticise is not that a billionaire, or a billionaire from other countries in a global world, expresses his opinion — but what he says," Scholz said at a news conference. "He supports the extreme right throughout Europe, in Britain, in Germany, in many, many other countries, and that is something that is completely unacceptable." "This endangers the democratic development of Europe, it endangers our community, and that must be criticised," Scholz said. Polls show AfD in second place ahead of the election, with support of about 20 per cent, but Weidel has no realistic chance of becoming chancellor because other parties refuse to work with the party. Centre-right opposition leader Friedrich Merz has also criticised Musk's endorsement of AfD. Merz's Union bloc leads polls and he is the favourite to become Germany's next leader.

3 lawyers for late Russian opp leader Navalny jailed by court

PTI ■ PETUSKI

Three lawyers who once represented the late Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny were convicted by a court Friday as part of the Kremlin's crackdown on dissent that has reached levels unseen since Soviet times. Vadim Kobzev, Igor Sergunin and Alexei Liptser were already in custody and were given sentences from 3 1/2 to five years by a court in the town of Petushki, about 100 km east of Moscow. They were arrested in October 2023 on charges of involvement with extremist groups, as Navalny's networks were deemed by authorities. The case was widely seen as a way to increase pressure on the opposition to discourage defence lawyers from taking political cases. At the time, Navalny was serving a 19-year prison term on several criminal convictions, including extremism.

He died in a Russian prison camp in February 2023. The independent Russian newspaper Novaya Gazeta reported that Kobzev said in his final statement in court on Jan 10 that "we are being tried for transmitting Navalny's thoughts to other people". The independent Russian news outlet Mediazona reported three journalists attending the sentencing were detained and taken to a police station. Navalny's networks were deemed extremist following a 2021 ruling that outlawed his organisations — the Foundation for Fighting Corruption and a network of regional offices — as extremist groups. That ruling, which exposed anyone involved with the organisations to prosecution, was condemned by Kremlin critics as politically motivated and designed to stifle Navalny's activities. According to Navalny's allies, authorities accused the

lawyers of using their position to pass information from him to his team. Navalny, an anti-corruption campaigner and outspoken opponent of President Vladimir Putin, was arrested in 2021 upon his return from Germany, where he was recuperating from a nerve agent poisoning he blamed on the Kremlin. He was ordered to serve 2 1/2 years in prison. After two more trials, his sentence was extended to 19 years. He and his allies said the charges were politically motivated and accused the Kremlin of seeking to jail him for life. In December 2023, Navalny was moved from a penal colony in the Vladimir region east of Moscow to one above the Arctic Circle, where he died in February at the age of 47 under still-unexplained circumstances. His widow, Yulia Navalnaya, and members of his team alleged he was killed on orders from the Kremlin. Officials have

rejected the accusation. Two other Navalny lawyers, Olga Mikhailova and Alexander Fedulov, are on a wanted list but no longer live in Russia. Mikhailova, who defended Navalny for a decade, said she was charged in absentia with extremism. Kobzev, Liptser and Sergunin have been deemed to be political prisoners, according to human rights advocates from Memorial, Russia's most prominent rights group that won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2022. The group demands their immediate release. Independent Russian media reported Friday that Konstantin Kotov, an activist accused of donating to Navalny's organisation, left Russia before he was due to appear in a Moscow court Friday. He told Mediazona he decided to leave after a heart surgeon, Ivan Tishchenko, was jailed for four years for donating around \$34 to Navalny's organisation.

Pence calls on Trump to renew US support for Taiwan

Taipei (PTI): Former US vice president Mike Pence called on President-elect Donald Trump to renew his pledge to support Taiwan in the event of a Chinese invasion. Speaking during a visit to Taipei on Friday, Pence said China's annexation of the island would impact global trade, technology and nuclear proliferation. "The fall of Taiwan would likely spark a new nuclear arms race," he said. "Smaller Asian nations concerned about Chinese aggression would no longer be confident of American deterrence. American security commitments would be viewed as empty promises, destabilising not only this region, but the wider world." He added that nations would feel "they had no choice but to develop their own nuclear arsenal", which would increase the risk of global nuclear confrontation. Pence, who served as vice president during Trump's first term but had a falling out with his former boss over Trump's refusal to concede the 2020 election, sought to reassure Taiwanese people of Washington's continued support. The US is Taiwan's main arms provider and favours maintaining the status quo between Taipei and Beijing, which has threatened to annex the self-ruled island, by force if necessary. On his campaign trail last year, Trump cast doubt over the US' continued backing of Taiwan, accusing the island of stealing the chip industry from the US and saying Taiwan should pay the US for protection against China. Pence, speaking at an educational forum in Taiwan's capital, said he was convinced the US would never "abandon" its allies across the Pacific Ocean. "I call on the new administration in Washington, and freedom-loving nations around the world to urgently renew our commitment for providing Taiwan with the support it needs to defend itself and its freedom," he said. Pence also called on Trump's incoming administration to start negotiations for a free trade agreement with Taiwan, a development that's long been floated by various US and Taiwanese politicians and that would be sure to anger China.

New Okhla Industrial Development Authority

NOIDA Administrative Building, Sector-6, NOIDA-201301 (U.P.) Website : www.noidaauthorityonline.in

नीलामी की विज्ञप्ति

मुख्य कार्यपालक अधिकारी, नवीन ओखला औद्योगिक विकास प्राधिकरण की ओर से भण्डार क्रय विभाग सैक्टर-39 के भण्डार में जमा निष्क्रिय सामग्री जैसा है जहाँ है के आधार पर दिनांक 04.02.2025 को प्रातः 11:00 बजे समिति के समक्ष नीलामी की जानी है। नीलामी में भाग लेने के इच्छुक व्यक्ति/संस्था, निष्क्रिय सामान का निरीक्षण किसी भी कार्यदिवस में दिनांक 20.01.2025 से दिनांक 03.02.2025 तक कर सकते हैं। नीलामी में भाग लेने वाले प्रत्येक व्यक्ति को बोली बोलने से पूर्व रु. 90,791/- (रुपये नब्बे हजार सात सौ इक्यान्वे मात्र) धरोहर राशि एफ.डी.आर./डी.डी. के रूप में नवीन ओखला औद्योगिक विकास प्राधिकरण के पक्ष में बोली बोलने की तिथि से पूर्व पैन नम्बर सहित भण्डार क्रय विभाग के कार्यालय में जमा करानी होगी। धरोहर राशि Refundable होगी। सबसे अधिक बोली लगाने वाले को नीलामी के तुरन्त बाद नीलामी राशि का 25% मुतातान तुरन्त जमा करना अनिवार्य है। सामग्री 20 दिन के अन्दर बाकी मुतातान करके उठाना होगा, अन्यथा धरोहर राशि एवं 25% मुतातान राशि जप्त कर लिये जायेगे। नीलामी होने वाली सामग्री की सूची भण्डार क्रय विभाग के नोटिस बोर्ड व सैक्टर-39 स्थित कार्यालय में कार्य दिवसों में देखी जा प्राप्त की जा सकती है। किसी भी प्रकार का अतिरिक्त कर देय होगा। सक्षम अधिकारी को किसी भी बोली को निरस्त करने का पूर्ण अधिकार होगा।

भण्डार क्रय अधिकारी, नौएडा
कार्यालय : सैक्टर-39, नौएडा

CLEAN, GREEN, SAFE & SECURE NOIDA

Lloyd Austin ends his term marred by Afghanistan but buoyed by Ukraine

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin will bid farewell Friday to the forces and personnel he has led through a tumultuous term that had three major military crises, a global pandemic and a personal brush with cancer that became a flashpoint for the way it was mishandled. Austin, 71, spent 41 years of his life in a military uniform. He retired as a highly decorated four-star general who earned a Silver Star — an award given for gallantry in action — for leading troops from the front in the initial 2003 invasion of Iraq. He is one of the many Pentagon leaders who have served in combat and has "dust on his boots" — something President-elect Donald Trump's choice for defence secretary, Pete Hegseth, has falsely claimed is his distinction and why he is needed to restore a military

Graffiti on Assad's prison walls express Syrians' fears and loves

Damascus (PTI): Languishing in a dungeon cell of Syria's then-ruler Bashar Assad, an unknown prisoner scrawled a verse of Arabic poetry on his cell wall — an expression of pain and love amid his torment. "My country, even if it oppresses me, is dear. My people, even if uncharitable to me, are generous," he wrote. It's a well-known verse, composed 800 years ago by a poet defying a tyrannical caliph. As you walk through the cold, dark cells of Assad's prisons, the graffiti on the walls cry out. They plead to God and yearn for loved ones. Often mysterious, they preserve fragments of what anonymous men were thinking as they faced torture and death. "Trust no one, not even your brother," someone darkly warns on a cell wall in Damascus' notorious Palestine Branch detention facility.

Since 2011, tens of thousands of Syrians vanished inside the network of prisons and detention facilities run by Assad's security forces as they tried to crush his opposition. Inmates went for years without contact with the outside world, living in overcrowded, windowless cells where their cellmates died around them. Torture and beatings were inflicted daily. Mass executions were frequent. Most inmates would have fully expected to die. They had no reason to believe anyone would ever see the messages they scratched into the walls except future prisoners. One wrote a single word in Arabic, "ashtaqtalak" - "I miss you" - a love letter that could never be sent to a beloved whose name only the writer need know. More than a month after the prisons were opened by insur-

gents who ousted Assad in December, The Associated Press toured several facilities to view the graffiti left behind. Nothing can be known about the men who drew and wrote them. Only a few bear names, and few are dated. It's impossible to know who of them lived or died. Some walls have layers of graffiti on top of each other, marking generations of suffering. "Don't be sad, mother. This is my fate," reads one, dated Jan 1, 2024. Underneath it are traces of an older text, so faded that only a few words are legible: "... except for you" - a hint of longing for a loved one. Many of the writings and drawings are cries to parents or loved ones. Someone drew a heart broken in two, with "mother" written in one side, "father" in the other.

समाचार पत्र में विज्ञापन द्वारा तामील के लिए सम्बन्धीत न्यायालय उपजिलाधिकारी/सहायक कलेक्टर (प्रथम श्रेणी), गाजियाबाद।

पत्रांक: 1432 फेर-एफएससी03ओ/2024 दिनांक: 13/01/2025

कम्प्यूटर वाद सं०-T202411280110791 वाद संख्या 10791/2024

अंतिम धारा- उत्तर प्रदेश राजस्व संहिता-2006,144 श्रीराम द्विवस प्राप्ति

तहसील व जिला गाजियाबाद

बनाम

अजय सिंह यादव एवं 5 अन्य ग्राम शाहपुर बम्हेटा, परगना हासना, तहसील व जिला गाजियाबाद

श्रीराम द्विवस प्राप्ति0-नीमपुर अगस्त्युर कटक उड़ीसा

.....वादी

बनाम

1. अजय सिंह यादव पुत्र श्री अमर सिंह निवासी शाहपुर बम्हेटा, परगना हासना तहसील व जिला गाजियाबाद।

2. गजय सिंह यादव पुत्र श्री अमर सिंह निवासी शाहपुर बम्हेटा, परगना हासना तहसील व जिला गाजियाबाद।

3. सूरज मान पुत्र कल्लू निवासी शाहपुर बम्हेटा, परगना हासना तहसील व जिला गाजियाबाद।

4. शीर्ष टावरल प्राप्ति0, बी-111, सैक्टर-5, नौएडा।

5. नगर निगम गाजियाबाद द्वारा नगर आवक, नगर निगम गाजियाबाद।

6. उत्तर प्रदेश सरकार द्वारा कलेक्टर गाजियाबाद

.....प्रतिवादीगण

वादी ने आपके विरुद्ध उत्तर वाद संविदित किया है। उत्तर वाद में मेरे न्यायालय में सुनवाई हेतु दिनांक 27.01.2025 निश्चित है। अतः आप उत्तर देने के लिए व्यक्तिगत रूप से या अधिवक्ता के माध्यम से अपना उत्तर देने के उपसंहार हेतु के लिए सम्बन्धित न्यायालय में दिनांक 13.01.2025 को मेरे हस्ताक्षर से उत्तर न्यायालय की मुहर लगाकर जमा किया गया।

(अजय दीक्षित) उपजिलाधिकारी/सहायक कलेक्टर (प्रथम श्रेणी), गाजियाबाद

UK orders 'rapid audit' of ethnicity in child sexual abuse

PTI ■ LONDON

Pakistani heritage gangs and the police taskforce evidence also shows exploitation and abuse taking place across many different communities and ethnicities. But the data on ethnicity of both perpetrators and victims is still inadequate," Yvette Cooper told MPs.

"In order to go much further, I have asked Baroness Louise Casey to oversee a rapid audit of the current scale and nature of gang-based exploitation across the country and to make recommendations on the further work that is needed... It will properly examine ethnicity data and the demographics of the gangs involved and their victims and it will look at the cultural and societal drivers for this type of offending including amongst different ethnic groups," she said. The shadow home secretary, Conservative MP Chris Philp, responded to stress that the authorities had his-



Firefighters watch a helicopter drop water on the Palisades Fire in Mandeville Canyon in Los Angeles, on Saturday.

torically ignored or covered up ethnicity related data surrounding child sexual exploitation. "Thousands of young girls, often in their early teens, were systematically raped by gangs of men, predominantly of Pakistani heritage. Those in positions of authority — the police, local coun-

cils and the Crown Prosecution Service — ignored them and, in some cases, even covered up these horrendous crimes because of absurd concerns about so-called cultural sensitivity," said Philp. "Ten days ago, the Prime Minister [Keir Starmer] compounded this by saying

that it was a 'far-right bandwagon' to raise these issues and call for a proper inquiry. Let me say this: it is not far right to stand up for rape victims, and smearing those who raised this issue is exactly what led to the victims being ignored and the crimes covered up in the first place," he told the Commons. Cooper reiterated that the actions the government has announced this week covers the duty to report child abuse, proper penalties for any cover-ups, stronger sentences for grooming gangs, new rights for victims to get an independent review on reopening their case and new action to reopen historical police investigations. The Home Office said the rapid national audit will begin soon and last three months. It will be supported by an expert advisory board and draw on the views of victims

China launches Pakistani satellite into space

Beijing/Islamabad (PTI): China successfully launched a Pakistani satellite into space from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center on Friday. The satellite, Pakistan's first indigenous Electro-Optical (EO-1), was launched at 12.07 pm (Beijing Time) by a Long March-2D carrier rocket and entered its planned orbit successfully, state-run Xinhua news agency reported. Named PRSC-EO1, the satellite uses electro-optical sensors to collect data and images of the Earth's surface by detecting and measuring reflected sunlight or emitted radiation, according to Pakistan's Space and Upper Atmosphere Research Commission (SUPARCO). "This remarkable milestone marks a giant leap forward in Pakistan's journey toward self-reliance and technological excellence in space exploration," SUPARCO said in a statement. It added that the satellite will boost Pakistan's ability to monitor and manage natural resources, respond to disasters

and improve urban planning and agricultural development. SUPARCO Chairman Muhammad Yousef Khan acknowledged the hard work and dedication of the agency's engineers, emphasising that the launch reflected "Pakistan's commitment to leveraging space technology for national progress and sustainable development". Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif termed it a proud moment for the nation. In a post on social media platform X, he said from predicting crop yields to tracking urban growth, the satellite is a leap forward in the country's journey towards progress.

Xi, Trump hold talks over phone

Beijing (PTI): Chinese President Xi Jinping held a telephone conversation with US President-elect Donald Trump on Friday, official media here reported. The phone conversation between the two leaders comes just three days before Trump's inauguration ceremony on Jan 20. Xi has deputized Vice-President Han Zheng to attend Trump's swearing-in ceremony, marking the first time a senior Chinese official will be present at a US presidential inauguration, the Hong Kong-based South China Morning Post reported.

PUBLIC NOTICE: Notice is hereby given to the General Public that Mr. Om Gulati is the owner of Residential Plot No. 241 area measuring 350 sq. Mtrs. situated at block C, sector-44, Noida, Distt. Gautam Budh Nagar U.P. through GI Deed dated 06.10.2023 regd. as doc. No. 8950 executed by Mrs. Roma Gulati in favour of Mr. Om Gulati in respect of said plot.

CHANGE OF NAME: I, Madhumita Mishra W/o Mr. Ranjan Asthana R/o Flat No. 10115, on 11th Floor, ATS Happy, Trails Plot No. GH-02A, Greater Noida, West Rejesh Pilot Chowk Sector-10, Bisakhilalapur, Gautambudh Nagar, Uttar Pradesh, have changed my name from Madhumita Mishra W/o Mr. Ranjan Asthana to Madhumita Asthana W/o Mr. Ranjan Asthana.

Public Notice: This is to inform the general public that Mr. Om Gulati is the owner of Residential Plot No. 241 area measuring 350 sq. Mtrs. situated at block C, sector-44, Noida, Distt. Gautam Budh Nagar U.P. through GI Deed dated 06.10.2023 regd. as doc. No. 8950 executed by Mrs. Roma Gulati in favour of Mr. Om Gulati in respect of said plot.

Public Notice: This is to inform the general public that Mr. Tejveer is the owner of Plot area measuring 508.59 Sq. Yds., Gata No. 186, situated at Village Agwana, Sikandarabad U.P. 203205 through Sale deed dated 01.11.2021 regd. as doc. No. 10542 executed by Mr. Surendra Kumar & Mr. Shripa in favour of Mr. Tejveer in respect of said plot.

Public Notice: This is to inform the general public that Mr. Tejveer is the owner of Plot area measuring 508.59 Sq. Yds., Gata No. 186, situated at Village Agwana, Sikandarabad U.P. 203205 through Sale deed dated 01.11.2021 regd. as doc. No. 10542 executed by Mr. Surendra Kumar & Mr. Shripa in favour of Mr. Tejveer in respect of said plot.

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GOVERNMENT OF HARYANA TENDER NOTICE: CONSTRUCTION OF COMMUNITY CENTRE/CLUB HOUSE IN EXPRESS GREEN, LICENSE NO. 263 OF 2014 (LC-1394), SECTOR-11, DIT MANESAR.

दूरस्थ एवं ऑनलाईन शिक्षा केन्द्र CENTRE FOR DISTANCE & ONLINE EDUCATION KURUKSHETRA UNIVERSITY, KURUKSHETRA (Established by the State Legislature Act XII of 1956) (A++ Grade, NAAC Accredited)

ADMISSION NOTICE (JANUARY 2025): Centre For Distance & Online Education (CDOE) invites applications for admission to the following Under-Graduate, Post-Graduate, Diploma and Certificate Programmes offered through Online mode & Open Distance Learning (ODL) mode for the session JANUARY 2025.

GOVERNMENT OF HARYANA TENDER NOTICE: TENDER NOTICE: PURCHASE OF PAPER SETTING PERFORMS WITH ENVELOPES AS PER SPECIMEN COPY FOR INDIRA GANDHI UNIVERSITY, MEERUPUR, REWARI.

SPACE INCUBATRICES TECHNOLOGIES LIMITED: STANDALONE UN-AUDITED FINANCIAL RESULTS FOR THE QUARTER AND NINE MONTHS ENDED 31.12.2024. Table with columns: S. No., Particulars, 3 months ended 31.12.2024, Year ended 31.03.2024, 3 months ended 30.09.2024.

PUBLIC NOTICE: In the matter of SNG FINCAP LIMITED having its Registered Office at Office No. 510, GD IIT, Northex Towers A-9, Netaji Subhash Place, Patimura, New Delhi-110034 having CIN No. U65100DL1995PLC096278.

Indian Overseas Bank: SYMBOLIC POSSESSION NOTICE (For Immovable Property) [Rule 8(1)]. The undersigned being the Authorised Officer of the Indian Overseas Bank, GLA Engineering College- Ajhai Branch, Mathura, Uttar Pradesh.

SPACE INCUBATRICES TECHNOLOGIES LTD. (Nishant Mittal) Managing Director DIN : 02766556

THE PIONEER CLASSIFIEDS: CHANGE OF NAME. I, Yati Sirohiwal D/o Satya Prakash, R/o BH-67 East Shalimar Bagh New Delhi - 110088 State that my name has inadvertently got recorded in my passport as Yati Serohiwal, whereas in my other document my name reflects as Yati Sirohiwal.

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ESAF SMALL FINANCE BANK: GOLD AUCTION NOTICE. Notice is hereby given for the information of all concerned that Gold ornaments pledged with ESAF Small Finance Bank and not redeemed by borrowers, despite repeated reminders and notices, of our branches, are listed below. This will be auctioned as per the details given below.

Indian Overseas Bank: BARARI- MATHURA BRANCH (ADDRESS : BARARI VIA REFINERY P.O., BARARI MATHURA, UTTAR PRADESH - 281005. Phone No. 8925950472 & E-mail Id : lob0472@job.in)

Indian Overseas Bank: SYMBOLIC POSSESSION NOTICE (For Immovable Property) [Rule 8(1)]. The undersigned being the Authorised Officer of the INDIAN OVERSEAS BANK, BARARI-MATHURA, BARARI VIA REFINERY P.O., BARARI, MATHURA, UTTAR PRADESH-281005, under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13(12) read with rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued a demand notice dated 09/05/2024 calling upon the borrowers / mortgagors / guarantors, 1. M/s AVAS POLICE LINE, MATHURA, 281001 (Guarantor).

Indian Overseas Bank: SYMBOLIC POSSESSION NOTICE (For Immovable Property) [Rule 8(1)]. The undersigned being the Authorised Officer of the INDIAN OVERSEAS BANK, BARARI-MATHURA, BARARI VIA REFINERY P.O., BARARI, MATHURA, UTTAR PRADESH-281005, under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13(12) read with rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued a demand notice dated 09/05/2024 calling upon the borrowers / mortgagors / guarantors, 1. M/s Vignette Flour Mill, Village-Dhanateja, Post-Barari, Mathura, Uttar Pradesh 281005.

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Union Cabinet approves ₹11,440 Crore revival plan for Rashtriya Ispat Nigam Ltd

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Union Cabinet has approved a Rs 11,440 crore revival plan for debt-laden Rashtriya Ispat Nigam Ltd (RINL), according to a statement released on Friday. The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA), chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has approved the revival plan for RINL for Rs 11,440 crore, it added.

The infusion includes Rs 10,300 crore as equity capital into RINL and conversion of Rs 1,140 crore working capital loan as 7 per cent non-cumulative preference share capital redeemable after 10 years to keep RINL as a going concern, the official statement said.

With this revival package, many of the legacy problems that RINL used to face will be resolved, Information and



Broadcasting Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said. The equity infusion of Rs 10,300 crore into RINL will help it overcome the operational problems related to raising working capital and start blast furnace operations in the most productive way, the statement said.

The revival package would allow the company to gradually reach its full production capacity, which is critical and is in the national interest to have stability in the Indian steel market by augmenting steel production and also save the livelihoods of employees (regular and

contractual) and those dependent on the operations of the steel plant. The revival plan envisages that RINI will start full production with two blast furnaces in January 2025 and with three blast furnaces by August 2025. Under the Ministry of Steel, RINL operates the Visakhapatnam Steel Plant (VSP), the only offshore steel plant in Andhra Pradesh. It has an installed capacity of 7.3 Mtpa of liquid steel. As per the statement, the financial condition of RINL is critical. RINL has exhausted the sanctioned borrowing limits from banks for working capital and was not in a position to get further loans from banks. RINL also defaulted on the capex loan repayments and interest payments in June 2024.

Eight former, current Paytm officials pay ₹3.32 Crore to settle case with Sebi

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

As many as eight current and former officials of One97 Communications, which owns and operates Paytm, have collectively paid Rs 3.32 crore to markets regulator Sebi to settle allegations of flouting securities market norms. Those who have settled the case are the company's former compliance officer and company secretary Amit Khera; Ashit Ranjit Lilani, Neeraj Arora, Mark Schwartz and Pallavi Shardul Shroff, who were holding the positions of independent directors; and then non-executive nominee directors - Douglas Feagin, Munish Varma and Ravi Chandra Adusumalli, according to a Sebi order.

The order came after these officials proposed to settle the proceedings initiated against them through a show cause notice issued on May 17



"without admitting or denying of the findings." "In view of the receipt of settlement amount by Sebi, the instant adjudication proceedings initiated against the notices vide show cause notice...Dated May 17, 2024, are hereby disposed of," Sebi said in its settlement order. The Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) initiated adjudication proceedings in the matter of One97 Communications for the alleged violations of provisions of LODR (Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements) norms and ICDR (Issue of Capital and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations. It was alleged that independent directors being part of NRC (Nomination and Remuneration Committee) failed to discharge duties with unbiased and independent approach while decision-making with respect to matters involving benefits to

the company's MD and CEO Vijay Shekhar Sharma and his relatives, in violation of LODR Regulations, 2015. These directors allegedly approved and signed offer documents containing incorrect statements and incomplete disclosures, in violation of ICDR rules. Besides, other directors signed offer documents containing incorrect statements and incomplete disclosures with respect to the company, being a professionally managed firm having no identifiable promoter whereas the company having promoter Sharma, in violation of ICDR Regulations rules. These individuals settled the allegations by paying a settlement amount to Sebi. Individually, Lilani and Arora paid Rs 53.62 lakh each, Adusumalli, Schwartz, Shroff, Feagin and Varma remitted Rs 42.9 lakh each and Khera shelled out Rs 11.05 lakh.

India's economic growth poised to rebound, says RBI Bulletin

PTI ■ MUMBAI

India's economic growth is poised to rebound as domestic demand regains strength, though the stickiness in food inflation warrants careful monitoring, the latest RBI Bulletin released on Friday said. An article on the 'State of the Economy' published in the January Bulletin also noted that the economic outlook for 2025 is divergent across countries with some loss of speed in the US; weak-to-modest recoveries in Europe and Japan; more moderate growth profiles in emerging and developing countries alongside a more gradual disinflation relative to advanced economies.

"In India, there is a conducive quickening of high-frequency indicators of economic activity in the second half of 2024-25, bearing out the implicit pick-up in real GDP growth for this period in the annual first advance estimates of the NSO," it said. It further said, the headline



inflation eased for the second successive month in December, although the stickiness in food inflation warrants careful monitoring of second order effects. The article has been authored by a team led by Michael Patra, who demitted the office of RBI Deputy Governor earlier this month. "India's economic growth is poised to rebound as domestic demand regains strength. Rural demand continues to gain momentum, reflecting a resilience in consumption, supported by brighter

India's forex reserves drop by USD 8.714 Billion to USD 625.871 Billion

PTI ■ MUMBAI

India's forex reserves dropped by USD 8.714 billion to USD 625.871 billion in the week ended January 10, the RBI said on Friday. Earlier, the overall kitty dropped by USD 5.693 billion to USD 634.585 billion in the week ended January 3, the Reserve Bank of India said. The reserves have been on a declining trend for the last few weeks, and the drop has been attributed to revaluation along with forex market interventions by RBI to help reduce volatilities in the rupee. The forex reserves had increased to an all-time high of USD 704.885 billion in end-September. For the week ended January 10, foreign currency assets, a major component of the reserves, decreased by USD 9.469 billion to USD 536.011 billion, the data released on Friday showed.



Expressed in dollar terms, the foreign currency assets include the effect of appreciation or depreciation of non-US units like the euro, pound and yen held in the foreign exchange reserves. Gold reserves increased by USD 792 million to USD 67.883 billion during the week, the RBI said. The Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) were down by USD 33 million to USD 17.781 billion, the apex bank said. India's reserve position with the IMF was down by USD 4 million to USD 4.195 billion in the reporting week, the apex bank data showed.

Gold jumps ₹700 to ₹82K per 10 gms

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Rising for the third consecutive day, gold prices on Friday surged Rs 700 to trade near a record high at Rs 82,000 per 10 grams in the national capital due to persistent buying in the local markets, according to the All India Sarafa Association. The precious metal had settled at Rs 81,300 per 10 grams on Thursday. The price of gold of 99.5 per cent purity continued to shine for the third straight day by jumping Rs 700 to Rs 81,600 per 10 grams against Rs 80,900 per 10 grams in the previous close. However, silver prices declined Rs 500 to Rs 93,500 per kg on Friday. The metal had ended at Rs 94,000 per kg in the previous trading session. On October 31 last year, gold of 99.9 per cent purity and 99.5 per cent purity hit a record high of Rs 82,400 and Rs 82,000 per 10 grams, respectively, in the local markets. Despite a weak trend in the international markets, the precious metal gained in the



domestic market, mainly due to higher demand from jewellers, traders said. Meanwhile, in futures trade on the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX), gold contracts for February delivery declined Rs 424 or 0.54 per cent to Rs 78,802 per 10 grams. "Gold witnessed minor profit booking from higher zones on MCX, retreating towards Rs 78,800," Jateen Trivedi, VP Research Analyst of Commodity and Currency at LKP Securities, said. The decline comes as white flags emerge in the Middle East, signalling easing tensions, and the recent positive data from the US, including CPI, retail sales, and the Federal Reserve's dovish outlook, appear to have been largely priced in, Trivedi

added. Silver contracts for March delivery plummeted Rs 1,093 or 1.18 per cent to Rs 91,710 per kg on the MCX on Friday. Globally, Comex gold futures fell USD 21.10 per ounce or 0.77 per cent to USD 2,729.80 per ounce. "Gold dipped slightly below USD 2,750 per ounce ahead of upcoming US housing and industrial production data," Kaynat Chainwala, AVP of Commodity Research at Kotak Securities, said. Fed Governor Christopher Waller on Thursday said if economic data continues to weaken, the central bank might implement three or four rate cuts this year further stoking the optimism for rate cut expectations which lent support to the metal. Additionally, Comex silver futures quoted 1.47 per cent lower in the Asian market hours at USD 31.26 per ounce. Further, uncertainties surrounding US President-elect Donald Trump's trade policies and tariff plans should contribute to limiting losses for the safe-haven asset, according to commodities experts.

Cabinet approves refarming of 687 Mhz of spectrum, more to come: Scindia

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Union Cabinet has approved the refarming of 687 Mhz spectrum for mobile services and more will be done based on the study by a committee of secretaries put in place by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Telecom Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia said on Friday. Speaking at an event of industry body COAI, the minister said mobile services need 2,000 Mhz of spectrum by 2030 and the Cabinet decision takes the total quantum of radiowaves to 1,587 Mhz. "Yesterday's Cabinet approved the refarming of 687 Mhz. This means this takes us from 900 Mhz to 1,587 Mhz. (of



which) 320 (MHz) will be released immediately, some by the end of next year and some by the end of 2028-29, which makes us ready for 2030," Scindia said at Digicom Summit 2025. The government, through refarming, earmarks or arranges spectrum of services based on the demand and where the radiowaves can be used efficiently.

The telecom industry has been demanding to make available 2000 megahertz of radiowaves available for mobile services in mid-bands, which are frequencies in the range of 1000 Mhz to 6000 Mhz. Scindia said the government will ensure that the requirement of the industry is met and there are no hurdles in the digital telecom landscape of the country. "That still leaves a gap of roughly 300 (Mhz). So, the ask is not over. The second round of this, the Committee of Secretaries, is working on it. The report will come by mid of this year. We will take that step to ensure that there are no bottlenecks for our digital telecom landscape to grow in India," Scindia said.

He said that telecom services are empowering people, and farmers, supporting several economic engines like digital payments and a backbone to the digital economy. Scindia said that it is his dream that India by 2030, transpends herself into a telecom product nation. "I am in conversation, as we speak, with our telecom majors and OEMs (original equipment makers) to see if there are possibilities to set up telecom manufacturing zones (TMZ). I think that time for TMZs has come," he said. The minister said that transformations in the sector are based on five key pillars, including policy level, technology, and ease of doing business.

Rupee ends one paisa down at 86.62 against US dollar

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The rupee traded in a tight range and settled 1 paisa lower at 86.62 (provisional) against the US dollar on Friday, as massive outflow of foreign funds and falling domestic equity markets dented investors' sentiment. A firm American currency and higher crude oil prices also weighed on the domestic unit, forex traders said. At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 86.60, stayed range-bound between the high of 86.55 and low of 86.62 throughout the day and ended at 86.62 (provisional) against the greenback, 1 paisa down from its previous closing level. On Thursday, the rupee depreciated 21 paisa to close at 86.61 against the US dollar.



In two back-to-back sessions, on Tuesday and Wednesday, the local unit had gained 30 paise from its lowest-ever closing level of 86.70 against the dollar. Anuj Choudhary, Research Analyst at Mirae Asset Sharekhan, said the rupee weakened on a negative tone

in the domestic markets and a surge in crude oil prices. "Importer demand may also pressurise the rupee. However, any selling of dollars by the Reserve bank of India (RBI) may support the rupee at lower levels. Traders may take cues from industrial production and

housing market data from the US," he said and projected the USD-INR spot price to trade in the range of 86.55 to 86.95. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 0.09 per cent higher at 108.91. Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, rose 0.36 per cent to USD 81.58 per barrel in futures trade. In the domestic equity market, the 30-share BSE Sensex fell 423.49 points, or 0.55 per cent, to settle at 76,619.33 points, while the Nifty declined 108.60 points, or 0.47 per cent, to 23,203.20 points. Foreign institutional investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 4,341.95 crore on Thursday.

Rail operators likely to post double-digit growth in FY25: India Ratings

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Rail operators' revenue is expected to grow into double-digit, while warehousing sector is projected to log a 3-5 per cent year-on-year growth in organic rentals this fiscal even as the demand for Grade-A space may remain intact, ratings agency India Ratings said on Friday. For sea transport, the ratings agency said, it is expecting port volumes will be supported by the coastal movement of goods and global container freight, with the easing of geopolitical tensions, including the Red Sea crisis and the normalisation of US-bound traffic. Earnings Before Interest, Taxes, Depreciation, and Amortization) for container freight stations is expected to remain range-bound due to the increase in

the proportion of direct port delivery and high competition intensity at large ports, according to Ind-Ra (India Ratings). Ind-Ra has also assigned an improving outlook for the logistics industry for FY26 and said that macro-tailwinds arising from the government's multipolar investments across ports, rail, road, and air transport are expected to bode well for the industry. Sustained investments and the resultant increased scale of operations are expected to improve cost efficiency and operational flexibility which could lead to higher profitability for Ind-Ra-rated integrated logistics companies, said Pratik Mundhada, Associate Director, Corporates, Ind-Ra. "In Ind-Ra's base case, we see double-digit revenue growth for rail operators in FY26, supported by huge private investments in rakes and dry



terminals in 2024. For warehousing entities, we project organic rental growth of 3-5 per cent year-on-year while demand for Grade-A spaces is expected to remain intact in FY26," he stated. Container freight stations' profitability, according to Mundhada, is likely to remain subdued in this fiscal due to intense competition. "Lastly, for freight forwarders, revenue growth and EBITDA

are likely to be impacted by a moderation in the global freight rates," he added. The ratings agency noted that initiatives such as the National Logistics Policy and the PM Gati Shakti National Master Plan aim to enhance multimodal connectivity and foster interdisciplinary coordination. Further, it stated that public-private partnerships are expected to be supported by

haulage charges will remain key monitorable. The Eastern Dedicated Freight Corridor is likely to improve supply chain efficiency for thermal plants, led by increased speed and scheduled train operations, it said. Ratings on logistics and supply chain companies are mostly on a "Stable Outlook", given the sustenance of operational performance, while maintaining a comfortable leverage profile, Ind-Ra said. "While we see capital investments by logistics infrastructure companies including warehousing, rail and dry terminals, their ability to raise long-term debt at a competitive pricing and Ind-Ra's expectation that these companies will be able to optimise the asset utilisation are supporting their credit profile and thereby the Stable rating Outlook," it said.

INBRIEF

NRDC SIGNS MOA WITH IISC TO DRIVE TECHNOLOGY COMMERCIALISATION

BENGALURU: The National Research Development Corporation (NRDC), a Government of India enterprise under the Ministry of Science and Technology, and the Indian Institute of Science (IISc), India's premier institution for advanced scientific research and education, have signed a landmark Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) to accelerate the commercialisation of IISc-developed technologies. The MoA was signed and exchanged today at IISc by Cmde Amit Rastogi (Retd.), CMD, NRDC and Prof. Govindan Rangarajan, Director, IISc in the august presence of key officials from NRDC and IISc.

GREAT PLACE TO WORK HONOURS BSES: A CULTURE OF TRUST AND INCLUSIVITY

BSES Rajdhani Power Limited (BRPL) and BSES Yamuna Power Limited (BYPL) have been awarded the highly coveted "Great Place to Work" Certification, a globally recognised benchmark for workplace excellence. This certification underscores BSES' commitment to fostering a workplace culture rooted in trust, respect, and inclusivity. The recognition reflects the organisation's focus on creating an environment where employees feel valued, empowered, and inspired to excel.



CLAY SHAPED EMOTIONS



connection. The earthy textures and intricate details of the terracotta forms draw viewers into an intimate engagement with the art. Reghu's ability to blend Dravidian and African features results in works that feel rooted in tradition while addressing contemporary sensibilities. The energy within the sculptures invites viewers to pause and reflect, creating a quiet dialogue between art and audience. Reghu draws inspiration from ancient traditions, including the art of the Indus Valley and Harappan civilisations. His sculptures are not replicas of the past; they reinterpret these influences to explore identity and human emotion in a modern context. His figures, with their expressive stances and thoughtful

An exploration of life and emotion through G. Reghu's evocative terracotta sculptures at Art Magnum Gallery, says SAKSHI PRIYA

gestures, evoke narratives that are both universal and deeply personal. The exhibition showcases Reghu's mastery of terracotta as a medium, bringing his forms to life with an emotional resonance that remains long after one leaves the gallery. The contours and expressions of his sculptures suggest movement and thought, compelling the audience to engage with the works on a deeper level. Whether through the tension in a figure's posture or the serenity of a tilted head, each piece carries an emotional weight that connects with the viewer.

Touchable Emotions celebrates clay as a material with both historical significance and contemporary relevance. Reghu's work honours ancient traditions while pushing their boundaries, demonstrating the enduring power of this medium to express complex themes. Through his art, he creates a bridge between the past and the present, showing how heritage and innovation can coexist.

This exhibition is an invitation to reflect on universal themes of life and emotion.

Reghu's terracotta sculptures serve as a poignant reminder of art's ability to connect us to shared experiences. The world of G. Reghu's evocative terracotta sculptures, on display until February 15, 2025, at Art Magnum Gallery, New Delhi. Don't miss the chance to connect with his transformative journey from traditional pottery to emotionally powerful human forms.



PHOTOS: PANKAJ KUMAR

Art has the power to transform the ordinary into the extraordinary, offering a language beyond words. Rainer Maria Rilke's observation, "The purpose of art is to lay bare the questions that have been hidden for a long time," resonates deeply when considering the process of sculpting with clay. This medium, both humble and evocative, captures human emotions in their rawest form, narrating stories that connect with the core of our shared experiences.

The Touchable Emotions exhibition at Art Magnum Gallery features the terracotta sculptures of renowned sculptor G. Reghu. Curated by Jyotirmoy Bhattacharya, the exhibition rummages into themes of life, heritage and emotion. Reghu's relationship with clay is deeply personal, as he shapes it to express stories that reflect universal human experiences. Each sculpture explores facets of existence, joy, introspection and



Classical Singing at its Best

By SAKSHI PRIYA

What is it about music and dance that can stir our hearts and minds in ways words never could?

The Power of Classical Music:

The 26th Swami Haridas-Tansen Sangeet Nritya Mahotsav curated by Padma Bhushan Dr. Uma Sharma. The Festival opened with a captivating Dhrupad performance by Ustad F. Wasifuddin Dagar, whose renditions of Raag Kambhoji and Raag Adana drew listeners into a peaceful space. The stillness in the room was striking, as Dagar's music seemed to speak directly to the heart, offering a rare moment of calm in an otherwise busy world. His mastery of the Dhrupad tradition set a perfect tone for the evening, allowing the audience to experience the beauty of classical music in its purest form.

The night took on new energy when Ustad Shujaat Khan stepped on stage. His sitar playing was truly magical. The audience, enraptured by the fluidity of his performance, responded with a standing ovation. The smooth flow of notes and the intricate patterns he created with his strings left a lasting impression on everyone present. His performance was an experience that



pulled the listener into the depths of his artistry.

Following this, the legendary Pt. Hariprasad Chaurasia brought a sense of serenity to the evening with his flute recital. His ability to draw emotion from the bansuri (flute) was clear as he moved through ragas with ease. The sound of his flute seemed to fill the room, evoking a wide array of emotions, from joy to contemplation, as he effortlessly navigated complex melodies. Each note he played invited the audience to listen closely and reflect on the feelings embedded in his music.



The Fusion of Traditions: Day two of the festival continued to impress, with Pt. Vishwamohan Bhatt and his son, Pt. Salil Bhatt, bringing a unique touch to the proceedings. Their performance on the Mohan Veena and Satvik Veena captivated with its fusion of classical and folk traditions. The melodies were rich and moving, connecting deeply with the audience. Along with the Manganiyars from Rajasthan, their performance was a journey through the cultural heart of India, showcasing the diversity and vibrancy of its musical heritage.

A standout moment on day two was the collaboration between Pt. Shubendra Rao on the sitar and Smt. Saskia Rao on the cello. Their

performance merged Eastern and Western classical music with remarkable ease. The fusion of sitar and cello was both unexpected and beautiful, offering a fresh perspective on the possibilities of musical collaboration.

Smt. Shubha Mudgal's vocal performance rounded off the evening, showcasing her remarkable ability to convey emotion through song. Her renditions in Raag Kedar and Raag Megh captured the essence of Indian classical music, leaving the audience in wonders of her vocal range and depth.

Kathak and the Divine Connection: The final evening was a celebration of Kathak, with Padma Bhushan Dr. Uma Sharma presenting a moving performance, despite health challenges. Her seated portrayal of Kathak Bhav in 'Maiyaa Mori Mein Nahi Maakhan Khayo' showcased the grace and power of the dance form. Accompanied by her disciples, Sharma's performance took the audience through a spiritual journey, demonstrating the depth and beauty of Kathak.

The festival closed with a powerful performance by Begum Parween Sultana, whose voice filled the space with an intensity that left the audience in standing ovation. Her final rendition was the perfect conclusion to a festival that had showcased the very best of India's classical music and dance. It was a celebration of tradition, passion and artistry, an event that will remain etched in the hearts of all who were fortunate enough to witness it.



KALP: Experience Life in Art

By TEAM VIVA

KALP (Phases), is an exhibition of exquisite artworks by artist Poornima Dayal from Mumbai. This exhibition is taking place at The Lalit Kala Academi, 35, Rabindra Bhavan, Ferozshah Road, New Delhi from 15th January 2025 to 21 January 2025. It was inaugurated on 15th January by Padam Shri Dr. Shovana Narayan, Amita Sarabhai, Joint secretary, Ministry of Culture, Nidhi Kulpati, M.D Ndtv. Poornima Dayal is an internationally acclaimed, award winning artist who has exhibited extensively across the globe.

She is the recipient of the Winner prize Award by The Golden Duck Gallery, Hungary, Budapest in early 2024. She also has received the Honorable Awards and Talent Prize awards from Teravarna Art Gallery, Los Angeles. Poornima had the privilege of representing India at The Venice International Art Fair in 2023. Her artworks have also been displayed several times at the prestigious Jehangir Art Gallery, Mumbai, Telangana Art Gallery, Hyderabad, The Bombay Art Society, Mumbai, The Nehru Centre Art Gallery, Mumbai, Amethyst and Jadoka Art Galleries, Chennai. The 'Vishwarang' program by the Government of India, The Rabindranath Tagore University of Art, Kolkata, The Peak Galleria, Hong Kong, The Holy Art Gallery, Athens and Paris respectively and The Line Contemporary, London. Having had the opportunity to exhibit at The Vienna Biennale, she has been



painting since 33 years. 'Abstract conceptual' is how she describes her style of art. 'I use a lot of textures and colors in my style of painting', continues Poornima. KALP, her latest Solo Exhibition at The Lalit Kala Academi is a depiction of life's journey through the various phases of life. In this exhibition, true to its name are exhibited different series of her Acrylics on Canvas, each representing a different phase. 'KALP' signifies the importance of living a life in reverence loving and accepting life. Of being grateful for everything has a Divine purpose. 'For me Art is very precious. It's something I respect. It is a way of self expression for me and I am grateful for it', quotes Poornima. A treat for Art Lovers the exhibition is on from 11 am to 7pm at The Lalit Kala Academi from 15 to 21 January 2025.





Dream is still alive to play for India: Karun Nair

PTI ■ BENGALURU

After a prolonged wait on the sidelines and a melancholic social media post nearly three years back, Karun Nair has made a sensational reunion with cricket, scoring five hundreds in the ongoing Vijay Hazare Trophy and he is now cautiously optimistic about wearing the Indian jersey after eight years. Karun, who has scored 752 runs at a mind-blowing average of 75.2 for Vidarbha, now looks hungry for runs, and is a far cry from the forlorn player who scribbled: "Dear Cricket, please give me another chance." Will that opportunity come his way when the selectors announce India's ODI squads for the home one-dayers against England and the ICC Champions Trophy? Only time will tell, but he has good reasons to "dream." "The dream is always to play for the country. So, yes, the dream is still alive. That's the reason we play this game, to play for your country. So, the one and only goal was to play for the country," Karun told PTI. But as someone who has endured massive setbacks and near-misses in his career, Karun does not want to think too far ahead. "I think this is my third comeback (laughs). And I need to keep doing what I am doing at the moment. Keep scoring runs whenever I can in every single game that I play. That's the most that I can do. Everything else is not in my control. "But till it (selection)

happens, it's just a dream. It's still not there yet. But again, like I said, I would like to focus on one innings at a time," the 33-year-old said. So, what has he done differently from the past to get back to his run-making ways? "I've not done anything differently. There is no secret. I think it's just years of hard work and persistence, you know, the coming together of all of it. And probably you can say, taking each day as a new one and making sure that I respect every single innings that I play." But there were days when the 33-year-old was apprehensive about his crickety future, when runs totally dried up in domestic matches and in the IPL. "I will be lying if I say I was not afraid. I think anyone would have those feelings. But I never had the thought that my career would end. I just had the thought of where it is going? What am I doing? How has this happened? "It takes a while for you to come out of that phase and to understand what is happening and then what you are supposed to do. So, I told myself that I need to start from zero again. "And give myself a few years and see where it goes. And then I can decide what to do. So, that was my thought process," he explained. But the tough passage made him more aware about himself and his game. "It was a tough situation to be in. Emotionally, mentally. But yeah, it really taught me

a lot of things about myself as a person and about my cricket. So, I am really grateful for those learnings. Without that, I don't think I would be in this situation at the moment." **Shifting to Vidarbha was a good move** The first hint of change in his fortunes came along with a shift to Vidarbha from Karnataka ahead of the 2023-24 season. "I am really grateful that I got this opportunity from Vidarbha Cricket Association to play First-Class cricket. First of all, without which, you know, I wouldn't be here. And for the platform they have provided and the environment they have created to, you know, welcome me. "They treat me as a family and make me feel like I have been playing with them for many years. "And I never got the feeling that I am a professional or an outsider. So, it was really comfortable. And very humble people. So, they all helped me get through each and every game with a smile and a positive environment," he said. The right-handed batter also thanked former India pacer Abey Kuruvilla for facilitating his entry into Vidarbha squad. "Abey Kuruvilla was the person I spoke to first. I just spoke to him saying that I just need a team to play. And he is the one who spoke to Vidarbha Cricket Association and put me in touch with them," he added. Since then the runs began to steadily increase.

Ranji Trophy: Kohli named in 22-member provisional squad for Delhi's next game

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Star batter Virat Kohli has been named in Delhi's 22-member provisional squad for their next Ranji Trophy game against Saurashtra in Rajkot but doubts remain about his participation after it came to light that he is nursing a niggles. It is learnt that Kohli has intimidated the Delhi and Districts Cricket Association (DDCA) top brass that he has a neck niggles that he sustained in Sydney during the final Border-Gavaskar Trophy Test against Australia.

He was treated by the physio there and as of now, there is no clarity on availability for the Ranji match starting January 23. Whether he will play or just fly down to Rajkot for a couple of days' training will be clear only after he details his position to DDCA president Rohan Jaitley. Kohli had last played a red-ball game for Delhi back in 2012 against Uttar Pradesh in Ghaziabad. A year after that, the legendary Sachin Tendulkar played his last Ranji Trophy match against Haryana at Lahli. Talismanic wicketkeeper-

batter Rishabh Pant will feature in a Ranji Trophy game after nearly seven years although it has been learnt that he has declined captaincy, which means Ayush Badoni will continue in the role. "Rishabh felt the existing captain (Badoni) should continue to lead the side. He feels that since he is not available consistently, one shouldn't tinker with leadership," a member of the DDCA apex council told PTI on conditions of anonymity. "When he was offered captaincy, he said that he is very happy to play under Badoni.

D Gukesh to take on Anish Giri in Tata Steel opener

PTI ■ WIJK AAN ZEE

World champion Ding Liren will take on local star Anish Giri in the opening round of the 87th Tata Steel Chess tournament here on Saturday, marking his first competitive outing since claiming the coveted crown last month. Giri, the 2023 winner, holds the reputation of being a tough cookie thanks to his impeccable theoretical knowledge and research that has been the Dutchman's forte for many years now. However, 18-year-old Gukesh, who likes to go with a no-draw approach in every game he plays, is in great form and can look forward to a solid campaign after the World Championship triumph over Chinese Ding Liren in Singapore. Gukesh received India's highest sporting honour, the Major Dhyani Chand Khel Ratna, in Delhi this morning from President Droupadi Murmu and left for the Dutch city immediately after the ceremony.

INDIAN RAILWAYS
"PUBLIC NOTIFICATION"

Notice is hereby given to all users of Railway lines and premises situated on the Complete section of the under noted section of the Northern Railway that the 25000 Volt, 50 Hz, AC overhead traction wires will be energized on or after the date specified against the section. On and from the same date the overhead traction line shall be treated as live at all time and no unauthorized person shall approach or work in the proximity of the said overhead line.

Section	Date
Sub: "Energisation of 25 KV, Single phase 50 HZ, AC newly electrified Line from Deoband (Excluding) location no. 01/10 (Ch: 647.80) to Roorkee (Excl.) location no. 28/15 Ch: 549.30) along with SP at Jhabrera, SSP at Roorkee, goods line in Bhanera-Khas station and associated turnouts, x-overs including energisation of Auxiliary Transformers in above said section under Moradabad Division (RKM/TKM-28.80/35.40)".	20.01.2025

INDIAN RAILWAY
INTRODUCTION OF AC 25 KV TRACTION
"WARNING TO ROAD USERS"

It is notified for information of the Public that in connection with introduction of 2.2 KV AC electric traction over "Energisation of 25 KV, Single phase 50 HZ, AC newly electrified Line from Deoband (Excluding) location no. 01/10 (Ch: 647.80) to Roorkee (Excl.) location no.28/15 Ch: 549.30) along with SP at Jhabrera, SSP at Roorkee, goods line in Bhanera-Khas station and associated turnouts, x-overs including energisation of Auxiliary Transformers in above said section under Moradabad Division (RKM/TKM-28.80/35.40)". Height gauges have been erected at all the level crossings with clear maximum height 4.78 m and contact wire shall be at a height of minimum 5.5 m above road level with a view to prevent loads of excessive height from coming into contact or dangerous proximity to live traction wire.

Public are hereby notified to observe the height specified above for the purpose of loading vehicles and to see that the loads carried in road vehicles do not infringe the height gauges under any circumstances. The dangers of a load of excessive height are as follows:-

- i) Danger to the height gauge and consequent obstruction to the road as well as the railway line.
- ii) Danger to the materials or equipment carried or the vehicle itself.
- iii) Danger of fire and risk of life due to contact with or dangerous proximity to the conductors.

Dy. Chief Electrical Engineer/Const.
N.Rly. 4th Floor, DRM Office, New Delhi

18/1/2025
SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

KIND ATTENTION RAIL PASSENGERS! KUMBH MELA SPECIAL TRAINS

For the Convenience of Rail passengers during KUMBH MELA-2025, Railways are operating several Special Trains in addition to regular trains. The date wise list of Special Trains are given below:-

SPECIAL TRAINS RUNNING ON 18.01.2025 (SATURDAY)					
Spl. Train No.	Station From	Dept. Time	Station To	Arr. Time	Stoppages
02417	Subedarganj	21:35	Delhi Jn.	08:55	Fatehpur, Govindpur, Etawah, Tundla & Aligarh stations
02418	Delhi Jn.	09:30	Subedarganj	19:40	
04111	Prayagraj Jn. (Ring Rail)	06:00	Prayagraj Jn. (Ring Rail)	18:50	Prayagraj Rambagh, Jhusi, Handia Khas, Gyanpur Road, Madhosingh, Banaras, Bhadohi, Janghai Jn., Mariahu, Zafarabad Jn., Shahganj Jn., Akbarpur, Gosainganj, Ayodhya, Ayodhya Cantt., Sultanpur, Maa Belha Devi Dham Pratapgarh Jn., Mau AImma, Phaphamau Jn. & Prayag Stations.
04112	Prayagraj Jn. (Ring Rail)	06:30	Prayagraj Jn. (Ring Rail)	21:00	
04113	Prayagraj Jn. (Ring Rail)	17:30	Prayagraj Jn. (Ring Rail)	07:45	Prayagraj Rambagh, Jhusi, Handia Khas, Gyanpur Road, Madhosingh, Banaras, Bhadohi, Janghai Jn., Mariahu, Zafarabad Jn., Shahganj Jn., Akbarpur, Gosainganj, Ayodhya, Ayodhya Cantt., Sultanpur, Maa Belha Devi Dham Pratapgarh Jn., Mau AImma, Phaphamau Jn. & Prayag Stations.
04114	Prayagraj Jn. (Ring Rail)	17:45	Prayagraj Jn. (Ring Rail)	08:00	
04210	Prayagraj Sangam	11:15	Jaunpur	14:00	Prayag, Phaphamau, Phulpur, Janghai & Mariahu Stations.
04209	Jaunpur	14:15	Prayagraj Sangam	17:15	
03409	Malda Town	20:45	Prayagraj Rambagh	17:15	New Farakka Jn., Barharwa Jn., Sahibganj Jn., Kahaigaon, Bhagalpur, Sultanpur, Jamalpur Jn., Abhaipur, Kiul Jn., Mokameh, Barh, Bakhtiyarpur, Rajendra Nagar, Patna Jn., Danapur, Ara, Buxar, Pt. Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Jn., Varanasi & Banaras Stations
09404	Janghai	08:30	Ahmedabad Jn.	18:00	Prayagraj, Fatehpur, Govindpur, Etawah, Tundla, Agra Fort, Bayana, Gangapur City, Sawai Madhopur, Kota, Ramganj Mandi, Bhawani Mandi, Nagda, Ratlam, Dahod, Godhra, Chhayapuri & Anand Stations
06019	Mangaluru	04:15	Varanasi Jn.	14:50	Kasaragod, Nileshwar, Payyanur, Kannur, Thalassery, Vadakara, Kozhikode, Feroke, Tirur, Shoranur Jn, Ottappalam, Palakkad Jn, Coimbatore Jn., Tiruppur, Erode Jn, Salem Jn, Jolarpettai Jn, Katpadi Jn, Arakkonam Jn, Perambur, Gudur Jn, Nellore, Ongole, Chirala, TenaliJn, Vijayawada Jn, Khammam, Warangal, Ramagundam, Sirpur Kaghaznagar, Balharshah Jn., Chandrapur, Nagpur Jn, Itarsi Jn, Pipariya, Narsinghpur, Jabalpur Jn., Katni Jn, Maihar, Satna Jn, Manikpur Jn, Prayagraj Chheoki Jn, Mirzapur & Chunar Jn. stations.
04251	Prayag Jn.	20:30	Ayodhya Cantt.	23:55	Phaphamau Jn., Maa Belha Devi Dham Pratapgarh Jn. & Sultanpur stations
04252	Ayodhya Cantt.	15:45	Prayag Jn.	19:55	
04253	Phaphamau Jn.	11:15	Ayodhya Cantt.	14:45	Maa Belha Devi Dham Pratapgarh Jn. & Sultanpur stations
04254	Ayodhya Cantt.	06:15	Phaphamau Jn.	10:15	
04255	Prayag Jn. (Ring Rail)	05:35	Prayag Jn. (Ring Rail)	21:30	Phaphamau Jn., Mau AIma, Maa Belha Devi Dham Pratapgarh Jn., Chilbila Jn., Khundaur, Sultanpur, Kudebhar, Khajurhat, Bharatkund, Ayodhya Cantt., Salarpur, Sohawal, Devrakot, Baragaon, Rudauli, Raujagaon, Patranga, Daryabad, Saidkhanpur, Saldarganj, Rasauli, Barabanki Jn., Safedabad, Malhaur, Lucknow Jn., Utretia, Mohanialganj, Kankaha, Nigohan, Shrirajnagar, Bachhravan, Kuninganj, Harchandpur, Gangaganj, Rae Bareilly Jn., Rupamau, Fursatganj, Jais, Bani, Gauriganj, Talakhjuri, Amethi, Misrauli, Maa Chandika Devi Dham Antu, Jagesharganj, Chilbila Jn., Maa Belha Devi Dham Pratapgarh Jn., Shanidev Dham Bishnathganj, Mau AIma, Sevait and Phaphamau Jn. & stations
06071	Chennai Central	14:20	Gomtinagar	14:15	Gudur Jn., Nellore, Ongole, Chirala, Tenali Jn., New Guntur, Vijayawada Jn., Khammam, Warangal, Sirpur Kagaznagar, Balharshah, Gondia Jn., Balaghat Jn., Mainpur, Jabalpur, Katni Jn., Maihar, Satna Jn., Manikpur Jn., Prayagraj Chhivki Jn., Mirzapur, Chunar Jn., Varanasi Jn. And Ayodhya Dham Jn. stations.
07107	Tirupati	20:55	Banaras	15:45	Gudur Jn., Nellore, Ongole, Chirala, Tenali Jn., Vijayawada Jn., Eluru, Tadepalligudem, Nidadavolu Jn., Rajamundry, Samalkot Jn., Annavaram, Elamanchilli, Anakapalle, Duvvada, Pendurti, Kottavalasa, Vizianagram Jn., Bobbili, Parvatipuram, Rayagada, Muniguda, Kesinga, Titlagarh, Balangir, Barghar Road, Sambalpur Jn., Jharsuguda Jn., Rourkela, Hatia, Ranchi, Muri Jn., Barka Kana, Tori, Latehar, Barwadih Jn., Daltonganj, Garwa Road Jn., Japla, Son Nagar, Dehri On Sone, Sasaram, Bhabua Road, Chandauli Majhwar, Pt. Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Jn., Kashi & Varanasi Stations
01034	Mau Jn.	23:50	Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj(T)	14:30	Azamgarh, Shahganj Jn., Varanasi, Chunar, Mirzapur, Prayagraj Chheoki, Manikpur Jn., Satna, Maihar, Katni, Jabalpur, Narsinghpur, Pipariya, Itarsi Jn., Banapura, Harda, Khirkiya, Chhanera, Talvadya, Khandwa Jn., Bhusaval Jn., Jalgaon Jn., Manmad Jn., Nasik Road, Igatpuri, Kalyan Jn., Thane & Dadar Stations
04202	Prayagraj Sangam	12:20	Alamnagar	17:00	Prayag Jn., Kunda Harnamganj, Unchahar Jn., Rae Bareilly, Bachhravan & Utariatya Jn. Stations
04201	Alamnagar	19:15	Prayagraj Sangam	23:25	
04206	Prayagraj Sangam	13:30	Ayodhya Cantt.	17:00	Maa Belha Devi Dham Pratapgarh Jn. & Sultanpur stations
04205	Ayodhya Cantt.	08:45	Prayagraj Sangam	12:15	
07707	Moula Ali	23:55	Azamgarh	17:15	Charlapalli, Jangaon, Kazipet Jn., Peddapalli, Manchiryal, Bellampalli, Sirpur Kagaz Nagar, Balharshah, Chandrapur, Nagpur, Itarsi, Pipariya, Narsinghpur, Jabalpur, Katni, Maihar, Satna, Manikpur, Prayagraj Chheki, Banaras & Shahganj station.
06002	Gomtinagar	03:45	Chennai Central	23:55	Ayodhya Dham Jn., Varanasi Jn., Chunar Jn., Mirzapur, Prayagraj Chheoki Jn., Manikpur Jn., Satna Jn., Maihar, Katni Jn., Jabalpur, Nainpur, Balaghat Jn., Gondia Jn., Balharshah, Sirpur Kagaznagar, Warangal, Khammam, Vijayawada Jn., New Guntur, Tenali Jn., Chirala, Ongole, Nellore & Gudur Jn. Stations
04527	Phaphamau Jn.	22:30	Amb Andaura	17:50	Rae Bareilly Jn., Lucknow, Shahjahanpur, Bareilly Jn., Moradabad, Najibabad, Roorkee, Saharanpur, Yamunanagar Jagadhri, Ambala Cantt., Chandigarh, Morinda, Roop Nagar, Anandpur Sahib, Nangal Dam & Una Himachal Stations
04316	Dehradun	08:10	Phaphamau Jn.	23:50	Haridwar, Najibabad, Moradabad, Bareilly Jn., Lucknow & Rae Bareilly Jn. stations
04066	Delhi Jn.	23:25	Phaphamau Jn.	14:15	Ghaziabad, Hapur, Garhmuktesar, Gajraula, Amroha, Moradabad, Rampur, Bareilly Jn., Shahjahanpur, Hardoi, Lucknow & Raebareilly Jn. stations.

SPECIAL TRAINS RUNNING ON 19.01.2025 (SUNDAY)					
Spl. Train No.	Station From	Dept. Time	Station To	Arr. Time	Stoppages
02418	Delhi Jn.	09:30	Subedarganj	19:40	Fatehpur, Govindpur, Etawah, Tundla & Aligarh stations
04111	Prayagraj Jn. (Ring Rail)	06:00	Prayagraj Jn. (Ring Rail)	18:50	Prayagraj Rambagh, Jhusi, Handia Khas, Gyanpur Road, Madhosingh, Banaras, Bhadohi, Janghai Jn., Mariahu, Zafarabad Jn., Shahganj Jn., Akbarpur, Gosainganj, Ayodhya, Ayodhya Cantt., Sultanpur, Maa Belha Devi Dham Pratapgarh Jn., Mau AImma, Phaphamau Jn. & Prayag Stations.
04112	Prayagraj Jn. (Ring Rail)	06:30	Prayagraj Jn. (Ring Rail)	21:00	
04113	Prayagraj Jn. (Ring Rail)	17:30	Prayagraj Jn. (Ring Rail)	07:45	Prayagraj Rambagh, Jhusi, Handia Khas, Gyanpur Road, Madhosingh, Banaras, Bhadohi, Janghai Jn., Mariahu, Zafarabad Jn., Shahganj Jn., Akbarpur, Gosainganj, Ayodhya, Ayodhya Cantt., Sultanpur, Maa Belha Devi Dham Pratapgarh Jn., Mau AImma, Phaphamau Jn. & Prayag Stations.
04114	Prayagraj Jn. (Ring Rail)	17:45	Prayagraj Jn. (Ring Rail)	08:00	
04210	Prayagraj Sangam	11:15	Jaunpur	14:00	Prayag, Phaphamau, Phulpur, Janghai & Mariahu Stations.
04209	Jaunpur	14:15	Prayagraj Sangam	17:15	
09032	Ghaziapur City	00:30	Udhna Jn.	12:45	Aundhhar Jn., Jaunpur, Varanasi, Chunar, Mirzapur, Prayagraj, Fatehpur, Govindpur, Orai, Veerangana Laxmibai Jhansi, Lalitpur, Bina, Ganj Basoda, Vidisha, Sant Hirdaram Nagar, Shujalpur, Ujjain, Nagda, Ratlam, Dahod, Godhra, Vishwamitri & Bharuch Station
04251	Prayag Jn.	20:30	Ayodhya Cantt.	23:55	Phaphamau Jn., Maa Belha Devi Dham Pratapgarh Jn. & Sultanpur stations
04252	Ayodhya Cantt.	15:45	Prayag Jn.	19:55	
04253	Phaphamau Jn.	11:15	Ayodhya Cantt.	14:45	Maa Belha Devi Dham Pratapgarh Jn. & Sultanpur stations
04254	Ayodhya Cantt.	06:15	Phaphamau Jn.	10:15	
04255	Prayag Jn. (Ring Rail)	05:35	Prayag Jn. (Ring Rail)	21:30	Phaphamau Jn., Mau AIma, Maa Belha Devi Dham Pratapgarh Jn., Chilbila Jn., Khundaur, Sultanpur, Kudebhar, Khajurhat, Bharatkund, Ayodhya Cantt., Salarpur, Sohawal, Devrakot, Baragaon, Rudauli, Raujagaon, Patranga, Daryabad, Saidkhanpur, Saldarganj, Rasauli, Barabanki Jn., Safedabad, Malhaur, Lucknow Jn., Utretia, Mohanialganj, Kankaha, Nigohan, Shrirajnagar, Bachhravan, Kuninganj, Harchandpur, Gangaganj, Rae Bareilly Jn., Rupamau, Fursatganj, Jais, Bani, Gauriganj, Talakhjuri, Amethi, Misrauli, Maa Chandika Devi Dham Antu, Jagesharganj, Chilbila Jn., Maa Belha Devi Dham Pratapgarh Jn., Shanidev Dham Bishnathganj, Mau AIma, Sevait and Phaphamau Jn. & stations
08562	Visakhapatnam Jn.	22:20	Gorakhpur	20:25	Vizianagram Jn., Srikakulam Road, Palasa, Brahmapur, Chhatrapur, Balugaon, Khordha Road, Bhubaneswar, Naraj Marthapur, Dhenkanal, Angul, Boinda, Redharwol, Sambalpur City, Jharsuguda Road, Raigarh, Champa Jn., Bilaspur,endra Road, Anuppur, Shahdol., Umaria, Katni, Maihar, Satna, Manikpur, Prayagraj Chheoki Jn., Mirzapur, Chunar, Varanasi, Jaunpur Jn., Mau Jn. And Deoria Sadar Station.
04202	Prayagraj Sangam	12:20	Alamnagar	17:00	Prayag Jn., Kunda Harnamganj, Unchahar Jn., Rae Bareilly, Bachhravan & Utariatya Jn. Stations
04201	Alamnagar	19:15	Prayagraj Sangam	23:25	
04206	Prayagraj Sangam	13:30	Ayodhya Cantt.	17:00	Maa Belha Devi Dham Pratapgarh Jn. & Sultanpur stations
04205	Ayodhya Cantt.	08:45	Prayagraj Sangam	12:15	
04526	Bathinda Jn.	04:30	Phaphamau Jn.	23:55	Rampura Phul, Barnala, Dhuri, Patiala, Rajpura, Ambala Cantonment, Yamunanagar Jagadhri, Saharanpur, Roorkee, Laksar, Najibabad, Moradabad, Bareilly Jn., Shahjahanpur, Hardoi, Lucknow & Rae Bareilly Jn. station
04315	Phaphamau Jn.	06:30	Dehradun	21:30	Rae Bareilly Jn., Lucknow, Bareilly Jn., Moradabad, Najibabad & Haridwar Stations
04065	Phaphamau Jn.	23:30	Delhi Jn.	13:40	Raebareilly Jn., Lucknow, Hardoi, Shahjahanpur, Bareilly Jn., Rampur, Moradabad, Amroha, Gajraula, Garhmuktesar, Hapur & Ghaziabad Stations
04662	Amritsar	20:10	Phaphamau Jn.	19:00	Beas, Jalandhar City, Dhandari Kalan, Sirhind, Rajpura, Ambala Cantt., Yamunanagar Jagadhri, Saharanpur, Deoband, Muzaffarnagar, Meerut City, Hapur, Garhmukteshar, Gajraula, Amroha, Moradabad, Rampur, Bareilly Jn., Shahjahanpur, Lucknow and Raebareilly Jn. stations
03410	Prayagraj Rambagh	19:15	Malda Town	14:30	Banaras, Varanasi, Pt. Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Jn., Buxar, Ara, Danapur, Patna Jn., Rajendra Nagar, Bakhtiyarpur, Barh, Mokameh, Kiul Jn., Abhaipur, Jamalpur Jn., Sultanganj, Bhagalpur, Kahaigaon, Sahibganj Jn., Barharwa Jn. & New Farakka Jn. Stations

During the Rail journey never travel with inflammable objects like Crackers, Petrol, Kerosene & Gas Cylinder etc.

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