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INSIDE

MONEY 10
SEBI PLANS TO INTRODUCE PRE-LISTING TRADING IN IPO SHARES TO DETER GREY MARKET ACTIVITY: BUCH

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14 NAXALS KILLED IN BORDER OPERATION

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ RAIPUR/BHUBANESWAR

Fourteen Naxals, including a top leader of the CPI (Maoists) who was carrying a reward of Rs 1 crore, were killed in a joint operation by CRPF and State Police forces along the Chhattisgarh-Odisha border. Union Home Minister Amit Shah Tuesday termed the encounter as "another mighty blow to Naxalism" and asserted the Narendra Modi government's resolve for a Naxal-free India and the joint efforts of the security forces to eliminate the menace from the country.

Chhattisgarh's Gariaband district superintendent of police Nikhil Rakhecha said of the deceased, one has been identified as Jairam alias Chalpati, a central committee member of the CPI (Maoist), who was carrying a bounty of Rs 1 crore. The identity of the remaining cadres was yet to be ascertained.

"Another mighty blow to Naxalism. Our security forces achieved major success towards building a Naxal-free Bharat. The CRPF, SoG Odisha, and Chhattisgarh Police neutralised 14 Naxalites in a joint operation along the Odisha-Chhattisgarh border. With our resolve for a Naxal-free India and the joint efforts of our security forces, Naxalism is breathing its last today," Shah wrote on X. Giving details of the incident, police said two women Naxalites were killed during a joint operation on Monday along the Chhattisgarh-Odisha border. A large cache of firearms, ammunition and IEDs, including a self-loading



Four gangsters killed in gunfight with STF in Shamli

BISWAJEE BANERJEE ■ SHAMLI

Four notorious criminals, including a wanted gangster with a bounty of Rs 1 lakh, were killed in a late-night encounter with the Special Task Force (STF) of Meerut on Monday. The shootout occurred near the Udupur brick kiln in the Jhijnhana area of Shamli district after the STF intercepted the suspects' vehicle while acting on a tip-off about an impending robbery.

When the STF team attempted to stop a Brezza car, the occupants allegedly opened fire, leading to a fierce exchange of gunfire. Arshad, a member of the Mukim and



Mustafa alias Kagga gang from Gangoh, Saharanpur, sustained bullet injuries and died on the spot. He was wanted in multiple cases of robbery and murder in Shamli, Saharanpur, and Panipat in Haryana. Three of his associates, Manjeet from Sonipat, Satish from Madhuban in Haryana, and another unidentified man, also succumbed to injuries in the encounter.

Inspector Sunil Kumar was injured in the exchange of fire and has been admitted to a hospital in Gurugram. His condition is reported to be stable.

Police recovered pistols and country-made firearms from the scene. Investigations revealed that Manjeet, who had been serving a life sentence, was out on parole and had resumed criminal activities. The gang was reportedly planning a major robbery in the Jhijnhana area when they were intercepted by the STF.

Senior police officials, including DIG Ajay Sahni and Shamli SP Ramsevak Gautam, visited the site of the encounter and are supervising the ongoing investigation.

rifle, were recovered from the encounter site. A fresh exchange of firing took place late Monday night and it continued till early hours of Tuesday in a forest under the Mainpur police station areas (Chhattisgarh) along the Chhattisgarh-Odisha border, in which 12 more Naxalites were gunned down. With this, the total number of Maoists killed in the operation went up to 14, police said.

Intermittent exchange of firing in the area was underway on Tuesday too and the number of Maoist casualties may increase, they said. A joint team of security personnel from the District Reserve Guard (DRG) of the Chhattisgarh Police, CoBRA commandos of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) and Special Operation Group (SOG) personnel from the Odisha Police were involved in the operation.

The operation was launched on the night of January 19 based on intelligence inputs about the presence of Maoists in the Kularighat reserve forest of Chhattisgarh, just 5 km from the border of Odisha's Nuapada district. Hailing the security forces, Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai said under the BJP-led double-engine government at the Centre and the state, Chhattisgarh will get rid of the menace by March 2026. He said strengthening the resolve of Prime Minister Modi and the union home minister to end Naxalism in the country by March 2026, the security forces have been continuously achieving success and moving rapidly towards fulfilling the target.

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Firefighters work to extinguish a fire in a hotel at a ski resort of Klartalkaya in Bolu province, in northwest Turkey PTI

At least 66 dead in hotel fire in Turkey

PTI ■ ANKARA

A fire at a hotel at a popular ski resort in northwestern Turkey on Tuesday killed at least 66 people, Turkey's Interior Minister said. Ali Yerlikaya said at least 51 other people were injured in the disaster.

"We are in deep pain. We have unfortunately lost 66 lives in the fire that broke out at this hotel," Yerlikaya told reporters after inspecting the site. Health Minister Kemal Memisoglu said at least one of the injured was in serious condition. The fire broke out at around 3:30 am in the restaurant of the 12-story Grand Kartal hotel in the resort of Klartalkaya in Bolu province, officials and reports said. The cause of the fire was under investigation.

Two of the victims died after jumping from the building in a panic, Gov Abdulaziz Aydin told the state-run Anadolu Agency. Private NTV television said some people tried to climb down from their rooms using sheets and blankets.

There were 234 guests staying at the hotel, Aydin said.

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Trump signs citizenship order



President Donald Trump talks to reporters as he signs executive orders in the Oval Office of the White House PTI

AGENCIES ■ WASHINGTON

Donald Trump, the newly sworn-in US President, signed an executive order on Monday that would end birthright citizenship in the United States. Set to take effect on February 20, the order specifies that children born to foreign passport holders, even those legally residing in the country on tourist, student, or work visas, will no longer automatically acquire US citizenship. This decision is expected to have far-reaching implications, particularly for over one million Indians currently in line for green cards.

Speaking from the Oval Office, Trump criticised the current system, calling birthright citizenship "absolutely ridiculous" and claiming the US is the "only country in the world" that provides automatic citizenship to children born on its soil. He argued that this policy change is necessary and justified, citing "very good grounds" for the shift. The order outlines that

children born in the US after the effective date will not be granted citizenship unless the father is a US citizen or lawful permanent resident, and the mother's presence in the country is either unlawful or temporary. This includes individuals on student, tourist, or work visas.

The move has provoked strong opposition from civil rights groups and immigrant advocates, with organisations such as the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) filing a lawsuit challenging the order's legality. Author and academic Vivek Wadhwa criticised the policy, warning that it would exacerbate the difficulties faced by highly skilled immigrants who are already trapped in a lengthy green card backlog. He argued that while excluding children of undocumented immigrants and "birth tourists" might be one issue, the broader impact of excluding those legally contributing to the US economy and workforce could harm the country's competitiveness.

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Mamata Seeks death for rape convict



West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee addresses the media in Howrah PTI

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Proportionate to West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's "disappointment and shock" at the RG Kar Medical College and Hospital rape and murder convict not getting the death sentence, her government on Tuesday moved the Calcutta High Court, seeking the death penalty for Sanjoy Roy, the accused.

This, while the parents of "Abhaya," the victim lady doctor who was raped and murdered in the wee hours of August 9, 2024, inside her own hospital premises, literally thrust aside Banerjee's "sympathy," requesting her to "keep off our daughter's matter and let us fight for justice." The Division Bench of Justice Debangshu Basak promptly allowed the matter to be filed after Advocate General Kishore Dutta moved on behalf of the State, seeking the death penalty for Roy.

"I was aghast to see that the death penalty was not allowed in this matter... when someone turns a demon, can society be human? If someone commits a crime, should we forgive

them? This will encourage him to commit such crimes again," Banerjee thundered from a public meeting at Malda, asking, "How does the judgment say it is not the 'rarest of rare' (case)? If say it is rare, sensitive, and heinous?" Banerjee had on Monday blamed the Central Bureau of Investigation for failing to prove their case in the Sealdah District and Sessions Court, praising her own State Police for ensuring speedy justice in similar other cases. Banerjee's statement was stoutly backed by Trinamooli Congress spokesperson Kunal Ghosh, who directly blamed the CBI for its "untidy investigation." He said, "It is for the CBI to explain how the convict eluded the death sentence as the case was being dealt with by them after it was taken away from the Kolkata Police and given to them... in fact, the Kolkata Police had arrested Sanjoy Roy before his custody was transferred to the CBI... the State Police during this period has cracked four cases at Farakka, Mathabhanga, Gurap, and Kulti and ensured the death sentence in all the cases."

However, the father of the victim rejected the State Government's approach and requested the Chief Minister to keep off the matter. "You have done enough... we need no more favors... please keep off the case... let us fight our own battle," the father of the victim said rather acerbically. "Had the Chief Minister been serious about the case, she would have acted with purpose when she was required to do so by properly directing the police not to allow tampering of the evidence so that the other bigger and more powerful people involved in the act could be arrested... she did not act while her own police administration was destroying evidence... Whatever the Chief Minister has done till date, she should not do any further."

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BJP unveils welfare manifesto

SAUMYA SHUKLA ■ NEW DELHI

As the Delhi Assembly elections approach, a shower of new freebies continues to pour down on the people of the national Capital with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), on Tuesday, promising a slew of welfare schemes, including free education for needy students from 'KG to PG' in government institutions, a one-time assistance of Rs 15,000 for UPSC aspirants, and an insurance cover of Rs 10 lakh, along with a Rs five lakh accident cover for

domestic helps and auto-taxi drivers, as part of the second phase of its 'Sankalp Patra.' Former Union Minister and Lok Sabha MP Anurag Thakur presented the manifesto which has eight poll promises including 'zero tolerance' for corruption. He said that a Special Investigation Team (SIT) will be formed to probe all 'irregularities and scams' of the AAP government if the party comes to power in Delhi. "As soon as the BJP government is formed, we will form an SIT to investigate the Mohalla Clinic scam, classroom scam, DTC bus scam, Delhi Jal Board scam," Thakur said. The manifesto includes a



BJP MPs Anurag Thakur with Delhi party President Virendra Sachdeva, Ramvir Singh Bidhuri, Vijender Gupta during the launch of the second part of the party's 'Sankalp Patra' (manifesto) for the upcoming Delhi Assembly elections, in New Delhi, Tuesday Photo: Ranjan Dimri/The Pioneer

number of measures focusing on youth including a one-time financial assistance of Rs 15,000 and reimbursement of fees and travel expenses twice for Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) and state civil services examinations. The party also assured that its government in Delhi would launch 'Dr BR Ambedkar Stipend Yojna' to provide Rs 1,000 monthly aid to Scheduled Caste (SC) students at polytechnic and skill centres in the national capital if voted to power. In a bid to counter AAP's

promise to provide insurance to auto-drivers, who have traditionally been a voter base of the ruling party, the BJP also promised to form welfare boards for domestic workers and auto-taxi drivers once they form the government.

The senior BJP leader added, "Besides, the boards will provide Rs 10 lakh of insurance and Rs 5 lakh of accident cover and offer scholarships to the children of domestic workers and auto-taxi drivers." He also promised six months' paid maternity leave for the female domestic workers.

Under the PM SVANidhi scheme for street vendors, the number of beneficiaries will be doubled, he said, citing the Sankalp Patra-2. Thakur alleged that the AAP government had failed to implement the Jal Jeevan Mission in the national capital, reiterating the BJP's commitment to improve infrastructure and welfare if voted to power. "Under the Jal Jeevan Mission, water comes from taps even at 17,000 feet in the mountains but the AAP-da (AAP) government did not implement it in Delhi," he claimed.

Former Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal described the BJP's election manifesto as "dangerous for the country". The AAP convenor alleged that the BJP plans to shut free education in government schools and dismantle free health services including the mohalla clinics if voted to power.

The first part of the BJP's manifesto for the Delhi polls, Sankalp Patra-1, was released by its president JP Nadda last week. The party has already promised Rs 2,500 per month to Delhi women under the 'Mahila Samridhi Yojna' and assured that all public welfare schemes of the outgoing AAP government will continue in the future.

Saif returns home after attack

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Six days after he survived a murderous attack at his Bandra residence, Bollywood actor Saif Ali Khan was discharged from the Lilavati Hospital here on Tuesday evening. Fifty-four-year-old Saif — dressed in a white shirt and a pair of denims — looked hale, hearty and cheerful, as he walked out of the hospital and briefly raised his arm to wave at his fans and media persons, before heading in a car towards his home. A few close aides and private security personnel accompanied him.

Saif was seen with friends and neighbours, as he walked into his "Satguru Sharan" building. Minutes later, the actor returned to his 12th floor apartment where he had sustained six stab injuries, including the one in his spine, in a knife attack on him by an



Bollywood actor Saif Ali Khan on his way to home after he was discharged from Lilavati Hospital, in Mumbai PTI

intruder between 2 am and 2.30 am on Thursday last. The intruder -who has now been identified as a Bangladeshi national Shariful Islam Shahzad (30) - is currently in the custody of the Mumbai police. After he was brutally stabbed by the intruder after a failed burglary attempt, a profusely bleeding Saif himself taken an autorickshaw and rushed to the Lilavati Hospital at around 3 am.

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R-Day rehearsals choke traffic in Capital

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Massive traffic congestion was seen in central Delhi due to the Republic Day parade rehearsals on Tuesday, leaving hundreds of commuters stranded on the road. Commuters also complained of long queues at metro stations due to heightened security checks ahead of Republic Day. Routes leading to Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg near the ITO, arterial roads of the Ring Road, between Ashram and IP Estate flyover, Man Singh Road, Rafi Marg, Janpath Road, Shahjahan Road, Akbar Road, Ashoka Road and other routes around the Kartavya Path were severely hit. A traveller shared videos and pictures of a traffic jam in Mundka following which the Delhi Traffic Police said the traffic control room has been informed and the needful is being done. "Don't feel like going out for work. The traffic in Delhi is horrible," another user on X said. Motorists blamed traffic personnel for not regulating traffic properly and said



Traffic jam near the Ring Road owing to rehearsal for the Republic Day Parade Photo: Ranjan Dimri

that there was no proper information about the traffic diversions. A user who shared a picture of online maps said, "All the roads leading to Central Delhi are fully jammed. People had to wait more than one

hour on the road to reach their destination." Posting a picture of the heavy traffic near Kartavya Path, a user wrote, "Is it too much to ask Delhi Traffic Police to manage traffic? The entire central Delhi is choked."

While some users reported that they were late for work or didn't want to go to work due to Delhi roads being jam-packed. Heavy traffic congestion was also reported in several parts of south Delhi. One of the commuters posted on social media that they were stuck in a traffic jam on MB Road for two hours.

Another commuter who commutes daily to his office in his car said, "Usually I start in the early morning to reach my office on time. But today it was a completely different situation. I got stuck in traffic for more than two hours. I had to inform my seniors that I would be late for work."

He further said that security has also been increased due to Republic Day with the traffic police conducting vehicle inspections at every checkpoint which adds to the congestion. The snarls persisted despite the traffic police issuing an advisory on January 15, notifying the public about road closures in central Delhi.

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WEATHER

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MARKETS



Sensex tanks 1,235 pts to 7-month low

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark Sensex tanked 1,235 points to settle at more than seven-month low due to an across-the-board selloff triggered by global trade war worries after US President Donald Trump announced tariffs on neighbouring countries on his inauguration day.

The 30-share BSE Sensex plummeted 1,235.08 points or 1.60 per cent to settle at 75,838.36 dragged by losses in ICICI Bank and Reliance Industries. During the day, the BSE benchmark plummeted 1,431.57 points or 1.85 per cent to hit an intraday low of 75,641.87. The broader NSE Nifty plunged 320.10 points or 1.37 per cent to close at 23,024.65. In the intraday trade, the NSE Nifty plunged 367.9 points or 1.57 per cent to 22,976.85.

Among Sensex shares, Zomato, NTPC, Adani Ports, ICICI Bank, State Bank of India, Reliance Industries, Mahindra & Mahindra, Bajaj Finance, Tech Mahindra and Axis Bank were the major laggards. UltraTech Cement and HCL Technologies were the only gainers. European markets were trading higher on Tuesday. In Asian markets, Tokyo and Hong Kong ended higher, while Shanghai and Seoul settled on a flat note on Tuesday. US markets were closed on Monday on the occasion of Martin Luther King Jr Day.

CLASSIFIEDS

सूचना

सर्वसाधारण को सूचित किया जाता है कि मेरा पुत्र अब्दुल मुकीम (ABDUL MUKEEM) जो कि कक्षा 10 का छात्र है...

सूचना

सर्वसाधारण को सूचित किया जाता है कि मेरे पुत्र अब्दुल मुकीम (ABDUL MUKEEM) जो कि कक्षा 10 का छात्र है...

NOTICE

I am JASVANTHARA W/O Late. Babu Ram Niwasini Village Gangapur (Walipur) Post Walipur Police Station Baldirai, District Sultanpur (U.P.) I declare on oath that my husband late, Babu Ram has retired from the Indian Army...

AUCTION NOTICE

दिनांक 24-01-2025 मध्यान्ह 12:00 बजे राष्ट्रीय अकादमी सीमा शुल्क, आंचलिक परिसर, ए-ब्लॉक, अमृतवाह कर भवन, विभूति खण्ड, गोमतीनगर, लखनऊ में निम्नोक्त घोषित कार्यालय कर्मचर, अल्मारियों, एयरकंडीशनर आदि की नीलामी, सिक्किरीटी रु० 10,000/- नकद, जी. एस. टी. पंजीकरण, आधार, पैनकार्ड के साथ जमा होगी। आई०पी० सिंह एडव० सन्स.

NOTICE

My Correct name is Kiran Katiyar D/o Kaushal Kishor Katiyar W/o Ravindra Kumar R/o A-351, near Kali Mandir Barra 6, Kanpur Nagar, Which is mentioned in all records by mistake my name is mentioned in Aadhar card No.743420511869 as Vimlesh Katiyar which is My house hold name in future I will known Kiran Katiyar, I have completed all legal formalities regarding above by me

NOTICE

I have correction my name from Mradulata Sonkar to Mridulata Sonkar, whereas in all the educational records the name is Mridulata Sonkar W/O Vivek Kumar R/O 156-W-2 Shyam Vihar -PO-Barra Kanpur-27

NOTICE

I have changed my name from Shagufta Jamal to SHAGUFTA W/O Shahid Akhtar R/o 42/79 Misri Bazar Moolganj Kanpur for all future purpose.

NOTICE

I have changed my name from Shagufta Jamal to SHAGUFTA W/O Shahid Akhtar R/o 42/79 Misri Bazar Moolganj Kanpur for all future purpose.

NOTICE

सूचना देवदली सुचित किया जाता है कि मैं रामराज पुत्र स्वर्गीय दयाराम आर्य 52 वर्ष निवासी ग्राम सेनौर पोस्ट कयामपुर जिला बाराबंकी, रायच पूर्वक सुचित करता हूँ कि मेरी तलाकपत्र पत्नी से पैदा हुए पुत्र विष्णुका नाम संवकृष्ण है के जलत संपत्त में पश्कर अस्मानिक गतिविधियों से निवृत्त रहने तथा पारिवारिक सदस्यों के मानसिक शोषण का कारण बनने के चलते मैं अपनी सम्पत्त वत अन्त संपत्ति से वेदवत्त करता हूँ। अन्वये मे उसके द्वारा किये गये कृष्ण एव लेन देन का मुद्रसे या मेरे परिवार से कोई संबंध नहीं होगा। शायदी, रामराज पुत्र स्वर्गीय दयाराम निवासी ग्राम सेनौर पोस्ट कयामपुर जिला बाराबंकी मोबाइल- 9415901144

NOTICE

I have changed my son's name from Pushkar Kanaujia To Pushkar Kanaujia for future purposes, Pramod Kumar Kanaujia R/o Aaraji No.339, Ambedkar Puram, Kalyanpur Kanpur Nagar

Information

I hereby declare and inform that my name Seema Mishra wife of Vijay Kumar Mishra resident of 94/3 Feroze Gandhi Colony Thana Kotwali District Raebareilly was mentioned as Guddi Mishra wife of Vijay Kumar Mishra in some forms whereas my name is mentioned as Seema Mishra in all my forms like Aadhar, PAN, Voter Card, etc. Therefore, I make this public declaration and inform that my name should be mentioned as Seema Mishra wife of Vijay Kumar Mishra in all my forms, both the names are mine. In future, all the forms should be mentioned in my name Seema Mishra and in the forms in which my name was mentioned earlier as Guddi Mishra, there also my name will be mentioned and read as Seema Mishra. Declarant/Informant Seema Mishra Alias Guddi Mishra Wife of Vijay Kumar Mishra

NOTICE

I, Raveesh Tiwari (Roll No. 7154292, S/O Vivek Tiwari), have lost my ICSE marksheet and certificates for 10th grade (2019-2020) and 12th grade (2021-2022) in Lucknow on January 3rd 2025. These documents are vital for me. If anyone finds these, please contact me. 9517524194 Contact Address: 4/6 Butler Palace Colony jopling road hazratganj lucknow 226001

NOTICE

My name has wrongly been mentioned in Aadhaar Card No.965096406486 as Arvindra. My correct name is Arvind Kumar Shukla S/o Shri Chandra Kumar Shukla R/o Vill.Salempur Karowan, Unnao. I should be known & identified by this name.

NOTICE

I, Bindu Tiwari, hereby notify that my original registered sale deed executed by Uttarakhnd Cooperative Housing Society in Favor of Krishna Kumar Gupta on 01.09.1981, Book No. 2744 N, Page No. 493-495, Serial No. 5865 has been lost. Any use of this document by any other person will be considered illegal. Bindu Tiwari, W/O Kailash Tiwari Add-122, Ambalika, Vikas Nagar, Lucknow, Mobile No. 6392926792

NOTICE

I have changed my name from Mukesh Panjwani to Mukesh Kumar Panjwani to be known as Mukesh Kumar Panjwani in all future references. Mukesh Kumar Panjwani, Add- 1/49 w-1, Saket Nagar, Kanpur

NOTICE

I have changed my name from Mukesh Panjwani to Mukesh Kumar Panjwani to be known as Mukesh Kumar Panjwani in all future references. Mukesh Kumar Panjwani, Add- 1/49 w-1, Saket Nagar, Kanpur

NOTICE

We, Mrs. Santosh Shukla & Mr. Ajay Shukla (son) & Mrs. Priya Shukla & Mrs. Jaya Shukla (Daughters) of Late Jagdish Chandra, are the only legal heirs of the Late Jagdish Chandra who passed away on 11/01/2018. Unfortunately Ajay Shukla died on 04/01/2023 issueless reflect from family membership certificate issued by SDM, Kanpur Nagar, vide bearing No. 1334/अड-कनिगा/2023 dated 11.08.2023, by virtue of succession the House No.120/456 built over Plot No.399 Block N.P. Narayanpur Scheme No.1 situated at Lalpat Nagar, Kanpur Nagar, area 167.226 Sq.Mtr, thereafter said Mrs. Santosh Shukla W/o Late Jagdish Chandra, Mrs. Priya Shukla D/o Late Jagdish Chandra & Mrs. Jaya Shukla D/o Late Jagdish Chandra W/o Mr. Shashank Dixit sold out said House to Mr. Ravindar Singh Bhatia S/o Mr. Trilochan Singh & Mrs. Hempreet Kaur W/o Mr. Ravindar Singh Bhatia, duly registered in the office of Sub-Registrar, Kanpur in Book No.I Volume No. 14398 at pages 343 to 380 at serial No. 14430 on 06.12.2022, thereafter said Mr. Ravindar Singh Bhatia S/o Mr. Trilochan Singh & Mrs. Hempreet Kaur W/o Mr. Ravindar Singh Bhatia, agreed to sell said to Mr. Simaran Pal Singh S/o Mr. Surindar Pal Singh, has been vested in their ownership and the said premises in free from encumbrances, if any bank, has any charge over it, the same be informed to the undersigned within 7 days otherwise their claim will be extinguished. (SARVESH CHANDRA DUBEY) ADVOCATE 411-412 IVTH FLOOR "KRISHNA TOWER" 15/63, CIVIL LINES, KANPUR Mob.-09839039220 E-mail: advocatesarveshdubey@gmail.com

NOTICE

I Vad Unath Singh Rathore father of Vivek Kumar Rathore Resident of 219-G, Tiwaripur Bagiya, Jajmau Kanpur Nagar Pin, 208010 U.P. have changed my name from vad unath singh rathore to Yadunath Singh Rathore vide affidavit dated 15/01/25 Before Notary Kanpur Nagar U.P. Affidavit No.93AE 384546

NOTICE

I have changed my name Jitendra Kumar Mishra to Jitendra Kumar Mishra S/o Devi Charan Mishra R/o 128/14, Y-Block, Kidwai Nagar Kanpur

NOTICE

I have changed my name Jitendra Kumar Mishra to Jitendra Kumar Mishra S/o Devi Charan Mishra R/o 128/14, Y-Block, Kidwai Nagar Kanpur

NOTICE

I have changed my name from Usha Mishra to Usha Mishra W/o Jitendra Kumar Mishra R/o 128/14, Y-Block, Kidwai Nagar Kanpur

Govt rejects key monuments as Waqf assets at JPC meeting

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Uttar Pradesh government on Tuesday submitted before the Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) on Waqf (Amendment) Act 2024 that out of the 14,000 hectares claimed to be Waqf property, as much as 11,000 hectares are government land. The government also refused to recognise the Asafi (Bada) Imbarara and Chhota Imbarara in Lucknow, and the Bahu Begum Ka Maqbara in Faizabad (now Ayodhya), as Waqf properties. In Uttar Pradesh, a total of 1.25 lakh properties are registered with the UP Sunni Central Waqf Board, and 7,785 properties with the Shia Waqf Board. The JPC meeting on the Waqf (Amendment) Act 2024 was held in Lucknow on Tuesday. Suggestions and objections were sought from Muslim religious leaders and organisations. A total of 11 members, including JPC Chairman Jagdambika Pal and member Asaduddin Owaisi, participated in the meeting. Prominent attendees included Shia Waqf Board Chairman Ali Zaidi, Maulana Khalid Rashid Farangi Mahali, Maulana Sufiyan Nazami, representatives from Jamaat-e-Islami, the Milli Council, and officials from other organisations. This marked JPC Chairman Jagdambika Pal's second visit to Lucknow. During his earlier visit, he met with Muslim community leaders and intellectuals. Sources said that Pal held extensive discussions with Maulana Khalid Rashid Farangi Mahali and Maulana Saif Abbas about the bill. Speaking to reporters after the meeting, Pal said, "This law is being introduced for the betterment. Today was our last meeting in Lucknow. Earlier, similar meetings were held in various states. In today's discussion, we also consulted Minister Danish Azad Ansari, Minister OP Rajbhar, and the Shia Waqf Board and UP Sunni Central Waqf Board." AIMIM national president and MP Asaduddin Owaisi alleged that the new law aims to undermine Waqf properties, as the 'Bada Imbarara, Chhota Imbarara in Lucknow, and Bahu Begum tomb in Ayodhya have not been considered as Waqf properties by the government.' "How can there be a non-Muslim member in the Waqf Board? All power will be transferred to the collector, who will function according to the gov-

ernment. The bill has many shortcomings, which is why it is facing opposition," said Owaisi. The Uttar Pradesh government defended its position, stating that a comprehensive survey of Waqf properties had been conducted. Officials noted that there had previously been no data on Waqf properties in the state, including registration details or figures on confiscated land. The government cited findings from the Sachar Committee, which identified 60 properties as government-owned. Jagdambika Pal emphasised the productive nature of the meeting, stating that discussions were held in a constructive atmosphere. He noted that complaints are frequently received about the misuse of Waqf properties and cited examples of vast land holdings, such as 5,000 acres in Pilibhit and 70,000 acres in other areas, which require proper management. The UP government had, in September 2022, decided to undertake a survey of all the Waqf properties in the state. The UP government overturned a 1989 government order that mandated automatic registration of high or mounded land, barren land, and Usar land as Waqf property. The government had then issued directions to all the district magistrates and commissioners to re-examine the documents of all the properties that had been registered under Waqf since April 7, 1989, and to record the status of such lands. The government says that the cemetery, mosque, and Idgah land should be properly demarcated because, under the 1989 ordinance, many such properties, which were Usar, Banjar, and Bhita in the revenue records, were also declared Waqf properties. Under the guise of this order, some cultivable land was also automatically registered as Waqf property, sources said. The government maintains that under the Muslim Waqf Act of 1960, no Waqf property can be automatically registered. The 1989 order, however, revealed that many properties were registered with the Waqf Board without any application, leading to the ordinance. Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav vociferously opposed the survey, saying, "We are against the survey of Waqf properties by the state government. It should not be done. This government wants to keep people entangled only in the Hindu-Muslim issue."

CM Yogi addresses people's concerns



Officials that any delay or negligence in addressing public grievances would be unacceptable. During the Janata Darshan, several people approached the chief minister seeking financial help for medical treatment. The CM assured them that the government would provide full support for their treatment. He directed officials to expedite the preparation of treatment cost estimates and forward them to the administration. For a woman seeking medical assistance, CM Yogi directed officials to arrange treatment at a medical college or a specialised hospital. On matters related to revenue and police, the chief minister emphasised transparency and fairness, ensuring that no one faces injustice. Yogi also instructed officials to take strict legal action against those involved in illegal land grabs.

2 workers die due to gas leak in factory

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Lucknow (PNS): Two workers died on Tuesday and one other was injured due to gas leakage in a factory in Sikandarabad industrial area of Bulandshahr, police said. The incident took place at the BATX Energies factory in the industrial area, the police said. District Magistrate Shruti said three workers were rushed to the hospital after gas leakage. Two died during treatment while the treatment of Girish, the third one, is underway, she said. Of the two workers who died, Ankush is from Moradabad while Satyendra is from Gulavathi. The factory has not resumed function yet and a trial is going on there, officials said. The district magistrate said a probe has been ordered into the incident. She said the family members of the deceased will be given all possible help. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has expressed grief over the accident and has instructed officials to expedite the relief work. The chief minister has expressed condolences to the families of the people who died in the incident and has instructed for proper treatment of the injured person. Additional District Magistrate (Administration) Prashant Kumar said after looking inside the factory, it appeared to be a battery recycling plant. "Initial information that was received says the plant is still in the commissioning stage and it was being started today. Facts revealed that around 8.30 am, three people fainted due to gas leakage here and they were taken to the hospital," he said. Kumar said as soon as the administration got the information, everyone immediately reached the spot. It was found that two people who were in the hospital died. The condition of one person was critical and he has been referred to Delhi, he said. The factory management and officials have been called for their take on the incident, he said, adding that it is to be found out whether they took safety measures in the plant. The ADM said the administration was trying to ascertain whether the technical requirements and norms were followed. "All these things are a part of the investigation. We are also looking at the CCTV cameras installed there," he added.

Lko Metro EW Corridor nearing PIB approval

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Lucknow Metro East-West Corridor project is nearing approval from the Public Investment Board (PIB). A senior official from the Uttar Pradesh Metro Rail Corporation (UPMRC) confirmed on Tuesday that the inter-ministerial consultation for PIB approval has been completed. Feedback from 30-40 ministries has been compiled, and a meeting is set to finalise the approval process. The official expressed optimism, expecting PIB approval shortly, after which the proposal will be presented for Union Cabinet approval. The Detailed Project Report (DPR) for the East-West Corridor, connecting Charbagh to Vasant Kunj under Phase 1B of the Lucknow Metro, was approved by the Network Planning Group (NPG) on July 9, 2024. The state government had already granted clearance for the project in March 2024. The NPG meeting, held at Vanija Bhawan, Delhi, was chaired by the additional secretary of the Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of India. The meeting focused on potential obstructions such as utilities (water pipelines, transmission lines, sewer lines), railway lines, buildings or monuments under the Archeology department, bus stands, and multi-modal connectivity via the PM Gati Shakti portal. No significant obstacles to the construction of the East-West Corridor were identified. The PM GatiShakti portal provided comprehensive details about various utilities that could affect the project, enabling better planning and reducing construction delays. Representatives from key departments, including Housing and Urban Affairs, Defence, Railways, Environment and Forests, and Finance, participated in the NPG meeting. The next phase involves obtaining PIB approval before the project is submitted to the Union Cabinet for final clearance. The proposed East-West Corridor will span 11.165 kilometres, with 4.286 kilometres elevated and 6.879 kilometres underground. The corridor will feature 12 stations, including seven underground and five elevated stations. The estimated cost of the project is Rs 5,081 crore, with a completion timeline of five years. The East-West Corridor will connect with the existing North-South corridor at Charbagh Metro Station, which will serve as an interchange. The corridor will enhance connectivity to significant areas of old Lucknow, such as Aminabad and Chowk, and ease traffic congestion in the region, providing greater convenience to the people.

20-year-old girl injured in knife attack by bike-borne accused

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Allegedly attacked with a sharp-edged weapon in Shankarpur village, under the jurisdiction of Madijan Police Station, on Tuesday, police said. The attack was carried out by two unidentified youths on a motorcycle. While the motive remains unclear, police have begun an investigation. No arrests or detentions have been made so far. The victim was rushed to the Trauma Centre at King George's Medical University, where she is said to be out of danger. Police suspect that the attackers were locals who may have harboured grievances against her. Reports indicate that the woman was on her way to college when the attack occurred. Two masked individuals on a motorcycle approached her, and one of them, riding pillion, attacked her with a knife, slitting her throat. The victim began bleeding heavily and collapsed to the ground, unconscious. After the attack, the culprits fled the scene but abandoned their motorcycle at the spot. Passersby informed the police, who, with the help of locals, transported the victim to the hospital. The police stated that the victim's statement has not yet been recorded, as she remains in shock and unable to speak. Patrolling has been intensified in the area, and efforts are underway to identify and apprehend the assailants. In a separate incident, an 18-year-old girl, Vaishnavi Rajput, allegedly hanged herself at her home in Aliganj on Tuesday evening. Vaishnavi was discovered by her father on Tuesday at around 8:30 pm. He informed the Aliganj police and rushed her to KGMU Trauma Centre, where doctors declared her dead. No suicide note was found at the scene. Investigations are ongoing.

Mystery shrouds bizman's death

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A 44-year-old Bengaluru-based businessman, identified as Nilesh Bhandari, was found dead under mysterious circumstances here late on Monday night. He had been rushed to RMN Hospital, where doctors declared him dead upon arrival. As per reports, Bhandari had arrived in Lucknow for business assignments and had checked into Hotel Saffron in Chinhat on Friday with a female companion, whom he introduced as his business partner to the hotel staff. The duo later moved to room 208. Over the course of their stay, Bhandari and his partner attended several business meetings. During this time, he remained in contact with his wife and children, and was scheduled to leave the city on Tuesday evening. According to police reports, Bhandari went to the bathroom on Monday evening but collapsed shortly after coming out. His companion raised an alarm, drawing the attention of the hotel staff and others nearby. He was immediately rushed to the hospital, but he died on the way. The police are investigating the cause of his sudden death, noting that there were no visible injury marks on his body. His family has been informed about his passing. While the female companion was interrogated, she was allowed to go with the condition that she would cooperate with the investigation if summoned again. The case remains under investigation as authorities work to determine the circumstances surrounding his death.

Dist admn gears up for Republic Day

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The district administration is gearing up for the Republic Day celebrations, with a key meeting held under the leadership of Divisional Commissioner Roshan Jacob. Secretary to the Chief Minister, Surya Pal Gangwar, and District Magistrate Visakh G. The meeting focused on ensuring that the upcoming national festival is marked by dignified and spectacular events. Jacob emphasised that the Republic Day programmes should be not only engaging and attractive but also inspiring and educative. She also reviewed the preparations for UP Diwas, which is scheduled for January 24, instructing authorities to operate additional buses on eight routes to facilitate smooth transportation to the event venue. Publicity campaigns will be launched to inform the public about bus routes and pickup points. She also directed the police to ensure VIP and general public entry is well-organised at the venue, and the municipal corporation was tasked with ensuring cleanliness, fogging, water tankers, and mobile toilets at the Avadh Shilpgram. In the review for the Republic Day programme, Gangwar said that cultural performances from artistes of eight states will be featured during the event. These artistes will arrive on January 21, with a full dress rehearsal scheduled for January 24. A total of 66 contingents will take part in the parade, and special attention will be given to maintaining the parade's timeline. Gangwar also mentioned that, like last year, the national anthem will be broadcast live via ITMS and the municipal corporation's LED screens. During this broadcast, all traffic signals will turn red, and citizens will be expected to stand in respect for the anthem.

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CITYBRIEFS

PROF ML BHATT IS NEW DIRECTOR OF KSSSCIH

Professor Madan Lal Bhatt, Vice-Chancellor of HNB Medical University, Dehradun, and former vice-chancellor of KGMU, assumed office as the new Director of Kalyan Singh Super Speciality Cancer Institute and Hospital (KSSSCIH) on Tuesday. He took over from Prof RK Dhiman, Director of SGPGI, who held the additional charge since 2021.

CONFERENCE

Maulana Azad National Urdu University, Lucknow, will host a two-day national conference on 'Evolution and Shifts: Emerging Patterns in Literature and Language' on February 24 and 25. During the poster release, campus incharge and conference coordinator, Prof Huma Yaqub, highlighted the conference's focus on the evolving trends in literature and language and their impact on society. Faculty members Suma Faisal, Ishrat Naheed, and Nuzhat Akhter were also present.

IDFC FIRST Bank Limited

(erstwhile Capital First Limited, amalgamated with IDFC Bank Limited and presently known as IDFC FIRST Bank Limited) CIN : L651107N2014PLC097792 Registered Office: - KRM Towers, 8th Floor, Harrington Road, Chetpet, Chennai- 600031. Tel : +91 44 4564 4000 | Fax: +91 44 4564 4022

Notice under Section 13 (2) of the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002

The following borrowers and co-borrowers availed the below mentioned secured loans from IDFC FIRST Bank Limited (erstwhile Capital First Limited, amalgamated with IDFC Bank Limited and presently known as IDFC FIRST Bank Limited) The loans of the below-mentioned borrowers and co-borrowers have been secured by the mortgage of their respective properties. As they have failed to adhere to the terms and conditions of the respective loan agreements and had become irregular, their loan were classified as NPA as per the RBI guidelines. Amounts due by them to IDFC FIRST Bank Limited (erstwhile Capital First Limited, amalgamated with IDFC Bank Limited and presently known as IDFC FIRST Bank Limited) are mentioned as per respective notices issued more particularly described in the following table and further interest on the said amounts shall also be applicable and the same will be charged as per contractual rate with effect from their respective dates.

Table with 5 columns: Sr No., Loan Account No., Type of Loan, Name of borrowers and co-borrowers, Section 13 (2) Notice Date, Outstanding amount as per Section 13 (2) Notice

PROPERTY ADDRESS : ALL THAT PIECE AND PARCEL OF PLOT NO 104-A, FORMING PART OF ARAZI NO. 327, SITUATED AT MAJJA SATWARI, PARGANA/TEHSILDISTRICT-KANPUR NAGAR, UTTAR PRADESH- 208013, ADMEASURING 75 SQ.YDS. AND BOUNDED AS: EAST: PLOT NO.107, WEST: 25 FT. WIDE ROAD, NORTH: PLOT NO.104, SOUTH: PLOT NO. 105

You are hereby called upon to pay the amounts to IDFC FIRST Bank Limited (erstwhile Capital First Limited, amalgamated with IDFC Bank Limited and presently known as IDFC FIRST Bank Limited) as per the details shown in the above table with contracted rate of interest thereupon from their respective dates and other costs, charges etc. within 60 days from the date of this publication, failing which the undersigned shall be constrained to initiate proceedings, under Section 13 (4) and section 14 of the SARFAESI Act, against the mortgaged properties mentioned hereinabove to realize the amount due to IDFC FIRST Bank Limited (erstwhile Capital First Limited, amalgamated with IDFC Bank Limited and presently known as IDFC FIRST Bank Limited). Further you are prohibited under Section 13 (13) of the said Act from transferring the said secured assets either by way of sale/lease or otherwise.

Date : 22.01.2025 Place : KANPUR IDFC FIRST Bank Limited (erstwhile Capital First Limited, amalgamated with IDFC Bank Limited and presently known as IDFC FIRST Bank Limited)

Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar Ph.D Admission- January, 2025 Online applications are invited for admission to Ph.D. programme January 2025 in various courses latest by 05-02-2025. For details consult University website www.gndu.ac.in Director of Research NA/12/27625/2023/40972 Dated CHD :-/1/21/2025

Pilgrims throng Kinnar Akhara at Maha Kumbh

Members say sect 'sealed right to spirituality'

PTI ■ MAHAKUMBH NAGAR

Having faced stiff resistance when they tried to register an 'akhara' for transgender persons 10 years ago, the camp of their sect at the ongoing Maha Kumbh is now flooded with pilgrims queuing up for blessings.

More than 3,000 trans persons, most of them abandoned by their families, are residing in the akhara and taking part in the sacred bathing ritual at the Sangam. The surge of devotees seeking their blessings has finally offered them hope that they would be accepted in society. Mahamandeshwar of Kinnar Akhara, Pavitra Nandan Giri — who identified herself as a woman — told PTI that society had always despised eunuchs.

"We have always been considered inferior. When we wanted to register an akhara for ourselves, questions were raised about our religion. We were asked why we needed it. Despite the resistance, we managed to register it 10 years ago and this is our first Maha



Kinnar Akhara at Maha Kumbh in Prayagraj

PTI

Kumbh," she said.

Akharas are monastic institutions or sects that unite seers (ascetics) under specific spiri-

tual traditions and practices. Giri said, "Today, we are able to take a dip at the Sangam, conduct processions similar to

other akharas, and perform rituals. The akhara is flooded with pilgrims and they are lining up to take our blessings. We

are proud to have found our place and hopefully we will be accepted more in society as well."

A nursing graduate, Giri said her family abandoned her, as is the case with many trans persons, and she found herself in the community and her new family.

"Life is difficult for us. As a child, I would play with my brothers and sisters, unaware that I was not one of them. Once known, everyone treated me like I was inferior or untouchable. I even completed my formal education but still continued to face discrimination," she said.

The Akhil Bharatiya Kinnar Akhara is the 14th akhara at the Maha Kumbh. The 13 akharas are divided into three groups — Sanyasi (Shaivite), Bairagi (Vaishnav) and Udaseen. Each akhara is allocated specific time slots for certain rituals, creating a vibrant atmosphere filled with processions featuring decorated elephants, horses and bands. The Juna Akhara is one of the oldest and largest among the 13.

M a h a m a n d e s h w a r Laxminarayan Tripathi, who also identified as a woman, said they were treated at par with other seers at the Maha Kumbh.

"We are chanting prayers, singing 'bhajan (hymns)' and performing 'yagya (offering in fire)'. People are queuing up to

take one-rupee coins from us. It is considered auspicious when a 'kinnar' gives blessings. Though this is well known, society still refuses to accept us. The akhara has now sealed our right to spirituality," she said. Asked about the resistance faced by the akhara, Tripathi said, "The resistance was less from people and more on grounds of religion. I asked if we did not even have the right to pray or call ourselves Hindu? The Juna Akhara came with us and our akhara was established to promote inclusivity and bring visibility to marginalised communities. We want to send out a message that spirituality transcends all boundaries of gender and identity." Visakhapatnam native Trinatha Uika, who also identified as a woman, said she was four when her family learnt that she was "different".

"I was too young to realise why I was being treated as an inferior, what my fault was. I learnt all these lessons away from my family when I was growing up. I never saw them again. This community is my family now," she said. The mega-religious event, organised every 12 years, is being held in Prayagraj from January 13 and will continue for 45 days. More than seven crore pilgrims have so far taken a holy dip at the Sangam — the confluence of the Ganga, Yamuna and the mythical Saraswati rivers.

MAHA KUMBH SNIPPETS

GUIDELINES ISSUED TO PREVENT ACCIDENTS CAUSED BY GAS LEAK

To ensure the safety of devotees and Kalpvasis during the ongoing Maha Kumbh, the Food and Logistics department conducted a special meeting on Tuesday focusing on LPG safety. The session was attended by departmental officials, LPG distributors, gas company representatives, and Fire department officers. During the meeting, key guidelines were issued to prevent accidents caused by LPG leakage. These measures include mandatory cylinder testing and strict restrictions on the sale of unauthorised cylinders. LPG cylinders will be inspected for leaks by technical assistants. Cylinders found to be leaking will not be supplied. Gas cylinders, pipes, and regulators will be checked. Any equipment not meeting safety standards must be replaced. Technical assistant teams have been deployed throughout the fair area to respond promptly to any emergencies. The storage of gas in the fair area will be limited to a maximum of 100 kg. Complete details of each supply vehicle must be submitted to the designated office. The meeting resolved that strict action would be taken against anyone found misusing domestic LPG or selling unauthorised cylinders. The Food and Logistics department urged all LPG distributors and officials to ensure proper monitoring and safety of gas supplies within the fair area. Any violations of the rules will result in punitive action against the concerned agencies.

ANIMATED FILM 'RAMAYANA: THE LEGEND OF PRINCE RAM' TO BE SCREENED TODAY

The Hindi version of the Indo-Japanese animated film 'Ramayana: The Legend of Prince Ram' is set to premiere at Maha Kumbh on Wednesday (January 22). The special screening of the animated film will take place at 10 am at the Divya Prem Sewa Camp, Sector 6, near Netra Kumbh. Social Welfare Minister Aseem Arun will be the chief guest. The screening is one of the many new features introduced by Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath for this year's Maha Kumbh. For the first time in the event's history, an animated film will be screened during the festival. The film vividly portrays the extraordinary tale of Lord Ram, his unwavering devotion, and the triumph of righteousness over evil. Designed especially for children, this initiative promises to inspire and entertain families and audiences of all age groups. Organisers have highlighted the film's appeal, making it a memorable experience for attendees. Set for a nationwide release on January 24, the screening at Maha Kumbh adds a unique significance to the event.

Spl cabinet meeting at Maha Kumbh today

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Yogi Adityanath government is set to hold a special cabinet meeting in Prayagraj on Wednesday, January 22.

All 54 ministers of the Uttar Pradesh Cabinet have been invited to this meeting, which is expected to approve several significant proposals and schemes for the state.

Following the meeting, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, along with the entire cabinet, will take the holy dip in the sacred waters of the Triveni Sangam. This isn't the first time CM Yogi has led his cabinet to the Sangam. In 2019, during the Kumbh Mela, he took a ceremonial dip along with his ministers, Akhara Parishad President Narendra Giri, and other saints.

The cabinet meeting will be held at the Triveni Sankul in Arai, starting at 12 noon. The location has been changed to avoid inconvenience to pilgrims visiting the Sangam. Initially, the meeting was planned at the Mela Authority Auditorium, but concerns over VIP security disrupting pil-

grims' movement led to the shift in venue.

After the meeting, the ministers will travel from the Arai VIP Ghat to the Sangam by motorboats. At the Sangam, CM Yogi and the cabinet members will perform the worship rituals and take the holy dip in the Sangam.

As per reports, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, Deputy Chief Ministers Keshav Prasad Maurya and Brajesh Pathak, along with Cabinet ministers Suresh Kumar Khanna, Surya Pratap Shahi, Swatantra Dev Singh, Baby Rani Maurya, Jaiveer Singh, Laxmi Narayan Chaudhary, Dharampal, Nand Gopal Nandi, Anil Rajbhar, and other ministers, including those with independent charge and state ministers, will take the holy dip in the Sangam after attending the cabinet meeting.

Meanwhile, besides the ministers, 130 VIPs who are attending the meeting will include the principal secretaries and other officers of all departments. They will also take a holy dip on the occasion. Some important proposals are being prepared for the meet-

ing. It is expected that the Maha Kumbh area may be declared plastic-free permanently. This proposal is being prepared with the cooperation of the municipal corporation. Although the Kumbh area is declared plastic-free during the fair period, if it is declared a permanent plastic-free zone, it will be an important decision in the steps being taken towards Nirmal Ganga and will prove to be a milestone.

Along with this, during the cabinet meeting, Prayagraj, Ayodhya, Varanasi, Mathura, and some other districts may also be declared as special religious areas.

Meanwhile, a municipal corporation meeting was held on Monday, during which the demand was made to fully and effectively implement the 74th Constitutional Amendment and bring a proposal related to it in the proposed cabinet meeting during Maha Kumbh on January 22.

The councillors said that the amount left after the completion of Maha Kumbh should be used for development works in the form of a special economic package.

Grandest celebration of Indianness, says Chidanand Saraswati

Mahakumbh Nagar (PNS):

As Maha Kumbh 2025 continues with scores of saints, spiritual leaders, and millions of devotees immersed in the rich spiritual experience, spiritual leader Chidanand Saraswati, President of Parmarth Niketan, Rishikesh, has described the event as "the grandest celebration of Indianness".

He said, "This festival symbolises the resurgence of Sanatan Dharma, and Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath is committed to elevating it to even greater heights."

He added, "For those who follow the Sanatan Dharma, no festival surpasses Maha Kumbh in significance. It is not just a festival for a select few, but a collective celebration. The enthusiasm and devotion of the participants have turned the banks of the holy Sangam into a sea of believers—a sight unparalleled anywhere in the world."

Chidanand Saraswati, who has been attending Maha Kumbh since 1971, expressed his admiration for the arrangements made for this year's grand event at Prayagraj. He lauded

Yogi for orchestrating such an extraordinary event, acknowledging the chief minister's relentless efforts in making this possible.

He shared that the event has left everyone in awe, with devotees and tourists from across the globe drawn to its spiritual energy. He said, "The mesmerising aura of Maha Kumbh has left an indelible impression on visitors, compelling them to return repeatedly. The festival is a beacon of unity and vitality, sending the world an unparalleled message of Sanatan Dharma's harmony."

Recalling his experience at the Sangam, Chidanand Saraswati remarked that he felt immense pride witnessing the people's enthusiasm.

He said, "The scene of devotees from every corner of the nation and beyond taking a dip in the holy waters was divine and magnificent. Even individuals from countries like Pakistan, Bangladesh, Bahrain, and the Arab world are captivated by the spiritual grandeur of Maha Kumbh, with many expressing a desire to join the celebration. The festival showcases the



Adani Group Chairman Gautam Adani distributes food to needy at Shri Bade Hanuman Ji Temple during the Maha Kumbh Mela 2025, in Prayagraj on Tuesday

PTI

'Water Woman' overwhelmed by cleanliness

PNS ■ MAHAKUMBH NAGAR

Visibly overwhelmed by the cleanliness and uninterrupted flow of the sacred Triveni Sangam at the ongoing Maha Kumbh, Shipra Pathak, the 'Water Woman of India', has expressed her gratitude to Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath for his dedicated efforts.

Pathak actively leads the 'Ek Thali, Ek Thaila' campaign for water and environmental conservation at Maha Kumbh. Under her campaign, lakhs of eco-friendly bags and plates have been distributed at Maha Kumbh with the support of various organisations.

Praising the cleanliness across the Kumbh, including the Triveni Sangam, she said, "The level of cleanliness here is extraordinary. This beautiful arrangement is the result of efforts by a leader who, besides being a chief minister, is also a sadhak, yogi, and sanyasi. Kumbh is very close to his heart, and no one could have managed it better than him."

Calling Yogi Adityanath the most popular chief minister, Pathak shared an experience from her journey.

"In November last year, I walked from Ayodhya to Rameswaram. When I told people in Karnataka that I came from Ayodhya, their response was, 'That's Yogi's Uttar Pradesh! The fact that the largest state in India is identified with Yogi ji even in a small village in Karnataka speaks volumes about Maharaj ji's service, commitment, and principles from Kashmir to Kanyakumari."



Priests perform 'Ganga Arti' during the Maha Kumbh Mela 2025 in Prayagraj on Tuesday

PTI

Pathak has walked 13,000 kilometres to promote water and environmental conservation. Her organisation, Panchtatva, has 15 lakh members and has facilitated the planting of 25 lakh saplings along riverbanks. At Maha Kumbh, she is actively raising awareness about cleanliness through her campaign.

She explained, "To ensure a clean Kumbh, we distributed bags, plates, glasses, and spoons to Akharas. If we noticed a devotee carrying a plastic bag, we handed them an eco-friendly alternative. While we strive to keep our rivers clean, it is

essential to preserve our culture. Rivers can be cleaned with machines and commercialisation, but without cultural preservation, there will be no Maha Kumbh on the riverbanks in the future."

Pathak, who left her business and job to dedicate herself to saving rivers and forests, spoke about the profound significance of Maha Kumbh. "It is not just an ordinary festival or occasion. People from all classes, communities, and ideologies come together to take a dip at the Triveni Sangam, creating a unique and powerful vibration. Taking a dip here is not my sole

focus. For the past year, we've been working to ensure that those who come to take a dip in the Sangam find clean and uninterrupted water. Through environmental conservation, we've united 100 organisations that support this mission."

Reflecting on her journey to becoming the 'Water Woman', she shared, "Since childhood, I've had a deep connection with water. My parents named me Shipra, after the river. While travelling abroad for work, I noticed how clean the rivers there were, despite not being worshipped as goddesses. It made me wonder why our

rivers couldn't be the same." She added, "The Narmada Parikrama was a turning point for me. I observed that where Maa Narmada flows cleanly and uninterrupted, people's finances, health, and development thrive. But where the river is polluted, lives are adversely affected. This realisation led to my renunciation. I travelled along the Shipra, the Gomti, and journeyed from Ayodhya to Rameswaram. Our aim is not to imagine a new India, but to preserve the essence of ancient India and pass our cultural heritage to the next generation."

More than 100 devotees saved after heart attacks

Mahakumbh Nagar (PNS):

Over 100 devotees who suffered heart attacks at Maha Kumbh have been saved while 183 critical patients have received ICU care and 580 minor surgeries have been successfully performed, officials said. Additionally, 1,70,727 blood tests have been conducted and 1,00,998 people have availed OPD services so far, they said.

Equipped with state-of-the-art technology, the Central Hospital at the Maha Kumbh is providing world-class medical care to ensure the safety and well-being of millions of devotees, they said.

Dr. Gaurav Dubey, Nodal Officer of the Maha Kumbh Medical Establishment, said devotees from across India and abroad are receiving exceptional healthcare.

Highlighting recent cases, he said, "Two devotees from Madhya Pradesh experienced chest pain and were successfully treated at Central Hospital. Both were admitted to the ICU, underwent examinations and received prompt treatment. Now they are fully healthy." Dr. Dubey said ECGs were conducted on both patients, leading to effective treatment and recovery.

Among other cases, 105-year-old Baba Ram Jane Das from Hanumanganj in Phulpur sought treatment at Central Hospital for stomach pain.

Namami Gange Pavilion attracting visitors

PNS ■ MAHAKUMBH NAGAR

At Maha Kumbh 2025, the Namami Gange Pavilion in Prayagraj is attracting large crowds. Established under the Namami Gange Mission, the pavilion raises awareness about the Ganga's cleanliness and conservation. It features the Interactive Biodiversity Tunnel, where visitors can explore the river's rich biodiversity and natural beauty. Its advanced projection technology creates a lifelike experience, showcasing the chirping of riverbank birds and highlighting the Ganga's vital role in sustaining life. The pavilion's centrepiece is a digital exhibition that creatively showcases the various initiatives undertaken for the river's cleanliness and conservation. A major highlight is the Prayag Manch, which presents real-time data on the Ganga and Yamuna and their tributaries. This includes information on water levels, pollution metrics, and overall cleanliness, making it an informative visitor hub. Additionally, the pavilion displays the progress made in riverfront development along the Ganga and highlights the operations of sewage treatment plants. Visitors also gain insight into the technical and structural measures in place to maintain the river's purity. The exhibit also features replicas of iconic Ganga species, such as the Gangetic dolphin, turtles, crocodiles, and fish, offering an educational experience, particularly for children and youth. This initiative effectively conveys the importance of conserving the Ganga and its biodiversity, fostering a sense of responsibility among future generations. The National Book Trust (NBT) has set up a special reading corner in the exhibition, featuring a curated collection of books on topics such as the Ganga, Maha Kumbh, social policies, and national pride. This reading corner has become a key attraction for those eager to delve into the cultural and historical significance of the Ganga. Renowned institutions like the Wildlife Institute of India, the Ganga Task Force, and IIT-Delhi are also contributing to the pavilion by sharing valuable insights on the conservation of endangered Ganga species, public awareness initiatives, and waste management practices. These efforts highlight the importance of the Ganga while fostering a more profound sense of responsibility among visitors. A statue of Lord Ganesh, along with his vehicle, the mouse, is prominently displayed in the pavilion, symbolising the purity and cleanliness of the Ganga. This installation reinforces the cultural and emotional connection people have with the river. The Namami Gange Mission has urged the devotees attending Maha Kumbh to recognise the Ganga as a river and an integral part of India's cultural heritage, historical legacy, and economic vitality.

Maurya unveils pillar, statue at Sarnath

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya attended the 25th Winter Kagyu Dharma Shastrarth organised at Vajra Vidya Sansthan, Sarnath on Monday and unveiled a replica of Ashoka Pillar replica and Nagaraj statue in the temple premises. He greeted the top Buddhist religious leaders, Dalai Lama and Karmapala, by offering Khata on their pictures. He formally started the programme by lighting a lamp in front of the statue of Lord Buddha.

In his address, Maurya said the presence of about 800 Buddhist monks from different countries in Sarnath is no less than the organisation of Maha Kumbh. The head of the institute, Khepon Karma Gendum, presented the statue of Lord Buddha, *angavastram* and *dhoop* to the chief guest. A special puja was organised by about 800 Buddhist monks on the occasion. Zila Panchayat Chairperson Poomam Maurya, Mayor Ashok Tiwari, MLC Hansraj Vishwakarma, Anand Pandey etc were prominently present in the programme.



Deputy Chief Minister KP Maurya at a programme in Sarnath, Varanasi on Monday.

Earlier, addressing a seminar organised under the Constitution Pride Campaign 'Our Constitution, Our Self-Respect' being run by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) at the BJP regional office in Rohania, Maurya claimed that the Congress has tarnished the

pride of the Indian Constitution, while the BJP government has given full respect to the contribution of Dr Ambedkar. He said the Congress has only changed the Constitution. He added that 106 amendments have been made to the Indian

Constitution so far, out of which 75 have been made during the Congress rule which shows that the Congress repeatedly changed the Constitution for political interest. The Congress repeatedly used Article 356 to dismiss opposition-ruled state governments

and impose central rule, under which President's rule was imposed 88 times, he added. Delivering the welcome speech, regional BJP president Dilip Patel said the BJP government has given real justice to the exploited and deprived society. He said the BJP government has taken the initiative to digitize the writings and speeches of Dr Ambedkar so that his thoughts and principles can be conveyed to more people. The programme was conducted by district general secretary Sanjay Sonkar while the vote of thanks was proposed by district president and MLC Hansraj Vishwakarma. In the seminar, city president Vidyasagar Rai, Mayor Ashok Tiwari, zila panchayat chairperson Poomam Maurya, MLC Dharmendra Rai, former mayor Kaushalendra Singh, former MLAs Surendra Narayan Singh and Shiv Tapasya Paswan, regional media in charge Navratan Rathi, co-media in charge Santosh Solapurkar, city media in-charge Kishore Seth, Shailendra Mishra, Nirmala Singh Patel, Yuva Morcha regional president Shailendra Maurya and many others were also present.

Minister lays foundation stone for improving road condition

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Uttar Pradesh Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Stamp and Court Registration Fees Ravindra Jaiswal laid the foundation stone for laying of interlocking stones on four kutchha roads at a cost of ₹1.81 crore approved by DUDA in Akatha ward under City North assembly constituency here on Tuesday. The minister instructed the officers present on the spot to ensure that the works whose foundation stone was laid during the day is completed on priority with quality by running a campaign on a war footing.



Negligence will not be tolerated at any level, he warned. On the occasion Ajit Singh, Atul Singh, corporators Sanjay Jaiswal, Rajesh Yadav and

Rajendra Maurya, Arvind Jaiswal, Manoj Jaiswal, Harishchandra Maurya, Alok Dev Mishra and residents of the colony were present.

Wanted criminal arrested

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

The Panki police arrested a wanted criminal, who had escaped from police custody from the collectorate compound on Monday afternoon where he was brought from the district jail for hearing, after an encounter near Kapli underpass late at night. During the exchange of fire, he sustained bullet injury on his left leg. The injured accused identified as Arif alias Matha, was admitted to LLR (Hallet) Hospital for treatment. Police recovered a stolen bike and a country-made pistol from the possession of the accused. Sixteen cases were lodged against the accused Matha of Gangaganj, Panki, under different sections of loot, NDPS Act etc at many police stations of the city besides Panki. He was lodged in the jail in a loot case. The court had issued a non-bailable warrant (NBW) against him in a case under NDPS Act. His hearing in the case was scheduled in the court of ADJ (XI) on Monday. When constables Satyam Singh and Sunny Chaudhary of the district jail were taking him to the court, he escaped taking

advantage of the crowd. Immediately, two police teams were deputed near the residence of accused but they could not provide any clue about his location. Meanwhile, Kotwali police lodged an FIR against both the guilty cops who were placed under suspension by the city police commissioner. Suddenly, during search, Panki police spotted Matha near Kapli underpass late at night and arrested him after exchange of fires. DCP (West) Rajesh Kumar Singh said when the accused was trying to escape out of the city on a stolen bike, police chased him. During exchange of fire, he sustained bullet injury on his leg and was admitted to the hospital for treatment. Police recovered the stolen bike and a country-made pistol used in opening fire on police party from the accused. An FIR had also been lodged against the accused, he said.

ACTION AGAINST LAND MAFIA: Intensifying action against the city's land mafia and extortionists, city police commissioner Akhil Kumar on Tuesday directed the lodging of an FIR against 12 people, including the former Kanpur Press Club president Avaneesh Dixit and a lawyer Shalendra Pandey. The FIR comprised eight named and four unidentified people. It was lodged on the complaint of Nayantara of Shivkatra Road, Lal Bungalow, Chakeri. The other named people include Piyush Jaiswal, Jyoti Jaiswal, Jitendra Kumar Dixit, Sanjiv Mishra, Anshul Pandey and a senior journalist. It was alleged that the accused had forcibly secured unauthorised possession on the movable/immovable properties of Eco Friends Society belonging to Nayantara's brother Rakesh Kumar Jaiswal. Society secretary Piyush Jaiswal alleged that after the death of its president Rakesh Jaiswal, the accused had secured unauthorised possession on the movable/immovable properties worth crores of rupees in Kanpur, farm house in Nainital and withdrew lakhs of rupees from its bank accounts. After lodging the FIR, police started investigation in the matter. Police Commissioner Akhil Kumar has set up a special team to probe the issue.

Interdependence between Kashi, Vivekananda highlighted

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Yugacharya Swami Vivekananda's 163rd Shubhavirbhav Tithi was celebrated with great pomp and show at Ramakrishna Advaita Ashram in Laxmi on Magh Krishna Saptami Tithi as per Indian calendar on Tuesday. After Mangalarati at 4 am, Veda Paath and Usha Kirtan were performed. At 7 am, special puja and havan were performed by Swami Alokkananda. In the morning, Dr Swami Dayapurmananda gave a discourse on Kathopanishad and Swami Shastriprananda presented Leela-Geeti. At 4 pm, a religious meeting was organised in which Swami Dharmidharananda delivered the welcome address. Nirmal

Bhuwal, a research scholar of Banaras Hindu University, gave a very powerful speech in Sanskrit, calling Swami the Cyclic Hindu Monk of India, describing his journey to Chicago victory and calling him worthy of respect by all. Swami Alokkananda, a senior monk of Ramakrishna Sangha, who was present as the keynote speaker, described Swami as Vedanta Kesari and discussed the experimental Vedanta introduced by him and described the charm of the Upanishads. "Swami Vivekananda has the greatest contribution among Indians who introduced and influenced the modern world with Indian tradition and philosophy", he said, adding that with his vast knowledge, sharp rea-

soning power, impeccable character, unwavering self-confidence and tireless hard work, he performed such a miracle that could not be done in the last several centuries. "Swami Vivekananda punctured the balloon of western superiority that had taken root in the Indian psyche and shattered the inferiority complex of Indians. He taught the tired, weak, languid India to stand up courageously and be proud of its invaluable heritage", he said. Presiding over the meeting, Swami Vishwatmananda said that Swami was the first person who introduced Vedanta philosophy and Yoga of Sanatan Dharma to Europe and America. "Swami revived the Hindu religion which had become dry in modern India",

he said. While expressing his gratitude, Swami Ishananda spoke about the interdependence between Kashi and Swami Vivekananda. The religious gathering was conducted by Utkarsh Chaube. After the evening aarti, a group kirtan was held. Khichdi-bhandara was arranged from 12 noon in which about 1,200 people took the prasad. **MEMORIAL LECTURE:** Senior academician from Harvard Law School Vandana Chak said that new dimensions are being continuously developed in the field of commerce and students must be prepared to face the challenges of a changing world. She was delivering the memorial lecture organised by the Faculty of Commerce, Banaras Hindu

University (BHU) in memory of Dr IN Gurtu here on Tuesday. The lecture's theme was 'Conflict of Interest Paradigms in Corporate Democracy'. Vandana Chak shared insights with students about their lives and encouraged them to take pride in their culture and to work relentlessly. Dean, Faculty of Commerce, Prof HK Singh welcomed the guests. He mentioned that if a professional approach, technological advancement and customer satisfaction are seriously emphasised, India will become a developed nation by 2047. "India has the greatest potential to emerge as a super-fast economic power because we have both expertise and a demographic dividend," he added.

Student killed as bus rams into stationary truck



DCP (Central) Dinesh Tripathi visiting LLR (Hallet) Hospital to enquire about the condition of injured girl students

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

A girl student died when a bus suddenly rams into a stationary truck near Chhivli river under Aung police station area of Fatehpur on Tuesday morning. Thirteen girls and two teachers were injured when the bus of Government Inter College, Bindki, was taking them on tour to ITI Kanpur around 10.30 am. All the injured were admitted to LLR (Hallet) Hospital. The deceased was identified as

Nasra. Station Officer (SO) Aung Hanuman Pratap Singh said the accident took place when the truck driver was removing pebbles etc from the wheels after parking his vehicle. DCP (Central) Dinesh Tripathi also rushed to the spot and enquired about the condition of the injured in the hospital. Meanwhile Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath took cognizance of the road accident in Fatehpur and expressed condolences to the family of the deceased student. **TWO WOMEN INJURED:** Two women were injured when their cab collided with a divider while trying to overtake a vehicle on Sachendi highway on Tuesday

The CM directed the officials to immediately reach the spot and expedite the relief work. He directed for proper treatment of the injured and wished them speedy recovery. The CM directed to provide immediate financial assistance of ₹2 lakh to the family of the deceased student. **TWO WOMEN INJURED:** Two women were injured when their cab collided with a divider while trying to overtake a vehicle on Sachendi highway on Tuesday

morning. After this a speeding truck rams into the cab from behind due to which it was badly damaged. A woman suffered fracture in her arm. Police, with the help of a crane, got the damaged vehicle towed to the side of the road and restored the traffic. The injured were sent to a hospital. Reports said that Sunil of Tulsipur, Auraiya, along with wife, sister and daughter had come to Kanpur Dehat to attend a family function. After attending it they left for Kanpur city by the cab on Tuesday morning. Their cab collided with the road divider near Chauhan Dhaba, Sachendi, while trying to overtake a vehicle. Suddenly, a truck rams into the cab from behind damaging it badly. Sachendi inspector said Sunil is safe. Anita, suffered a fracture in her arm while Neelima, daughter of Santoshi, had a head injury. All the other children were also completely safe. The truck driver escaped after the incident leaving the vehicle behind which had been impounded by the police. The injured are undergoing treatment in the hospital, he said.

Progress of schemes reviewed

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

A review meeting of development works on the Chief Minister's dashboard was held under the chairmanship of District Magistrate S Rajalingam. In it the DM directed the officers of different departments to improve the ranking by making progress in development-oriented schemes by conducting an in-depth review. He said if negligence is found in the progress, action will be taken against the concerned.



Mayor Pramila Pandey asking encroachers to remove their shops in Parade area on Tuesday.

In the meeting, a total of 85 schemes of 30 departments were reviewed, in which 48 schemes of the district have received A+. The DM directed all the responsible officers to work with full responsibility to improve the poor rank of 15th Finance Commission Gram Panchayat, Jal Jeevan Mission, Mass Marriage Scheme, Mid Day Meal Scheme, Tourism State Scheme, Pre-tenth Scholarship Scheme, maintenance of roads, construction of new roads, Family ID, ICDS Scheme so that everyone's rank can be ensured to come in A Plus. In the meeting, the DM also reviewed the PM Suryaghar Yojana in which he directed to ensure the expected progress in the scheme by organising camps at various levels. He asked to ensure that maximum number of people get benefit in the benefit-oriented schemes, including destitute women pension, scholarship schemes, marriage grant schemes, old age pension, Kanya Sumangala Yojana. In it the progress of various schemes including tourism, social forestry, Operation Kayakalp, Nipun Bharat, Fisheries, Milk Production, Project Alankar, ODOP, PM Vishwakarma, silt cleaning etc was reviewed. Chief Development Officer (CDO) Himanshu Nagpal, District Forest Officer (DFO) Varanasi Swati Singh and officers of various departments were present in the meeting.

KNN conducts anti-encroachment drive



Mayor Pramila Pandey asking encroachers to remove their shops in Parade area on Tuesday.

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

The Kanpur Nagar Nigam (KNN) carried out an anti-encroachment drive from Parade to UHM hospital on Tuesday. During the drive led by Mayor Pramila Pandey heavy police force was present. Mayor expressed displeasure over encroachments on footpath which causes traffic jam on the road every day. She took the encroachers to task and asked them to immediately remove their illegal set up. Due to the IMAs blood bank on this road, there is a problem in the smooth movement of the ambulance. She said illegal encroachment would not be tolerated under any circumstances. Nagar Nigam Zonal Officer (Zone-1) Vidya Sagar Yadav said about 150 temporary shops were bulldozed during the drive. The encroachers

were warned not to do so in future to prevent penal action against them. The drive was carried out on both the sides of the IMA building, Parade, UHM and Dufferin Hospital and in front of Ramasrey Park. Before the drive began, most of the shopkeepers had removed their stalls on their own. When all the shopkeepers started setting up their shops again after departure of the squad, the zonal officer sent the bulldozer to get them removed. He also asked the enforcement squad to remain present on the spot and maintain a strict vigil on the encroachers. **SAMPOORN SAMADHAN DIWAS:** District Magistrate Jitendra Pratap Singh, while chairing the Sampoorn Samadhan Diwas at Bilhaur tehsil on Monday, severely criticised the absence of Satish Chandra, executive

engineer, Jal Nigam (Rural) and directed to suspend his salary disbursement. He admonished the executive engineer during a telephonic conversation. He emphasised that the state government's objective was to ensure timely and transparent justice, requiring the district administration to function with discipline, responsibility and integrity. He warned of stringent action against dereliction of duty. At the Sampoorn Samadhan Diwas, Bilhaur, 83 complaints were registered and the DM instructed the officials to ensure prompt and qualitative resolution. At Narwal tehsil, out of 50 complaints received, five were resolved immediately. The district magistrate inspected the under-construction cattle shelter in Nanama village. Chief Development Officer (CDO) Diksha Jain informed that during inspection carried out on October 21, 2024, UPCLDF was instructed to address identified deficiencies. He noted supervisory negligence by UPCLDF unit's executive engineer, Kanpur, and sought clarification. Due to contractor's unsatisfactory performance, the chief development officer was instructed to initiate appropriate action. Earlier, the district magistrate had conducted a surprise inspection of multi-level parking construction at Sarsaiya Ghat reprimanding the officers for substandard work. He directed to complete the project by September and warned of strict consequences for non-compliance with timeline and quality standards.

Laser-guided electrochemical paper analytical device developed

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Researchers at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) have designed a highly automated and sensitive laser-directed electrochemical Paper Analytical Device (LD-ePAD) for multifunctional sensing applications. The team led by Prof Pranjal Chandra, along with PhD students Supratim Mahapatra and Rohini Kumari at the School of Biochemical Engineering Institute of Technology (BHU) developed this paper tronic device that is the major motivation and has comparable performance to commercially available electrode-based devices. Prof Pranjal Chandra said the newly designed analytical device is sustainable, biodegradable, eco friendly and relatively cheaper compared to the existing systems. A groundbreaking study at the Laboratory of Bio-physiosensors and Nanobioengineering, IIT (BHU), showcases the power of an automated plat-

form in detecting harmful free radicals in medical samples, toxic metals in river water samples, diseased biomarkers (alkaline phosphatase), food adulterants etc with unmatched sensitivity and repeatability. This work marks a significant advancement in clinical diagnostics / environmental monitoring by offering a versatile and sustainable platform that enables the detection of various analytes with minimal modifications. Such a system is highly miniaturised and can be operated by the general public and can be deployed at public healthcare centre/ point-of-care settings where the access of advanced diagnostics is limited, he added. He said that the earlier technologies place a strong emphasis on the detection of a single type of molecule and lack the potential to detect multifunctional molecules. Additionally, the existing system uses various enzymes to generate analytical signals. Further, the majority of the reported paper-based elec-

trodes primarily deploy a two-electrode system that is the working and counter electrode. Nevertheless, the lack of a third electrode (reference electrode) makes it more difficult to obtain accurate and repeatable results due to the potential drift, said Prof Chandra. The accuracy of electrochemical diagnostics can be improved by implementing a three-electrode system in paper-based platforms, he added. This will provide greater control over the applied potential and produce more reliable and consistent results. This new technology developed at IIT (BHU) has been recently showcased in the workshop on 'Microfabrication and Biosensors: Advances in Diagnostics' at the IIT Jammu during January 18-19. The event provided expert insights on creating next-generation diagnostic platforms by providing hands-on experience to research scholars in microfluidic chip fabrication, biosensor integration, and mammalian

cell culture and analysis. In this workshop, Supratim Mahapatra, PhD student under Prof Pranjal Chandra presented this technology in front of experts and participants and won the 'Best Innovation Award' for this ground breaking innovation that has tremendous commercial impact. By creating this affordable platform, we are one step closer to bringing technological innovations to local people for point-of-care diagnosis, hence enhancing their quality of life, said Prof Chandra. IIT (BHU) Director Prof Amit Patra congratulated the winning team for bringing laurels for the institute and working under the flagship programme of Atmanirbhar Bharat, Make in India of PM Narendra Modi. Such indigenous and sustainable technology developed at IIT (BHU) in the laboratory of Prof Pranjal Chandra based on advanced nanobioengineering caters the need of the hour and has direct societal application, Prof Patra added.

Mahamana camp organised at Maha Kumbh

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The Banaras Hindu University (BHU) has organised Mahamana camp in Maha Kumbh. As per the order of the Vice-Chancellor, a committee has been formed for its operation with Dr Shri Krishna Tripathi as president, Dr Shatrughan Tripathi convenor and Dr Ashutosh Pathak member. The university has given Dr Shatrughan Tripathi the responsibility for efficient conduct of this programme. Bharat Ratna Mahamana Pt Madan Mohan Malaviya was a supporter of Sanatan Dharma.

Keeping this in mind, the university has opened an Astrology Consultation Centre for the general public in Mahamana's camp, in which they will be able to discuss their horoscope. Palmistry experts will from the Department of Astrology also be present. Mahamana used to emphasise on yoga education for the students of the university to stay healthy. For this purpose, trainee yoga teachers will be present who will train the common people in yogasanas to keep the body healthy. The root of Sanatan culture is Vedas. Therefore, Vedic

scholars will also do recitation in the camp. Vaidyas of Ayurveda faculty will also be available in the camp so that the common people can discuss their health with them. Free medicines will also be distributed to the common people. Rector of the university Dr Sanjay Kumar, Registrar Dr Arun Kumar Singh, Director, Institute of Medical Sciences, Dr SN Sankhwar, Faculty Dean of SVDV, Dr Rajaram Shukla and Medical Superintendent Prof KK Gupta have extended their best wishes to the committee for organising the camp.

BJP slams Kejriwal, accuses him of misquoting Ramayan

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) slammed Kejriwal on Tuesday accusing him of misquoting the Ramayan and "insulting" Lord Ram and Sita, with its Delhi unit president Virendra Sachdeva holding a fast as a mark of absolution. In response, Kejriwal said the BJP was protesting against him in the honour of demon king Ravana and accused the party leaders of having "demonic tendencies". The two parties are indulged in an intense war of words, a blame game over a range of issues with Delhi Assembly polls just around the corner.

Kejriwal found himself under fire from the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) after his remarks

during an election rally in Vishwas Nagar, Delhi, on Monday, comparing the BJP to the "golden deer" in the Ramayana. In a major gaffe while referencing Ramayana, Kejriwal said, "I want to warn the slum dwellers that these days they (people of BJP) are staying in slums, they do not love you, they love your vote and will sell all your land after the elections. Lord Ram was exiled for 14 years, so one day he went to the forest to arrange for food, left Mata Sita in the hut and told Laxman that you will protect Sita Maa. Meanwhile, Ravana came in the form of a golden deer. Sita said to Laxman that I want this deer... Laxman went and Ravana kidnapped Sita Maa. These BJP people are

also like that golden deer, do not get involved in their trap." Kejriwal's remarks drew the ire of the BJP, who accused him of insulting Sanatan Dharma and misinterpreting the sacred text of Ramcharitmanas, labelling him a "Chunavi Hindu". Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva, who started his fast after a visit to Prachin Hanuman temple, called Kejriwal a "Chunavi Hindu" and sought forgiveness for "disrespect" shown by him to Sita-Ram. Sachdeva visited the Hanuman Temple at Connaught Place this morning to pay respects to Shri Ram Darbar, Lord Hanuman, and Saint Tulsidas. He sought forgiveness for the AAP chief for sharing a misrepresentation of the Ramayan, and hurting



the sentiments of millions of Hindus. Sachdeva has also decided to observe a symbolic fast on Tuesday as an act of prayer while continuing with his regular activities. He start-

ed his fast after a visit to Prachin Hanuman temple, called Kejriwal a "Chunavi Hindu" and sought forgiveness for "disrespect" shown by him to Sita-Ram. "It is regret-

table that Chunavi Hindus like Arvind Kejriwal mention deities in their election rallies but hurt Hindu sentiments by narrating inaccurate stories due to ignorance," he said. Kejriwal in an election meeting on Monday, quoted Ramayana saying Sita was abducted by Ravana who appeared as a golden deer, when Lord Ram went out in search of food. The BJP leaders objected to it, alleging Kejriwal misquoted the Ramayan story and pointed out that it was another character in the epic, "Mama Marich" who distracted Lord Rama as a golden deer when Ravana abducted Sita.

"I said yesterday that Ravana took the form of a golden deer. The BJP leaders are sitting

on dharna outside my house for why I insulted Ravana," he claimed. They have so much love for Ravana, they have "demonic tendencies", he charged and added, "I want to warn the slum dwellers and poor in Delhi that they will devour them if they come to power."

Sachdeva hit out at Kejriwal saying he was the same leader who previously quoting his grand-mother tried to create an "anti-Ram Mandir" narrative and advocated hospitals and schools in place of the temple. "The Hindu community will never forgive Kejriwal for hurting their sentiments," he said. Senior AAP leader Manish Sisodia also attacked the BJP over the issue in a post on X, saying the party leaders were

"defending" Ravana as if they were also "descendants" of the demon king. He alleged the BJP's politics stooped so low that its leaders were using symbols like Ravana to justify their false statements. BJP spokesperson Pradeep Bhandari launched a scathing attack on Kejriwal, calling him a "Chunavi Hindu" for misquoting Ramayana and said his true face had been exposed in front of the people of Delhi and the country. Bhandari remarked that appeasement runs in the veins of Kejriwal and Congress MP Rahul Gandhi and that the AAP supremo was "irritated" with the slogan of 'Ek hain toh safe hain' and Lord Shri Rama's temple in Ayodhya and wants to give lands of Delhi to Waqf.

Rahul Gandhi criticises Modi Government for its economic policies

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Tuesday criticized the Modi government for its economic policies and asserted that real development is when everyone progresses, there is a fair environment for business, a fair tax system and the income of workers increases.



income of workers increases. Only this will make the country prosperous and strong," Rahul Gandhi asserted. He had announced on Sunday the launch of a 'White T-shirt Movement', championing the rights of the masses. He had accused the Narendra Modi government of turning its back on the poor. Gandhi had announced the launch in a social media post and urged people to be a part of it.

"If you believe in economic justice, oppose rising wealth inequalities, fight for social equality, reject all forms of discrimination, and strive for peace and stability in our country, wear your white T-shirts and join the movement," said the video voiceover posted by Rahul Gandhi on social media. The Congress has been attacking the government over its handling of the economy, claiming the issues of rising prices, decreasing private investment and stagnating wages are hitting the common people hard.

adding they are barely able to make ends meet. The real income of workers has either remained stagnant or decreased in the last five years, he said. "The harmful GST and income tax have made life difficult for the poor and the middle class, while corporate loans are being waived off," the former Congress chief said. Due to skyrocketing inflation, now not only the poor but also the salaried class is forced to take loans for their needs, he said. "Real development is when everyone progresses - there is a fair environment for business, there is a fair tax system and the

In a social media post in Hindi, he said, "The truth of Modi Ji's developed India: Your hard work, whose profit? The wheel of the country's economy is turning with your sweat and blood, but are you getting your fair share in it? Just think." The share of the manufacturing sector in the economy has gone down to the lowest level in 60 years and due to this, people are struggling for employment, the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha said. Wrong policies in the agriculture sector have worsened the condition of farmers and farm labourers, Rahul Gandhi said,

Demand for NRI representation in Parliament at panel meeting

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

A suggestion to give non-resident Indians representation in Parliament was made on Tuesday at the meeting of the parliamentary committee on external affairs due to their growing numbers and unique issues concerning the diaspora interest. Sources said Congress MP Deepender Singh Hooda cited examples of countries such as Italy, which has reservation in legislature for its citizens residing abroad, to pitch for NRI representation in Parliament to cater to their issues in a better way.

The standing committee headed by Congress MP Shashi Tharoor discussed a number of issues concerning the Indian diaspora. As millions of NRIs reside in foreign countries, they deserve to have representation in Parliament, Hooda is learnt to have said. Some NRI groups in the past have demanded seats in Parliament. As of now, NRIs cannot even vote from abroad



and are required to come to India to exercise their franchise. A bill to allow them to vote through a proxy in the Lok Sabha and assembly elections was introduced in Parliament in 2018 but lapsed later. NRIs are officially described as "overseas electors". Tharoor said after meeting members had a very detailed and thorough discussion with four organisations working with the diaspora. The MPs were very engaged. It was a lively and full discussion with a lot of questions and answers, he added.

Sources said the organisations participating in the meeting made some good proposals, including one from

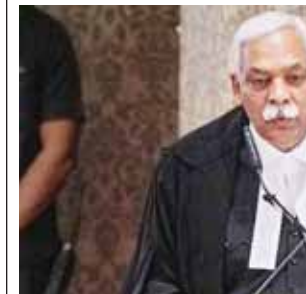
Kerala that said Indian organisations could skill people depending on the needs of any foreign country.

This will streamline the immigration of skilled workers and curb undesirable activities, including desperate attempts by people to reach foreign destinations, at times illegally, an MP said after the meeting.

The organisations that attended the meeting were Norika Roots from Kerala; the Punjab government's Department of NRIs Affairs; People of Indian Origin Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Delhi; and the Centre for Diaspora Studies, Central University of Gujarat.

The Ministry of External Affairs informed the committee in an earlier meeting that a bill focusing on emigration issues was under the government's consideration. Tharoor said the ministry had informed the panel that the bill was under preparation and discussion. One of the requests from state governments is that they should also be consulted, he added.

Justice Devendra Kumar Upadhyaya takes oath as Chief Justice of Delhi HC



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Justice Devendra Kumar Upadhyaya on Tuesday took oath as the Chief Justice of the Delhi High Court. Delhi Lieutenant Governor V K Saxena administered the oath to the judge at a ceremony in Raj Niwas. The ceremony was attended by several dignitaries, including Chief Minister Atishi and judges of the Delhi High Court.

Justice Upadhyaya, who was the chief justice of Bombay High Court, was appointed to the post on January 14. The Supreme Court Collegium on January seven recommended

his transfer. Born on June 16, 1965 at Muskarai, UP, Justice Upadhyaya enrolled as an advocate in May 1991 after completing his LLB from Lucknow University. He was appointed as a judge of the Allahabad High Court on November 21, 2011, and took oath as its permanent judge on August six, 2013. He took oath as the Chief Justice of Bombay High Court on July 29, 2023. After the elevation of Justice Manohan to the Supreme Court, Justice Vibhu Bakhru was serving as acting Chief Justice of the Delhi High Court.

Ten years of Beti Bachao Beti Padhao initiative celebrated with nationwide events

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The government will organise weeks-long celebrations to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao initiative, the Union women and child development ministry said on Tuesday. Beginning on Wednesday, the celebrations will continue till March eight, observed as International Women's Day.



The inaugural event in Delhi on Wednesday will feature Union ministers J P Nadda, Annapurna Devi and Savitri Thakur, alongside senior women officers from the armed forces, paramilitary forces and the Delhi Police.

Officials from central ministries, Anganwadi workers, student volunteers and representatives from international organisations such as UNICEF, UN Women and the World Bank will also participate. The occasion marks the beginning of nationwide celebrations reflecting the scheme's trans-

formative impact over the past decade, according to a ministry statement. The celebrations will include events at the state and the district levels.

Special programmes will be held on Wednesday, Sunday (January 26), and March eight, engaging communities through rallies, cultural performances, and felicitation ceremonies for women achievers. The ministry has also announced sustainability initiatives, including a nation-

wide plantation drive, and will run awareness campaigns across print, digital and social media to further amplify the message of gender equality and empowerment. Launched on January 22, 2015, by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Haryana's Panipat, the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao initiative was created to address the critical issues of gender imbalance and declining child sex ratio. Over the years, the initiative

has driven significant progress. The national sex ratio at birth improved from 918 in 2014-15 to 930 in 2023-24, and the gross enrolment ratio of girls at the secondary level rose from 75.51 per cent to 78 per cent during the same period. Institutional deliveries rose from 61 per cent to 97.3 per cent, and first-trimester antenatal care registrations surged from 61 per cent to 80.5 per cent, reflecting the programme's far-reaching impact. The scheme has gone beyond numbers to drive cultural and social change.

Initiatives such as the Kanya Shiksha Pravesh Utsav returned more than a lakh out-of-school girls to education while programmes like the Yashaswini Bike Expedition showcased the empowerment of women in action.

The scheme has also utilised creative campaigns, including collaborations with television shows, to address societal issues such as girl child abandonment and to spread awareness about the value of daughters.

WHO expresses regret over US withdrawal from global health body

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has expressed regret over President Donald Trump's announcement of the US withdrawal from the global health body as it hoped the country would reconsider its decision and engage in a constructive dialogue to maintain the partnership.

Soon after his swearing-in on Monday, Trump signed an executive order beginning the process of withdrawing America from the WHO. This is the second time in less than five years that the US has ordered the withdrawal from the world body. Trump has long been critical of the WHO and sought to pull out the US from the UN body during his first term Presidency, but his successor Joe Biden reversed Trump's decision. The executive order signed by Trump said the president was sending a presidential letter to the United



Nations secretary-general to formally notify him of the US pull to withdraw.

"The World Health Organization regrets the announcement that the United States of America intends to withdraw from the organization," the apex global health body said in a statement. "We hope the United States will reconsider and we look forward to engaging in constructive dialogue to maintain the partnership between the

USA and WHO, for the benefit of the health and well-being of millions of people around the globe," it stated. The statement said WHO plays a crucial role in protecting the health and security of the world's people, including Americans, by addressing the root cause of diseases, building stronger health systems and detecting, preventing and responding to health emergencies, including disease outbreaks, often in dangerous

places where others cannot go. The United States was a founding member of WHO in 1948 and has participated in shaping and governing its work ever since, alongside 193 other member states, through its active participation in the World Health Assembly and Executive Board, the statement said.

"For over seven decades, WHO and the USA have saved countless lives and protected Americans and all people from health threats. Together, we ended smallpox, and together we have brought polio to the brink of eradication. American institutions have contributed to and benefited from membership in WHO," it said. "With the participation of the United States and other member states, WHO has over the past seven years implemented the largest set of reforms in its history, to transform our accountability, cost-effectiveness, and impact in countries," the global health body said.

Need to see gravity of contempt on tree felling in Delhi Ridge: SC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Tuesday said it needed to see the gravity of contempt after a plea alleged tree felling in Delhi Ridge area for widening of a road in violation of its orders.

A bench of Justices Surya Kant and N Kottiswar Singh, reserved its verdict on the contempt plea filed by one Bindu Kapurea, who alleged trees were cut despite top court's last year's March 4 order denying permission to the DDA. He said the fact of tree felling was suppressed from the court.

"We need to see the gravity of contempt in this matter. Whether the trees were felled for widening of road to the hospital, meant for paramilitary jawans, who serve in remote areas like in jungles or in Leh, where there are minimal medical facilities. Or, were the trees felled to widen the road for the

benefit of affluent persons of the area," said the bench. It added the court needed to take a fresh look of the entire matter and wouldn't be swayed by previous orders passed by different benches of the apex court on the issue.

"We need to take an independent approach on this issue. So, that we are not swayed by the earlier orders of the court or the view taken by the court. We would like to form our own view and finish off this matter," the bench said. Senior advocate Vikash Singh, appearing for Delhi Lieutenant Governor, said he had filed an affidavit and was not aware of court's embargo on tree felling in the area.

He said irrespective of what had happened, the authorities would plant around 70,000 saplings to purge the contempt areas not as simple as being projected and there was a deliberate violation of court orders apart from the suppression of



crucial information about trees already being felled when the DDA sought court's permission.

He alleged there were already three roads for the hospital but the authorities wanted to benefit the affluent residing near the hospital. Sankaranarayanan submitted a map of the area to claim the alignment of road was changed to enter into the forest area which led to felling of trees for widening of the road.

The bench said it would examine all the aspects and pass the order on the issue. In December last year, the top court asked for a list of affluent persons, who reportedly benefited from illegal tree felling in Delhi's Ridge area and sought to know the site plan for afforestation.

The ridge is an extension of Aravalli Hill range in Delhi and a rocky, hilly and forested area. It is divided into four zones - south, south-central, central

and north -- for administrative reasons. These four zones make up a total of about 7,784 hectares.

Sankaranarayanan had referred to a Forest Survey of India report stating a total of 1,670 trees were cut, but the DDA claimed it was only 642 trees.

The top court had issued a contempt notice to the DDA vice-chairman Subhasish Panda for felling of trees for the construction of an approach road to the hospital and directed Lieutenant Governor and DDA Chairperson V K Saxena to file a personal affidavit detailing actions against erring officials for allegedly illegally felling around 1,100 trees in Delhi Ridge area in February, 2024.

The tree felling drive was purportedly done for widening the road going towards Central Armed Police Forces Institute of Medical Sciences (CAPFIMS) Hospital.

Construction work of RRTS from Delhi to Shahjahanpur to begin soon: Minister

PNS ■ GURUGRAM

Union Minister Rao Udayesh Singh said that the construction work of the Regional Rapid Transit System (RRTS) from Delhi to Shahjahanpur will start soon. He said that before the Union Budget, he has talked to Union Urban Development Minister Manohar Lal over phone on this matter and requested to complete all the formalities regarding this project as soon as possible.

Rao told that Union Urban Development Minister told him that the project will cost around Rs 22,000 crore and the project will start soon. Rao said that this project will prove to be a milestone for the region in the field of public transport and the people here will be able to travel to Delhi and Rajasthan easily.



While giving this information, Singh also disclosed that earlier this project was revised and a proposal was given by the officials to do it in the first phase from Delhi to Dharuhera. When people gave him this information during the Lok Sabha elections, he talked to the then Union Urban Development Minister Hardeep Puri and requested him to extend it only till

Shahjapur in the first phase. Rao asserted that Union Minister has also agreed to the proposal to extend it only from Delhi to Shahjahanpur in the first phase.

Rao said that in the first phase of Delhi-Shahjapur, the train will go to Shahjahanpur via Gurugram, Manesar, Bilaspur, Dharuhera, Rewari, Bawal Neerana on this route of about 100 kilometers. "22 stations are proposed on this route, for which an action plan is being prepared. Earlier the approval of this plan was to turn from Mahipalpur in Delhi and go through Old Delhi Road Signature Tower in Gurugram, but later it was revised and a proposal was made to take it along the highway through the Delhi Jaipur National Highway via Sarhau Border," the Minister said.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Pak army calls the shots

Former Prime Minister of Pakistan Imran Khan gets 14-year jail sentence but it won't fix Pakistan politics

Former Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan's recent conviction and 14-year prison sentence mark a critical juncture in the country's turbulent political history. Accused of corruption in a high-profile case involving illegal acquisition of land through a deal with property tycoon Malik Riaz, Khan's sentencing further diminishes his political standing. This development not only underscores the enduring influence of Pakistan's military establishment but also raises concerns about the country's democratic trajectory. The accountability court verdict found Khan and his wife, Bushra Bibi, guilty of illegally obtaining plots of land worth billions of rupees in exchange for facilitating Riaz's laundering of \$239 million. While Khan received a 14-year sentence and a fine of 1 million Pakistani rupees, his wife was handed a seven-year sentence. The Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), has condemned the sentence, labeling it a politically motivated attack. Khan has consistently dismissed the charges



as a "witch hunt" orchestrated by his rivals, particularly Pakistan's powerful military, which he accuses of engineering his ouster and imprisonment. Khan remains one of Pakistan's most popular leaders, with a dedicated following that views him as a symbol of resistance against entrenched corruption and military dominance. His imprisonment, however, presents significant challenges for his party and supporters. PTI's ability to mobilise mass protests and maintain its political momentum is constrained by the increasing crackdown on its members and leaders. For Pakistan's political system, Khan's conviction deep crisis. It highlights the judiciary's perceived partiality and its use as a tool to settle political scores. Moreover, the case illustrates the broader struggle between civilian leaders and the military establishment that has long dominated Pakistan's political landscape. Despite Khan's claims of standing against dictatorship, his tenure as prime minister (2018-2022) was marked by a close alliance with the military, which eventually soured. His falling out with the military's top brass, particularly after accusing them of plotting his assassination, set the stage for his political downfall. The military's role in orchestrating Khan's ouster and subsequent legal troubles underscores its continued dominance. For decades, the military has acted as Pakistan's ultimate power broker, influencing elections, judicial proceedings, and policy decisions. This has impeded the growth of democratic institutions in the country. Khan's case reaffirms that no civilian leader can challenge the military's authority without facing severe consequences thus subverting the democracy. The implications of Khan's conviction extend beyond his personal political future. It sets a precedent for the use of legal mechanisms to neutralise opposition and raises concerns about the erosion of democratic institutions. Pakistan, indeed has a long way to go on the road to democracy!

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PICTALK



Devotees celebrate 'Komuravelli Mallanna Jathara' festival, at Komuravelli in Siddipet

Why new generation may force change in Thai politics

The nation grapples with economic challenges, political turbulence and the enduring influence of its old guard monarchy-military alliance



ASHOK K MEHTA

The tourist-undiscovered jewel is Siracha in the Gulf of Thailand, 90 km southeast of Bangkok and 30 km north of Pattaya. Ascott Group's Oakwood Hotel is your strategic compass to assimilate Siracha as I am doing. Blissfully quiet alongside a park caressing the sea, it caters to all: Koreans who come in droves to play golf even while their president was being arrested; Japanese with corporate interests are also in plenty; soon Chinese will descend for the Year of Snake but hardly any Indians though 200 of them are building an oil refinery close by. Koh Sichang island 40 minutes in a steamer is worth getting lost in as King Rama V loved to do 200 years ago.

Ripened Sirachans belt their favourite melodies in the park as joggers and wanderers freeze to a halt when the national anthem plays in the mornings. Unlike in fading monarchies elsewhere, the Royals are ubiquitous: pictures of the present King Maha Vajiralongkorn, the Queen, the highly respected late king and the King's sister are familiar sights in the Kingdom of Thailand which escaped being colonised. But lately political parties like now in its third avatar, the People's Party led by the Harvard-educated Pita Limjaroenrat and the past nemesis of the old guard, Pheu Thai party led by old fox Thaksin Shinawatra, have tried to unseat the old guard consisting of the monarchy-military alliance. In the 2023 elections, these parties sought a review of the crime of lese majeste (Royal Defamation) which is a seditious law to repress dissent and reforms in the military but the coalition could not unite. The old guard maintains its authoritarian indirect rule through the unelected constitutional court and a 250-member Senate (Upper House) formed by the Army after the 2014 coup. Incidentally, Thailand holds the dubious record for the maximum number of attempted and successful coups (30). A military-backed government of former Army Chief Gen Prayut Chan O'Shea became Prime Minister- from khaki to Savile Row suit -from 2014 to 2023 when his Palang Pracharath Party (PPP) was overwhelmed by the



democratic tsunami. The old guard employed the constitutional court to ban Pita from politics for ten years which prevented the formation of a democratic coalition government despite 284 members in a House of 500 lawmakers; instead, Shinawatra's Pheu Thai formed a fractured coalition government of six parties which initially included another former Army Chief, Gen Prawit Wongsuwan-led PPP. In the present government Shinawatra's daughter, Paetongtarn is PM (it was Shinawatra's sister, Yingluck once earlier) and is backed by six parties. Shinawatra's return from exile in August 2023 and rehabilitation in politics was the result of a royal pardon as part of a deal to maintain the status quo with the old guard calling the shots. Unlike in Nepal where two adversarial political parties have formed a coalition government (after nearly two decades of musical chairs) for political stability, Thailand is subjected to a wobbly government led by an inexperienced Shinawatra scion remotely controlled by the patriarch. Peoples Party and Pheu Thai will not be allowed to form a coalition by vested interests. The big challenge for the government is the economy which has declined from a growth rate of 4.5 per cent in 2000 to 1.6 per cent between 2014 and



THE OLD GUARD MAINTAINS ITS AUTHORITARIAN INDIRECT RULE THROUGH THE UNELECTED CONSTITUTIONAL COURT AND A 250-MEMBER SENATE (UPPER HOUSE) FORMED BY THE ARMY AFTER THE 2014 COUP

2023. The government has not been able to fulfil its promise of giving Thaibahat 10,000 (around Rs 25,000) for all 45 mn Thais to boost consumption, though, in September 2024, it did provide some of the dole in Phase 1. On January 27, 2025, four elderly will receive Thaibahat 10,000 to trigger the economy. Other steps proposed to revive the economy are negotiating additional Free Trade Agreements and implementing infrastructure projects. Thailand's most ambitious project is the land bridge connecting the Andaman Sea in the Indian Ocean with the South China Sea in the Pacific Ocean across the Isthmus of Kra costing USD 35 bn which will be a shorter alternative route through the Malacca Strait - China's historic dilemma for its sea trade. China will be the leading investor in the strategic project that will alter the economic dynamics for Thailand and the region, especially China. Thailand holds the magic wand for tourism. As targeted, foreign travellers in 2024 crossed 35 mn increasing the country's revenue by 34 per cent over the previous year. Integrated entertainment is the new slogan and includes gambling in casinos while visa-free long-term entry has been extended. Chinese are by far the largest number of vis-

itors followed by Malaysians and Indians. Saarc countries especially Nepal have much to learn about integrated tourism. India and Thailand have enjoyed fruitful relations, especially the religious connection with Hinduism and Buddhism. Thailand is part of Bimstec and as part of ASEAN closely involved with Track I and Track II meetings on locating a political resolution of Myanmar's civil war in which India as a neighbour is a key stakeholder. Myanmar's Generals envy the old guard's hold over power but they have no King to invoke divinity. Thailand relies heavily on China (14 per cent population is of Chinese origin) while having good relations with the West, especially the US. Thaksin Shinawatra is again under the scanner booked for an old case of lese majeste. The old guard has perfected all tricks of the trade to check the growing aspirations of the new generation represented by Pita's reincarnated People's Party (and other parties) whose slogan for the 2027 elections is "government of change". That should worry the old guard, not Siracha. (The writer, a retired Major General, was Commander, IPKF South, Sri Lanka, and founder member of the Defence Planning Staff, currently the Integrated Defence Staff. The views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

UPROAR OVER JUDGEMENT

Madam — It is with reference to the news "Justice for murderers most foul" - January 21. The Sealdah Court in Kolkata has ordered Sanjay Roy, the convict in the rape and murder case of a trainee doctor at the state-run RG Kar medical college and hospital, to life imprisonment until death and noted that it was not in the rarest of rare categories. Also, the court has ordered Sanjay Roy to pay a 50,000-rupee fine and directed the West Bengal government to pay 17 lakh rupees as compensation to the victim's family. Though the Court convicted Sanjay Roy, the convict, on different sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, it refrained from imposing the death penalty for raping and murdering a young doctor on a hospital campus itself. It is unfortunate. As per the Indian legal system, the CBI, which investigated the case, has the right to challenge the sentencing order and seek enhancement of the sentence to death before the High Court. Many people, including the CM of West Bengal, are not satisfied with the sentence awarded to the convict Sanjay Roy. The incident led to nationwide outrage and prolonged protests by junior doctors in West Bengal demanding justice for and stronger security measures in government hospitals. At the same time, a court in Kerala has awarded a 24-year-old woman the death penalty for the sensational murder of her boyfriend in 2022 by administering him with a concoction laced with lethal herbicide, a planned murder.

P Victor Selvaraj | Tirunelveli

ISRO'S MILESTONE ACHIEVEMENT

Madam — Apropos to "A Giant Leap in Space", published on January 21. Former President of India, late Dr APJ Abdul Kalam, would have been the happiest person had he been alive today as ISRO scripted another history in space. India has entered into the niche club along with the US, China, and Russia. It is a huge

Trump begins his second term



Donald Trump is all set to write the new world order with his second term as the 47th President of America. The inauguration ceremony of Mr. Donald Trump is jam-packed with the tech titan guest list from all around the world; interestingly, Indian industry tycoon Mukesh Ambani is also part of the delegation. The reign of Donald Trump is already a matter of

deep discussion, speculation and sensitivity for the whole world. After his 'America First' commitment, he is making a comeback with MAGA, i.e., Make America Great Again.

His inauguration speech will act as the ultimate trailer as for the whole world, he highlight his commitment and plans for the upcoming four years, and the way he want to shape the future world order. Now that Mr. Trump has officially begun his presidency 2.0, we all have to wait and watch what churning will come out for the rest of the countries of the world from the presidency of Donald Trump. India also has to closely test the new avatar of Mr. Trump, wishing for more strategic cooperation and proximities in the years to come.

Kirti Wadhawan | Kanpur

technological milestone that underscores our ambitions to expand our share, which is just 2 per cent now, in the 400 billion USD global space market. Space docking is a stepping stone in our desire to build a space station or other various complex missions like Chandrayaan-4 and Gaganyaan. Along with other payloads, eight cowpea seeds were sent to space, which germinated within four days of the mission launch, which demonstrates that food can be grown in long space missions. China-our hostile neighbour-whose ambitions of becoming a space power are not hidden from anyone-so India must continue to develop cutting-edge capabilities to safeguard its space assets. Further, the GoI has approved the setting up of a third launch pad at Sriharikota, which will further boost ISRO's space ambitions and future projects.

Bal Govind | Noida

HOSTAGES RELEASED IN GAZA

Madam — Apropos "Gaza ceasefire begins, handover of hostages started,"

published on January 20. The ceasefire between Israel and Hamas raises hopes for a possible end to a devastating 15-month conflict.

The ceasefire, agreed upon after a year of intensive mediation by the United States, Qatar and Egypt, is the first step in a long and fragile process aimed at winding down the war. Interestingly, Qatar, punching above its weight, has set itself up as the world's leading mediator, which is probably because the West Asian nation wants to establish its own security in an unstable region, analysts say. Global relationships are key, and Qatar is known for its wide and varied network of contacts. Meanwhile, the ceasefire does mark the start of a new chapter for Palestinians, particularly those in Gaza, and Israelis. While ceasefires are not legally binding, they can perhaps best be thought of as a type of contract between warring parties.

Ranganathan Sivakumar | Chennai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

ISRO's space docking: A new era for India's space exploration



BIJU DHARMAPALAN

This pioneering feat showcases India's growing expertise in advanced space technologies and paves the way for ambitious space odysseys

The Indian space research landscape has consistently been characterised by a combination of resilience, ingenuity, and ambition. The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), which has consistently advanced the frontiers of science and technology, recently accomplished another significant milestone with the successful completion of its docking experiment. This accomplishment represents a pivotal moment in India's space exploration endeavours, emphasising the nation's expanding capabilities in sophisticated space technologies.



synchronisation of spacecraft in space—a complex technological feat. India has joined the select group of spacefaring nations that possess docking skills because of the Indian Space Research Organisation's (ISRO) successful demonstration of this capacity. To establish permanent human settlements beyond Earth, space colonisation necessitates the development of sophisticated capabilities, including the ability to construct space habitats, transfer resources between spacecraft or from Earth, and manage maintenance and logistics in space. Docking technology is essential for these activities as it facilitates the construction of large modular structures, such as space stations or habitats. This capability guarantees that multiple components can be launched inde-

pendently and assembled in orbit, thereby reducing the complexity and cost of the mission. Additionally, docking enables the exchange of resources and the transfer of crew members, which are both critical for maintaining long-term missions and developing self-sufficient systems in space. ISRO is establishing the foundation for India's involvement in humanity's endeavours to become a multi-planetary species by mastering docking technology. ISRO's success in docking technology positions India as a significant player in global space exploration and enhances its strategic importance in the space sector. By demonstrating its capability to execute complex space manoeuvres, India strengthens its ability to develop Indigenous space infrastructure, including modular space habitats and stations. The Gaganyaan mission, India's inaugural human spaceflight program, is one of the immediate beneficiaries of this accomplishment. Critical functionalities, including the assembly of modular space habitats and the execution of

in-orbit refuelling, will be facilitated by docking technology. These capabilities will guarantee mission flexibility and efficiency, which are essential for the long-term preservation of human existence in space. Furthermore, the success of docking technology will expedite the fulfilment of India's vision of having its space station, "Bharatiya Antriksh Station," by 2035. Docking proficiency augments ISRO's potential for intensified engagement with international space agencies. As the International Space Station (ISS) approaches the end of its operational lifespan, there is a worldwide initiative for next-generation orbital platforms. India's proven docking capabilities position it as a significant partner for collaborative missions, potentially enhancing its influence in global space governance and diplomacy. This scientific achievement enhances India's standing in the burgeoning space economy.

(The writer is the Dean-Academic Affairs, at Garden City University, Bangalore. views are personal)



FIRST COLUMN

THE MATERIALISM
DILEMMA

How Gen Z can break free from consumer-driven values and have a life of their own



SHAINY SHARMA

In a world that is increasingly driven by consumerism, the rise of materialistic values among Generation Z, or Gen Z as it is often abbreviated has become a topic of growing concern. Gen Z as defined as the age group between the mid-1990s and early 2010s, has grown up in an era that is undoubtedly dominated by social media, influencer culture, and hyper-connectivity.

While technological advancements have brought undeniable benefits, they have also fostered a culture that often equates self-worth with possessions and appearances. Gen Z must reassess these values and prioritise more meaningful aspects of life. The rise of social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, and many more have created an environment where materialism thrives. The relentless exposure to idealised lifestyles and extravagant displays of wealth has fostered feelings of inadequacy and pressure to conform or compete.

Today, social media influencers, often incentivised by brands showcase expensive products as symbols of success and happiness which has reinforced a cycle where material possessions are viewed



as essential for validation and social status. The pressure to abide by these standards is so overpowering, especially for young individuals who are still forming their identities resulting in profound psychological effects. Recent studies have examined the spending behaviours of Gen Z, highlighting a complex relationship with materialism. Various studies have also shown that individuals who prioritise material wealth and possessions often experience increased anxiety, reduced life contentment, and higher rates of depression.

Gen Z which is already grappling with a mental health crisis, the fixation on materialism exacerbates the problem as it shifts focus away from intrinsic values such as personal growth, relationships, and community involvement, which are far more fulfilling and enduring sources of happiness. There is no denying that materialism has significant environmental repercussions.

The fast fashion industry, a key driver of consumerism, is notorious for its unsustainable practices, contributing to pollution, waste, and the exploitation of labour. Gen Z, which is often touted as the most environmentally conscious generation, faces a paradox and their inclination toward materialistic consumption undermines their efforts to combat climate change.

While materialism has been ingrained in modern society, it is not an inevitable path for Gen Z. By recognising the pitfalls of this mindset and striving for a more balanced and intentional approach to life, they can pave the way for a healthier, more sustainable future. It is time for Gen Z to redefine success, not as the accumulation of material possessions but as the cultivation of meaningful relationships, personal growth, and contributions to the greater good. In conclusion, Gen Z has the opportunity to break free from the traps of materialism and redefine success by prioritising intrinsic values such as personal growth, meaningful relationships, and sustainability. By embracing a more intentional and balanced approach to life, they can shape a healthier, more fulfilling and environmentally conscious future.

(The writer is an educator; views are personal)

Dangers of China's mega-dam plans on the Yarlung Tsangpo



B K SINGH

With the Tibetan region's seismic vulnerability due to tectonic plate activity, such mega-dam projects could exacerbate risks to life, biodiversity and regional stability

Earthquake of 7.1 magnitude on the Richter scale on January 7 in Tibet killed 126 people and injured 188 making rescue and relief difficult as the temperature dropped to -60 Celsius. Tremors were also felt in Nepal, Bhutan and the Indian states of Bihar and West Bengal. The epicentre of the quake was Tibet's Tingri County, 75 km north of Mount Everest, the World's highest mountain. The quake brings focus on China's latest plan to build the World's biggest dam on the Yarlung Tsangpo River in Tibet, very close to the Indian territory of Arunachal Pradesh. Tibetan region and its fringe areas in China are seismically quite active.

This is the area where the Indian and Eurasia plates clash and the force generated can be strong enough to cause uplifts and increase the height of the Himalayan peaks. In Sichuan province alone earthquake of 7.9 magnitude was struck in May 2008 killing 90,000 people, another of 7.1 magnitude in April 2013 killing 196 people, and the third one of 6.8 magnitude in September 2022 killing 93 people has been recorded. Qinghai province has also seen two major earthquakes of 7.1 magnitude in April 2010 and 6.2 magnitude in December 2023 killing 2698 and 126 people respectively.

Two earthquakes have also struck Gansu province in July 2013 and December 2023. A report released after the 7th January earthquake in Tingri, Tibet, NASA has brought out that the speed of earth rotation has slowed down after the water was impounded in three gorges dam (607 meters in height and 2 km long) on the River Yangtze in China. The report further says that the earth takes .06 microseconds more to complete a rotation about its axis, post-construction of the dams. Earth rotation is linked to interplanetary activities, and can influence activities from Sun as well as the atmosphere.

The dams make the region seismic prone increasing the vulnerability of the population. More such dams in the region would increase the vulnerability further. Seismic activities have the potential to damage large dams too. If any such dam bursts in an earth quake, a large quantity of water would outflow through human areas washing away lives and properties.

This can be catastrophic in the region. The world's mightiest river Yarlung Tsangpo in Tibet, which becomes Brahmaputra as it flows in Arunachal Pradesh has several gigawatts of energy stored as it runs down the steep mountains. China has projected 60 gigawatts of power by damming this river in Tibet at the cost of \$137 billion. The power output of this project is two and half times the output of the Four Gorges Dam, along the river's upper and middle reaches. These are Dagu dam (640 megawatts), Zangmu Dam (510 megawatts), Jiacha Dam (320 megawatts) and Jiexu Dam (300 megawatts). The Zangmu dam project is the only one among these that has been operational so far. The other three projects are still in the construction stage and are marred by logistical and technical challenges posed by steep



WITH THE LEVEL OF TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCEMENTS, THE COUNTRY POSSESSES, THE REMAINING DAM PROJECTS WILL ALSO BE A REALITY AND EVENTUALLY, VERY LITTLE WATER WILL BE ALLOWED TO FLOW IN THE BRAHMAPUTRA IN THE LEAN PERIOD

mountains and deep gorges. China being an upper riparian state should not work on such projects in secrecy and put lower riparian states like India and Bangladesh to a disadvantage. It is irresponsible and aggressive posturing of China that it plans to change the flow of water in the Brahmaputra River during lean as well as peak seasons. Data suggest that the total annual outflow of Yarlung Tsangpo in China is significantly lower than the Brahmaputra in India. Brahmaputra, therefore enjoys a much bigger catchment in steep mountains than Yarlung. This is when only the Zangmu dam project is operational. The challenges encountered by China in completing other projects in the middle reaches are not unsurmountable.

With the level of technological advancements, the country possesses, the remaining dam projects will also be a reality and eventually, very little water will be allowed to flow in the Brahmaputra in the lean period. This is likely to hurt biodiversity conservation and agricultural production in India and Bangladesh.

For more than a decade China has been dumping the maximum amount of greenhouse gases nearly 14 gigatons annually into the atmosphere. The US is the distant second with 8 gigatons annually.

With the warming Sea surface huge amount of moisture is dumped in the atmosphere having the potential to bring heavy downpours for one or two days.

In such circumstances, 400 mm of rain in 48 hours is not uncommon these days. It would result in unprecedented flooding and the authorities would be forced to release water from the dams, to save the lives and livelihood of the population.

The Brahmaputra in India during the rainy season always swells. It has more disadvantages than advantages. While the floodplains of Brahmaputra in Arunachal Pradesh and Assam become fertile when the water recedes and leaves silt behind, the flooding brings misery to people and biodiversity. Kaziranga National Park, a UNESCO hotspot, is world world-famous site for biodiversity conservation. It is one of the best conservation sites for endangered single-horn rhinoceros. Though Kaziranga is a tiger reserve, but state of Assam gives first preference to rhinoceros conservation. Poachers kill this huge animal for a single horn. Forest personnel sacrifice their life to protect it. During the flood, many species of even big mammals get washed away with the flow of water.

The Forest department of the Assam government has made several arrangements including the construction of high-rise embankments using earth, to ensure that wild animals take shelter on these embankments during peak flooding.

The release of any additional quantity of water from the Chinese dams will cross the threshold and wash away wild animals in even bigger numbers. Though there is no formal water

treaty between the two countries, the Chinese plan for the dam without consulting riparian states and UNESCO is morally inappropriate. Since China won't listen to anyone on earth, India must take certain actions in its interest.

We should enhance our monitoring system and record the volume of flow of water in different seasons in rivers flowing from China. Satellite imagery should also be used in mapping and forecasting flood risk. More storage facilities should also be created so that the flood water can be diverted into them, whenever the river crosses the high flood level mark. While selecting sites for flood storage structures, local and ecological factors must be taken into consideration. Further seismic activities must also receive proper consideration. State governments and the centre must boost navigation activities in the Brahmaputra basin. The central government has already prioritized investments in inland waterways. Brahmaputra Waterway 2 has direct access to Chittagong Port in Bangladesh and Haldia in West Bengal.

It can be a very good economic corridor for trade with south-east Asian countries. In the absence of a water treaty, we should flag the issues relating to climate change, wetland conservation, and biodiversity conservation on all forums where both India and China are signatories.

(The writer is retired principal chief conservator of forests, head of Forest Force, Karnataka. Views are personal)

Maha Kumbh 2025: A timeless 'sangam' of faith, mythology and modernity

the event reaffirms its status as an intangible cultural heritage, blending ancient mythology and lived religious practices to embody the unity in diversity of Indian spirituality

Mark Tully, the well-known former BBC correspondent depicted the 1989 Maha Kumbh at Prayag as an enigmatic and enchanting interplay of time and timelessness. Navigating the kaleidoscopic unfolding of saints from Akhadas, pilgrims called Kaplvasis, stakeholder communities such as Prayagwals and Ghatiyas priests, Kewats and Khatiks, and overall householders and renouncers, Tully reported on the mythology and history aimed at a greater common goal, the spiritual uplift of the participating humanity. The religion of the Hindus at Maha Kumbh wrote Tully, is a 'religion beyond the reality of history, a religion of the imagination which goes beyond reason'.



DEV NATH PATHAK

The Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur is engaged in reviewing the Prayag Maha Kumbh of 2025, enabling a fresh perspective on the interplay of time and timelessness surrounding the intangible heritage. At various levels, the intangible heritage seems to have found tangible manifesta-

tion. The enormity of Mahakumbh is not merely in the formidable statistics on the whopping number of participants or even the scale of the organisation. The numbers have increased over the decades and the organisation has entered an art of state level. In the past Mahakumbh was spotted by the Indian Space Research Organisation space satellite as one of the most jaw-dropping visuals. The 2025 version has ensured that more elaborate facilities for the pilgrims and sadhus, diverse categories of accommodations on three sides of Sangam, and the latest technology for the upkeep of hygiene are in place. The administrators of the Kumbh district have seemingly left no stone unturned to ensure highly

efficient, technologically supported services. Yet the most significant is the power of mythology, history and social embeddedness of the Hindu religion, the Sanatan dharma. No wonder UNESCO had to declare Kumbh as an intangible heritage of India in 2017. But the intangible and abstract have very tangible and concrete expressions in the Kumbh, the latest addition being an up-marketed Akshaya Vat, a mythical tree adjoining the precincts of the fort of emperor Akbar. Even though Maha Kumbh is conceived and communicated through abundant textual references, it is a manifestation of lived religious tradition and collective memory of India. The ancient texts of the Rigveda, Yajurveda, Atharva



Veda, Matsya Purana, Skanda Purana, Vishnu Purana, and the epics such as Valmiki's Ramayana and Ved Vyas's Mahabharata provide ample references to the religious congregation, premised on the origin myth of Hindu mythology. Gods in collaboration with demons conducted a churning of the ocean, the sagar-manthan. The boatmen tell us that the sagarmanthan shall contin-

ue in our minds. Of the fourteen priceless outcomes of the churning one was a Kumbh of Amrit, a pitcher filled with immortality nectar. Many versions of the myth and tales inform that some drops of nectar fell in the confluence of rivers, Ganga, Jamuna and mythical Sarasvati. On certain celestial occasions, the nectar in the confluence becomes available for the pilgrims, who stay by the confluence and observe a daily life of austerity, piety, and spiritual practices, called Kalpwaas, aimed at transforming the body and mind. Unlike the modern historians' dispute about the origin of Mahakumbh, many travellers, chroniclers and intellectuals from ancient to modern times have found it mystical. The

Chinese Buddhist scholar Hsüan Tsang attended a Kumbh in the 7th century CE in which the emperor of Kannauj Harshavardhan participated and gave away his wealth. In the 9th century CE, the Hindu reformer saint and scholar Adi Shankar transformed the Mahakumbh into a more pan-Hindu event. Much later Mughal emperor Akbar constructed ghats and fortifications by the Sangam contributing to the infrastructure of the Kumbh Mela, as described by Abu Fazal in Akbarnama. In modern India Mahatma Gandhi had more critical comprehension of the Mahakumbh. He mentioned in his biography that self-realisation was not a hostage to the pilgrimage in the Kumbh, yet in 1915 he

attended the Kumbh at Haridwar. Jawaharlal Nehru, however, fondly remembered in 'The Discovery of India', "What was the tremendous faith, I wondered, that had drawn our people for untold generations to this famous river of India?" A microcosm of India, Maha Kumbh represents unity in diversity and lived religion described in Dhananjay Chopra's book published in 2024 by the National Book Trust of India. Perhaps that ensures an interplay of time and timelessness and thus a long future of the Maha Kumbh. (The author is Associate Professor of Sociology at South Asian University and is a member of the Maha Kumbh review team of IIT Kanpur; views are personal)

Steel, cement industries in hands of few people: Nitin Gadkari

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Union Minister for Road Transport Nitin Gadkari on Tuesday said the steel and cement industry "cartels" pose a big problem for the country and its infrastructure development. There are very few players in the two sectors, which are critical for infrastructure development, and these players act in cahoots. "Steel and cement industries are in the hands of a few people. They always decide the rates. Their cartelism is a big problem for the country," he said, speaking at the IECRP 2025 exhibition here. The Union minister said the fiber-reinforced plastic (FRP) can act as a good alternative to break the hold of the steel and cement companies and offered every help possible. "To create alternative material is my important interest to support you," he said. However, he urged the FRP players to bring down their prices such that the final costs are less by 20-25 per cent than the other entrenched alternatives.

SC suggests ad-hoc judges to tackle backlog

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Tuesday suggested the appointment of ad-hoc judges in high courts to deal with the huge pendency of criminal appeals. A special bench comprising Chief Justice Sanjiv Khanna and Justices B R Gavai and Surya Kant referred to the data on pendency of criminal cases in several high courts and said in Allahabad High Court alone there were 63,000 criminal appeals pending. The CJ said in the Jharkhand High court the figure stood at 13,000, and similarly 20,000, 21,000, 8,000 and 21,000 criminal cases were pending in high courts at Karnataka, Patna, Rajasthan and the Punjab and Haryana respectively. The bench said it could partly modify the 2021 judgement to ensure ad-hoc judges were appointed to decide criminal appeals by division benches presided over by sitting high court judges. The CJ said no ad-hoc

judge should be appointed in a high court if it was functioning with 80 per cent sanctioned strength of judges. "We will have to deal only with the condition that the ad hoc judges will be sitting on the benches which are dealing with criminal cases with one sitting judge as the presiding judge... to that extent we require that modification," the bench said and asked the attorney general R Venkataramani to assist it on January 28. On April 20, 2021, the apex court in a crucial verdict directed retired high court judges to be appointed as ad-hoc ones for a period of two to three years to clear the backlog of cases. During the hearing, the CJ said he listed the case keeping in mind the "acute pendency of criminal appeals in some high courts". The 2019 case titled as Lok Prahari v. Union of India is being heard by the bench in which the judgement was delivered in 2021. The bench is dealing with the smooth implementation of

judgement. It had said the process suggested by the Centre for appointment of ad-hoc judges in high courts was "very cumbersome" and underlined the adoption of a simpler procedure so to not defeat the real objective of their appointment. The rarely used Article 224A of the Constitution deals with the appointment of ad-hoc judges in high courts and says "The Chief Justice of a High Court for any State may at any time, with the previous consent of the President, request any person who has held the office of a Judge of that Court or of any other High Court to sit and act as a Judge of the High Court for that State". The top court also laid down guidelines to regulate the appointments. The guidelines covered issues such as the trigger point when the appointment process could be set in motion, tenure, procedure for appointment, salary, perks, maximum number of such judges and their role in a judging cases.

SC asks HCs to set up panel over judges pay commission

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Tuesday asked all High Courts to expedite setting up a two-judge panel to address grievances of district judicial officers on the implementation of the Second National Judges Pay Commission recommendations. A bench comprising Justices B R Gavai, Augustine George Masih and K Vinod Chandran passed the order after senior advocate K Paremeshwar, who is assisting it as an amicus curiae, said many high courts were yet to form the Committees for Service Conditions of the District Judiciary (CSCDJ) as directed by it earlier. The top court, on January 4 last year, said it recommended setting up the two-judge



panel in all high courts to ensure that the orders on pay, pension and other retirement benefits for judicial officers as per the Second National Judicial Pay Commission (SNJPC) were implemented. On Tuesday, the amicus said while some high courts had set up the panels, they did not meet regularly to deal with the grievances, prompting several judicial officers to

move the top court. "We therefore request all the high courts to implement the directions issued by this court by order dated January 4, 2024. If the CSCDJs are not appointed so far by any of the high courts, the same shall be appointed within a period of four weeks from today," the bench said. It also directed the nodal officers -- required to be retired district judges -- of the CSCDJs to be appointed within four weeks. It asked the respective high courts to provide office space for the nodal officers within their premises. The bench asked the apex court registry to send a copy of its order to the chief secretaries of all states and UTs and the registrar generals of high courts. The SNJPC recommendations cover pay

structure, pension and family pension and allowances, besides dealing with the issue of establishing a permanent mechanism to determine subjects of service conditions of the district judiciary. Earlier, the apex court said each high court will have a two-person committee, comprising high court judges, including one who was elevated from the district judiciary, to deal with SNJPC-related issues and other grievances of serving and former judicial officers. The registrar general of the high court will be the ex-officio secretary of the panel, which will have a former district judge as its nodal officer, it said. The court was hearing a plea filed by the All India Judges Association and others on pay and service conditions of district judicial officers.

Political parties should have code of conduct for lawmakers: Om Birla

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PATNA

Parliament and state legislatures, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla on Tuesday urged political parties to devise a code of conduct for their lawmakers to uphold the dignity of their respective Houses. The two-day 85th All India Presiding Officers' Conference also adopted a five-point resolution that included a collective resolve to take steps to ensure "disruption-free" debate and discussion in their respective legislatures. The presiding officers agreed to deploy technologies such as artificial intelligence and machine learning to bring legislative bodies closer to the people by making available debates in the local and two additional languages, Birla said. The presiding officers voiced concern over the decline in the number of sittings of state legislatures and agreed to implement the resolutions of previous meetings. "In an earlier meeting of the presiding officers, we had resolved that the state legislatures would hold at least 60 sittings in a calendar



year. We have agreed to make efforts to implement the resolution," Birla told PTI in an interview. Making a strong pitch for an internal code of conduct by political parties for their elected representatives, Birla said such an approach could lead to fewer disruptions in legislative bodies. The Lok Sabha speaker said some parties had an unwritten code of conduct for Parliament and state legislatures and their members refrained from entering the well of the House

and disrupting proceedings. Birla also urged the media not to glorify lawmakers for disrupting House proceedings and write more frequently against unruly conduct during sessions of Parliament and state legislatures. "Don't make heroes out of those who disrupt proceedings," the Lok Sabha speaker said. The two-day conference was attended by 41 presiding officers who expressed their views on "75th Anniversary of Constitution: Contribution of

Parliament and State Legislative Bodies in Strengthening Constitutional Values". Speakers of various state assemblies, including Satish Mahana (Uttar Pradesh), Rahul Narvekar (Maharashtra), M Appavu (Tamil Nadu) and Abdul Rahim Rather (Jammu and Kashmir), participated in the deliberations. Ram Shinde and Neelam Gorhe, the chairperson and the deputy chairperson of the Maharashtra Legislative Council, respectively, also spoke on the deliberations. Addressing the valedictory session, Birla said the presiding officers had resolved to make legislative bodies the focal point of debate and discussion. "All political parties should cooperate in upholding the dignity of the legislative bodies. This will be possible only when political parties have a code of conduct for their lawmakers," he said. His remarks came in the backdrop of repeated disruptions witnessed in many legislative bodies. The Lok Sabha speaker said the presiding officers resolved to bring in more efficiency in the functioning of legislative bodies by using technology.

Saini slams AAP in Delhi campaign

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

In his first election campaign for the Delhi assembly elections, Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini on Tuesday slammed AAP for failing to deliver on its poll promises and asked people to drive away the Arvind Kejriwal-led party to the other bank of the Yamuna. Saini held a public meeting in Delhi's Rajinder Nagar constituency from where the party has fielded Umang Bajaj. Rajinder Nagar, a coaching hub in Central Delhi, was in the eye of the storm last year after three civil services aspirants died due to rain-induced flooding in the basement of a coaching institute. Attacking the AAP government at the public meeting, Saini alleged that it has failed to deliver on its promises. "Kejriwal had promised that his government would help children of poor families become doctors and engineers. Instead, he opened liquor shops in every lane. He also promised clean water, but people are struggling with dirty water. Kejriwal promised to make Delhi like Paris, but the roads of the city continue to remain in poor condition. He has failed to fulfil his promises in the past 10 years," Saini said. He asked people to take a pledge to oust the "corrupt" AAP out of power and drive them to the far side of the Yamuna. "February 5 is the time to teach them (AAP) a lesson and ensure the lotus (BJP's poll symbol) blooms in Delhi," the Haryana chief minister said.



Omar visits Badhaal after 17 mystery deaths

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

After receiving widespread flak for remaining absent on ground zero, Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah Tuesday trekked mountainous Badhaal village, 55 kms from Rajouri district headquarters, to express solidarity with the bereaved families whose 17 members, including 13 children, died under mysterious circumstances in the past one-and-a-half month. Omar accompanied by National Conference local MLA Javid Iqbal Choudhary and cabinet colleague Javed Rana visited the graveyard and offered 'Fateh' (special prayers) to

the deceased. Omar expressed sympathies with the bereaved families including Mohd Aslam who lost his six children and his maternal uncle and aunt who adopted him in the past week. Aslam and his wife are the only survivors in his family after the tragedy. During his brief stay in the village, Omar also interacted with the village elders and gave them a patient hearing. Interacting with the village elders Omar said, "I never imagined that I would find myself in Pir Panjal, facing such a tragic situation. The pain and sorrow of the grieving families are truly unimaginable". Omar also assured the members of the grieving

families that his government would extend all possible help and take all necessary steps to address the situation at hand. He said that Badhaal villagers are not alone in their grief—we stand with them during this challenging period. Earlier on Monday, a high-level inter-ministerial team headed by a Director rank officer of the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), launched a massive exercise and collected food and other samples to ascertain the cause of death due to a mysterious illness. District authorities in Rajouri recently sealed a spring in the village after its water tested positive for some pesticides/insecticides.

At least 66 dead in hotel fire in Turkey

From page 1

Necmi Kepcetutan, a ski instructor at the hotel, said he was asleep when the fire erupted and he rushed out of the building. He told NTV television that he then helped some 20 guests out of the hotel. He said the hotel was engulfed in smoke, making it difficult for guests to locate the fire escape. "I cannot reach some of my students. I hope they are OK," the ski instructor told the station. Television images showed the roof and top floors of the hotel on fire. Witnesses and reports said the hotel's fire detection system failed to operate. "My wife smelled the burning. The alarm did not go off," Atakan Yelkovan, a guest staying on the third floor of the hotel, told the IHA news agency.

"We tried to go upstairs but couldn't, there were flames. We went downstairs and came here (outside)," he said. Yelkovan said it took about an hour for the firefighting teams to arrive. "People on the upper floors were screaming. They hung down sheets... Some tried to jump," he said. The government appointed six prosecutors to lead an investigation into the fire. NTV television suggested that the wooden cladding on the exterior of the hotel, in a chalet-style design, may have accelerated the spread of the fire. The 161-room hotel is on the side of a cliff, hampering efforts to combat the flames, the station also reported. NTV showed a smoke-blackened lobby, its glass entrance and windows smashed, its wooden reception desk charred and a chandelier

crashed to the ground. Kartalkaya is a popular ski resort in the Koroglu mountains, some 300 km east of Istanbul. The fire occurred during the school semester break when hotels in the region are packed. Aydin's office said 30 fire trucks and 28 ambulances were sent to the site. Other hotels at the resort were evacuated as a precaution and guests were placed in hotels around Bolu. Meanwhile, a gas explosion at a hotel at another ski resort in central Turkey injured four people. The explosion took place at the Yildiz Mountain Winter Sports Centre in Sivas province. Two skiers and their instructor were slightly injured while another instructor received second-degree burns on the hands and face, the Sivas governor's office said.

R-Day rehearsals choke traffic in Capital

From page 1

According to the advisory, the Delhi Police has made special traffic arrangements to facilitate the uninterrupted movement of Republic Day parade rehearsals on the Kartavya Path. The special arrangements have been made for January 17, 18, 20, and 21, it read. Heavy traffic congestion was also reported in several parts of south Delhi. One of the commuters posted on social media that they were stuck in a traffic jam on MB Road for two hours. Some commuters who opted for the metro complained of long queues at the stations

due to heightened security checks ahead of Republic Day. A user posted a video on X showing a long queue at the metro station and said, "Delhi metro please we can't afford it in that peak time, please. We are using Delhi metro to avoid traffic. This is the peak hour to travel for a corporate life. We all know that 26th January (Republic Day) is near but we can't afford it in that time. @OfficialDMRC." The Delhi Police had earlier issued a traffic advisory and stated that special traffic arrangements were made for four days in order to facilitate the uninterrupted movement of the Parade on Kartavyapath.

Saif returns home after attack

From page 1

His eight-year-old son Taimur had accompanied Saif to the hospital in the autrickshaw. The doctors attending on Saif at the Lilavati were all praise for the actor whom they called him a "real-life hero" "who despite being in deep pain, covered in blood, but managed to reach the hospital on his own in an autrickshaw barely an hour after the attack on him in the small hours of yesterday". After his admission to the Lilavati Hospital, the actor

had undergone a surgery for removal of a knife stuck in his spine and for also plugging the leakage of spinal fluid. During a surgery carried out on him immediately afterwards, the doctors attending on Saif removed a 2.5-inch piece of knife from Saif's spine. While Saif was in the hospital, a health insurance document of the actor had surfaced on social media. Niva Bupa Health Insurance, of which Saif is a policy-holder, confirmed the health insurance claim made by the

actor on the day of his admission to the hospital. The leaked health insurance document showed that Saif had claimed Rs 35.98 lakh for his treatment of the stab wounds he had suffered during the attack. Of the amount, the insurance company gave an approval for Rs 25 lakh at the beginning of his treatment at the hospital. Interestingly enough, the document had said that the actor's expected discharge was January 21, which incidentally proved to be correct.

Trump signs citizenship order

From page 1

The order's interpretation of the 14th Amendment to the US Constitution, which has long been understood to guarantee birthright citizenship, is at the heart of the controversy. The amendment, adopted in 1868 following the Civil War, was specifically designed to ensure citizenship for children born on US soil,

including those of formerly enslaved people. It states that "all persons born or naturalised in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the state wherein they reside." Trump's executive order narrows this interpretation, asserting that birthright citizenship has never extended to those born on US

soil but not "subject to the jurisdiction" of the country. The order defines this exclusion to include children born to mothers unlawfully in the US or temporarily present, such as those visiting on a tourist, student, or work visa, and whose fathers are not US citizens or lawful permanent residents. Additionally, the order reaffirms traditional definitions of sex, clarifying

that "mother" refers to the "immediate female biological progenitor" and "father" to the "immediate male biological progenitor," thereby excluding non-binary or gender-neutral interpretations. The order's potential impact is significant, especially for immigrants from countries with large US diaspora populations. The policy will particularly affect children

born to immigrant parents on temporary visas or those without legal status. While the executive order could prompt federal agencies to adopt a more restrictive interpretation of citizenship, it faces significant legal challenges. Experts argue that such a change would require a constitutional amendment, not just an executive order. Amending the Constitution

would need two-thirds approval from both the House of Representatives and the Senate, followed by ratification of US states. Even with the Republican Party holding majorities in Congress, the legal and political hurdles could delay or block the implementation of this policy. The issue of birthright citizenship is not new to

Trump. During his first term, he repeatedly advocated for eliminating birthright citizenship for children of foreign nationals. In 2018, Trump suggested he could achieve this through an executive order, but the idea was widely debated, and no such order was enacted by the end of his presidency. As part of his 2024 campaign, Trump revived the issue, promising to address it on his first day

back in office. The executive order aligns with Trump's long-standing position on immigration, which has included several controversial measures aimed at reducing immigration to the US. While his supporters have praised his hardline stance, critics argue that his policies are discriminatory and harmful to immigrants who contribute to the nation's economy and growth.

Trump pardons Jan 6 defendants, including violent rioters

AP ■ WASHINGTON

President Donald Trump on Monday pardoned, commuted the prison sentences or vowed to dismiss the cases of all of the 1,500-plus people charged with crimes in the Jan 6, 2021, US Capitol riot, including people convicted of assaulting police officers, using his clemency powers on his first day back in office to undo the massive prosecution of the unprecedented assault on the seat of American democracy.



President Donald Trump, from right, with first lady Melania Trump and Vice President JD Vance, from left, with his wife Usha Vance, dance at the Commander in Chief Ball, Monday, in Washington, during the 60th Presidential Inauguration. AP/PTI

Trump's action, just hours after his return to the White House, paves the way for the release from prison of people found guilty of violent attacks on police, as well as leaders of far-right extremist groups convicted of failed plots to keep the Republican in power after he lost the 2020 election to former President Joe Biden.

The pardons are a culmination of Trump's yearslong campaign to rewrite the history of the Jan 6 attack that left more than 100 police officers injured as the angry mob of Trump supporters — some armed with poles, bats and bear spray — overwhelmed law enforcement, shattered windows and sent lawmakers and aides running into hiding.

While pardons were expected, the speed and the scope of the clemency amounted to a stunning dismantling of the Justice Department's effort to hold participants accountable over what has been described as one of the darkest days in the country's history.

Trump also ordered the attorney general to seek the dismissal of roughly 450 cases that are still pending before judges stemming from the largest investigation in Justice Department history. Casting the rioters as "patriots" and "hostages," Trump has claimed they were unfairly treated by the Justice Department that also charged him with federal crimes in two cases he contends were politically motivated. Trump said the pardons will end "a grave national injustice that has been perpetrated upon the American people over the last four years" and begin "a process of national reconciliation." The pardons were met with elation from Trump supporters and lawyers for the Jan. 6 defendants. Trump supporters gathered late Monday in the cold outside the Washington jail, where more than a dozen defen-

dants were being held before the pardons.

"We are deeply thankful for President Trump for his actions today," said James Lee Bright, an attorney who represented Oath Keepers founder Stewart Rhodes, who was serving an 18-year prison sentence after being convicted of seditious conspiracy and other crimes.

It's unclear how quickly the defendants may be released from prison. An attorney for Enrique Tarrio, the former Proud Boys national chairman who was sentenced to 22 years in prison for seditious conspiracy, said he expected his client to be released from prison Monday night.

"This marks a pivotal moment in our client's life, and it symbolizes a turning point for our nation," attorney Nayib Hassan said in a statement. "We are optimistic for the future, as we now turn the page on this chapter, embracing new possibilities and opportunities." Democrats slammed the move to extend the pardons to violent rioters, many of whose crimes were captured on camera and broadcast on live TV. Former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi called it "an outrageous insult to our justice system and the heroes who suffered physical scars and emotional trauma as they protected the Capitol, the Congress and the Constitution."

Trump signs order to withdraw from Paris climate agreement

AP ■ WASHINGTON

US President Donald Trump on Monday signed an executive order to withdraw from the ambitious Paris Agreement on Climate Change, a fulfilment of a campaign promise.

"I am immediately withdrawing from the unfair one-sided Paris climate accord," Trump said before signing the executive order at an inauguration event at Washington's Capital E arena here.

Notably Trump had withdrawn from the Paris Agreement immediately after his first inauguration in January 2017. Joe Biden reversed that decision later. The Paris Agreement places unfair economic burdens on American workers, businesses, and taxpayers. It hampers the economic and national security of the United States while allowing the world's leading polluters such as China to continue to pollute, according to the Trump team. Describing it as a one-sided

agreement, Trump said the United States will not sabotage its own industries while China pollutes with impunity.

"China, I mean, look, they use a lot of dirty energy, but they produce a lot of energy and when that stuff goes up in the air, you know, it doesn't stay there," he said.

"It's not like you got a wall. We love walls, don't we? Not like you have a wall around it and it floats into the United States of America after three and a half to five and a half days. It floats across the oceans and it comes right over your neighbourhood and it falls into your neighbourhood. So, they all say we have to fight for cleaner air, but the other dirty air is dropping all over us, so what the hell are they talking about," Trump said. "Unless everybody does it, it just doesn't work."

We had the cleanest air and the cleanest water that this country has ever had under the Trump administration,

US President signs executive order extending TikTok ops for 75 days

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

US President Donald Trump on Monday signed an executive order that extended the operations of TikTok, the Chinese controlled video short sharing platform, by 75 days, during which he plans to pursue a resolution that protects national security while saving a platform used by 170 million Americans.

"I am instructing the attorney general not to take any action to enforce the Act for a period of 75 days from today to allow my Administration an opportunity to determine the appropriate course forward in an orderly way that protects national security while avoiding an abrupt shutdown of a

communications platform used by millions of Americans," said the executive order signed by Trump.

Signed into law by Joe Biden in April last year, the bill passed by wide bipartisan majorities in the House and the Senate gave TikTok's parent company ByteDance 270 days to divest from the app or face a ban from US app stores. The popular video sharing app went dark on January 18, but it restored its services after Trump promised to extend its deadline a day later.

"During this period, the Department of Justice shall take no action to enforce the Act or impose any penalties against any entity for any noncompliance with the Act,

including for distributing, maintaining, or updating (or enabling the distribution, maintenance, or updating) of any foreign adversary controlled application as defined in the Act," said the executive order. Trump, in his executive order said, he has the unique constitutional responsibility for the national security of the United States, the conduct of foreign policy, and other vital executive functions.

"To fulfil those responsibilities, I intend to consult with my advisors, including the heads of relevant departments and agencies on the national security concerns posed by TikTok, and to pursue a resolution that protects national security while saving a platform used by 170 million

Americans. "My Administration must also review sensitive intelligence related to those concerns and evaluate the sufficiency of mitigation measures TikTok has taken to date," Trump said in the executive order.

"The unfortunate timing of section 2(a) of the Act — one day before I took office as the 47th President of the United States — interferes with my ability to assess the national security and foreign policy implications of the Act's prohibitions before they take effect," he said.

"This timing also interferes with my ability to negotiate a resolution to avoid an abrupt shutdown of the platform while addressing national security concerns," he added.

Senate confirms Marco Rubio as secretary of state, first cabinet member for US Prez

Washington (AP): The Senate quickly confirmed Marco Rubio as secretary of state Monday, voting unanimously to give President Donald Trump the first member of his new Cabinet on Inauguration Day.

Rubio, the Republican senator from Florida, is among the least controversial of Trump's nominees and vote was decisive, 99-0. Another pick, John Ratcliffe for CIA director, is also expected to have a swift vote. Action on others, including former combat veteran and Fox News host Pete Hegseth for defence secretary, is expected later in the week.

"Marco Rubio is a very intelligent man with a remarkable understanding of American foreign policy," Sen. Chuck Grassley of Iowa, the senior-most Republican, said as the chamber opened.

It's often tradition for the Senate to convene immediately after the ceremonial pomp of the inauguration to begin putting the new president's team in place, particularly the national security officials.

During Trump's first term, the Senate swiftly confirmed his defence and homeland security secretaries on day one, and President Joe Biden's choice for director of national intelligence was confirmed on his own Inauguration Day.

With Trump's return to the White House, and his Republican Party controlling majorities in Congress, his outsider Cabinet choices are more clearly falling into place, despite initial scepticism and opposition from both sides of the aisle.

Senate Majority Leader John Thune moved quickly Monday, saying he expected voting to begin "imminently" on Trump's nominees. Democrats have calculated it's better for them to be seen as more willing to work with

Trump, rather than simply mounting a blockade to his nominees. They're holding their opposition for some of his other picks who have less support, including Tulsi Gabbard for director of national intelligence and vaccine skeptic Robert F. Kennedy Jr. for health secretary.

Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer said his party will "neither rubber-stamp nominees we feel are grossly unqualified, nor oppose nominees that deserve serious consideration."

Rubio, he said, is an example of "a qualified nominee we think should be confirmed quickly."

Senate committees have been holding lengthy confirmation hearings on more than a dozen of the Cabinet nominees, with more to come this week. And several panels are expected to meet late Monday to begin voting to advance the nominees to the full Senate for confirmation.

The Senate Foreign Relations Committee advanced Rubio's nomination late Monday. The Senate Armed Services Committee and Senate Intelligence Committee, respectively, advanced the nominations of Hegseth and Ratcliffe.

Rubio, a well-liked senator and former Trump rival during the 2016 presidential race, has drawn closer to the president in recent years. He appeared last week to answer questions before the Foreign Relations Committee, where he has spent more than a decade as a member.

As secretary of state, Rubio would be the nation's top diplomat, and the first Latino to hold the position. Born in Miami to Cuban immigrants, he has long been involved in foreign affairs, particularly in South America, and has emerged as a hawk on China's rise.

Major influx of aid into Gaza on Day 2 of ceasefire: UN

AP ■ UNITED NATIONS

Gaza has received a major influx of aid and goods, with 915 trucks crossing into the territory on the second day of the ceasefire, the United Nations said. UN deputy spokesman Farhan Haq said colleagues in Gaza informed the UN that 915 trucks — significantly higher than the 600 trucks called for in the ceasefire — entered Gaza on Monday, based on information from Israeli authorities and the guarantors of the ceasefire agreement.

UN humanitarian chief Tom Fletcher said Sunday the

needs in Gaza are staggering and his office said Monday that aid workers are ramping up the delivery of food, clean water, shelter materials and other essential supplies.

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs reported that the more than 2 million people in Gaza, about half of them children, depend on this aid, Haq said. The World Health Organization, meanwhile, has a 60-day plan to increase beds and deploy overseas health workers to Gaza hospitals, but some 30,000 Palestinians have life-changing injuries and need specialised care, Haq said.

'2 Americans freed in Af prisoner exchange'

AP ■ ISLAMABAD

A prisoner swap between the United States and Afghanistan's Taliban freed two Americans in exchange for a Taliban figure imprisoned for life in California on drug trafficking charges, officials said Tuesday.

The deal came as President Joe Biden, who oversaw the chaotic US withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2021, handed power over to returning President Donald Trump. The Taliban praised the swap as a step toward the "normalisation" of ties between the US and Afghanistan, but that likely remains a tall order as most countries in the world still don't recognize the militants' rule.

The Taliban's Foreign Ministry in Kabul confirmed the swap, saying two unidentified US citizens had been exchanged

for Khan Mohammed, who was sentenced to two terms of life imprisonment in 2008.

The family of Ryan Corbett, one American held by the Taliban, confirmed he had been released in a statement. Corbett, who had lived in Afghanistan with his family at the time of the 2021 collapse of the US-backed government, was abducted by the Taliban in August 2022 while on a business trip.

"Our hearts are filled with overwhelming gratitude and praise to God for sustaining Ryan's life and bringing him back home after what has been the most challenging and uncertain 894 days of our lives," the family's statement said. They thanked both Trump and Biden, as well as many government officials, for their efforts in freeing him.

Corbett's family also praised

the Middle East nation of Qatar for "for their vital role in facilitating Ryan's release, and for their visits to Ryan as the United States' Protecting Power in Afghanistan."

Energy-rich Qatar, which hosted negotiations between the US and the Taliban over the years, did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Before Biden left office, his administration had been trying to work out a deal to free Corbett as well as George Glezmann and Mahmood Habibi in exchange for Muhammad Rahim, one of the remaining detainees at Guantanamo Bay. Glezmann, an airline mechanic from Atlanta, was taken by the Taliban's intelligence services in December 2022 while traveling through the country. Habibi, an Afghan American businessman who worked as a

contractor for a Kabul-based telecommunications company, also went missing in 2022. The Taliban has denied that it has Habibi. It wasn't immediately clear if either of the two men was the other released.

Officials in Washington did not respond to requests for comment early Tuesday after Trump's inauguration the day before. The Taliban called the exchange the result of "long and fruitful negotiations" with the US and said it was a good example of solving problems through dialogue. The Islamic Emirate looks positively at the actions of the United States of America that help the normalization and development of relations between the two countries," it said. The Taliban has been trying to make inroads in being recognized, in part to escape the economic tailspin caused by its takeover.

Putin discusses 'multipolar global order' with China's Xi

AP ■ MOSCOW

Russian President Vladimir Putin had a call Tuesday with Chinese President Xi Jinping, emphasising the two countries' close ties, a day after Donald Trump was sworn in as the 47th US president. The two leaders have developed strong personal links that helped bring relations between Moscow and Beijing, growing even closer after Putin sent troops into Ukraine in 2022. China has become a major customer of Russian oil and gas and a source of key technologies amid sweeping Western sanctions on Moscow. In Tuesday's call with Xi, Putin emphasised that Russia-China relations are based on shared interests, equality and mutual benefits, noting that they "don't depend on internal political factors and the current international environment."

"We jointly support the development of a more just multipolar global order and work to ensure indivisible security in Eurasia and the world as a whole," Putin told Xi in remarks carried by the Russian state TV. "Joint efforts by Russia and China play an important stabilising role in global affairs."

Xi similarly praised close cooperation between Moscow and Beijing, saying it helps "bring positive energy to reforming and developing the global system". While neither leader directly mentioned Trump in the televised fragment of their call, the timing of the conversation may signal that Putin and Xi want to coordinate their action in dialogue with the new US administration. The Chinese president had a call with Trump on Friday and expressed hope for positive ties with the US.

Trump had threatened to impose tariffs and other measures against China in his second term, while also hinting at ways in which the two rival powers could cooperate on issues such as regional conflicts and curbing the export of substances used in the production of fentanyl. Putin, who is yet to talk to Trump, congratulated him on taking office in televised remarks during a video call with officials and welcomed his intention to open a dialogue with Moscow.

Trump told reporters Monday after taking office that Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy had told him he wanted to make a peace deal and voiced hope that Putin would follow suit. He added that Putin would be destroying Russia by failing to make a deal, pointing out Russia's economic troubles, including high inflation.

Landslides, flash floods on Indonesia's Java island leave 17 dead, 8 missing

Jakarta (AP): Indonesian rescuers recovered the bodies of at least 17 people who were swept away in flash floods or buried under tons of mud and rocks that hit hilly villages on the country's main island of Java, officials said Tuesday. Eight people were missing. Torrential rains on Monday caused rivers to burst their banks, tearing through nine villages in Pekalongan regency of Central Java province, as mud, rocks and trees tumbled down on mountainside hamlets, said Bergas Caturisasi, who heads the local Disaster Management Agency.

He said rescue workers by Tuesday had pulled out at least 17 bodies in the worst-hit village of Petungkriyono, and rescuers are searching for eight villagers who are reportedly still missing. Eleven injured people managed to escape and were

rushed to nearby hospitals, Caturisasi said.

Television reports on Tuesday showed police, soldiers and rescue workers used excavators, farm equipment and their bare hands to sift through the rubble looking for the dead and missing in devastated villages, while others carried victims on bamboo stretchers or body bags to ambulances or trucks. "Bad weather, mudslides and rugged terrain hampered the rescue operation," Caturisasi said, adding that people who were fishing in the river and those who were taking shelter from the rain were swept away by flash floods.

National Disaster Management Agency spokesperson Abdul Muhari said flash floods swept away villagers and vehicles passing through devastated villages and triggered a landslide that buried two houses.

Starmer: Killing of 3 girls calls for 'fundamental change'

London (AP): Prime Minister Keir Starmer said Tuesday that the killing of three girls at a Taylor Swift-themed dance class must lead to "fundamental change" in how the British state protects citizens. Starmer said the government must also answer "tough questions" about how authorities failed to stop a violence-obsessed teenager before he stabbed three young girls to death in the seaside town of Southport in July.

In a televised statement, the prime minister said that a public inquiry would tackle failings in the case of Axel Rudakubana, who injured another eight children, their instructor and a passer-by. "The tragedy of the Southport killings must be a line in the sand for Britain," Starmer said. Rudakubana, 18, unexpectedly changed his plea to guilty on Monday, the first day of his trial at Liverpool Crown Court.

He is due to be sentenced on Thursday.

His guilty plea means that details that had been withheld from the public to try to ensure a fair trial can now be reported. They include the fact that Rudakubana was referred three times to the government's anti-extremism program, Prevent, when he was 13 and 14, and was in contact with multiple state agencies — all of whom failed to spot the danger he posed.

The killings in Southport in northwest England triggered days of anti-immigrant violence across the country after far-right activists seized on incorrect reports that the attacker was an asylum-seeker who had recently arrived in the UK.

Rudakubana was born in Cardiff to Rwandan parents. Critics have accused Starmer's government of withholding information about the suspect

in the aftermath of the attack. Starmer said there was no conspiracy of silence, just a desire to see justice done.

"The only losers if the details had been disclosed would have been the victims and the families because it ran the risk the trial would have collapsed," he said.

Police and prosecutors also face questions about why the case was not labelled terrorism, despite Rudakubana facing charges of possessing an al-Qaida manual and the poison ricin alongside charges of murder and attempted murder. Starmer said the case showed that "terrorism has changed" and the law might need to be changed to deal with "a new threat... (from) acts of extreme violence carried out by loners, misfits, young men in their bedrooms."

"It's clearly extreme violence. It's clearly intended to terrorise," he said.

Sebi plans to introduce pre-listing trading in IPO shares to deter grey market activity: Buch

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Sebi is looking at introducing a system where an investor can sell shares as soon as they are allotted in an Initial Public Offering (IPO) to curb grey market activity, chairperson Madhabi Puri Buch said on Tuesday. The chief of the capital markets regulator also announced that the top two proxy advisory firms are on the verge of launching a portal which will be a repository of related party transactions and will be useful in judging the governance standards in a company for any stakeholder. It can be noted that many IPOs in the recent past have seen very high subscriptions, and many of the issuances have also made huge listing-day gains which result in the grey market activity of passing on allotted



shares. Buch, an i-banker turned markets regulator, reminisced that during her banking days,

this grey market activity used to be called "curb trading". "We feel that if anyway investors want to do that, why not give

them that opportunity in a proper regulated way?" Buch said, addressing an Association of Investment Bankers of India

(AIBI) event here. "The idea is whatever is the grey market that is going on, pre-listing, we think that is not suitable. If you got an allotment and want to sell your right, sell it in the organised market," she explained reporters later. Buch said discussions are underway with two stock exchanges to put in place the "when listed" facility where shares can be traded during the three days between the allotment and listing. "As soon as the allotment is over, the entitlement to that share gets crystallised. Then the person should have the right to sell that entitlement," Buch said. On the plans of proxy advisors to launch the Related Party Transactions (RPT) portal, the Sebi chief said the two major entities in the fray are on the verge of launching the facility.

Government disburses ₹1,596 Crore in six PLI schemes this fiscal

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The government has disbursed Rs 1,596 crore under Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) schemes for six sectors, including electronics and pharma, during the April-September this fiscal, an official said. The government in 2021 announced PLI schemes for 14 sectors such as telecommunication, white goods, textiles, manufacturing of medical devices, automobiles, speciality steel, food products, high-efficiency solar PV modules, advanced chemistry cell battery, drones, and pharma with an outlay of Rs 1.97 lakh crore. Out of the total Rs 1,596 crore, the maximum amount of Rs 964 crore was disbursed under the PLI scheme for large-scale electronics manufacturing. It was followed by pharma (Rs 604 crore), food products (Rs



11 crore), telecom (Rs nine crore), bulk drugs (Rs six crore) and drones (Rs two crore). Incentives disbursed till 2023-24 stood at Rs 9,721 crore, the official said adding the scheme is having a cascading effect on the country's MSME ecosystem. The anchor units that will be built in every sector will require a new supplier base in the entire value chain. Most of these ancillary units will be built in the MSME sector.

Further as of August 2024, across 14 sectors, investment of Rs 1.46 lakh crore have been realised, which has resulted in incremental production/sales of over Rs 12.50 lakh crore, employment generation of over 9.5 lakhs, and exports surpassing Rs 4 lakh crore. Over 760 applications have been approved under PLI schemes. The departments implementing their respective schemes are responsible for the disbursements.

Chemical industry seeks tweaking in customs duties in Budget

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The chemicals industry has sought tweaking in customs duties in the forthcoming Budget on certain products such as Polyethylene Terephthalate and Polyvinyl Chloride with a view to cut imports from China and boost domestic manufacturing. China is currently the world's biggest exporter of key products like Polyethylene Terephthalate (PET) resins, Purified Terephthalate Acid (PTA), Polyvinyl Chloride (PVC) and polyester fibre. Industry sources said that this global overcapacity, coupled with flat demand growth in many countries and a changing geopolitical landscape, poses a threat of cheap imports flooding into India.

Though India has significantly increased its domestic capacity for PET bottle-grade chips, there has been an increase in the low-cost imports, especially from China, which has eroded the competitiveness of India's domestic producers, they said. Similarly, in the case of PVC, a critical material used in sectors like construction, needs a relook in terms of tariff treatment considering its crucial role in the economy.

"Restoring PVC duty back to pre-2022 levels of 10 per cent would provide desired impetus for creating domestic capacity," they added. Further in the Man-made Fiber (MMF) polyester segment where domestic capacity utilisation is being hindered by low-cost imports, especially from China warrants an upward revision of tariff to 10 per cent.

"A tariff increase on polyester would not only safeguard domestic manufacturers from unfair competition but also bolster local production capacities, aligning with the ambitious textile sector growth target of USD 350 billion by 2030," the source said. The industry has shared these issues with the government for their consideration. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman is scheduled to present the Budget on February 1.

Rupee falls 14 paise to close at 86.59 against US dollar



PTI ■ MUMBAI

The rupee pared initial gains and settled for the day lower by 14 paise to 86.59 (provisional) against US dollar on Tuesday, tracking heavy sell-off in the domestic equity market and a recovery in the US dollar index. Forex traders said the dollar weakened from its 109 levels but clawed back to 108.66 as Donald Trump declared tariffs against Canada and Mexico in the near future but stopped short of declaring any tariffs against China.

Rupee is expected to see high volatility ahead of key events in the global and domestic economic landscape, they added. At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened on a positive note at 86.28 against the greenback. During the day, the local unit touched an intraday high of 86.28 and a low of 86.59. It finally closed at 86.59 (provisional), registering a fall of 14 paise over its previous close of 86.45 against the US dollar. According to Anuj Choudhary - Research Analyst at Mirae Asset Sharekhan, the Indian rupee opened higher on a weak tone in the US dollar and overnight decline in crude oil prices. However, the domestic currency lost initial gains as the domestic markets tanked. A recovery in the US dollar index also pressurised the rupee. The US dollar recovered after US President

Donald Trump threatened Canada and Mexico with 25 per cent tariffs by February 1. "We expect the rupee to remain weak on underlying strength in the US dollar and weak domestic markets. Importer demand for dollars may further pressurise the rupee," Choudhary said. However, any further decline in crude oil prices may support the rupee at lower levels. Markets may see some volatility amid announcements by the US government, Choudhary added. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading down 0.62 per cent to 108.66. Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, fell 0.97 per cent to USD 79.37 per barrel in futures trade. On the domestic equity market front both the benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty witnessed a highly volatile trade.

Bridgestone India expects seven-eight per cent growth in replacement demand in 2025

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Bridgestone India is expecting around seven-eight per cent growth in the replacement demand this calendar year after seeing a disruption owing to multiple factors in 2024, a top company executive has said. The Indian arm of the Japanese tyre company Bridgestone Corporation also said that along with increasing its product offerings, it is also expanding its market footprint by ensuring its presence in tier three and four towns of the country. The company in November announced a USD 85-million investment plan for enhancing production capacity and capability across its two plants in the country to reinforce its premium-mass strategy. "We are focusing on providing premium products and services to Indian consumers as part of



our mid-to-long term strategy with focus on sustainability at the core of our business. India is the fastest-growing market in our portfolio and our recently announced investments of USD 85 million is a reflection of our confidence in the Indian market," Hiroshi Yoshizane, Managing Director at Bridgestone India told PTI. Stating that the company aims to be the premium mass leader in the passenger cars radial tyre segment in India, he said, "We have a very positive outlook as far as the Indian market is

concerned." "Last year (2024) saw a lot of disruption of demand owing to multiple factors. We see the demand coming back in 2025 towards around seven-eight per cent," he said. These efforts, the USD 85-million investment plan, which kickstarts this year, are expected to increase total production capacity at the Pune plant by approximately 1.1 million tyres annually by 2029, Yoshizane said. They will also improve capability to ensure premium tyre production at the Indore plant, he said.

Prateek Group launches luxury project

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Prateek Group, a prominent Noida-based real estate developer, has unveiled its ambitious luxury project, Prateek Grand Begonia, in Siddharth Vihar, Ghaziabad. Valued at approximately ₹5,000-6,000 Crore, the project offers 2,400 meticulously designed 2, 3, and 4 BHK units. Strategically located along NH24, the development ensures excellent connectivity to Delhi, Meerut, and key NCR hubs. The first phase of the project, comprising 1,200 units priced from ₹1.2 crores, has already seen over 50% sales, highlighting its appeal among buyers. Prashant Tiwari, CMD, Prateek Group, said, "The overwhelming response reflects our commitment to quality and excellence."

BlueVerse to unveil sustainable vehicle washing solutions

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

BlueVerse, a DPIIT-Recognised start-up, will showcase its innovative automated vehicle washing solutions at the Bharat Mobility Summit 2025, taking place from January 17 to 22 at Bharat Mandapam,

New Delhi. Visitors can explore BlueVerse's revolutionary technologies at Stall No. three, Hall No. nine. Aligned with India's sustainable mobility vision, BlueVerse's systems recycle 98 per cent of water, leveraging IoT-enabled effluent monitoring and patented recycling

technologies to address water wastage and environmental hazards in the vehicle washing sector. India's vehicle washing industry consumes 2.5-3 billion cubic meters of water annually, exacerbating groundwater depletion and untreated waste issues. "BlueVerse is committed to

innovation that drives sustainability and social responsibility," said Rushang Shah, Founder, BlueVerse. Having saved 10 million liters of water and safely managed 16,712 kg of sludge, BlueVerse invites summit attendees to witness its transformative impact on mobility.

Tata Power-DDL partners with TPEVCSL

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Tata Power Delhi Distribution (Tata Power-DDL) on Tuesday announced its partnership with Tata Power EV Charging Solutions Ltd (TPEVCSL) for developing public electric vehicle charging infrastructure at Delhi Municipal Corporation sites. The tie up aims to promote the adoption of electric vehicles in Delhi, aligning with Tata Power-DDL's vision of a 'Green Tomorrow' and supporting India's goal of achieving net zero emissions by 2070, according to a statement. Tata Power-DDL, a power utility supplying electricity to a populace of around nine million in North Delhi, has announced a strategic partnership with TPEVCSL to develop public EV charging infrastructure across the parking sites of Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD). The agreement was signed between Tata Power-DDL and TPEVCSL in the presence of senior officials of both organisations.

Futures market suspension sparks debate

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Asish Bahuguna, Chairman of NCDEX, criticised the suspension of futures markets, highlighting its adverse effects on farmers. He argued that the suspension, seen as a government attempt to control prices, benefits consumers at the expense of farmer incomes, potentially undermining the goal of doubling farmer earnings. With farmers' per capita income still at a 1:3 ratio compared to non-farmers, Bahuguna emphasised that suspensions fail to reduce price volatility and overlook global and local price influences like tariffs and import duties. Market expert Vijay Sardana supported Bahuguna's stance,



calling for studies to examine the political motivations behind the suspension. Meanwhile, Neeraj Jat, CEO of AwantikaFPC, praised the

futures market for helping farmers secure better prices and reduce dependence on traditional mandis. Advocates argue that

developing futures derivatives could enhance agricultural value chains, improve infrastructure, and better support farmers.

Karur Vysya Bank reports 20.39 per cent rise in Oct-Dec 2024 net at ₹496 Crore

PTI ■ CHENNAI

Private sector Karur Vysya Bank has reported a 20.39 per cent rise in its net profit for the October-December 2024 quarter to Rs 496 crore, the bank said on Tuesday. The Tamil Nadu bank had registered a net profit of Rs 412 crore during the corresponding quarter of last financial year. For the nine month period ending December 31, 2024, the net profit surged by 24.28

per cent at Rs 1,428 crore, as compared to a net profit of Rs 1,149 crore recorded during the corresponding period of last financial year. "We have continued another strong quarter of performance, guided by our three key metrics: growth, profitability and asset quality. The bank's performance indicators align with our guidance, demonstrating consistent and inclusive growth," said The Karur Vysya Bank

Managing Director and CEO Ramesh Babu B. The total income during the nine month period ending December 31, 2024 stood at Rs 8,482.33 crore, from Rs 7,049.21 crore registered in the same period, a year ago. For the quarter under review the total income of the bank went up to Rs 2,953.44 crore from Rs 2,497.17 crore registered year ago. Babu said, "We have maintained strong trajectory of growth in RAM (retail,

agriculture and micro, small and medium enterprises) verticals, continuing the solid start we made at the beginning of the year. I am confident that the same will be maintained going forward." The total business of the bank as on December 31, 2024 stood at Rs 1,81,993 crore, from Rs 1,58,357 crore registered in the same quarter of last financial year. "Our total business crossed Rs 1.81 lakh crore. The

inclusive growth from all the business segments has supported for reaching net profit of Rs 1,428 crore for the nine month period", Babu added. As on December 31, 2024 the bank's distribution network was at 866 branches and one digital banking unit and 2,197 ATM networks. About 55 per cent of the branches are located in semi-urban and rural areas, he said. The Gross Non-Performing

Assets (GNPA) has improved by 75 basis points and stands at 0.83 per cent of gross advances as on December 31, 2024 (Rs 691 crore) vis-à-vis 1.58 per cent as on December 31, 2023 at Rs 1,152 crore. Net Non-Performing Assets is below one per cent and stands at 0.20 per cent of net advances as on December 31, 2024 (Rs 167 crore) as against 0.42 per cent as on December 31, 2023 at Rs 305 crore, the bank said.

RECPDCL HANDOVERS HVDC TRANSMISSION PROJECT'S TO ADANI ENERGY SOLUTIONS LIMITED

GURUGRAM: REC Power Development and Consultancy Limited (RECPDCL), a wholly owned subsidiary of REC Limited, the Maharashtra CPSU under the aegis of Ministry of Power, has handed over the project specific SPV (Special Purpose Vehicle) of HVDC Transmission Project under TBCB route viz, Rajasthan Part I Power Transmission Limited to Adani Energy Solutions Limited on 20th January 2025 at Gurugram.



FIVE-DAY BOOT CAMP ON DRONE TECHNOLOGY COMPLETED AT GURU NANAK DEV UNIVERSITY



AMRITSAR: Under the visionary guidance of the worthy Vice Chancellor, Prof. Karamjeet Singh, the department Electronics Technology in collaboration with Dr. BR Ambedkar National Institute of Technology, Jalandhar organised a 5-Day Boot Camp on "Drone Dynamics: Drone Technology, Trends and Applications" from 20th-24th January, 2025.

SIMATS HOSTS INTL. MEET ON VECTOR-BORNE DISEASES, AWARDS HANDED OVER TO EXPERTS



CHENNAI: Entomologists played a vital role in combating the menace of vector-borne diseases, yet the number of experts and their role was being often ignored, speakers at an international conference said on Tuesday.

INBRIEF

PROF. KARAMJEET SINGH'S FIRST SENATE MEETING AS VICE-CHANCELLOR OF GNDU

AMRITSAR: In his first Senate meeting as Vice-Chancellor of Guru Nanak Dev University, Prof. Karamjeet Singh emphasized the importance of making higher education globally competitive and employment-oriented.



VIT-AP UNIVERSITY AND IIT MADRAS INK MOU TO PROPEL RESEARCH AND INNOVATION IN DEEPTECH

AMARAVATI: In a landmark move aimed at fostering innovation and strengthening research collaborations, VIT-AP University, Amaravati, has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the esteemed Indian Institute of Technology Madras (IITM), Chennai.



Aryna Sabalenka reaches the Australian Open semifinals

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Aryna Sabalenka's bid for a third consecutive Australian Open championship will continue after she got past Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova 2-6, 6-2, 6-3 in a surprisingly difficult quarterfinal Tuesday night.

The No. 1-ranked Sabalenka has now won 19 matches in a row at Melbourne Park and will face her good friend, No. 11 seed Paula Badosa, in the semifinals Thursday. Sabalenka had run her set streak to 25 at the place — dating all the way to the 2023 final — when she grabbed the opener against 2021 French Open runner-up Pavlyuchenkova. But Sabalenka had a hard time harnessing her intimidating strokes on a windy evening in Rod Laver Arena until doing so down the stretch and collecting the last three games after the third set was tied at 3-3.

"Honestly," Sabalenka said, "I was just praying." She won her first major championship at Melbourne Park in 2023, then added another last January, before raising her total to three Grand Slam trophies at the U.S. Open last September. The last woman to win the Australian Open three straight years



was Martina Hingis from 1997 to 1999. Badosa's 7-5, 6-4 victory over No. 3 Coco Gauff in the day's first

quarterfinal was surprising, sure, but nothing compared with how significant a win by No. 27 Pavlyuchenkova over Sabalenka

would have been. And that certainly seemed like it might occur for much of the second set and at least the start of the third.

Instead, Pavlyuchenkova fell to 1-8 in Grand Slam quarterfinals, including 0-4 at the Australian Open.

So how did Pavlyuchenkova nearly pull off the win this time? By handling Sabalenka's big serves, first and foremost, reading them well and delivering deep returns. It took a bit of time to find the range, but once she did, Pavlyuchenkova was nearly perfect: After Sabalenka held all four of her service games in the first set, she lost five of the next six.

Pavlyuchenkova also produced stinging groundstrokes that equaled her powerful opponents' for much of the contest. And by showing off some talent with her volleying, claiming eight of the first nine points she finished at the net — one even appeared to be a sort of mistake but landed in, eliciting a wry smile from Pavlyuchenkova.

As things stayed tight, Sabalenka grew frustrated, her shot-accompanying grunts and post-point screams growing louder. After getting broken to fall behind 1-0 in the third set, she hit her racket against the blue court. Eventually, though, she was able to smile and look ahead to trying to return to the final with one more victory.



Chelsea defeats Wolverhampton 3-1 in Premier League

PTI ■ LONDON

Chelsea ended a five-game winless run in the Premier League by beating Wolverhampton 3-1 to move above Newcastle and Manchester City into fourth place.

Tosin Adarabioyo put the home side ahead after 24 minutes when he scored from close range after Reece James's shot was deflected into his path six meters from goal. It was his third goal in three games after a recent double in the FA Cup against Morecambe.

Wolves was on the back foot for most of the first half but grabbed an equalizer in stoppage time with the help of a mistake by Chelsea keeper Robert Sanchez. Amid a flurry of pushing and shoving, Sanchez dropped a corner kick at the feet of Matt Doherty who stabbed the ball home from a meter out.

However, a revamped Chelsea, with James making a first league start since Nov 3 and Trevoh Chalobah impressing after his unexpected recall from loan club Crystal Palace, was too strong for a Wolves side that is now winless in four league games.

Marc Cucurella made it 2-1 when he chested down a cross from the right and bundled the ball into the net on the hour mark. Five minutes later, Chalobah's goal-bound header was helped on by

Noni Madueke as Chelsea put the game beyond doubt.

Madueke said he apologized to Chalobah for nicking his goal but defended his "attacker's instinct" for being in the right place at the right time to make sure the ball crossed the line.

He also paid tribute to his teammate for showing what he called "leadership, character (and) bravery on the ball." "He slotted in seamlessly so I am delighted for him," Madueke said. "It is no coincidence with players like him and Reece (James) back in we won the game."

Doherty, meanwhile, lamented his team's poor defending at set pieces. "You have to want the ball to come to you, or you have to want to attack it. We need to start putting our head in where it hurts and defending set pieces with an over my dead body attitude," Doherty said. "Against every team in the Premier League you have to be on it for 90 minutes and I just thought tonight there were too many times where we weren't on it."

Chelsea moves onto 40 points, two clear of Newcastle and Man City and four behind Arsenal and Nottingham Forest. Liverpool tops the table with 50 points.

Wolves remains in 17th spot, one above the relegation zone but equal on points with 18th-placed Ipswich.



Manchester City signs Palmeiras defender Vitor Reis for \$36 Million

PTI ■ MANCHESTER

Manchester City signed a second defender in two days, this time 19-year-old Vitor Reis from Palmeiras for 35 million euros (\$36 million) on Tuesday. Lens' Abdoukodie Kusanov signed on Monday for a 4 1/2-year contract. The length of Reis' contract wasn't given.

"I'm excited to join Manchester City," Reis said. "I want to make my mark as we seek more trophies." The four-time defending Premier League champion has been unusually busy in the January transfer window following an alarming run of form leading up to Christmas. City was fifth in the standings and 12 points



behind leader Liverpool, and fighting to reach the last 16 in the Champions League. Eintracht Frankfurt forward Omar Marmoush is reportedly another target for 75 million euros (\$77 million).

City director of football Txiki Begiristain said.

The moves for Reis and Kusanov, also a center back, come after injuries to City defenders including Ruben Dias, John Stones and Nathan Ake. An ACL injury for Ballon d'Or winner Rodri has also undermined City's challenge in the Premier League and Europe, with manager Pep Guardiola admitting recently his squad was too small to cope.

City has traditionally preferred to save major transfers for the offseason, but Guardiola has chosen to strengthen now. City plays Paris Saint-Germain in the Champions League on Wednesday, with both teams in danger of being eliminated.

Bengaluru FC eye return to winning ways against Odisha FC in ISL

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Bengaluru FC would be keen to return to winning ways when they host a defensively struggling Odisha FC in their Indian Super League match here on Wednesday.

The juggernauts are currently seventh on the table with 21 points from 16 games, while the Blues sit third with 28 points from as many matches as the Sergio Lobera-coached team.

Odisha FC have won once and drawn twice in their last five games and will eye registering their first league double over Bengaluru FC, following their 4-2 victory in the reverse fixture on December 1.

Bengaluru FC, on the other hand, have struggled recently, losing their last home game 0-1 to Mohammedan SC on January 11, 2025, followed by a 1-1 draw to Hyderabad FC on the road. A loss in this match would mark their first back-to-back home defeats in over two years.

The Blues will look to bounce back and stay in the hunt for the first spot, though they now trail the top-placed Mohun Bagan Super Giant (36) by eight points (28), slightly undoing their impressive run in the earlier parts of the season.

In their last five games, the Gerard Zaragoza-coached team have faced two defeats, as many draws, and a solitary

victory, which has seen FC Goa beat them to the second spot, as the Gaurs are currently holding 30 points. Bengaluru FC have scored thrice and conceded four times in their previous three encounters, where they have picked only a single point.

It's clear that they need to resurrect their organisation and setup on both ends of the field, especially against the league's joint top-scorers Odisha FC, who have netted 31 times, with Diego Mauricio (7), Jerry Mawihmingthanga (4), and Mourtada Fall (4) leading the endeavours for them.

Odisha FC have scored exactly two goals in each of their last three ISL games. Another multi-goal performance would see them equal their longest streak of such games in the competition (four games between December 2019 and January 2020).

Unfortunately for them, their defensive drawbacks mean that they have given away nine goals in this time period and won a single point.

Odisha FC have scored 96.8% of their goals this season (30 out of 31) from inside the box. So Bengaluru FC could consider strengthening their defensive unit within the 18-yard area to practically outnumber Odisha FC in that zone and restrict their ability to operate freely and find the back of the net.

Satwiksairaj-Chirag sail into Indonesia Masters second round

PTI ■ JAKARTA

India's Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty stormed into the second round of the USD 475,000 Indonesia Masters super 500 badminton with a clinical straight-game win against Chinese Taipei's Chen Zhi Ray and Lin Yu Chieh here on Tuesday.

The Asian Games champions, who reached back-to-back semifinals at Malaysia Super 1000 and India Super 750 in the last two weeks, outwitted Chen and Lin, ranked 38th in the world, 21-16 21-15 in their opening match.

World No. 19 combination of Tanisha Crasto and Ashwini Ponnappa stamped their authority over Thai pair of Ornicha Jongsathapornpan and Sukkita Suwchai 21-6 21-14 in the women's doubles opening round. Satwik and Chirag, the former world number ones, will face the



winner of the match between Indonesia's Raymond Inra and Patra Harapan Rindorindo and Thailand's Kittinupong Kedren and Dechapol Puavaranukroh. Ashwini and Tanisha, who won the Guwahati Masters super 100 title, last month will take on Malaysia's Pei Kee Go and Mei Xing Teoh next. In men's singles, 2023 Odisha Masters runner-up Ayush Shetty brushed aside compatriot Kidambi Srikanth 21-7 21-15, while Tanya Hemant eked out a hard-fought 16-21 21-17 21-15 win over Chinese Taipei's Tung Ciou-Tong in the men's and women's qualifying rounds.

Coco Gauff loses to Paula Badosa

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Coco Gauff's forehand and serve abandoned her in the worst way and at the worst time at the Australian Open on Tuesday, and the No. 3-seeded American was eliminated in the quarterfinals by No. 11 Paula Badosa of Spain 7-5, 6-4.

Gauff entered the match at Rod Laver Arena with a 9-0 record in 2025 and on a 13-match winning streak that dated to her title at the WTA Finals in November. Using tweaks to some key strokes to great effect in the hopes of earning a second Grand Slam title at age 20, the 2023 U.S. Open champion had only dropped one set through four matches at Melbourne Park this year.

"She's full of confidence. But I'm playing well, too," Badosa said ahead of the contest. "I'm ready to face her." Was she ever. And Badosa now heads to her first Grand Slam semifinal at age 27. "I'm a bit emotional," said Badosa, who had been 0-2 in major quarterfinals. "I wanted to play my best tennis. I think I did. ... I'm super proud of the level I gave today."

She kept the pressure on Gauff, who only briefly managed to showcase her skills. Gauff finished with 41 unforced errors, a total that included six double-faults — including on the last point of the game that put Badosa ahead 5-2 in the second set — and 28 missed



forehands. Gauff had to contend with 10 break points and lost four of her 11 service games. She never earned so much as a single break point while returning until after she already trailed by a set and a break in the second.

One key game — and one that illustrated Gauff's problems on this afternoon — was the second of the second set. It lasted 22 points spread over more than a dozen minutes, and Badosa converted her fifth break chance after Gauff missed two forehands in a row.

Of Badosa's 12 points in that game, 11 came via mistakes by Gauff, including seven off the American's forehand. That sort of thing kept happening throughout the 1-hour, 43-minute matchup, and Gauff often would

respond to a miss off her racket by covering her face with her palm or slapping one of her legs. After one error, she dropped her racket to the blue court. When the quarterfinal ended with a forehand winner, Badosa placed her hand over her mouth, then knelt on the ground. This was a big moment for someone who reached a career-best ranking of No. 2 in 2022, but then dealt with a serious back injury that made her contemplate ending her tennis career.

"I would never think that, a year after, I would be here," Badosa said. "I've been through a lot. In the past, I was one of the best players in the world."

She next will go up against No. 1 Aryna Sabalenka, the two-time defending champion in Melbourne, or No. 27 Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova, the runner-up at the 2021 French Open. Their quarterfinal was to be played Tuesday night.

That was scheduled to be followed by the day's most-anticipated matchup: Novak Djokovic vs. Carlos Alcaraz in the men's quarterfinals.

Djokovic, 37, is aiming for an 11th Australian Open trophy and a record 25th Grand Slam singles title overall. Alcaraz seeks to complete a career Grand Slam at age 21 by adding a championship in Australia to the ones he already owns: two from Wimbledon plus one apiece from the U.S. Open and French Open.

Praggnanandhaa beats Arjun, shares lead with Abdusattorov

PTI ■ WUJ AN ZEE

Indian Grandmaster R Praggnanandhaa scored a finely-crafted victory over compatriot Arjun Erigaisi to share the lead with Uzbek Nodirbek Abdusattorov after the third round of the Tata Steel Chess Tournament here.

Both Praggnanandhaa and Abdusattorov have 2.5 points each.

It turned out to be an excellent day for the 19-year-old Indian as he handled the Catalan opening to perfection, getting a tiny advantage and squeezing out the defensive resources right from the early middle game stage.

After the trade of Queens, the players reached a rook and knight endgame wherein Erigaisi's fractured pawns on the queenside came under the scrutiny. Slow manoeuvring ensued and

Praggnanandhaa methodically won a pawn on the king side before his rooks came in to play from the other flank.

The game lasted 60 moves handing Erigaisi his second defeat in three days after his opening round loss to another compatriot P Harikrishna.

World Champion D Gukesh had it easy as white as he played out a draw with top seed Fabiano Caruana of United States to take himself to two points out of a possible three in the first major chess tournament of the year.

Playing with white, it was a rare game by Gukesh as he decided against taking any risks. The Queen pawn opening was met the Ragozine defense and Caruana acted true to the will of the position to expand his king side pawns.

On another day, Gukesh would have gone all out but here, the Indian decided pretty soon that



fighting for an advantage was probably not on cards. This was the first game to end in the Masters' section and it just

lasted 24 moves when the draw was agreed to vide repetition of moves. Harikrishna was held to a draw

by debutant Leon Luke Mendonca who finally opened his account. The Nimzo Indian by

Harikrishna did not have the desired impact as Mendonca, for once, decided to be very solid and not take too many chances. Harikrishna forced a perpetual in the end to move to 1.5 points.

With nine rounds still remaining in the first super tournament of the year, Gukesh, Caruana and Vincent Keymer of Germany share the third spot while Harikrishna is in the next bunch of four players on 1.5 points each.

In the challengers' section, the Indian girls had a forgettable day as R Vaishali lost to Nogerbek Kazybek of Kazakhstan while Divya Deshmukh found her nemesis in Aydin Suleymanli of Azerbaijan.

It was a very entertaining day in the challengers for the chess buffs as all seven games ended decisively with the player as white winning all the games.

Results round 3: Masters: Anish Giri (Ned, 1)

drew with Vladimir Fedoseev (Slo, 1.5); Fabiano Caruana (Usa, 2) drew with D Gukesh (Ind, 2); R Praggnanandhaa (Ind, 2.5) beat

Erigaisi Arjun (Ind, 0.5); Leon Luke Mendonca (Ind, 0.5) drew with P Harikrishna (Ind, 1.5); Max Warmerdam (Ned, 1) lost to Nodirbek Abdusattorov (Uzb, 2.5); Wei Yi (Chn, 1.5) drew with Vincent Keymer (Ger, 2); Jorden van Foreest (Ned, 1) drew with Alexey Sarana (Srb, 1.5).

Challengers: Aydin Suleymanli (Aze, 2) beat Divya Deshmukh (Ind, 0.5); Nguyen Thai Dai Van (Cze, 2.5) beat Nodirbek Yakubboev (Uzb, 1.5); Nogerbek Kazybek (Kaz, 1.5) beat R Vaishali (Ind, 1.5); Miaoyi Lu (Chn, 2.5) beat Svane Frederik (Ger, 1.5); Ediz Gurel (Tur, 2) beat Arthur Pijpers (Ned, 0.5); Oro Faustino (Arg, 1) beat Irima Bulmaga (Rom, 0); Erwin L'Ami (Ned, 2.5) beat Benjamin Bok (Ned, 1.5).

Shami in focus as India eye fresh start against England

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Fit-again pacer Mohammed Shami's comeback would be keenly watched when the Suryakumar Yadav-led Indian T20 team takes on an evenly-matched England in a five-match series starting here on Wednesday, aiming to make up for the recent Test disasters that have caused considerable turmoil and heartbreak.

The white-ball rubber, comprising five T20s and three ODIs after that, presents an ideal platform for both the teams to experiment with combinations and assess form before next month's Champions Trophy.

Shami, despite missing four matches, emerged as India's leading wicket-taker in the ODI World Cup 2023 with 24 scalps, including a sensational 7/57 in the semifinal against New Zealand at the Wankhede.

Interestingly, the pacer has claimed the same number of wickets - 24 at an average of 29.62 - in his limited T20I career and will aim to improve on that while proving his fitness.

Shami was sidelined after the last final against Australia on November 19, 2023 due to an ankle injury that

required surgery. The recovery from that was followed by swelling on his left knee during the domestic comeback some weeks back.

Following his inclusion in India's Champions Trophy squad, Shami's return will garner national attention.

With pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah nursing a back injury and his Champions Trophy participation doubtful, Shami's comeback assumes greater significance.

The 34-year-old made his competitive return in the Ranji Trophy for Bengal, guiding them to their first win of the season with a seven-wicket haul.

He followed it up with impressive performances in the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy (11 wickets) and the Vijay Hazare Trophy (five wickets). Shami's T20I career has been sporadic, with just 23 appearances since his debut in 2014. His last outing in the format was against England in the 2022 T20 World Cup semifinal.

With the Rohit Sharma-led Indian Test set-up still reeling from a horror tour of Australia, a good performance from the T20 side has become imperative especially after the Board had to step in to reinforce



dictats on team discipline.

Axar's new beginning
All-rounder Axar Patel will debut as India's vice-captain in the T20I format. He has been rewarded for his stellar all-round contributions in India's triumphant T20 World Cup campaign in the Caribbean last

year. Axar played a crucial knock of 47 off 31 balls in the final against South Africa and took nine wickets at an average of 19.22 across eight matches.

The Gujarat player has already outlined his vision for India's middle order, emphasising a flexible

approach with players floating between No. 3 to 7 depending on match situations.

Curious case of Sanju Samson
All eyes will also be on Kerala's Sanju Samson, who faces another critical juncture in his career after being omitted from India's Champions Trophy squad.

He was subsequently ignored by Kerala selectors for their Ranji Trophy match against Madhya Pradesh.

The wicketkeeper-batter has proven his mettle several times, becoming the first Indian to score successive T20I centuries in the recent series against South Africa being a case in point.

Promising all-rounder Nitish Reddy, who scored his maiden Test century against Australia in December at Melbourne, has also earned a spot in the squad, giving the team another option pace-bowling all-rounder along with the redoubtable Hardik Pandya.

England's fresh start
For the Jos Buttler-led England, the series marks a new chapter under head coach Brendon McCullum, who signed a three-year contract following Matthew Mott's resignation following their T20 World Cup exit.

Known for revolutionising Test cricket with his aggressive 'Bazball' approach, McCullum will now seek to replicate that success in the limited-overs format.

It would not be a new territory for the New Zealand great, who was also at the helm of Kolkata Knight Riders after playing for the

franchise in the inaugural IPL. England will miss key players Reece Topley, Sam Curran, and Will Jacks, but promising 21-year-old Jacob Bethell, who impressed in the ODI series against the West Indies last year, will look to shine.

Bethell has averaged 57.66 and struck at 167.96 in his seven T20I appearances. Test opener Ben Duckett has been given the position in the shortest format for the first time in six years.

Like Shami, England's fiery pacer Jofra Archer will be under the spotlight as he returns from injury to lead their pace attack ahead of the Champions Trophy.

The playing XI finalised for Wednesday also includes pace bowler Mark Wood, who has recently recovered from a right elbow injury.

But conditions in India, with the possibility of heavy evening dew, could pose a challenge for bowlers. After Wednesday's game, the series would move to Chennai for the second T20I (January 25), followed by matches Rajkot (Jan 28), Pune (Jan 31) and Mumbai (February 2). The ODI leg will start in Nagpur on February 6, followed by Cuttack (February 9) and Ahmedabad (February 12).



T20s won't affect England's CT preparation: Jos Buttler

PTI ■ KOLKATA

England skipper Jos Buttler is confident that the T20I series against India will not hamper their preparation for the upcoming Champions Trophy, and he also hopes to build a working relation with new head coach Brendon McCullum on this tour.

The ODI-format Champions Trophy will start from February 19, and England will play just three 50-over matches against India in the run-up to the marquee tournament.

"It's going to be a great series against a really top side in their own conditions. There's loads to look forward to. I'm not worried about schedules at the moment. I'm just looking forward to playing some games," Buttler said on the eve of the first T20I here at the Eden Gardens.

"I think it's going to be a really exciting T20 series. Obviously, there's some ODIs to follow, so yeah, I'm just looking forward to the games," he added.

McCullum, the red-ball coach, had succeeded Matthew Mott as England's limited over formats coach, and Buttler wanted to build the bond with the Kiwi.

"Obviously, it's not a new setup because Baz (McCullum) has been around for a while," Buttler said.

"There are a lot of players in this squad who have worked with him in the Test team over the years. So, yeah, I'm just looking forward to building that relationship in the white-ball setup."

England have arrived in India with a full-strength squad with Jofra Archer and Mark Wood leading the pace department.

"Sometimes there's so much cricket that certain players have to be rested or managed, but that's certainly not the case for us at all in this series. So we're a full complement of players, which is really exciting. Obviously, Baz is coming into the white-ball setup for the first time, and there's plenty to look forward to here and now."

He further mentioned that bowlers like Gus Atkinson, Brydon Carson, and Adil Rashid, who has multiple first-class centuries, provide depth to the line-up.

"I think we're really blessed, actually, in terms of the bowlers that we have here on this tour. They're all very, very capable batsmen. I think if you look at guys like Gus Atkinson with a Test hundred, Brydon Carson is an excellent hitter, and even Adil Rashid sometimes is down at 11 who's got multiple first-class 100s."

"I think we're very fortunate in that sense it gives a lot of confidence to the guys at the

top. There's plenty to come, so we can be really aggressive and not worry too much about our wicket, because we've got guys behind who can do exactly the same job," he added.

Bethell special
Buttler also praised young talent Jacob Bethell, who has been making waves in English cricket.

"He's done brilliantly well coming into international cricket. He's got a good head on his shoulders and obviously he's got the game for it, as you've seen in the white-ball stuff."

"Moving into Test cricket, it was fantastic to watch him in New Zealand. This is again a new challenge for him, playing in India, and one I know he's excited for," Buttler said.

Salt to keep wickets
As for England's playing XI, Buttler indicated that the team is almost settled, with some final decisions pending on the bowling front.

"Yeah, pretty much. Just waiting on a couple of the bowlers to see how they pull up through training. Phil Salt will keep wickets. He's obviously been playing brilliantly in T20 cricket for a while now."

"Ben Duckett will be with him at the top of the order. Jofra will play, Woody will play, and then we're just waiting on a couple of bowlers," he said.

Australian Open: Bopanna-Zhang pair lose mixed doubles quarterfinal

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Rohan Bopanna and Shuai Zhang had a match point in the Super Tie-break but could not close out the mixed doubles quarterfinals in their favour as local wild cards John Peers and Olivia Gadecki emerged winners in an exciting contest at the Australian Open here on Tuesday.

Bopanna and Zhang lost 6-2 4-6 9-11 in one hour and eight minutes at Kia Arena, bringing curtains on India's campaign at the first Grand Slam of the season.

Bopanna had earlier made exit from the men's doubles. India's other contenders, including singles exponent Sumit Nagal, and doubles specialists Yuki Bhambhani and N Sriram Balaji, had also lost at various stages of the hard-court Major.

Bopanna and Zhang ran away with the opening set but the Australian wild-card pair



bounced back strongly. The Chinese player lost her serve in the third game of the second set and that gave Peers and Gadecki an opening to force a Super Tie-break. There was no surprise, and that break remained with the wild cards, who wrapped up the second set.

The windy conditions also occasionally made the returns a bit tough.

Serving to stay in the set, Bopanna came out with his booming serves even as Peers tried to put pressure on him with an aggressive approach from the baseline, targeting Zhang on the net.

Peers gifted a free point with his double fault while serving for the set but came back strong with Gadecki hitting a volley winner on the next point.

Solid serving handed the local favourites two set points. They converted when Zhang's service return sailed over the baseline.

Bopanna lost his serve on the first point of the Super Tie-break with Peers finding a volley winner following a quick duel with Zhang. The Chinese also lost a point on her serve with super-fast returns being fired from across the net. Bopanna's on-the-jump forehand winner made it 3-3 but Peers found a stunning service return winner on the Indian's serve to earn another mini break.

A Peers return on Zhang's second serve gave the Aussies a 7-5 lead. Gadecki lost both points on her serve and it was 7-11.

At 8-8, Gadecki's feeble return went wide giving Bopanna and Zhang their first match point. Peers saved the chance with a strong serve.

Mandhana climbs to second position in ICC women's



PTI ■ DUBAI

India opener Smriti Mandhana inched closer to the top position, climbing to the second spot in the latest ICC women's ODI batting rankings following a stellar series against Ireland.

Mandhana, the only Indian in the top 10, had blasted 135 in the third ODI, besides scoring 41 and 73 in the opening and second game.

The 28-year-old currently has 738 points to her name, while South Africa's Laura Wolvaardt (773 points) is at the top, followed by Sri Lanka's Chamari Athapaththu (733) in the third place.

Jemimah Rodrigues, who scored her maiden hundred in the second ODI against Ireland, jumped two places at the 17th spot, while skipper Harmanpreet Kaur, who missed the series, is at the 15th spot.

Deepti Sharma, with 344 points, is placed at the sixth spot in the allrounders' list which is headed by Australia's Ashleigh Gardner, who claimed four wickets and scored 146 runs in the Ashes to claim the top spot from South Africa veteran Marizanne Kapp.

In the bowling rankings, headed by Sophie Ecclestone, Deepti also improved a spot to fourth with 680 rating points.

Gardner was productive with both bat and ball, as the Aussies claimed all three ODIs against England down under.

India defeats Malaysia in U19 Women's T20 World Cup

PTI ■ KUALA LUMPUR

Debutant left-arm spinner Vaishnavi Sharma recorded astonishing figures of 5/5, including a hat-trick, as India demolished Malaysia by 10 wickets in an utterly one-sided U19 Women's T20 World Cup match that was done and dusted in less than 18 overs here on Tuesday.

Vaishnavi's figures are the best ever in the tournament's history as Malaysia were bundled out for a paltry 31 in 14.3 overs. Fellow left-arm spinner Ayushi Shukla (3/8) also chipped in as India bowlers ran through Malaysia's batting line-up without much ado.

India barley batted an eyelid while chasing down the target in 2.5 overs, reaching 32 for no loss. G. Trisha made an unbeaten 27 off 12 balls with five fours.



The lowest total in a women's T20I, however, is 6 -- shared by Maldives and Mali.

In the men's game, Ivory Coast has held the record since being bowled out for just seven runs in a 264-run defeat by Nigeria in Lagos last year.

Now, India are on top of their group with four points, same as Sri Lanka but the former

has better Net Run Rate -- +9.1 to Lanka's +5.5.

But that easy chase was the fruit borne out of Vaishnavi's impeccable spell.

There was appreciable turn and bounce on offer in the pitch here, and she used it to the hilt as the home side batters had no answers to her guile.

Nur Ain Binti Roslan, Nur

Isma Dania and Siti Nazwah were her hat-trick victims, and she achieved the feat in the 14th over, that saw Malaysia further stumbling from 24 for six to 30 for nine.

"This was a dream debut to get a hat-trick and five-wicket haul. My journey has had its ups and downs. I look up to Radha Yadav (India senior left-arm spinner) and Ravindra Jadeja. I had visualised how to get wickets here last night," said Vaishnavi after the match.

Earlier, she had the wickets of Malaysia skipper Nur Syuhada and Nuriman as none of the home side batters were able to reach double digits.

In fact, India had bowled 10 wides and Malaysia's scoreboard would have been even more anaemic if those runs were not there.

Shubman Gill as vice-captain is a forward-thinking move: Ashwin

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Ravichandran Ashwin has backed the Indian team management's decision to appoint Shubman Gill as vice-captain for the Champions Trophy as a "forward-thinking move", saying the top-order batter's place in the side is more or less settled and he can be groomed as a future leader.

Off-spinner Ashwin, who retired during the recent Australia tour, seemed to suggest that there were no plenty of options available for the job.

"Think about who else in the current squad could be considered for the vice-captain role. I'm not saying whether the decision to make

Shubman Gill vice-captain was right or wrong, but the point raised is valid, especially since he was the vice-captain in the last series as well," Ashwin said on his YouTube channel on Sunday.

"I could be mistaken, but I believe he's also had some vice-captaincy experience in Test cricket. This could be a forward-thinking move, as the management might be considering who could take on the leadership role in the future."

While Gill is the ODI vice-captain, Axar Patel has been handed the role in T20Is.

"While both (Rishabh Pant and KL) Rahul could play together, they've handed the vice-captaincy to the player whose spot in the XI is

already secure. If Shubman Gill is groomed to lead in the future, he can rely on the guidance of senior players like Virat Kohli and Jasprit Bumrah," he said.

The prestigious ICC event is scheduled to start from February 19 in Pakistan and the UAE, and Ashwin raised concerns about the paucity of left-handers in the top seven apart from the absence of a reliable No. 8 in India's batting order.

"This squad mirrors the 2023 ODI World Cup," Ashwin said.

"Rohit Sharma and Shubman Gill open, both right-handed. Then there's Virat Kohli. Shreyas Iyer likely bats at 4, given his strong performance in the World Cup. KL Rahul



follows.

"At No. 6, it's a choice between Ravindra Jadeja and Axar Patel. Hardik occupies No. 7. We lack left-handed batters in the top seven. Outside the XI, we have Yashasvi Jaiswal and Rishabh

Pant."

Left-handed batter Yashasvi Jaiswal, who was one of the bright spots in the Australia Test series, was also included in the squad.

Weighing the permutations and combinations in which

Jaiswal may get his ODI debut, Ashwin said: "Jaiswal might only play if someone gets injured. He could have a chance against England. But what if he scores consecutive centuries?"

"One option is to open with Jaiswal and Rohit, pushing Shubman to 3, followed by Virat at 4. This would place either Rishabh Pant or KL Rahul at 5. If Jaiswal plays, Shreyas Iyer would likely be dropped. While unlikely, India must capitalise on Jaiswal's current form," he said.

All-rounder Washington Sundar is another player who could have an impact if he finds a place in the playing XI.

Reflecting on the scenario,

Ashwin said: "Another scenario involves Washington Sundar. Gautam Gambhir highly values Washington due to his batting. He can also be used as a floater."

"If you follow the World Cup format, you play either Jaddu or Axar at No. 6, Hardik at 7, and Washington at 8. This allows for three fast bowlers or Kuldeep and two pacers, maintaining balance with Hardik's all-round skills," he added.

India will play all their matches in Dubai, and Ashwin feels dew could be a factor there, affecting the team combination.

"Ideally, Washington should bat at 8. Does it make sense to have a player like Nitish

Reddy in the scheme of things? If Kuldeep plays at 9, it's two pacers and three spinners.

"With Nitish, he could bat at 8, allowing Kuldeep at 9 and two fast bowlers. This would provide the luxury of four fast bowlers and two spinners. I don't know if he was considered."

"Washington Sundar at 8 might not be feasible if dew is a major factor. In that case, Kuldeep Yadav would bat at 8, and the team would likely go with all seamers - Arshdeep, Bumrah, and Shami."

"In the 2023 World Cup, we lacked batting depth from No. 8 onwards. These are the crucial questions that need to be addressed."

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