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INSIDE

MONEY 10
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JUSTICE FOR MURDERS MOST FOUL

Life sentence for Sanjoy Roy Woman sentenced to death in Kerala

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

In what the parents of the victim called a "travesty of justice," for which they held the Kolkata Police and Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) responsible, the Sealdah Sessions Court on Monday sentenced convict Sanjoy Roy to life imprisonment until death - and not death, as the prosecution and the public had wanted - for committing the rape and murder of a 31-year-old postgraduate lady doctor from RG Kar Medical College and Hospital. Roy, a former civic volunteer who was working with the West Bengal Police at the time, was pronounced guilty of the RGKMCH rape and murder case on Saturday, with the quantum of punishment delivered by District and Sessions Judge Anirban Das on Monday. Judge Das stated that the crime did not fall under the "rarest of the rare" category, which is why he did not impose the death penalty on the convict. He also ordered the State Government to pay compensation of Rs 17 lakh to the parents who lost their daughter in the chilling crime "that shook the conscience of the country." Roy was found guilty on January 18, 2025, under sections 64, 66, and 103(1) of the BNS. However, the mother of the victim, who broke down in tears immediately after the judgment was pronounced, said, "We cannot discard the



RG Kar Medical College and Hospital rape and murder case convict Sanjoy Roy being taken to the CBI office at CGO Complex, in Kolkata PTI

order, but we think it is a rarest of rare case, as the rape and murder occurred inside the workplace, which is a second home, and that too by a civic police officer who is considered a protector of citizens." The family did not want money; they wanted justice, she said. She trailed off, saying, "Now we have understood that it is not enough to be the parents of a meritorious child... or enough to labor hard to see the child succeed... it is also

inside the seminar hall. The family will move the higher court to challenge the order. The victim's body was found in a semi-nude condition inside the seminar hall of the Chest Medicine Department of the hospital in the early hours of August 9, triggering nationwide outrage. Even as the medical fraternity, civil society, and the general public erupted in anger, promising a prolonged movement in the days to come, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee - whose government was primarily held responsible by the victim's family for destroying evidence and hushing up the case - promptly laid the blame at the Centre's door, calling it a failure of the central agencies that had been handling the case to ensure a death sentence for the convict. "I am very upset... my party too is... we wanted the death sentence... All of us had demanded the death sentence, but the court has given a life term until death. The case was forcibly taken from us. Had it been with the Kolkata Police, we would have ensured that he was given a death sentence... We don't know how they conducted the investigation. In many similar cases that were probed by the State Police, the death penalty was ensured in a record time of 55 to 60 days recently... I am not satisfied with the proceedings," the Chief Minister said.

KUMAR CHELLAPAN ■ KOCHI

A court in Kerala on Monday sentenced a woman to death for the sensational murder of her boyfriend in 2022. The Neyyattinkara Additional District Sessions Court also sentenced her uncle, Nirmalakumaran Nair, the third accused in the case, to three years of imprisonment. The 24-year-old convict, Greeshma, had sought leniency in sentencing by citing her academic achievements, lack of prior criminal history, and the fact that she is her parents' only daughter. In its 586-page verdict, the court observed that there was no need to consider the convict's age and other circumstances over the gravity of the crime committed, according to the prosecutor. The victim, Sharon Raj, was a BSc Radiology student and a native of Parassala in the Thiruvananthapuram district. The court also observed that the convict conspired to operate the crime in phases, she had a criminal background as she attempted to murder the youth earlier and tried to end her life after the arrest to divert the investigation, the prosecutor said. The trial court found Greeshma guilty under Sections 364 (kidnapping or abducting to murder), 328 (causing hurt by poison), 302 (punishment for murder) and 201 (causing disappearance of evidence) of IPC. Her uncle Nirmalakumaran Nair was also found guilty under Section 201 (causing disappearance of evidence), while her mother was acquitted due to lack of evidence. The prosecution charge was that Greeshma, who was in a relation with Raj for more than a year, wanted to get rid of him as her family had fixed her marriage with a soldier. Although she asked Raj to



Convict Greeshma being taken to a hospital for medical examination after being sentenced to death by a Kerala court for the murder of her boyfriend in 2022, in Thiruvananthapuram PTI

back off, the latter did not heed to her demand. This made her to bump him off. Accordingly Greeshma invited Raj to her house and administered him with a concoction laced with a lethal herbicide on October 14, 2022. She was helped by her mother, Sindhu and uncle, Nirmalakumaran Nair in destroying the evidence. After consuming the concoction Raj fell ill and breathed his last on October 25, 2022 following multi-organ failure. The poison consumed by him had resulted in irreversible damage to his liver, kidney and lungs. AM Basheer, a short story writer in addition to being the Additional Sessions Judge at Neyyattinkara, described the murder as a rarest of rare case and the crime was executed brilliantly. "The

accused does not deserve any leniency," said the judge while reading out the 580-pages long verdict. The case was investigated by the Crime Branch of Kerala Police and the charge sheet was submitted in 73 days. The Kerala High Court has to ratify the verdict before the hangman gets ready with the noose. The verdict is based on circumstantial evidence and not on documentary evidence. Expressing satisfaction with the judgment, mother of the victim, Priya, told reporters that she was grateful to the court for issuing such an exemplary order. Special Public Prosecutor VS Vineeth Kumar, told reporters that the verdict was fully justified and the court observed that this case is falling under the rarest of rare category. "The court noted that the convict was a brilliant criminal who meticulously planned the brutal murder," he said. He added that despite Greeshma's belief that she could not be held guilty, the scientific investigation conducted by the probe team ultimately led to her arrest. The court also rejected Greeshma's claim that she had no criminal background stating that she had attempted to poison Sharon by mixing paracetamol tablets into fruit juice. However, that attempt failed when he refused to drink it, citing its bitter taste, on 22 August 2022, the court noted. The court also observed that the woman's actions sent a harmful message to society and violated the sanctity of love, Kumar added. Welcoming the verdict, D Shilpa, the then Superintendent of Police, who oversaw the probe, said it was a victory for the joint efforts of the police investigation team. "We faced several challenges in various phases of the probe but the joint efforts by the officers helped in solving the case," she told reporters.

MARKETS



WEATHER

AQI 314
MAX 11.4 °C(+3.8)
MIN 24.5 °C(+5)

Uttarakhand to implement UCC on 26 Jan



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ DEHRADUN/NEW DELHI

Uttarakhand is all set to implement the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) on the occasion of Republic Day making it the first State in the country. Sources said a cabinet meeting led by Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami on Monday decided to start the process of enforcement of the UCC on January 26 as the cabinet also approved the rules under UCC as how to move ahead in the historic step. In fact last month the State government had announced that UCC would be implemented in January and with municipal elections scheduled for January 23 the results of which would be declared on January 25, sources said the government is prepared to announce UCC implementation on Republic Day. "The mandatory communiqué in this regard will be given the Union Home Ministry sooner," said a senior government source. Set to become the first Indian state to roll out the UCC, its rules manual includes provisions for tatkal registration, door-to-door services in remote areas and a state-wide mock drill on Tuesday. The list of services provided on the portal includes registration of marriage, divorce, and live-in registrations, termination of live-in relationships, intestate succession and declaration of legal heirs, testamentary successions, appeal in cases where application is

rejected, access to information, and complaint registration. After the meeting Dhami informed that preparations for implementing the UCC in the state are almost complete. "The training process for the UCC implementation is almost complete. During the cabinet meeting, we discussed implementing it as soon as possible. After reviewing everything, we will soon announce its implementation date," Dhami stated. Responding to a question, the chief minister said that its implementation will bring a big change in the state. He added that his party had promised to bring UCC before the 2022 elections, and the process was initiated in their cabinet meeting after assuming power. "We constituted an expert committee to draft the UCC, following which a bill was passed in the state assembly," he said. The Governor and subsequently the President have given their assent to the bill, making it an Act. As Uttarakhand is set to become the first state in independent India to implement uniform laws for all its citizens, Dhami dismissed the Congress's allegations that UCC represents divisive politics, calling them baseless. "This is not any divisive politics. UCC has a uniform system and uniform law for all," CM said. According to officials, online portals have been developed for citizens and officials, featuring Aadhaar-based verification, AI-based translation services in 22 Indian languages, and data integration across more than 13 departments/services (e.g., birth-death registrations, district/high courts, etc.). "The government has set separate fees for expedited registration under the Tatkal service. The registration and termination process for live-in relationships has also been simplified. Termination applications by one partner will require confirmation from the other partner. In testamentary succession, wills can be uploaded on the portal for online registration, modification, revalidation, or revival," a statement from the state government read.

Indian Army jawan killed in J and K ops



Security personnel stand guard near the site of the encounter, at Gujjarpatli area in Sopore, Baramulla district of Jammu and Kashmir PTI

In an overnight anti-terrorist operation, a soldier of the Indian Army laid down his life in the line of duty in the Gujjarpatli area of Sopore in North Kashmir's Baramulla district on Monday. This is the first incident of terrorist-related violence this year in which a soldier has sacrificed his life in the valley. Braving adverse weather conditions, the security forces have been maintaining a tight vigil along the Line of Control and the International Border amid reports of desperate infiltration bids by heavily armed terrorists from across the border in Pakistan. Meanwhile, the entire security grid has been beefed up in the run-up to the Republic Day celebrations across the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir.

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

TRUMP STRIKES BACK



President-elect Donald Trump takes the oath of office during the 60th Presidential Inauguration in the Rotunda of the US Capitol in Washington PTI

Donald J Trump was on Monday sworn in as the 47th president of the United States, marking his remarkable return to power for a second term four years after he left the American capital as a pariah. The 78-year-old Republican leader storms back to the White House with a strongman persona and a vision of an all-powerful presidency with a promise to aggressively reset US policies in a range of domains, including immigration, tariffs and energy. Trump registered a spectacular victory over his Democratic

rival Kamala Harris in the November 5 presidential election, defying two assassination attempts, two presidential impeachments and his criminal conviction. Four years back, Trump had left Washington as a pariah in the face of his unsuccessful attempt to overturn the 2020 presidential election to stay in office. His victory in the bitterly fought election was widely acknowledged as the most momentous comeback in American political history. JD Vance was sworn in as the vice president ahead of Trump. External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar attended the

inauguration ceremony as Prime Minister Narendra Modi's special envoy. The inauguration ceremony was held indoors under the Capitol Rotunda against the initially planned outdoor venue in view of frigid temperatures in the US capital city. The ceremony was attended by Trump's wife Melania, his daughter Ivanka and her husband Jared Kushner, and billionaires Elon Musk, Jeff Bezos and Tim Cook. On the first day in office, Trump is expected to sign a slew of executive orders, including kicking off a process to end birthright citizenship.

Fire Breaks out near Kinnar Akhara camp at Maha Kumbh

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ MAHA KUMBH NAGAR

A fire broke out near the Kinnar Akhara camp in Sector 16 of the Maha Kumbh on Monday morning, triggering panic among devotees and camp residents. This is the second fire incident at the Kumbh in two days, raising concerns about fire safety measures at the massive religious gathering.



Workers move the charred remains of a tent site, a day after a fire broke out at the Maha Kumbh Mela due to a cylinder blast, in Prayagraj PTI

Witnesses reported seeing smoke rising from a nearby camp early in the morning, leading to a commotion as people rushed to contain the blaze. Quick action by pilgrims and residents prevented the fire from spreading, and fire department personnel, supported by several fire engines, arrived shortly afterward to extinguish the flames.

BJP expands freebies to free-for-all Capital

SAUMYA SHUKLA ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP is set to broaden the ambit of freebies in the national Capital by including male students and senior citizens in the existing free bus ride scheme for women by the AAP led Delhi government ahead of the high-octane Delhi assembly elections. The BJP will release the second part of the 'Sankalp Patra' (manifesto) for the upcoming state assembly polls on Tuesday in the presence of former union minister Anurag Thakur. It is expected the second part will have three to five poll promises including free bus rides to women, male students and senior citizens

and free 'clean drinking' water. There were speculations that the second part of the manifesto will also include 300 free units of electricity for households. However, party sources said that the BJP, which is vying to end its drought of not being in power in the national capital for more than two decades, will wait for the ruling party to first announce its scheme regarding electricity bill and strategies accordingly if they want to increase the units. The AAP led Delhi government currently has a scheme that provides electricity free up to 200 units for households. In a bid to counter the AAP's free bus ride for women, which proved



BJP MP Anurag Thakur with Delhi party President Virendra Sachdeva addresses a press conference, in New Delhi Photo: Ranjan Dimri

to be an impactful scheme in the last assembly elections in Delhi, the BJP is set to extend this ride to senior citizens above the age of 40 and students without any age restriction.

In one of its poll promises, AAP has also announced free bus rides for male school and college students, along with a 50 per cent concession on Metro fares for all students, if his party is voted back to power.

The BJP will also promise 20,000 litres of free 'clean drinking' water. "We are promising clean drinking water unlike the AAP that gives dirty water to the people. Hence, this will be different from AAP's scheme which provides water that is not fit to drink," a party leader said. The BJP has already released the first part of its manifesto on January 17. The party promised a monthly aid of Rs 2,500 to women, and Rs 21,000 to pregnant women in its manifesto for the Delhi assembly elections. It made a total of six poll promises in the first part of the 'Sankalp Patra'. Addressing the media, Thakur had assured the people of Delhi that no existing freebies will be discontinued. After the release of the first part, South Delhi BJP MP and Chairman of the Assembly

Election Manifesto Committee Ramvir Singh Bidhuri said that there is a lot of enthusiasm among the people about the BJP manifesto. He said that only the first part of the manifesto has been released. "The remaining two parts are also being finalized and they will be released soon. The women of Delhi are very happy about the 'Mahila Samridhi Yojana' released in the first part of the BJP's manifesto. BJP workers are taking these announcements to every house. Women are especially thanking Prime Minister Narendra Modi," he said, adding that the women do not believe in the announcement made by AAP. The second part of the manifesto will focus on schemes keeping women and youth in the focus largely.

Temperature expected to rise, IMD issues fog and mist alert

PNS : JAMSHEDPUR

The minimum temperature in Jamshedpur and surrounding regions is expected to rise gradually by 2-4 degrees Celsius from tomorrow, according to a forecast issued by the Ranchi Meteorological Centre of the India Meteorological Department (IMD). The temperature rise is anticipated to bring some relief to the residents after a chilly spell in recent days.

The IMD's Ranchi Meteorological Centre has also issued an alert for fog and mist in the mornings over the next 48 hours, urg-



ing people to take necessary precautions while traveling during the early hours. It is expected that the fog will be dense in some areas, particularly in the districts of Ranchi, Jamshedpur, and other parts of South

Chotanagpur. Meanwhile, the Ranchi Meteorological Centre reported a drop in the minimum temperatures across several places in the state today. Jamshedpur recorded a minimum temperature of 9.5 degrees Celsius, while

Daltonganj recorded a slightly colder 8.5 degrees Celsius. The state capital, Ranchi, recorded a minimum temperature of 10.5 degrees Celsius.

Bokaro Steel City reported a minimum temperature of 8.2 degrees Celsius, while Simdega recorded the state's lowest minimum temperature of 5.1 degrees Celsius. Khunti was not far behind with a minimum temperature of 5.2 degrees Celsius. Other places like Gumla recorded 5.9 degrees Celsius, while Pakur and Garhwa recorded 9.5 degrees Celsius. Jamtara also reported a minimum temperature around 7 degrees Celsius.

The fluctuating temperatures in various districts have added to the cold wave conditions, with residents of several areas experiencing a significant dip in daytime temperatures as well. Meteorologists have advised the public to stay updated with the latest forecasts and take necessary precautions to avoid health risks associated with the cold weather.

As per the IMD's extended forecast, the gradual rise in temperatures from tomorrow is likely to bring some relief, but people should still be prepared for chilly mornings and foggy conditions for the next couple of days.

MAKEOVER OF THE INDIAN SKINCARE INDUSTRY



BY RACHNA TIWARI

The Indian skincare market is witnessing a dramatic shift, driven by a growing consumer consciousness. Fueled by a surge in awareness about natural ingredients and sustainable practices, consumers are increasingly gravitating towards "clean" skincare products. This preference for transparency and ethical sourcing is challenging established players and paving the way for a new wave of innovative startups.

Traditional players, often reliant on heavily marketed brands and aggressive advertising, are struggling to adapt. Consumers are now discerning, seeking products with minimal processing, traceable ingredients, and a commitment to environmental responsibility. This shift in consumer behavior is evident in the growing popularity of Direct-to-Consumer (DTC) Brands.

Startups like Mamaearth, with their focus on toxin-free, natural products for young mothers and families, are gaining traction by building strong online communities and focusing on authentic brand storytelling. This approach allows these brands to create a direct relationship with their consumers, leveraging social media and digital marketing to foster trust and loyalty. DTC brands also enjoy the flexibility to innovate quickly, responding to evolving trends and consumer feedback.

Minimalist Skincare Routines
Consumers are embracing

ing simpler skincare regimens, opting for multi-functional products like serums that combine multiple benefits, reducing their reliance on complex, multi-step routines. This trend reflects a growing understanding of skincare science among consumers, who are now prioritizing quality over quantity. Minimalist skincare not only simplifies routines but also aligns with sustainable consumption practices, as it often involves fewer products and less packaging.

Focus on Sustainability

Brands that prioritize eco-friendly packaging, sustainable sourcing, and ethical production practices are gaining a competitive edge. For instance, brands like Plum Goodness are gaining popularity for their commitment to sustainable packaging and cruelty-free practices. This focus on sustainability resonates particularly well with younger consumers, who are increasingly aware of environmental issues and willing to support brands that align with their values.

The "Clean Skin" Revolution: Challenges and Opportunities

This "clean skin" revolution presents both challenges and opportunities. Established players must adapt by:

Formulating Transparent and Ethical Products

Prioritize natural and organic ingredients, and clearly communicate their sourcing practices. For example, brands like Forest Essentials have successfully leveraged their Ayurvedic heritage and transparent ingredient sourcing to maintain a loyal customer base. Such transparency builds trust and sets brands apart in a competitive market.

Building Direct-to-Consumer Channels

Engage directly with consumers through online platforms and social media. A robust digital presence allows brands to tap into consumer preferences, offer personalized experiences, and gather valuable feedback to refine their offerings. **Embracing Sustainability**
Adopt eco-friendly pack-

aging and practices throughout the supply chain. Sustainability initiatives can include using recyclable materials, reducing plastic waste, and implementing ethical labor practices. These efforts not only attract environmentally conscious consumers but also contribute to long-term brand equity.

The Road Ahead

The Indian skincare market is poised for significant growth, driven by a discerning and demanding consumer base. With projections suggesting a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of over 10% in the next five years, the sector offers immense potential for both legacy brands and new entrants. However, success will depend on the ability to adapt to this new reality, where transparency, sustainability, and consumer-centric innovation are non-negotiable.

Emerging technologies, such as AI-driven personalized skincare recommendations and blockchain for ingredient traceability, could further transform the industry. These advancements can enhance consumer trust and enable brands to offer more tailored solutions. Furthermore, collaboration with dermatologists and skincare experts can add credibility to product claims, addressing the rising demand for scientifically backed formulations.

As the industry evolves, one thing remains clear: the future of skincare in India is not just about beauty; it's about responsibility, authenticity, and a deeper connection with the consumer. Brands that embrace this ethos will not only thrive but also shape the narrative of a more conscious and sustainable skincare industry.

WITH A CAREER SPANNING TEN YEARS, THE WRITER HAS SOLIDIFIED HER EXPERTISE IN HR, ENTREPRENEURSHIP, AND INNOVATION ECOSYSTEM DEVELOPMENT. SHE IS A PRINT AND RAMP MODEL WHO WAS ALSO FEATURED IN VOGUE AND GLADRAGS MAGAZINES.

Senior Journalist Nirmal Maharaj bereaved

PNS : BOKARO

Nirmal Maharaj, a prominent journalist and Bokaro district correspondent for a reputed daily, lost his father, Nivaran Chandra Maharaj (75), on the morning of January 18 at their ancestral home in Kasmar. His demise has left the local community in mourning.

Nivaran Maharaj was known for his dedication to social work. He contributed to the construction of a road from Maharaj Tola to Kasmar Chowk and was actively involved in various public welfare activities.

His last rites were performed on the evening of January 18 at the Khanzho River in Kasmar. Several locals, journalists, and public representatives expressed their condolences to the bereaved family.

Plans for indoor stadiums, multi-sports complexes

PNS : JAMSHEDPUR

The District Sports Management Committee meeting, chaired by Deputy Commissioner Ananya Mittal, was held at the Collectorate office to discuss the development of sports infrastructure and facilities in the district. The meeting was attended by ADM Law and Order Aniket Sachan, District Sports Officer Avinash Tripathi, representatives from sports associations, and other invited members. Key discussions included the opening of new day-boarding training centers, appointment of trainers, and construction of sports facilities such as indoor stadiums and multi-sports stadiums.

Recommendations for athletics training at +2 Vidya Niketan High School, Potka,



football training at Upgraded High School, Ghatshila, Narsingharh +2 High School, Dhalbhumgarh, and State Sponsored +2 High School, Patmda, and archery training at Giri Bharti High School, Haldipokhar, Potka, were reviewed. The District Magistrate directed the Sports Officer to collaborate with sports associations and identify locations for additional day-boarding centers

sports stadium in Chakulia, requiring eight acres. Proposals for sub-divisional level indoor stadiums were reviewed, with directions to submit site identification details. To address the increasing number of trainees in day-boarding centers, the District Magistrate proposed seeking departmental approval for appointing additional trainers.

The District Magistrate underlined the administration's commitment to fostering a strong sports culture by enhancing existing facilities and introducing new infrastructure. The meeting concluded with directives to ensure timely follow-ups and collaboration among stakeholders to achieve the district's sports development goals.

Jamshedpur's Prabhjot excels in the FMGE Exam

PNS : JAMSHEDPUR

Prabhjot Kaur Saini, a resident of Manifit, has successfully passed the Foreign Medical Graduate Examination (FMGE) on her first attempt. In the results announced late last night, she scored 214 out of 300, bringing immense joy to her family. Her father, Sardar Amarjeet Singh, and her mother,



Gurjeet Kaur, celebrated the achievement by cutting a cake and distributing sweets to their neighbors in joy.

Prabhjot Kaur completed her MBBS in Ukraine, Europe, where she spent six years pursuing her medical education. She appeared for the FMGE exam in Kolkata on January 12, and the results were announced today. The outcome has

brought her great happiness, and she credited her success to the support of her parents.

Her father, Amarjeet Singh, had also recently won the Tinsplate Union election, further adding to the family's celebrations. Prabhjot Kaur expressed her desire to serve patients in her home country, stating that she intends to practice medicine within India.

Rupesh Katariya wins Tata Steel City Golf Tournament

PNS : JAMSHEDPUR

Rupesh Katariya emerged victorious in the Tata Steel City Golf Tournament, showcasing his skills with an impressive 2-undercard. The event also marked the crowning of Vinod Mudili as the Golfer of the Year, thanks to his stellar performance throughout the season. Mudili clinched two tournament titles and finished as a runner-up in one, securing his spot as the best male golfer of the year.

In the women's category, Poonam Doshi claimed the Winner and Best Gross awards for her exceptional play. Hetal Adesara was honored with the Golfer of the Year title in the women's division, acknowledging her consistent excellence.

The tournament, held in a stroke-play format, concluded on a high note with DB Sundrara Ramam, Vice President (Raw Materials) of Tata Steel, gracing the event as the chief guest and presenting the awards.



Commissioner reviews DMFT work, inspects judicial records

PNS : BOKARO



Divisional Commissioner of North Chotanagpur Division, Hazaribagh, Pawan Kumar, conducted a review meeting on the progress of the District Mineral Foundation Trust (DMFT) at the office of the Deputy Commissioner in Bokaro. During the meeting, he assessed the status of various schemes implemented under DMFT and inquired about the number of meetings held by the DMFT Management Committee and Governing Body. The commissioner reviewed the

approved projects under various sectors for the financial year 2024-25 and expressed satisfaction with the coaching facilities established for underprivileged students preparing for competitive examinations. He also recommended implementing similar initiatives in other districts. In addition, the Commissioner inspected the judicial records of the Deputy Commissioner's Revenue Court, Additional Deputy Commissioner's Revenue Court, and DCLR courts in Chas and Bermo. He reviewed the records of

orders passed and obtained necessary information.

Key officials present during the meeting included Deputy Commissioner Vijaya Jadhav, Additional Commissioner Mohammad Mumtaz Ansari, DCLR Chas Prabhsh Dutta, DCLR Bermo Mukesh Machhua, and Assistant Public Relations Officer Avinash Kumar Singh.

The visit highlighted the commitment to ensuring the effective implementation of DMFT projects and maintaining transparency in revenue court proceedings.

Vedanta ESL hosts Mega Health Checkup Camp for rural communities

PNS : BOKARO

Vedanta ESL, in collaboration with MJM Hospital and the Citizen Foundation, organized a Mega Health Checkup Camp at Chandaha Bargad Tola under its healthcare initiative, Project Aarogya. The camp aimed to provide free quality healthcare services to underserved communities near the ESL plant.

With over 250 attendees, the camp featured five service desks for smooth operations: Registration, Lab Tests, Medicine, Help Desk, and Check-up Desk. Free consultations were offered in specialties like Orthopaedics, General Medicine, Paediatrics, and Dermatology. Diagnostic services included blood pressure checks, glucose tests, and weight monitoring.

Kunal Daripa, Head CSR at Vedanta ESL, stated, "This initiative addresses health and wellness challenges in the community by providing free healthcare services and spreading awareness about diseases and treatments."

The camp was supported by a team of experienced doctors, including Dr. M G Rasul (consultant for chronic diseases), Dr. Anand Kumar Manjhi (pediatrics), and Dr. Rahul Sinha (orthopedics). Distinguished guests, including Shyamlee Minz (CHRO, ESL Steel Limited) and community leaders, were present to oversee the initiative.

This effort highlights Vedanta ESL's commitment to social welfare, focusing on improving health access and well-being in rural areas.

Retired teacher Dilip Acharya passes away

PNS : JAMSHEDPUR

Retired teacher of Loyola School Dilip Acharya passed away on Sunday at his residence at Sakchi Seagull Apartment Reliance Fresh. The news of his demise has left the community in mourning. Acharya, a respected educator, was known for his long and dedicated service to Loyola School.

His elder son, Gregory Acharya, who recently suffered a leg injury in an accident, is unable to walk, and his wife is in a state of shock. Meanwhile, the family is awaiting the return of Acharya's younger son, who resides in London, to perform the last rites.

Loyola School Principal, Father Vinod Fernandes, along with Rajiv Talwar of the Loyola Alumni Association, Ronald D'Costa, and Professor Raymond D'Souza, Secretary of the Beldih Cemetery Committee, are in constant touch with the bereaved family to provide all possible support during this difficult time.



Legal awareness cum Career Counseling program at Law College

AVINASH ANJAN: HAZARIBAG

A legal awareness program was held under the 90-day legal awareness campaign organized by the Hazaribagh District Legal Services Authority and Jharkhand Legal Services Authority. The chief guest, while addressing the students, emphasized the importance of enhancing knowledge and skills to effectively contribute to society. He highlighted the role of legal awareness in empowering individuals to understand and exercise their rights and

stressed the responsibility of law students and young professionals in bridging the gap between the judiciary and the public.

The program included interactive sessions on fundamental rights, access to free legal aid, and the role of legal services authorities in ensuring justice for marginalized communities. The event concluded with a vote of thanks by Dr. Rashmi Pradhan, Principal In-Charge, who reaffirmed the institution's dedication to promoting legal education and awareness among students and the com-

munity. The career counseling program featured addresses by Vijay Kumar Singh, Vice President of the Hazaribagh District Bar Association, and senior advocate Samrendra Vikram.

Vijay Kumar Singh spoke about the vast opportunities in the legal profession, encouraging students to explore fields such as litigation, judiciary, corporate law, and legal research. He emphasized the importance of hard work and ethics as the foundation of a successful legal career. Samrendra Vikram high-



lighted the significance of developing advocacy skills and staying updated with legal developments, inspiring students to pursue their careers with purpose and dedication. The event began with a welcome address by Principal In-Charge Dr. Rashmi Pradhan, who stressed the value of such programs in shaping students' professional paths.

Orientation and Training program organized by NBJK

PNS : HAZARIBAG

A one-day orientation and training program was organized for the teachers of remedial coaching centers run under the Girls' Education Project operated by Nav Bharat Jagriti Kendra (NBJK) with the support of Action Village India. This event was held at NBJK Coordination Office, Amrit Nagar. These coaching centers provide tuition in relatively challenging subjects like Mathematics, Science, and English to schoolgirls in classes 8, 9, and 10. The teachers of these centers are quite experienced, and during this orientation-cum-



training program, they had a detailed discussion on teaching methodologies for the upcoming board examinations. The teachers formulated strategies to address complex and tricky questions in their respective subjects, aiming to ensure even academically weaker students benefit and improve.

During the session, Rajeev Singh, Senior Program Manager of NBJK, emphasized that with limited time left for the Class 10 board exams, the teachers at these remedial coaching centers need to put in extra effort to ensure the girls achieve good results. Out of the 13 teachers teaching in the coaching centers operating across 13 villages in Sadar, Katkamsandi, and Katkamdag blocks, 11 participated in the program. Abhay Kumar, the Regional Supervisor coordinating the event, shared that teacher-parent meetings were recently conducted at these remedial coaching centers.

CM holds high-level review meeting of different departments

Asks officials to accelerate development projects

PNS : RANCHI

Chief Minister Hemant Soren today held a high-level meeting with the officials of Health, Medical Education and Family Welfare Department, Scheduled Caste and Backward Class Welfare Department and Forest, Environment and Climate Change Department in the Jharkhand Ministry.

During this, the CM took detailed information from the officials about the proposed action plan related to the redevelopment and expansion of Rajendra Institute of Medical Sciences, (RIMS) Ranchi. He directed the officials to prepare a better master redevelopment plan for RIMS soon. In the new redevelopment master plan of RIMS, make an action

plan to arrange all things in a well-equipped manner keeping the future in mind.

The CM said that RIMS should have a distinct identity in the country. Modernization of health systems is the priority of our government. He said that in the redevelopment master plan of RIMS, a plan should be made to shift all the hostels to one place, all the residential complexes to North Block. He directed the officials to renovate the indoor area of the RIMS campus currently having 1600 beds and seal the basement area so that frequent water logging can be stopped. RIMS Director Dr. Rajkumar and Medical Superintendent Dr. Harendra Birua were also present in the meeting.

The CM took information about the tender process of

the proposed tribal welfare hostels from the officials of the Scheduled Tribe, Scheduled Caste and Backward Class Welfare Department. The officials informed the CM that it is proposed to construct two tribal welfare hostels in Ranchi and two tribal welfare hostels in Daltonganj. The tender process for these four hostels has been completed. It is proposed to construct a hostel for 525 scheduled tribe girl students in the Women's College (Science Block) campus in Ranchi and a hostel for 525 students in the tribal hostel campus. Two hostels for 525-525 students for the ST category are to be constructed at Redma, Bypass Road, Daltonganj, Palamu district. The construction work of all the above hostels will be started



Chief Minister Hemant Soren holds a meeting with officials of Health, Medical Education and Family Welfare Department, Scheduled Tribe, Scheduled Caste and Backward class Welfare Department and Forest, Environment and Climate Change Department at the Jharkhand Ministry, in Ranchi on Monday.

within the next one month.

The CM directed the officials to ensure that all the newly constructed hostels

have proper arrangements for all facilities like boundary wall, security guards, cleaning staff, cooks, necessary

furniture etc. He directed the officials that all the proposed hostels should be completed within the stipulated time limit. Take full care of quality in the construction work. Any kind of negligence in time limit and quality will not be acceptable, along with this the Chief Minister also gave many important instructions to the officials related to the construction of the hostel.

The CM directed the officials of the Forest Environment and Climate Change Department to remove the obstacles in the development work of rural area falling under Wildlife Sanctuary within the state. He told the officials that the development work of basic facilities like electricity, water, road in the villages situated in the forest area is not

being done as per expectations. The Chief Minister directed the officials of the Forest, Environment and Climate Change Department to remove the obstacles in the reconstruction work of the road connecting Madhuban to Parasnath (Sikar) Hilltop soon.

The CM said that this is an important road route and due to its dilapidated condition, people are facing a lot of problems. He told the officials that due to the complex rules of the Forest and Environment Department, many important development works of the villages falling under the forest area are being hampered, it is the priority of the state government to provide all the necessary facilities in the rural areas as well.

Additional Chief Secretary

to the CM, Avinash Kumar, Principal Secretary of Health, Medical Education and Family Welfare Department Ajay Kumar Singh, Principal Chief Conservator of Forests Satyajit Singh, Scheduled Tribes, Scheduled Castes and Backward Classes were present in the meeting.

Secretary of OBC Welfare Department Kripananda Jha, Secretary of Building Construction Department Arava Rajkamal, Secretary of Rural Development Department K. Srinivasan, Secretary of Forest, Environment and Climate Change Department Abu Bakar Siddiqui, Principal Chief Conservator of Forests Shashikar Samanta, Chief Conservator of Forests S.R. Natesh and other senior officials were present.

Inter-zonal chess tournament concluded at RRD

The inter-zonal chess tournament organized at the Railway Officers Club in Hatia concluded today in the presence of DRM cum Chairman SERSA Ranchi Jasmeet Singh Bindra. A total of 28 players from the teams of SER Headquarters and Ranchi, Chakradharpur, Adra and Kharagpur divisions participated in this tournament. All the matches of the tournament were played in six rounds and at the end of the tournament, the team of Chakradharpur Division was the runner-up. In the closing ceremony, the DRM honoured the winning team with a trophy and their players with medals and wished all the participants for the future competitions and praised the Divisional Sports Officer and all the members of Sersa, Ranchi for the successful organization of the tournament.



JMM begins membership drive, aims to enrol 50 lakh members

PNS : RANCHI

The ruling JMM today launched its membership drive with a target to enrol 50 lakh members in next 45 days. The membership drive which was launched today will run till February 28. The JMM membership drive is different from opposition BJP as regional party membership drive would not be held through 'missed call'.

"Our members will make door-to-door visits in villages, panchayats, blocks and districts and include members in the party through individual contact," Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) general secretary and spokesperson Supriyo Bhattacharya said.

"We have started our membership drive in Ranchi from Albert Ekka Chowk today. The drive will continue till February 28. Our target is to make at least 50 lakh new members," Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) general secretary and spokesperson Supriyo Bhattacharya told reporters.

He claimed that the JMM



found huge enthusiasm among people to join the party.

"I hope we will be able to make five lakh members only in Ranchi," he said.

In an apparent attack on the BJP, Bhattacharya said their membership drive would not be held through 'missed call'.

He said that party workers are committed to taking the ideas of JMM supremo Shibu Soren and the work of Chief Minister Hemant Soren to every village and 'tola' (locality) of the state.

"The party's target is to fulfil the aspirations of people in the state," Bhattacharya added. Earlier, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) launched

its mega membership drive in Jharkhand on December 22 last year.

The BJP has decided to make around 60 lakh members during the drive, which will continue till January 31, as the party had received over 59 lakh votes in the recently concluded assembly elections, a party official said.

Meanwhile, sources said that Jharkhand Chief Minister (CM) Hemant Soren's wife Kalpana Soren is expected to be named as the vice president of the ruling party Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) in the upcoming convention scheduled for April. The member of the legislative assembly (MLA) from Gandey, Kalpana may be

entrusted with the duty of fortifying the organisation after the party won 34 seats in the assembly elections held last year.

The gathering will celebrate the significant triumph of JMM. The decision is still pending on whether the convention will be held in Ranchi or Dumka. A party functionary confirmed that representatives from Bihar, Assam, Odisha, Bengal, Chhattisgarh, and Tamil Nadu will be in attendance at the convention this time.

"JMM's last convention in 2021 was held in a simple manner due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, this year, it will be held on a large scale to increase the party's influence in other states as well," the party functionary said.

Kalpana Soren, a prominent campaigner, spoke at over 100 rallies during the Jharkhand Assembly elections, contributing significantly to the victory of the INDI Alliance, a coalition of JMM and Congress in the state.

Govt to promote bamboo products in the State: Tirkey

Minister holds marathon meeting with officials of cooperative department

PNS : RANCHI

Days of people associated with bamboo products in Jharkhand will brighten up. The cooperative department of the state will assess the demand for bamboo products in the market and promote it. Agriculture, Animal Husbandry and Cooperative Minister Shilpi Neha Tirkey gave guidelines to the officials in a marathon meeting with the cooperative department at Pashupalan Bhawan in Hesar here on Monday.

During the review meeting of the cooperative department, there was a long discussion on Apex Society. Tirkey asked the officials to work in action mode till March in the first phase, while she instructed to prepare a plan to execute the work in mission mode from April. She said that retail outlets are necessary for green vegetables. Such outlets are necessary for the consumption and fair price of the veg-



etables of the farmers.

During the meeting, the officials informed that the tender process is going on for 10 outlets in the State. Similarly, they have been asked to focus on better prices and market of forest produce. The minister instructed to make a better plan for the purchase and sale of lac. She said that one district one program should be selected and promoted. For this, the officials should conduct a survey in the district and select it.

The Minister said that

there is a plan to build rice mills in Giridih and Simdega for paddy procurement. The process has been expedited in Giridih. The capacity of the rice mill will be 4 tonnes per hour. She gave the target of computerization of the Lamps Pacts of the state. For this, 3 to 4 Lamps and Pacts have been asked to be developed together as nodal. So that Lamps and Pacts can also be updated according to time. Tirkey instructed to speed up the process for filling the vacant posts so that the work is not affected.

All India Kavi Sammelan organised in City

PNS : RANCHI

An All India Kavi Sammelan was organised by Samridhdh Jharkhand and SET Foundation at Audrey House in Ranchi on Sunday. The Kavi Sammelan cum felicitation ceremony was inaugurated by chief guest Rajya Sabha MP Dr. Mahua Maji, real estate promoter Om Prakash Preet, Adani Power official Sanjeev Kumar, Eastern State Construction and Developers Private Limited official Rajendra Sinha, Introlink Interior Company CMD Tanmay Shah, literary worker and social worker Rita Dey by jointly lighting the lamp.

During the welcome speech, Om Prakash Preet expressed admiration for Jharkhand's rich culture and literature, emphasising the importance of literature and art in the State's identity. He also praised the sponsors and their vital role in supporting literary activities. The main sponsors of the event, including Adani Power and Eastern State Construction, were acknowledged for their contributions.

After the welcome speech, the chief guest Dr. Mahua Maji said that the land of Birsa Munda is very rich in terms of literature and culture. "In such a situation, the

State has once again become vibrant with such literary activities. From time to time, such events give strength to the literary world. Samridhdh Jharkhand and SET Foundation are playing an important role by working in the literary field." Manjhi also won the hearts of the people with one of her poems where she tried to explain why she is unable to write poetry and also expressed her feelings through poetry.

The felicitation ceremony honored individuals excelling in various fields such as education, health, business, and social work. Among the honorees were Ashutosh Kumar (Cyber Security), Dr. Sukhmani, Dr. Suraj Prasad, and Aanchal Jain (Phonics Trainer), along with several others from various sectors.

The Kavi Sammelan began with poets from different states presenting their works. Notable poets included Niloptal Mrinal, Vibha Singh, Nagendra Kesari, and Dhananjay Jaipuri. The audience was captivated by their performances, which filled the venue with cheers. Dhananjay Jaipuri was proposed for the post of the president of the entire program while Aftab Rana - a senior theatre artist and film director was selected as the announcer.



A delegation of Abua Santhal Samaj Bharat Dishom Central Committee meets Chief Minister Hemant Soren at the Jharkhand Secretariat in Ranchi on Monday. PNS

Track Cycling Competition concludes at National School Games

Rajasthan becomes overall champion, Maharashtra runner-up

PNS : RANCHI

In the Under-14, Under-17 and Under-19 track cycling competition which concluded on Monday at the 68th National School Games, the state of Rajasthan won the title of overall champion.

Rajasthan got a total of 81 points followed by Maharashtra which was declared as the runner up with 40 points. In Under-14 and Under-17 cycling competition, Manipur became the winner and Rajasthan the runner-up while in the Under 19 category, Maharashtra was declared as the winner and Rajasthan the runner up.

In Under-19, Akanksha from Maharashtra and

Shivratan from Rajasthan got the Best Rider award in girls and boys categories respectively. In the Under-17 boys solo cycling competition, Pawan Oraon of Jharkhand got the bronze medal. In this competition, Mahadev Saran and Sunil Saran both from Rajasthan bagged the gold medal and silver medal respectively.

In the Under-14 girls cycling competition, Dimple and Diksha both from Rajasthan got the gold and silver medal while Palakpreet Kaur from Punjab got the bronze medal. In the Under-14 boys cycling competition, Dharmaram Saran from Rajasthan got gold medal, Rudranil Patil from Maharashtra got the silver

medal and Gagandeep Singh from Punjab got the bronze medal.

In the Under-17 girls category, Rukmani from Rajasthan bagged the gold medal followed by Prajakta from Maharashtra and Usham Sandhya from Manipur who got the silver and bronze medals respectively. In the Under-19 girls cycling competition, Devi Chabukdhara from Assam clinched the gold, Laxmi Bishnoi from Rajasthan the silver and Tinkle Gogoi from Assam the bronze medal.

In the Under-19 boys cycling competition, Shivratan of Rajasthan bagged the gold medal, Rupjyoti from Assam the silver medal and Dinesh from

Rajasthan the bronze medal.

In the Under-19 girls group cycling competition, J Niramathi, S Sadhana Shri, S Sobrainka RT Karthiyayani from Tamil Nadu clinched the gold medal. Ashawari, Akanksha, Prerna and Rithika from Maharashtra got the silver medal and Nancy Oraon, Sanju Kumari, Shweta Kumari and Tara Minj from the host state of Jharkhand got the bronze medal.

In the Under-19 boys group cycling competition, Dinesh, Hari Prakash, Sachin and Shivratan from Rajasthan got the gold medal while Amit Singh, Gurasis Singh, Prashant Singh and Yuvraj Singh from Punjab got the silver medal and Aryan



Tejas, Deepak Kumar, Vikas Kumar and Vikas Yadav from Bihar got the bronze medal.

Senior Advocate of Jharkhand High Court, Pooja Jha, awarded medals to the winners of the cycling track competition. Those who awarded the medals included

Joint Director of Jharkhand Sports Authority Raj Kishor Khakha, General Secretary of Jharkhand Olympic Association Madhukant Pathak and General Secretary of Jharkhand Cycling Association Shailendra Kumar Pathak.

Rahul writes to Nadda, Atishi on plight of AIIMS patients

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi has written to Union Health Minister J P Nadda and Delhi Chief Minister Atishi, flagging the plight of hundreds of patients and their family members huddled on the footpath and subway outside AIIMS here and sought concrete steps to resolve this "humanitarian crisis".

The Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha also urged the central government to take concrete steps to strengthen the public healthcare system in the upcoming budget and increase the necessary resources for it.

In a post in Hindi on X, Rahul said, "I have written letters to the Chief Minister of Delhi and the Union Health Minister to provide better facilities to the patients and their families coming to Delhi AIIMS from all over the country."

"Recently I saw that in freezing cold these people are forced to sleep in the subway under the metro station, where there is no provision of drinking water or a toilet. There are heaps of garbage lying around. The arrival of such a large number of patients to Delhi AIIMS also shows that people are not getting affordable and good quality health facilities where they live," Rahul said.

"I hope that taking cognizance of my letter, the Chief Minister of Delhi and the Union Health Minister will take immediate steps to resolve this humanitarian crisis," he said.

In his letter to Nadda, Gandhi said he wants to bring to his attention "the distressing situation" outside AIIMS, Delhi and went on to add that during his recent visit to the area he was saddened to see hundreds of patients and their family members huddled on the footpath and in the subway in the bitter winter cold, with



only thin blankets to protect them without drinking water or sanitation facilities.

"Many of these patients travel from across the country, spend their life savings, and wait for months on end for medical care at India's premier medical institution. I am sure you will agree that no one should face such hardship, especially while already battling serious medical conditions," he said.

While AIIMS Delhi delivers excellent and affordable care, the condition of patients and their families shows that health-care is still out of reach for crores of Indians, he said in his letter dated January 18.

"As public representatives, we must all work together to address these issues. I urge you to take immediate and timely steps to address the situation at AIIMS Delhi. The government of India should work with the AIIMS leadership, the Government of Delhi and

charitable organizations to provide heating, bedding, water, and shelter to patients and expand permanent facilities for accommodation," Gandhi said in his letter to Nadda.

In addition, reducing the long wait times would help reduce patients' uncertainty, he said. "Crucially, the larger systemic issue is that AIIMS Delhi is overburdened because crores of people do not have access to affordable and high-quality healthcare where they live. I urge you, as Health Minister, to recognise and address this systemic issue," Rahul said.

As a first step, the new AIIMS facilities across the country should be operationalised at the earliest, he said.

"I hope the Government will use the upcoming Budget to review its overall approach, and substantially increase its investment in public healthcare. I request your prompt

intervention on this pressing humanitarian issue. You have my full support in any endeavour to reduce the suffering of countless patients and their families," the Congress leader said.

In his letter to Atishi, Rahul urged the Delhi government to take immediate and timely steps this winter. "More permanent solutions to accommodate patients by building and expanding permanent facilities should also be explored, in partnership with AIIMS and the Government of India, as well as charitable organisations," he said.

The Congress leader on Thursday had met several patients and their families camping on the roads, footpaths and subways around the AIIMS and enquired about their problems and grievances. He had accused the Centre and the Delhi government of showing "insensitivity" towards them.

NCC cadets should contribute to PM's Viksit Bharat dream: Rajnath

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Noting that Prime Minister Narendra Modi is an ex-cadet of the National Cadet Corps (NCC), Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Monday exhorted cadets to contribute to the Prime Minister's dream of making India a 'Viksit Bharat' by 2047.

Addressing a gathering of cadets and officers during his visit to the ongoing Republic Day NCC camp at Delhi cantonment, he also said he sees an image of India in NCC cadets.

A total of 2,361 NCC cadets from across the country are taking part in the month-long camp, which began on December 30, and will culminate with the Prime Minister's rally on January 27. The annual event is also witnessing the participation of 917 girl cadets, the largest contingent so far.

Appreciating the unity and discipline shown by cadets at the NCC camp, the defence minister said, "India has many bodies but one soul, many branches but one root, many rays but one light".

In his address, Rajnath Singh also recalled that before foraging into politics, he himself was "a student, a cadet of NCC, and



Ranjana Dimri

a physics teacher".

The energy and enthusiasm of the cadets reflect that India has and will have a bright future. NCC ingrains in youth leadership quality and discipline, he added.

The defence minister also spoke of the 'Viksit Bharat' vision of the government and the role the cadets can play in realising the ambitious vision that seeks to make India a developed nation by the time it completes 100 years since its Independence in 1947.

"Our Prime Minister Narendra Modi, himself an ex-cadet of the NCC, has given the vision

of 'Viksit Bharat' by 2047. So, its current cadets have a responsibility to contribute to his 'Viksit Bharat' dream," he said.

However, Rajnath Singh emphasised that 'Viksit Bharat' does not mean merely physical development on land, but a holistic growth of entire society.

Praising the NCC's role in inculcating discipline and leadership qualities among cadets when they are young, the defence minister said there is a "spark within" the cadets that forges a way of life for them in such a way that irrespective of

the profession they will choose later, they will all contribute to nation-building.

Rajnath Singh also recalled his visit to Taj Mahal Palace Hotel in Mumbai, a place, he said, also reminds one of the deadly 26/11 terror attacks in that city in 2008.

He also mentioned the last words spoken by Major Sandeep Unnikrishnan before he laid down his life while battling the terrorists in the attack. "That was his (Maj Unnikrishnan's) leadership quality (shown during the combat)," the defence minister told the cadets, exhorting them

to become leaders in life.

Rajnath Singh also exhorted them to "think big" and never get disheartened in life, nor have a narrow-minded thinking. "A person becomes significant in life not by virtue of the big posts one holds, but by the human qualities they have," he said.

"There is a need to move forward by breaking free from shackles of thoughts," he said, and urged people to never harbour conceit.

Earlier, he was accorded a welcome by a group of cadets drawn from all three wings of the NCC and later also reviewed a guard of honour given by them at the venue.

The defence minister also handed Raksha Mantri Padak and Commendation Cards to several NCC cadets, chosen for their exemplary performance and devotion to duty, at an investiture ceremony held during his visit. Rajnath Singh also visited the 'Flag Area' and interacted with a few cadets.

On Saturday, Minister of State for Defence Sanjay Seth visited the NCC camp and lauded cadets as "ambassadors" of 'Viksit Bharat' while urging them to continue working tirelessly towards the vision of making India a developed country by 2047.

SC stays proceedings in defamation case against Rahul

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday stayed trial court proceedings against Congress leader Rahul Gandhi in a criminal defamation case filed against him for alleged defamatory remarks against Union Home Minister Amit Shah.

Naveen Jha, a BJP worker, had filed the case against Gandhi in 2019 for his alleged remarks against Shah.

During one of his public speeches in Chaibasa before the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, Gandhi had allegedly referred to Shah as a "murderer".

A bench of Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta issued notice to the Jharkhand government and the BJP leader while seeking their response on Gandhi's appeal.

"Issue notice. Till further orders, further proceedings in the trial shall remain stayed," the bench said.

Senior advocate Abhishek Singhvi, appearing for Gandhi, said there are several judgments which say that only the aggrieved person



can file a criminal defamation complaint.

He submitted that the defamation complaint cannot be filed by a proxy third party.

Senior advocate Mahesh Jethmalani appeared for Jha. Gandhi has challenged the Jharkhand High Court order, which rejected his petition to quash proceedings against him in a trial court in connection with the complaint.

The Congress leader had contested the decision of a magisterial court in Ranchi, which instructed him to personally appear before the court to undergo trial. Later, Gandhi moved the high court, which issued a stay order on any further actions in the lower court against him.

After recording the statements of the complainant and witnesses, the magistrate had found merit in the case against Gandhi and directed him to appear before the trial court on February 4, 2023.

Later, the HC, while issuing a stay on the notice issued by the magistrate, ordered that "no coercive steps" be taken against Gandhi.

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Later, the HC, while issuing a stay on the notice issued by the magistrate, ordered that "no coercive steps" be taken against Gandhi.

Lakhimpur Kheri case: SC seeks report from UP police on Ashish Mishra 'influencing' witnesses

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday sought a report from UP Police after allegations, accusing Ashish Mishra of influencing witnesses in the Lakhimpur Kheri violence case, surfaced. A bench of Justices Surya Kant and N Kotiswar Singh directed the Lakhimpur Kheri superintendent of police (SP) to file the report in the court.

"In our considered view the veracity, genuineness and reliability of such material can only be gone into by the police administration. The police administration may submit a report in support or against the allegation made in the application seeking cancellation of bail," the bench said.

Mishra, son of former Union Minister Ajay Mishra, denied the allegations in his affidavit, and said every time the matter was listed, such averments were made for the cancellation



of his bail granted by the top court.

Advocate Prashant Bhushan, appearing for complainants, claimed he had an audio recording of an attempt made to influence crucial witnesses in the case. He also alleged Mishra attended a public meeting in violation of bail conditions. Seeking the cancellation of Mishra's bail, Bhushan said the court may ascertain the authenticity of the material brought before it.

Senior advocate Siddharth Dave, appearing for Mishra, opposed Bhushan's submission, saying his client was being targeted unnecessarily. He said his client was in Lok Sabha secretariat in Delhi on the day of the alleged public meeting. The bench asked Bhushan and Dave to submit their material to Ruchira Goel, UP Government's Standing Counsel, for handing it over to the Lakhimpur Kheri SP. Bhushan said the inquiry

should be carried out by some senior officers and not the SP as he may come under the influence. The bench said the SP was fairly a senior IPS officer and the court should trust the officers.

The hearing was posted after four weeks. On November 27, last year, the top court directed Mishra to respond to the allegations that witnesses of the case were being threatened. The apex court granted bail to Mishra on July 22 last year and restricted his movement to Delhi or Lucknow.

On October 3, 2021, eight people, including four farmers, were killed in Tikunia in Lakhimpur Kheri district during a protest by farmers against Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya's visit to the area. Four farmers were mowed down by a sports utility vehicle. A driver and two BJP workers were then allegedly lynched by angry farmers. A journalist also died in the violence.

Road safety: SC asks States, UTs to file report on compliance of Motor Vehicle Act

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

In a significant order, the Supreme Court on Monday directed 23 states and seven union territories to file compliance reports indicating implementation of the Motor Vehicle law's recent provisions besides rules on electronic monitoring and road safety measures. A bench comprising Justices Abhay S Oka and Ujjal Bhuyan noted five states and a UT, namely, West Bengal, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Kerala and Delhi, had filed their compliance reports.

The top court on September 2, 2024 passed directions on the implementation of Section 136A of the Motor Vehicles Act read with Rule 167A of the Motor Vehicles Rules which allow authorities to electronically monitor speeding vehicles.

The bench has now asked the remaining 23 states and seven UTs to file their compliance reports which will be shared with



the Supreme Court committee on road safety.

The apex court panel, in turn, would look into all aspects and provide its inputs which could be considered by the Centre in framing the standard operating procedure on electronic monitoring and enforcement of road safety measures, the bench said.

Senior advocate Gaurav Agrawal, assisting the bench as an amicus curiae, informed the bench that six states had filed their reports and the necessary directions may be passed with

regard to them.

The bench said it would consider the aspect on March 25 and its panel on road safety, in the meantime, could seek assistance of the six states while deliberating upon the reports.

Section 136A, introduced in 2021 in the Motor Vehicles Act, 1988, aims to deploy advanced technologies such as speed cameras, closed-circuit television (CCTV) cameras, speed guns, body-worn cameras, and automatic number plate recognition systems to ensure better traffic

management and enforcement of traffic laws.

It also emphasises electronic monitoring on national highways, state highways, and urban roads in cities with a population exceeding one million.

Rule 167A of the Motor Vehicles Rules deal with the implementation and other regulatory aspects of road safety measures.

Under the rule, the state governments have to ensure installation of electronic enforcement devices at high-risk and high-density corridors on national and state highways, and at critical junctions at least in major cities with more than a million population and also including 132 cities as specified in the rules.

"Section 136A of the Motor Vehicles Act is an innovative provision with the potential to transform road safety enforcement by leveraging technology. Proper implementation will ensure road discipline and allow for the efficient prosecution of violators," the bench had observed.

Yasin Malik trial: SC asks J and K HC to ensure proper VC facilities in Jammu court

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday directed the registrar general of the Jammu and Kashmir High Court to ensure proper video-conferencing facilities at a Jammu special court hearing two cases against jailed JKLF chief Yasin Malik and others. A bench comprising Justices Abhay S Oka and Ujjal Bhuyan further directed the Delhi High Court registrar general to ensure proper video-conferencing facilities in Tihar jail where Malik is lodged in a separate terror financing case.

Both High Court registrars were directed to file the status reports on February 18 by the

bench, which posted the hearing on the CBI plea on February 21. "We have perused the observations made by the (special) judge (of the Jammu court). At two places, he has recorded that the video-conference system in his court was not functioning properly," the court said.

The bench therefore directed the registrar general of Jammu and Kashmir High Court to look into what was "stated by the learned judge" and "take immediate steps for installing a proper system" to conduct the hearing through video-conferencing.

"The system should be such that there can be effective cross examination by using the system," it added.

The top court asked the registrar general to "do the needful" and submit a report by February 18 before it after deputing an expert to examine the newly-installed VC system in Jammu court.

"We also direct the registrar in-charge of IT (information technology) of the Delhi High Court to visit the jail at Tihar to see whether (VC) facilities are good enough to enable the first respondent (Yasin Malik) to cross examine witnesses in the trial," it said.

The bench was hearing a plea of the CBI seeking the transfer of the cases' trials in the 1989 kidnapping of Rubaiya Sayeed, daughter of former union minister Mufti Mohammed Sayeed, and the



1990 Srinagar shootout from Jammu to New Delhi.

At the outset, the bench was informed except Malik, all other accused were out on bail in the two cases.

The bench suggested it may transfer the trials to Tihar Jail by setting up a special court and other accused may appear through the VC facilities. The suggestion was opposed

by the counsel of the other accused.

Solicitor general Tushar Mehta, appearing for the CBI, said it appeared all the accused were working in tandem to delay the trial.

An accused's counsel, however, said, "What is the harm in having the trial there at Jammu court and have Yasin Malik appear through the VC? It will be difficult travelling all the way to Delhi."

He said the offences alleged were old and the accused, who were in their 60s and 70s suffered from age-related ailments.

Mehta said while Malik refused to engage a lawyer, others opposed the transfer of trial.

The accused said they were old, but they should have been careful enough in younger days while committing the offences, he said.

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

The plea is over the two cases -- killing of four Indian Air Force personnel on January 25, 1990 in Srinagar and Rubaiya's abduction on December 8, 1989.

Malik, chief of the banned organisation JKLF, is facing trial in both cases.

The top court was hearing a CBI plea against the September 20, 2022 order of a Jammu trial court directing

Malik, serving a life term in Tihar jail, to be produced before it physically to cross-examine prosecution witnesses in the abduction case.

The CBI said Malik was a threat to national security and couldn't be allowed to be taken outside the Tihar jail premises. Rubaiya, who was freed five days after her abduction when the then BJP-backed V P Singh government at the Centre released five terrorists in exchange, now lives in Tamil Nadu. She is a prosecution witness for the CBI, which took over the case in early 1990s.

Malik has been lodged in Tihar jail after he was sentenced by a special NIA court in May 2023 in a terror-funding case.

The unique discipline of Akharas at Maha Kumbh

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ MAHAKUMBH NAGAR

The Maha Kumbh in Prayagraj is not just a confluence of spiritual energy but also a showcase of unique traditions upheld by various Akharas. Each Shaivite Dashanami Akhara has its own internal governance, complete with dedicated "Kotwalis" (police stations) and "Kotwals" (chiefs) responsible for maintaining order within their camps. "The Kotwals are always Naga ascetics," explains Mahant Mahendranand of the Niranjani Akhara. "Their primary duty is to ensure discipline among the Nagas and other sadhus. They are empowered to impose penalties, both minor and severe, depending on the transgression."

Punishments and Internal Laws
Akharas have their own sets of rules and unique methods of delivering justice. Minor offenses may result in unusual punishments, such as distributing datun

(chewing sticks) to all members or performing camp cleaning duties for a week. However, serious crimes like marriage, rape, or financial misconduct often lead to expulsion from the Akhara. Digambar Ganesh Puri, Kotwal of the Mahanirvani Akhara, shares, "the purpose of these punishments is not merely punitive but corrective. They aim to make the offender realize their mistakes. Most penalties are religious rather than financial." In the case of severe accusations, the individual must present their defense before a council under the "Dharmadhwaaja" (religious flag), where the final decision is made by the panch (council). The Akharas avoid external courts, resolving disputes internally through deliberation and consensus.

Strenuous Rituals Begin for Naga Sannyas Initiates
On Saturday, over 900 ascetics of the Juna Akhara embarked on their Naga



Sannyas initiation. The day began with a collective dip in the Ganges, where each ascetic performed 108 immersions, chanting "Har Har Mahadev." Following this, the initiates underwent traditional tonsure and Janu (sacred thread) rituals. Back at the camp, the novices gathered around a sacred fire under the Dharmadhwaaja to begin intense spiritual practices. As per tradition, these ascetics, dressed only in loin cloths, must renounce worldly ties through rigorous rituals that last 48 hours. "Through these practices, the ascetics learn to conquer their senses and offer their weaknesses to the sacred fire," explained Shri Mahant Mohan Giri.

Rituals of Renunciation
One of the most profound aspects of Naga initiation is the self-performed pinda daan (offering to ancestors), a ritual traditionally reserved for the deceased. By performing their own pinda daan, initiates symbolically renounce their previous lives, severing all social ties and familial obligations. "The pinda daan liberates them from worldly debts, including their duties toward ancestors," says Acharya Awadheshanand Giri. "It is a step toward complete surrender to spiritual life. Once they take this step, there is no return to the social realm." The initiation culminates with the distribution of symbolic items like the kandi (sling bag), saffron robes, loin cloths, and bhabhoot (sacred ash). With these rituals complete, the novices are formally inducted into the Naga order. The Akharas, with their disciplined structures and centuries-old practices, offer a glimpse into a world where spirituality and tradition merge seamlessly. The Maha Kumbh, thus, becomes not just a religious congregation but a celebration of India's profound spiritual heritage.



Khoya-paya kendra reunites loved ones with their families

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ MAHAKUMBH NAGAR

The Digital Mahakumbh Khoya-Paya Kendra established by the Yogi government at the Prayagraj Mahakumbh, has once again demonstrated its efficiency, reuniting two missing children with their families using state-of-the-art technology and through dedicated efforts in Sector 4. The two children, 7-year-old Dharamjeet and 6-year-old Vikas Kumar, were found by the police in different areas and brought to the Khoya-Paya Kendra. Their pictures were displayed on digital platforms and TV screens to ensure that the information reached their families quickly. Upon receiving the information, the families arrived at the center. After completing the identification process, the children were safely handed over to their mother in the presence of the police. The incident occurred on January 15. Both children were brought to the Lost and Found Center from the Jhansi area, and they identified themselves as residents



of Chainpur. The Digital Mahakumbh Khoya-Paya Kendra serves as a prime example of the efficient administration under Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's leadership and the use of modern technology for public welfare. ON Sunday, 10 Khoya-Paya Kendra were established throughout the fairgrounds, further enhancing the reach and efficiency of the initiative. This center plays a crucial role in reuniting lost individuals, particularly children, with their families during the grand Mahakumbh event. The government has not only ensured that Khoya-Paya Kendra is technologically advanced but has also emphasized quick processing, human sensitivity, and transparency. Devotees attending the Mahakumbh have expressed appreciation for this initiative. The center has not only provided relief to families but also fulfilled the government's responsibility towards the safety and faith of the public.

The mystical world of Aghoris at Maha Kumbh

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ MAHAKUMBH NAGAR

A surreal and intriguing sight greets visitors at the Aghori camp in Sector 19 of the Maha Kumbh. Men clad entirely in black, their bodies smeared with ash, long unkempt hair flowing down their backs, rudraksha beads adorning their necks, and piercing red eyes. Some wear black turbans while others have earrings dangling from their ears. Outside the camp, a large black flag with "Alakh Niranjani" flutters in the wind. This is the enigmatic world of Aghoris, a sect often shrouded in mystery and misunderstanding. The Aghori way of life is not merely a set of practices; it is a spiritual journey that defies conventional norms. Bhola Nath, head of the Kathmandu Aghori Ashram, explains, "Aghor is not something you can learn from books. It is an experience that transforms you

from within. To walk this path, one must serve in an ashram under a guru for three years. Only then does the guru decide whether the seeker is ready for initiation." Aghoris have long been the subject of myths and misconceptions. One such falsehood is the idea that they engage in human sacrifice. Bhola Nath refutes this, stating, "There is a lot of misinformation about us. People spread rumors on social media, and some self-proclaimed Aghoris add to the confusion. It is true that ancient practices included symbolic offerings, but taking a life has never been a part of Aghor tradition. Even a single drop of blood was considered sufficient in ancient rituals." Their connection to cremation grounds is another aspect of their practices often misunderstood. These sacred spaces are central to their spiritual discipline, where they

engage in Shamsan Sadhana, Shiva Sadhana, and Shava Sadhana. In the latter, it is believed that the dead can fulfill certain desires during the rituals. Offerings of meat and liquor are made as part of these practices, which are conducted in strict secrecy, inaccessible to outsiders. One of the most controversial beliefs is that Aghoris consume the flesh of burning corpses. While some rituals may involve symbolic acts linked to decomposition, these are deeply philosophical rather than grotesque. Aghoris aim to transcend fears and attachments, seeing life and death as different manifestations of the same existence. Bhola Nath elaborates, "For an Aghori, everything is Shiva. The body, whether living or dead, is just a mix of five elements. Our rituals teach us to see beyond dualities like life and death."

Government launches online bonfire wood booking service for devotees

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ MAHAKUMBH NAGAR

In a move to ensure the comfort of devotees attending Mahakumbh 2025, the Yogi government has launched an online system for procuring bonfire wood. The Uttar Pradesh Forest Corporation has made firewood depot locations accessible via Google. The move seeks to help pilgrims combat the cold during the event. Devotees, including those arriving from abroad, can easily locate depots by searching "firewood depot Prayagraj" online, streamlining the process and



ensuring a hassle-free experience. DSM Prayagraj RK Chandna announced that 16 firewood depots have been set up across the Mahakumbh area, with wood priced at Rs 600 per quintal. This initiative addresses the growing demand for firewood during the event and ensures a consistent supply. Sixteen depots have been established across the Mahakumbh area to provide bonfire wood, with major depots located in Sector 16. The Uttar Pradesh Forest Corporation ensures wood availability at reasonable rates. Devotees can easily locate these depots by searching "firewood depot" online and use mobile navigation to reach the nearest depot effortlessly. According to the Uttar Pradesh Forest Corporation, approximately 27,000 quintals of wood will be supplied during Mahakumbh. Firewood will be transported from various depots across the state and sold at the prescribed rate of Rs 600 per quintal. This digital initiative by the government ensures ease of access for devotees and contributes to a smooth and well-organized Mahakumbh experience.



Haryana Patwaris protest against corruption allegations

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ GURUGRAM

Patwaris and Kanungos in Gurugram are upset after the release of the recent list of corrupt Patwaris by the state government. The Revenue Patwar and Kanungo Association on Monday held a protest in Gurugram against a "secret" letter compiled by the Haryana Revenue and Disaster Management Department had also revealed that 370 patwaris (revenue officials) as corrupt across the state. The list also includes 170 private individuals who double up as middlemen-cum-assistants for these officials. A report has been sought from respective Deputy Commissioners from across the state within 15 days. The officials are accused of taking money from people

directly or through middlemen in lieu of getting their work such as takseem (partition of land records), land measurement, mutation of property and corrections in land records done in the Revenue Department. Gurugram district has the maximum number of middlemen (26), who allegedly take money on patwaris' behalf. "A state-level meeting was held in Jind on Sunday. In the meeting patwaris and kanungo decided that, we will work wearing black armbands next three days across the state. We have also submitted a memorandum in the name of the Chief Minister today through the deputy commissioner for seeking their intervention into the matter," Satpal Patwari, president of Revenue Patwar and Kanungo Association, Gurugram said.

Woman from Thane loses ₹13.54 lakh to cyber 'suitor'

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ THANE/MUMBAI

Thane Police investigating a cyber fraud case busted an illegal call centre in UP and arrested the main accused after a car chase on the Lucknow-Barabanki highway, a senior officer said here on Monday. Deputy Commissioner of Police (Zone-I) Subash Burse said a woman from Mumbai in Thane district lodged an FIR last October stating that a man duped her of Rs 13.54 lakh

through a matrimony platform. "The man created a fake profile, posing as a successful diamond and jewellery businessman based in the USA. Over time, he gained the victim's trust and convinced her to pay large sums under various pretexts, including customs clearance for gifts and emergency funds under the pretext of an accident in Uganda," the DCP said. The digital trail led the police to Jaid Ful Khan, a 24-year-old salon operator from Bhopal. He

spilled the beans on the alleged mastermind, Eaz Ahmed Imtiaz Ahmed, a businessman based in Lucknow. On a tip-off received from a 12-year-old tea vendor, police located the illegal call centre, the police officer said. "When the suspect sensed police presence, he attempted to flee in his SUV, prompting a high-speed chase along the Lucknow-Barabanki highway. After a dramatic six-kilometre pursuit, the police apprehended him and seized his vehicle," he said.

LS Speaker expresses concern over fewer sittings of legislative bodies

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PATNA

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla Monday expressed concern over the decreasing number of sittings of legislative bodies and urged presiding officers to make efforts to address the issue. Birla's remarks at the inaugural function of the 85th All India Presiding Officers Conference (AIPOC) here came amid reports that the Delhi Assembly held a mere 74 sittings in its entire five-year tenure. The Lok Sabha Speaker also flagged planned disruptions in Parliament and State Assemblies, and urged political parties to draft guidelines for maintaining the dignity of the House. Birla also favoured increasing the role of parliamentary standing committees to ensure accountability of elected Governments. "Standing committees are mini-Parliaments and there is a need to strengthen their functioning," he said. Birla urged lawmakers to prioritize efficient scheduling and effective utilization of parliamentary time in order to address pressing national issues and ensure that the voice of the people is adequately represented. He also observed that the issue of maintaining and enhancing the dignity and



prestige of our Houses is of utmost importance. He suggested that all parties should make internal Code of Conduct for Members' behaviour in the House so that the democratic values are respected. Observing that People's representatives should follow constitutional propriety, rising above political ideology and affiliation, the Speaker opined that people's representatives must respect healthy parliamentary traditions while expressing their ideologies and viewpoints. The 85th AIPOC was attended by Rajya Sabha Deputy Chairman Harivansh, Bihar Assembly Speaker Nand Kishore Yadav, Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Samrat Choudhary and presiding officers of State legislative bodies from across the country. Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar met Birla at the Raj Bhavan on Monday morning but was conspicuous by his absence at the two-day conference -- "75th Anniversary of Constitution: Contribution of Parliament and State Legislative Bodies in Strengthening Constitutional Values." According to a study by PRS Legislative, the outgoing Delhi Assembly, which held 74 sittings during its five-year term, met for an average of 15 days a year. On the days it met, the assembly sat for an average of three hours. The House passed only 14 bills during its term, the lowest number for any previous full-term assembly.

Sambhal riots: Judicial panel to visit city on January 21

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ SAMBHAL/UP

The three-member judicial commission probing the Sambhal riots, will visit the city on January 21 to record written statements from the public, officials said on Monday. The Uttar Pradesh government constituted the judicial panel on December 11 to investigate the riots that erupted on November 24. Violence had broken out near the Shahi Jama Masjid during a survey, leading to clashes

between protesters and security personnel. Four people were killed and several others injured in the incident. The panel, accompanied by District Magistrate Rajendra Pensiya and Superintendent of Police Krishna Kumar, had earlier inspected the riot-affected areas including the Shahi Jama Masjid, on December 1. According to a statement issued by the District Information Department, Sohan Lal, Secretary of the

Judicial Inquiry Commission, said no written statements have been submitted to the commission so far, despite prior notification. The commission will now hold a session at the Public Works Department (PWD) guest house in Sambhal on January 21 accept written statements from individuals wishing to present their accounts of the riots. Authorities have urged those who wish to submit their statements to do so in writing before the commission's visit.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

A giant leap in space

ISRO'S space docking underscores the nation's technical prowess and sets the stage for future space explorations

India's space programme, spearheaded by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), has achieved yet another landmark with its first successful space docking experiment. This milestone represents a pivotal moment in the nation's space exploration journey, further cementing ISRO's reputation as a key player in global space technology. Space docking is the process of two spacecraft connecting in orbit, enabling the transfer of crew, equipment, or fuel. It is a critical technology for advanced space missions, including the construction of space stations, in-orbit servicing and interplanetary travel. The ability to dock spacecraft is a benchmark for spacefaring nations, signifying their capability to perform complex operations in space. ISRO's docking experiment involved two small, indigenously developed spacecraft launched into orbit. The mission demonstrated autonomous manoeuvring, where the spacecraft approached each other, aligned precisely, and successfully docked while orbiting Earth at high speeds.



The operation required intricate planning and the development of cutting-edge technologies such as precision navigation, control systems, and robotic mechanisms.

This docking experiment lays the groundwork for India's ambition to develop its own modular space station, a project slated for the next decade. Space docking technology is critical for future missions to the Moon and Mars. It facilitates the assembly of larger spacecraft in orbit and supports refueling and crew transfer, essential for long-duration missions. Mastery of docking technology positions India as a potential partner for international projects, such as the Lunar

Gateway or other collaborative space station endeavours. The success underscores ISRO's ability to innovate and develop sophisticated technologies domestically, reducing reliance on external support. Executing a docking manoeuvre is no small feat. ISRO had to address multiple challenges, including developing highly accurate navigation and control systems capable of autonomous decision-making. Ensuring synchronisation of two spacecraft traveling at speeds exceeding 28,000 km/h. ISRO's successful space docking marks a critical step forward in India's space aspirations. It aligns with the organisation's vision to expand its presence in low Earth orbit and beyond. The achievement also inspires confidence in India's space capabilities as the nation eyes ambitious goals such as the Gaganyaan human spaceflight mission, lunar exploration, and interplanetary ventures. The international space community has lauded ISRO's accomplishment, recognising it as a significant technical breakthrough. It reaffirms India's position as a rising space power, capable of undertaking challenging and high-stakes missions. As the nation continues to push the boundaries of what's possible, this milestone serves as a foundation for even greater achievements in the years to come. With every new stride, India moves closer to its dream of being a leader in the final frontier.

PICTALK



School students perform during Kokborok Day celebrations, in Agartala

Mahakumbh: Spiritual fervour meets economic revival

This edition of Mahakumbh is not only the world's largest religious congregation but also a showcase of Uttar Pradesh's evolving economic prowess and cultural magnificence



NAND GOPAL GUPTA
NANDANI

Over 3 crore devotees, both national and international, taking a holy dip on the debut day of Mahakumbh in Prayagraj, has just validated what we have been saying for the past several months. In terms of scale and grandeur, this edition of Mahakumbh would not only be the largest religious congregation on the planet. But it would also remain unmatched for a very long time. We estimate that it will eventually have around 400 million visitors (more than double the previous edition). But won't be surprised if the actual number exceeds our expectations, by a modest margin. Elaborate arrangements would be an understatement.

A more apt term would be epic-scale preparations. Yes, this is what went into this grand event which we would like to be remembered forever. The UP government had sanctioned more than 540 projects to create world-class amenities at an estimated expenditure in the vicinity of Rs 7,000 crore. You go to the site and you will notice a sprawling new city (covering 4,000 hectares) has been set up which has over 1.5 lakh tents and all basic amenities including advanced medical centres and distinct pockets for businesses.

There is hardly any name (big or small) in the consumer-facing business that you will find missing in action at the holy site serving the devotees with their offerings. On a cumulative basis, we are expecting a generation of economic activities worth Rs 2 lakh crore or over \$24 billion which is simply staggering. The security architecture created for this mega event is powered by artificial intelligence (AI), which is an added feature. Our objective has been simple. We wanted to create a site that would be the best possible amalgamation of religious fervour of the highest order and modern amenities of the best class. And from the initial response of the visitors, we seem to have succeeded to a large extent. It would be no exaggeration to say that we have spared no effort in ensuring that this grand religious event assumes an unmatched character. This was



our core focus right from day one of the planning stage as we knew that Mahakumbh this time would also be leaving a host of critical messages for the world. In symbolic terms, at a time when the geo-political turbulence is quite evident and religious intolerance is raising its head in many corners of the world, the Mahakumbh in Prayagraj is yet another occasion to prove the richness of our Sanatani heritage which is rooted in the philosophy of co-existence and welfare of the humanity. With thousands of foreign devotees (not only NRIs but devotees from other nationalities and religions too) expected to arrive at the holy site and experience the magnificence of Bharat's religious strength, the show has to also offer them a glimpse of the world's ancient society being in a serious resurgent mode. The event has to intrinsically validate our subtle claim of global leadership in several spheres. There is one more critical message that we wish to emanate from Mahakumbh this time. And that pertains to the growing economic prowess of Uttar Pradesh. From being in the disparaging 'Bimaru' state club till the recent decade, the turnaround in the state's economic fortune would be



OUR OBJECTIVE HAS BEEN SIMPLE. WE WANTED TO CREATE A SITE THAT WOULD BE THE BEST POSSIBLE AMALGAMATION OF RELIGIOUS FERVOUR OF THE HIGHEST ORDER AND MODERN AMENITIES OF THE BEST CLASS

quite evident at the site for which we have left no stone unturned. That millions of visitors should carry the impression of a modern and thriving economy is indeed an objective. We have been working quite hard in reviving the state's economy since 2017 trying to put it in the leader's club (among states) in the country. There has been a slew of policy and regulatory interventions which have delivered positive results. We are the third largest economy (state-wise) which has an impressive share of over 8 per cent in the national GDP. The annual growth of the state's economy in the last seven-eight years has been to the tune of 11 per cent, among the highest in the country. Despite being a landlocked state, we have a share of around 5 per cent in the national exports which has facilitated our defining Marketing Development Assistance scheme. This year, we will be announcing a new export policy that will take into consideration the new business opportunities (for the next five years) emerging from a far superior infrastructural base. We today have the largest rail network in the country, 38 per cent expressways' share of the national

kitty, four international and nine domestic airports. Further, seven new airports are under construction including the world-class Jewar Airport which will be unveiled soon. To energise grassroots economies, one of our major initiatives has been: the one-district-one-product scheme. Launched in 2018, this scheme seeks to identify the specific USP product of 75 districts and help the local stakeholders take that business to the next level with all-round support (training to marketing) from government agencies. Since the inception of the scheme, we have supported over 1,33,472 artisans across the state. The efforts to give a decisive rejig to the state economy have considerably paid off, propelling us to commit to further pushing our growth momentum and becoming a \$1 trillion economy in the not-so-distant future. This is the core objective of our economic salvation route, which we have been pursuing for quite some time. And I am quite confident, that the visitors to Mahakumbh this time, will also have a sufficient glimpse of it.

(The writer is Minister for Industrial Development & Export Promotion, Uttar Pradesh; views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

GOVERNOR VS STATE GOVERNMENT

Madam — The dispute between the Tamil Nadu government and Governor Dr RN Ravi over vice-chancellor appointments has reached the Supreme Court. On January 17, 2025, a bench led by Justices JB Pardiwala and R Mahadevan intervened, stating that the matter would be resolved by the next hearing unless the parties reached an agreement. The Tamil Nadu Government has filed writ petitions accusing the Governor of delays and non-compliance with constitutional duties. The court has scheduled the next hearing for next Wednesday, signalling its readiness to resolve the deadlock. This conflict echoes previous legal cases on gubernatorial powers in university appointments. In The Chancellor, University of Kerala vs Governor of Kerala (2017), the Supreme Court affirmed that while the Governor holds discretionary powers in such appointments, consultation with the state government is crucial. Similarly, the 2019 West Bengal VC appointment case emphasised state autonomy in these matters, reinforcing the need for cooperation between the state and the governor. External Affairs Minister Dr S Jaishankar, in his Nani Palkhivala Memorial Lecture, highlighted the importance of constitutional morality and the role of advisors in governance. His remarks, though not directly related to the Tamil Nadu case, underscore the significance of upholding constitutional norms. The Supreme Court's involvement could clarify the limits of gubernatorial power, setting a precedent for future state-governor conflicts. This case tests the balance between state autonomy and the governor's constitutional duties, with far-reaching implications for governance.

Gopalaswamy J | Chennai

STRICTER RULES FOR MIGRANTS

Madam — Many Indians move to Gulf countries to earn money within a short period. They live there for a few years, earn a substantial income and manage to survive under tough conditions. Even if the work is as labourers, the monetary com-

Indian women win Kho kho World Cup



The Indian women's team claimed the title of the first Kho Kho World Cup 2025 with their exceptional skills, invincible strategy, and incredible agility. On Sunday evening at the Indira Gandhi Indoor Stadium, India secured their victory by defeating Nepal with a massive margin of 78-40 in a historic match.

Dressed in blue jerseys, the Indian players dominated the game right from the start. Captain Priyanka Ingale delivered an extraordinary performance, scoring several crucial touch points, which helped the team maintain a consistent lead. Under her leadership, the team built a 34-point advantage and eliminated every possibility of a dream run for Nepal.

This victory stands as a living testament to Indian women's power and their growing influence in the world of sports. This historic achievement has not only brought glory to the nation but also inspired women athletes across the country. It symbolises the triumph of teamwork, determination, and relentless effort.

R K Jain | Barwani

FIRE BROKE OUT AT MAHAKUMBH

Madam — A fire broke out in the Maha Kumbh area in Prayagraj, leading to the burning of several tents. Two cylinders exploded in Sector 19 of the Maha Kumbh Mela, causing a massive fire in the camps. Firefighters are trying to douse the blaze. Although the police and administration team reached the spot, and the fire had been doused. But the issue has raised several questions on the safety of the devotees that have come from far areas to visit the spiritual atmosphere of the holy confluence and take a dip at the Triveni Sangam.

The government and administration express sorrow over the incident and pray for the safety of all devotees. It is the government's responsibility to ensure security, control the fire, and prevent such incidents in the future. Instead of paying deep consideration for the advertisement, authorities should develop focus on the safety and security of the lives of devotees.

Dimple Wadhawan | Kanpur Nagar

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

Sparking smile: Lessons from a children's elocution competition

From innovative tech-based ideas to timeless acts of kindness, the young participants presented thoughtful solutions that left me inspired about what truly makes us happy



ASHA IYER KUMAR

Last week, I had the privilege of being on the panel of judges for an elocution competition for students, with the topic 'The Perfect Solution to Make People Smile More.' It was an intriguing subject—one very close to my heart—because I am the kind of person who smiles a lot. A lot more than people sometimes care to respond to or reciprocate. On the street, in the metro, in the building gallery, during my walk—almost anyone I can get eye contact with, whether stranger or friend, gets a smile. It is the most inexpensive gift I can offer, regardless of whether it is valued or not. It's a heart-felt gesture that could be the very thing someone needs to make their day. The children who participated came up with some remarkable ideas—everything from making a smile a commodity that fetches monetary rewards or other tangible benefits to evoking emotional points that deeply resonated with the empathy in me. Given that the contest was called 'Pitch Perfect,' the students brought forth many innovative concepts to make people smile, many of which



revolved around technology. It was fascinating to imagine how new-age devices could inspire smiles, but I couldn't help wondering—do we really need tools and gadgets to smile? Can't we simply find natural reasons for it? Can't we create genuine moments that make people's eyes crinkle at the corners authentically?

As I waited for those ideas to unfold, I felt a gentle discomfort with the implicit belief that nothing happens these days without gadgets. But then came a few gems that emphasised the importance of compassion, empathy, and kindness as part of our daily lives—powerful ingredients for sparking smiles. This is what I want the younger generation to embody—an attitude that encourages them to be better people each day, spreading

smiles through simple acts of kindness, rather than relying solely on innovations. I was deeply moved by what some of the children shared. When I asked one young participant what act of kindness he had done that day to make someone smile or brighten their day, his answer was simple yet profound: "I told my mother how yummy the breakfast was, and it made her very happy."

My takeaway from the experience was this: the new generation is competitive, full of energy to beat the odds and rise to the top in life. But it is also brimming with humanness and rationality, qualities nurtured by the guidance of teachers, parents, and mentors. As they navigate the pressures of becoming super achievers, they still understand that the roots of happiness and peace lie in kindness and compassion. As is my habit, I often ask my students if they enjoy going to school and, if so, why. The answer I invariably hear is they like school not because of what they learn in class, but because of their friends. This sometimes makes me question my belief that schools

and universities should be temples of learning—platforms for young minds to ignite and soar.

Their answer also makes me wonder if there's more to be desired in how we mould our students. Have we focused too much on academic excellence at the cost of soul-nurturing education? Perhaps we need to spend less time teaching children skills to thrive in a competitive world and more time preparing them to be compassionate, kind-hearted individuals who bring joy to those around them. This competition, with all its innovation and spirited energy, reminded me that the most profound solutions to making people smile often lie in the simplest of acts: a word of appreciation, a compliment, a smile shared. As we look toward a future increasingly driven by technology, let's not lose sight of what makes us truly human. It's the little things that have the power to make the world a little brighter.

(The author is a Dubai-based columnist and children's writing coach. She has published six books. Views are personal)



FIRST COLUMN

THE TRANSFORMATIVE ROLE OF EDUCATORS

Educators serve as mentors and guide, empowering students to become responsible citizens



SAKSHI SETHI

Education is not merely the transfer of knowledge. It is the shaping of minds, the fostering of growth and even more the cultivation of potential. As educators, the role extends far beyond delivering lectures or grading assignments. It encompasses mentoring, inspiring and empowering individuals to become critical thinkers and responsible citizens. Reflecting on our roles allows us to embrace our responsibilities more consciously and adapt to the evolving needs of learners and society. In contemporary education, the role of the educator has shifted from being the sole source of knowledge to a facilitator of learning.

This transition underscores the importance of guiding students to explore, question, and construct their understanding. It is about creating an environment where students feel safe to express their thoughts, make mistakes and grow from them. The role of an educator becomes especially significant when working with board students. When talking about them, the educator's primary responsibility is to ensure a strong understanding of the curriculum, including breaking down complex concepts, identifying and addressing knowledge gaps and providing effective study strategies.

Beyond teaching content, educators must help students develop time management and exam techniques to perform confidently under pressure. The role demands subject expertise and a keen awareness of the examination format and trends. Today, the modern educational landscape for board students includes challenges such as increasing competition, societal expectations, and the rapid integration of technology in learning. Educators need to stay adaptable, leveraging digital tools



to make learning engaging and accessible by recognising diverse learning styles employing strategies to meet those needs, and ensuring that every student feels included and valued. Additionally, acknowledging the diverse learning needs of students and personalising instruction whenever possible is also crucial for ensuring their success. There is no denying that students are at a critical juncture in their academic journey, preparing for examinations that often determine their future educational and career paths. Reflecting on our roles as educators in this context reveals the need for a balanced approach that combines academic rigour, emotional support, and life-skill development.

One of the most vital roles of an educator is to be a lifelong learner. Education is a dynamic field, and staying updated with pedagogical advancements, cultural shifts, and technological innovations is essential. This commitment to personal growth will not only enhance teaching effectiveness but will also model the value of continuous learning for students. Teaching values such as critical thinking, collaboration, and adaptability prepare students for challenges beyond the examination hall. It is essential to emphasise that education is about equipping them with skills for life, not just marks on a report card. Reflecting on our roles as educators highlights the immense responsibility and opportunity, we have in shaping young lives. It requires academic expertise, emotional intelligence, and unwavering dedication. By nurturing not just the intellect but also the spirit of our students, we as educators can guide them toward success in their exams and, more importantly, in life. By embracing our multifaceted roles with passion and purpose, we can create transformative experiences for our students and leave an enduring legacy of knowledge and wisdom.

(The writer is an educator; views are personal)

How skill-based degrees are redefining India's future



DINESH SOOD

By aligning with industry needs and empowering individuals with practical expertise, the nation is paving the way for a more inclusive and dynamic workforce



India's education system is undergoing a quiet revolution. As the global job market evolves, the emphasis on traditional degrees gives way to skill-focused education tailored to the demands of a dynamic economy. A prime example is the introduction of degree courses in salons, spas, beauty parlours, and other vocational domains. These courses signify a paradigm shift in how we perceive education, employment, and entrepreneurship in 'Viksit Bharat.' This development addresses critical challenges. It aligns with the growing aspirations of India's youth, caters to burgeoning private sector industries, and equips individuals with skills for self-employment, entrepreneurship and opportunities abroad.

Growing Demand for Vocational Expertise

The global wellness industry, valued at over \$4 trillion, continues to expand, with India emerging as a key player. The beauty and wellness sector alone is projected to grow at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 18 per cent over the next five years. The personal grooming industry demands nearly 1.3 million professionals annually, significantly surpassing the 3-4 lakh jobs the software industry adds yearly. This boom has created immense demand for skilled professionals, from hairstylists and spa therapists to salon managers and beauty wellness consultants. Recognising this, regulatory bodies like the UGC and AICTE have integrated skills courses into the education system. Indian universities now collaborate with training institutes to offer structured programmes like the Bachelor of Science (BSc) in Beauty and Wellness. These programmes cover skincare, makeup artistry and salon management.

Other universities offer diplomas and degree programmes in wellness and hospitality sectors, designed with industry leaders. Globally, institutions such as the London College of Beauty Therapy (UK) and the Australian Academy of Beauty Dermal and Laser offer world-class programmes. These courses adhere to international standards, providing globally recognised certifications that enhance employability abroad.

Parity Between B Voc and BSc Degrees

An essential aspect of this transformation is recognising the equivalence of Bachelor of Vocation (B Voc) and Bachelor of Science (BSc) degrees. While BSc focuses on academic learning, B Voc emphasises hands-on, industry-relevant training. Recent policy reforms place these degrees on par, ensuring vocational education is no longer seen as secondary but as an equally credible academic pathway. This parity allows B Voc graduates to access the same opportunities as BSc graduates in employment, higher education, or competitive exams. It underscores the value of skills and practical expertise in driving economic growth.

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and National Credit Framework

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) further strengthens this integration. RPL allows individuals to earn formal recognition for previous informal training or work experiences. When aligned with the National Credit Framework, credits earned in schools, vocational training institutions, or universities become seamlessly transferable across sectors. This fosters flexibility in education, empowering individuals to personalise their learning journeys and reduce redundancy. By integrating RPL with skill-based programmes, India's education system becomes more inclusive and adaptable. Employment and Entrepreneurship Opportunities Skill-based degree programs unlock diverse career pathways:

- 1. Private Sector Jobs:** Luxury wellness brands, fitness chains, and beauty franchises seek trained professionals. Graduates can secure jobs in high-end spas, salons, and wellness centres with lucrative salaries and career growth.
- 2. Self-Employment and Freelancing:** These courses

empower entrepreneurial individuals to establish businesses. Graduates can run boutique salons or offer personalised wellness services, catering to niche markets.

3. Government Jobs: Recognising vocational degrees has expanded opportunities in government roles. Graduates are eligible for positions in wellness centres and initiatives under schemes like Skill India and PMKVY (Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana).

4. Global Opportunities: Programmes often include internationally recognised certifications, enhancing employability abroad. For instance, graduates from LCBT in the UK find opportunities in European markets, while Australian academy-trained professionals thrive in Asia-Pacific regions.

Breaking Stigmas Around Vocational Careers

Vocational careers have long been viewed as secondary options. Introducing structured degree programs challenges these stereotypes. Formal education in salons, spas, and beauty parlours combines technical skills, business acumen, and industry exposure, positioning these professions as aspirational.

This shift is especially empowering for women, who form a significant portion of the workforce in these fields and now gain access to recognised qualifications that enhance professional credibility. **Challenges in Implementation** India's higher education system, often criticised for being theory-heavy, struggles to improve practical skill sets. Initiatives like the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and platforms like SWAYAM aim to modernise education, but challenges remain:

- 1. Quality Assurance:** Maintaining high standards and industry relevance requires collaboration with established industry players.
- 2. Awareness:** Many students and parents remain unaware of these

opportunities, favouring traditional careers. Awareness campaigns are crucial.

3. Infrastructure and Faculty: Vocational education requires specialised infrastructure and trained faculty. Institutions must invest in state-of-the-art facilities and continuous professional development for educators.

4. Recognition and Accreditation: Further integration into academia and government recruitment processes will enhance vocational degrees' credibility.

Vision for the Future Skill-based degree programmes signify societal reform, recognising youth aspirations and aligning education with market realities. By formalising careers through structured courses, India creates a skilled and confident workforce. These reforms reflect a commitment to inclusivity, providing pathways for diverse socio-economic backgrounds to pursue rewarding careers.

India is on the brink of an educational revolution. Skill-based degrees in fields like salons, spas, and beauty parlours redefine education. These programmes bridge the gap between aspiration and opportunity, equipping students with skills to thrive globally. As these initiatives gain momentum, scaling them, ensuring quality, and destigmatising vocational careers are imperative. With parity between B Voc and BSc degrees and the integration of RPL into the National Credit Framework, India's education system is transforming into a flexible and robust framework. These changes will meet today's demands and shape a prosperous future for the nation.

(The writer is co-founder and MD of Orane International, a training partner of the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) and a network Member of India International Skills Centres, an initiative of GoI. The views expressed are personal)



THE BEAUTY AND WELLNESS SECTOR ALONE IS PROJECTED TO GROW AT A COMPOUND ANNUAL GROWTH RATE (CAGR) OF 18 PER CENT OVER THE NEXT FIVE YEARS

Balancing rights and order: Innovations in protest management

Protests are the lifeblood of democracy. For law enforcement, it must carefully balance between public safety and democratic freedoms

Thousands of people gather, holding banners and chanting slogans, their voices echoing through the streets. For law enforcement, these aren't merely demonstrations but skill, strategy, and restraint tests. Managing protests today demands more than enforcing law and order; it requires innovation, preparation, and trust.

Reflecting on this evolving role, a senior officer once remarked, "Our goal isn't to silence dissent but to ensure it unfolds safely for everyone involved. Effective protest management is about enabling expression while maintaining peace." This philosophy increasingly shapes how law enforcement approaches public demonstrations globally



O P SINGH

and in India.

Dialogue Policing: Dialogue policing, extensively practised in Sweden and Norway, prioritises proactive communication between police and protest organisers. Liaison officers meet organisers before demonstrations to discuss routes, safety measures, and mutual expectations. This approach fosters trust and de-escalates tensions

before they arise. Indian police have applied similar strategies during political rallies and cultural events, engaging community leaders to ensure peaceful outcomes.

Leveraging Technology: Technology is transforming protest management globally. In countries like Singapore and South Korea, drones with high-resolution cameras monitor crowd density and movement, while artificial intelligence (AI) tools analyse data to predict potential flashpoints. This enables law enforcement to allocate resources proactively and prevent crises. Indian police are increasingly adopting these tools. Drones were deployed during the farmers' protests and other large-scale events, offering real-time monitoring of crowd dynamics.

Social media monitoring cells track misinformation and narratives, enabling swift corrective measures. Law enforcement enhances its situational awareness and credibility by integrating technology with traditional methods.

Non-Lethal Methods: Germany sets a global benchmark for using non-lethal tools like water cannons, sound devices, and barricades to manage large gatherings. Officers trained in crowd psychology focus on isolating disruptive elements while respecting the rights of peaceful protestors. In India, non-lethal methods have been employed during sensitive protests, such as barricading roads to control crowds or using water cannons to disperse tense gatherings. The



focus remains on proportionality—ensuring responses are measured, harm is minimised, and democratic freedoms are respected. **Transparency and Accountability** Transparency is crucial for public trust. In New Zealand, body-worn cameras document police actions during protests, ensuring accountability and protecting officers from false accusations. Oversight bodies review

footage to ensure compliance with established protocols. In India, body-worn cameras have been introduced in several states, particularly during sensitive operations.

Multi-agency coordination for Large Protests Managing large-scale demonstrations often requires multi-agency collaboration. In the United States, unified command centres integrate local police, state law enforcement, and federal agencies for cohesive responses. These centres streamline resource sharing and operational alignment, which is critical for complex events. India's law enforcement regularly employs similar coordination during significant events, such as farmers' protests, political rallies, and national festivals. Central para-

military forces often supplement state police, ensuring adequate workforce and resources. Clear protocols and seamless coordination are the backbone of these efforts.

Comprehensive Training: Training is a cornerstone of effective protest management. Canadian police emphasise de-escalation, cultural sensitivity, and conflict resolution, with officers undergoing practical simulations to prepare for high-pressure scenarios. In India, the Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPR&D) has introduced advanced modules covering non-lethal tools, technology integration, and crowd psychology.

Ethical Policing: Ethical considerations are central to managing protests.

Globally, technologies like drones and AI are governed by protocols that protect privacy and civil liberties. Similarly, the principle of proportionality—using the minimum force necessary—guides actions to ensure demonstrators' rights are respected. In India, police increasingly emphasise ethical practices. Engaging community leaders, addressing grievances, and prioritising dialogue reflect a commitment to balancing public safety with democratic freedoms. The shift towards a restrained, people-centric approach underscores the evolving role of law enforcement in a modern democracy.

(The writer is Director General of Police and Head of the Haryana State Narcotics Bureau; views are personal)

Hamas returns 3 Israeli hostages, Israel frees 90 prisoners

PTI ■ RAMALLAH

After 15 months of collective grief and anxiety, three Israeli hostages left Hamas captivity and returned to Israel, and dozens of Palestinian prisoners walked free from Israeli jail, leaving both Israelis and Palestinians torn between celebration and trepidation as the ceasefire between Israel and Hamas took hold Sunday. The skies above Gaza and Israel were silent for the first time in over a year, and Palestinians began returning to what was left of the homes they fled across the war-ravaged enclave, started to check on relatives left behind and, in many cases, to bury their dead. After months of tight Israeli restrictions, more than 600 trucks carrying humanitarian aid rolled into the devastated territory.

The ceasefire that went into effect Sunday morning stirred modest hopes for ending the Israel-Hamas war. But in Israel, the joy of seeing freed hostages Emily Damari, Romi Gonen, and Doron Steinbrecher reunited with their families was tempered by major questions over the fate of the nearly 100 others abducted in Hamas' Oct 7, 2023, attack, still in captivity in Gaza. Damari, Gonen and



Israelis celebrate the release of three hostages who had been held captive by Hamas in Gaza as they gather in Tel Aviv, Israel, on Sunday

AP/PTI

Steinbrecher were the first among 33 Israeli hostages who are meant to be released in the coming six weeks in a deal that includes a pause in fighting, the release of nearly 2,000 Palestinian prisoners and increased fuel and aid deliveries for Gaza. What happens after the deal's first phase of 42 days is uncertain.

The agreement's subsequent stages call for more releases of hostages and prisoners and a permanent end to the war.

But Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who was pressured by the outgoing Biden administration and incoming Trump administration to secure a deal before the

president-elect's inauguration Monday in Washington, has said he received assurances from Trump that Israel could continue fighting Hamas if necessary. On Sunday, many Israelis stayed glued to TV screens all afternoon to glimpse the women being released through the windows of the Red Cross

ambulance. Footage showed them thronged by thousands of jostling Palestinians, including Hamas gunmen wearing green headbands, as militants handed them over to the Red Cross on a packed street in Gaza City. "An entire nation embraces you," Netanyahu said. National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir, a far-right

lawmaker who resigned on Sunday from Netanyahu's governing coalition over the ceasefire, said the nation was "happy and excited" for their release. In videos released by the Israeli government, the women were seen weeping and hugging their family members. Damari raised her bandaged hand in triumph.

The military said she lost two fingers in the Hamas-led militant attack on Oct. 7, 2023, that killed over 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and resulted in the abduction of some 250 others. Applause erupted among the thousands who gathered to watch the poignant scenes on large screens at Hostages Square, the Tel Aviv plaza where families and supporters of hostages have been protesting weekly to demand a ceasefire deal.

It took another seven hours for such scenes to unfold in the occupied West Bank, where the mood was initially subdued as the Israeli military warned that public celebrations for the released prisoners would be punished.

But scuffles with Israeli security forces and hours of waiting did little to deter the crowds that flooded the streets around 1 a.m., as large white buses carrying 90 Palestinian detainees — all women or teens — exit-

ed the gates of Ofer prison, near the West Bank city of Ramallah.

Drivers revved their engines in celebration. Fireworks erupted. Several men climbed on top of the bus and hoisted three Hamas flags. "God is greater!" the crowds shouted.

Many of those released expressed elation tinged with grief for the devastation wrought by the war in Gaza. A "double feeling" is how the most prominent detainee freed, Khalida Jarrar, 62, described it. Jarrar is a leading member of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, a secular leftist faction that was involved in attacks against Israel in the 1970s but later scaled back militant activities. Since her arrest in late 2023, she was held under indefinitely renewable administrative detention — a widely criticized practice that Israel uses against Palestinians.

"There's this double feeling we're living in, on the one hand, this feeling of freedom, that we thank everyone for, and on the other hand, this pain, of losing so many Palestinian martyrs," she told The Associated Press.

All of those being released had been detained for what Israel called offenses related to its security, from throwing

stones and promoting violence on social media to more serious accusations such as attempted murder.

The next release of hostages and prisoners is due Saturday. In just over two weeks, talks are to begin on the far more challenging second phase of the ceasefire agreement. In Gaza, there was palpable relief at the prospect of six weeks without fighting and Israeli bombardment that so far has killed over 46,000 Palestinians, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which says women and children make up more than half the fatalities but does not distinguish between civilians and fighters.

The skies above the besieged territory were free of Israeli warplanes for the first day since a weeklong ceasefire in November 2023 that freed over 100 hostages, offering Palestinians a chance to take stock of the devastation.

"This ceasefire was a joy mixed with pain," Rami Nofal, said a displaced man from Gaza City, explaining that his son was killed by Israeli bombardment. Masked Hamas militants appeared at some celebrations, triumphant as crowds chanted slogans in support of them.

The Hamas-run police reemerged from months of hiding.

Let America own 50% of TikTok: Trump

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

TikTok is back in the US after President-elect Donald Trump on Sunday praised it and said let the government own 50 per cent of the popular short video sharing platform.

TikTok went dark in the US on Saturday night because of a legislation, but it was back within less than 24 hours after Trump vowed to issue an executive order on his first day in office to delay the enforcement of the law. The short-video app is used by 170 million Americans.

"As of today, TikTok is back. You know, I did a little TikTok thing. We have a guy, TikTok Jack. He's a young kid, like 21 years old. We hired this guy and I went on TikTok. We went on TikTok as Republicans never won the youth vote. They won a lot of votes, but they never won the youth vote. But we won the youth vote by 36 points. So I like TikTok," Trump told his supporters at a victory rally here.

"Who in this audience goes with TikTok? Many? Frankly, we have no choice. We have to save a lot of jobs. We don't want to give our business to China. We don't want to give our business to other people," Trump added. Stating that the solution to the TikTok issue is a joint venture, Trump said, "They did that a long time ago when they had a different president. They didn't know that I was going to be the president. So I said, very simply, a joint venture. If you don't approve, they're out of business. They're worth nothing. If you do approve, they're worth like a trillion dollars."

"So, I said, I'll approve, but let the United States own 50 per cent of TikTok. I'm approving on behalf of the nation. So, they'll have a partner, the United States, and they'll have a lot of bidders, and we will do what we call a joint venture deal," the President-elect said.

"We're not putting up any money. All we're doing is giving them the approval, without which they have nothing," Trump said, adding, "Whether you like TikTok or not, we're going to make a lot of money."

Trump vows to act at historic speed to fix 'every single crisis facing US'

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

On the eve of his inauguration, President-elect Donald Trump promised his supporters and countrymen that he will act at historic speed to fix every single crisis facing the United States. "Starting tomorrow, I will act with historic speed and strength and fix every single crisis facing our country. We have to do it," Trump told his supporters at the Capitol One Arena, which was full to its capacity of 20,000 for a "Make America Great" victory celebration, with a large number of people waiting outside in chilling cold.

Trump, 78, made a stunning comeback when he defeated Vice President Kamala Harris in last year's general election to become only the second person in US history to be sworn in as the president after a gap of four years.

Trump, who will replace Joe Biden as the 47th president of the United States on Monday, arrived at the US Capitol on Saturday.

On a jam-packed day full of engagements, Trump addressed thousands of his supporters at what he called a 'victory rally'.

"Before even taking office, you are already seeing results that nobody expected to see. Everyone is calling it the Trump effect. It's you. You're the effect," Trump said.

"Since the election, the stock market has surged, while small business optimism has soared a record 41 points to a 39-year high. Bitcoin has shattered one record after another. Major investment company DMACC Properties has announced that it will invest between USD 20 billion and USD 40 billion in the US."



Elon Musk, left, and President-elect Donald Trump embrace as they look at Musk's son X vJ A-Xii, at a rally ahead of the 60th Presidential Inauguration, Sunday, in Washington.

AP/PTI

"SoftBank, another great company, has pledged between USD 100 billion and USD 200 billion. These are all investments that are only being made because of the fact that we won the election," he added.

Referring to meeting Apple CEO Tim Cook on Sunday, Trump said, "He said they're

going to make a massive investment in the US because of our big election victory." Giving an insight into his Day 1 plans, he told the cheering crowd, "Our incoming administration has achieved all of this in the Middle East in less than three months without me being the president.

We've already achieved more than what they've (Joe Biden administration) done in four years.

"Just imagine all the good things we will accomplish together with four more years in the White House. We are going to do a lot of things. You're going to see something tomorrow. You're going to see executive orders that are going to make you extremely happy."

Elaborating further, Trump said, "We have to set our country on the proper course. By the time the sun sets tomorrow, the invasion of our borders will come to a halt, and all the illegal border trespassers will, in some form or another, be on their way back home. Think of it. Millions and millions of people came into our country through open borders. No checks, no vetting, no anything. And a lot of those people are murderers."

Trump also said the border security measures he will outline in his inaugural address on Monday will be the most "aggressive, sweeping efforts to restore our borders the world has ever seen."

"We had the best, safest border in the history of our country," he said. Appearing briefly on the stage, Tesla owner Elon Musk, who has been made in-charge of the newly-created Department of Government Efficiency, said they are looking forward to making a lot of changes.

"This victory is the beginning. What matters going forward is to actually make significant changes, cement those changes, and set the foundation for America to be strong for centuries, forever... And make America great again," Musk said.

Biden pardons Fauci, Milley to guard against potential 'revenge' by Trump

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

President Joe Biden on Monday pardoned Dr Anthony Fauci, retired Gen Mark Milley and members of the House committee that investigated the Jan 6 attack on the Capitol, using the extraordinary powers of his office in his final hours to guard against potential "revenge" by the incoming Trump administration. The decision by Biden comes after Donald Trump warned of an enemies list filled with those who have crossed him politically or sought to hold him accountable for his attempt to overturn his 2020 election loss and his role in the storming of the US Capitol on Jan 6, 2021.

Trump has selected Cabinet nominees who backed his election lies and who have pledged to punish those involved in efforts to investigate him.

"The issuance of these pardons should not be mistaken as an acknowledgment that any individual engaged in any wrongdoing, nor should acceptance be misconstrued as an admission of guilt for any offence," Biden said in a statement.

"Our nation owes these public servants a debt of gratitude for their tireless commitment to our country," The pardons,

announced with just hours left in his presidency, have been the subject of heated debate for months at the highest levels of the White House. It's customary for a president to grant clemency at the end of his term, but those acts of mercy are usually offered to Americans who have been convicted of crimes.

Biden has used the power in the broadest and most untested way possible: to pardon those who have not even been investigated yet. The decision lays the groundwork for an even more expansive use of pardons by Trump and future presidents.

While the Supreme Court last year ruled that the president enjoys broad immunity from prosecution for what could be considered official acts, the president's aides and allies enjoy no such shield.

There are fears that Trump or future presidents could use the promise of a blanket pardon to encourage allies to take actions they might otherwise resist for fear of running afoul of the law.

Trump, who takes office at noon, has promised to, in his first moments as president, pardon many of those involved in the violent and bloody Jan 6, 2021, attack, which injured

roughly 140 law enforcement officers. It's unclear whether those pardoned by Biden would need to apply for the clemency or even accept the offer at all. Any acceptance could be seen as a tacit admission of guilt or wrongdoing, validating years of attacks by Trump and his supporters, even though those who have been pardoned have not been formally accused of any crimes.

"These are exceptional circumstances, and I cannot in good conscience do nothing," Biden said, adding that "Even when individuals have done nothing wrong — and in fact have done the right thing — and will ultimately be exonerated, the mere fact of being investigated or prosecuted can irreparably damage reputations and finances."

Fauci was director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases at the National Institutes of Health for nearly 40 years, including during Trump's term in office and later served as Biden's chief medical adviser until his retirement in 2022. He helped coordinate the nation's response to the COVID-19 pandemic and raised Trump's ire when he resisted the Trump's untested public health

'UK-US relationship will flourish under Trump'

London (PTI): British Prime Minister Keir Starmer has spoken of the relationship shared by the UK and the US as a "uniquely close bond" which would continue to flourish as Donald Trump is set to be sworn in as the 47th President of the United States of America in Washington DC on Monday. Extending "warmest congratulations" on behalf of the British government, Starmer sought to focus on Trump's historical ties with the UK — a reference to his familial connection through his Scotland-born mother.

He stressed that the second Trump presidency would see both nations tackle "global challenges" together as they work towards growth on both sides of the Atlantic.

"For centuries, the relationship between our two nations has been one of collaboration,

cooperation and enduring partnership. It is a uniquely close bond. Together, we have defended the world from tyranny and worked towards our mutual security and prosperity," said Starmer in a statement released by 10 Downing Street in London.

"With President Trump's long-standing affection and historical ties to the United Kingdom, I know that depth of friendship will continue. The United Kingdom and the United States will work together to ensure the success of both our countries and deliver for people on both sides of the Atlantic," he said.

Referring to his meeting with Trump back in September 2024, before Trump was elected to office in November, Starmer asserted that they have an agreement about the need to "deepen and invest in the transatlantic relationship."

British Sikh groups disrupt some screenings of 'Emergency' in UK

London (PTI): British Sikh groups have organised protests against Kangana Ranaut's 'Emergency', disrupting the film's screening at some cinemas in the UK during its opening weekend. The Sikh Press Association (PA) group stated on social media that the film is seen as "anti-Sikh" and the protests have resulted in cancelled screenings in Birmingham and Wolverhampton, in the West Midlands region of England. Community organisation Insight UK posted a video on its X platform showing protesters interrupting a screening of the film, directed by Ranaut who also essays the role of former prime minister Indira Gandhi, at a cinema in Harrow, north-west London.

"Pro-Khalistan extremists storm Harrow cinema and

attempt to stop the screening of 'Emergency', states Insight UK. Earlier, Sikh PA had released a statement to register the group's protest against the movie which covers the period of Emergency in India dating back to the 1970s. "UK Sikhs are protesting at cinemas (sic) across the UK regarding today's release of the film Emergency, a biopic of former India Prime Minister Indira Gandhi considered anti-Sikh propaganda," the group stated on X in time for the film's release on Friday.

"The film stars and was created by Kangana Ranaut, a notorious actress/politician in India, who pushes bigoted rhetoric about the minority Sikh-Punjabi community. Indira Gandhi was the PM who initiated the #SikhGenocide before her

assassination," the Sikh PA statement adds.

Meanwhile, Ranaut took to social media herself with a video expressing her gratitude and also voicing her disappointment regarding the film's reception in Punjab and among some Sikhs abroad. Speaking in Hindi, Ranaut said: "On behalf of Zee Studio, Manikarnika Film, and all the members of Ease My Trip, I would like to thank you all from the bottom of my heart. You all gave so much love and respect to our film. We don't even have words to express our gratitude. "But, I still have some pain in my heart. Punjab. In the industry, it was said that my films perform the best in Punjab. And today is a day when my film is not even allowed to be released in Punjab.

Teen pleads guilty to murder of three schoolgirls at UK dance class

London (PTI): An 18-year-old knife attacker accused of killing three schoolgirls at a Taylor Swift themed dance class in Southport, north-west England, last July pleaded guilty to all charges at the start of his trial at Liverpool Crown Court on Monday. Axel Rudakubana, born in the Welsh capital of Cardiff to a family of Rwandan heritage based in Lancashire in north-west England, was charged with 16 offences including the murder of Alice da Silva Aguiar, 9, Bebe King, 6, and Elsie Dot Stancombe, 7.

He was also charged with the attempted murder of 10 other people including eight children, as well as the production of ricin and possession of an Al Qaeda training manual. In a surprise move in court on Monday, Rudakubana reversed his previous not guilty pleas at the start of the teenager's murder trial expected to last from four to six weeks.

"You will understand it is inevitable the sentence to be imposed upon you will mean a life sentence," said Justice Julian Goose as he scheduled a sentencing hearing for Thursday. According to court reports, the accused wearing a face mask showed no emotion as the charges were read out to him. The attack, which took place during a summer holiday dance class for children at the Hart Centre in Southport, sent shock waves up and down the country.

Houthis to limit their attacks in Red Sea

Dubai (PTI): Yemen's Houthi rebels have signaled they now will limit their attacks in the Red Sea corridor to only Israeli-affiliated ships, just as a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip entered its second day Monday.

The Houthis' announcement, made in an email sent to shippers and others on Sunday, likely won't be enough to encourage global firms to reenter the route that's crucial for cargo and energy shipments moving between Asia and Europe. Their attacks have halved traffic through the region, cutting deeply into revenues for Egypt, which runs the Suez Canal linking the Red Sea to the Mediterranean.

"The ceasefire is considered fragile," said Jakob P. Larsen, the head of maritime security for BIMCO, the largest international association representing shipowners. "It is assessed that even minor deviations from the ceasefire agreements could lead to hostilities, which would subsequently prompt the Houthis to again direct threats against a broader range of international shipping."

The Houthis separately planned a military statement on Monday, likely about the decision. The Houthis made the announcement through their Humanitarian Operations Coordination Center, saying it was "stopping sanctions" on the other vessels it has previ-

ously targeted since November 2023. For Israeli ships, those "sanctions ... will be stopped upon the full implementation of all phases" of the ceasefire, it added. However, the center left open resuming attacks against both the United States and the United Kingdom, which have launched airstrikes targeting the rebels over their seaborne assaults.

"In the event of any aggression ... the sanctions will be reinstated against the aggressor state," the center said. "You will be promptly informed of such measures should they be implemented."

The Houthis have targeted over 100 merchant vessels with missiles and drones since the Israel-Hamas war in the Gaza Strip started in October 2023, after Hamas' surprise attack on Israel that killed 1,200 people and saw 250 others taken hostage. Israel's military offensive in Gaza has killed over 46,000 Palestinians, according to local health officials who do not distinguish between civilians and combatants but say women and children make up more than half the fatalities.

The Iranian-backed Houthis have seized one vessel and sunk two in a campaign that has also killed four sailors. Other missiles and drones have either been intercepted by separate US- and European-led coalitions in the Red Sea or failed to reach their targets, which have also included Western military vessels.

Pak's largest airport starts operations

Karachi (PTI): Pakistan's largest international airport, funded and built by all-weather ally China, in the restive Balochistan province was officially opened on Monday. The Gwadar International Airport and the Gwadar deep sea port built in the province under the USD 42 billion China-Pakistan Economic Corridor project (CPEC) are seen as important for boosting trade and regional connectivity by both countries. The Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) PK 503 aircraft was the first commercial flight to arrive at the new airport after its inauguration carrying commercial passengers and high-ranking officials. The aircraft which took off from Karachi after a 45-minute delay landed after an hour and 10 minutes flight.

China and Pakistan see the port city of Gwadar and its deep sea port and international airport as a hub of connectivity for the corridor, and an indispensable interchange for a 21st century Silk Route. The airport, equipped with modern facilities, is expected to play a critical role in boosting regional connectivity and strengthening Pakistan's position in global trade and infrastructure development. PM Shehbaz Sharif expressed satisfaction over the commencement of flight operations at Gwadar International Airport, calling it a major milestone in transforming Gwadar into a crucial link between Central and Eastern Asia, the Middle East, and Gulf countries. The PM highlighted the operationalisation of the airport as a significant step toward enhancing connectivity in Pakistan and the broader region.

Sample from remote Tanzanian region tests +ve for Marburg disease

Arusha (Tanzania): Tanzania's president said Monday that one sample from a remote part of northern Tanzania tested positive for Marburg disease, a highly infectious virus which can be fatal in up to 88% of cases without treatment. President Samia Suluhu spoke in Dar es Salaam, the commercial capital, alongside World Health Organisation chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus. WHO was the first to report on Jan 14 of a suspected outbreak of

Marburg that had killed eight people in Tanzania's Kagera region. Tanzanian health officials disputed the report hours later, saying tests on samples had returned negative results. Suluhu said Monday that further tests had confirmed a case of Marburg. Twenty-five other samples were negative, she said. Like Ebola, the Marburg virus originates in fruit bats and spreads between people through close contact with the bodily fluids of infected individuals or with surfaces, such as contaminated bed sheets. Symptoms include fever, muscle pains, diarrhea, vomiting and in some cases death from extreme blood loss. **PTI**



CHANGE OF NAME

Correct and full name of my father is Chander Deep Bhutani but it is written as Chander Deep in my Aadhaar card, educational certificates, Voter card, Shivam Deep r/o Top floor, House-26, Road-27, East Punjabi Bagh, Delhi-110026.

PD(1284)C I, Sanuj S/o Dharma Pal Singh R/o House No-82, Block-H1, Kunwar Singh Nagar, Ranholia, Nangloi, Delhi-110041, inform that I have changed the name of my minor daughter Shanvi to Shanvi Sansanwal for all future purposes.

PD(1285)A I, Suchi Garg W/o Sh. Ankur Garg D/o Sh. Anil Kumar Goel R/o H-1816 Prateek edifice, Sector-107, Noida, it is hereby inform to the public at large that my name has been changed from Suchi Goel to Suchi Garg due to my marriage with Mr. Ankur Garg.

PD(1286)C I, Raziya Tak, D/o, Mohammad, Fakarodin, R/O, B- 798, Jahangirpuri Delhi - 110033, that I, have Changed My Name from Raziya Tak to Rajiya, for all Purposes

PD(1289)C

Public Notice
This is to inform the general public that Mr. Bobby Bansal is the owner of Plot area measuring 160 sq. yds., i.e., 133.76 sq. mtrs. Out of khata no. 158, situated at village Mamura Pargana & Tehsil Dadri, Distt. Gautam Budh Nagar, U.P. through Gift deed dated 21.11.2022 regd. as doc. No. 7635 executed by Mrs. Rajendra in favour of Mr. Bobby Bansal in respect of said Plot.

Public Notice
This declaration is made at Delhi this 20th day of January, 2025 by Mr. Rajinder Pal Singh and Mrs. Dilpreet Kaur, residing at C-63 Y-1, Block-C, Dilshad Garden, Delhi-110095, do hereby state as follows:

- That it is informed to the public at large, Mr. Rajinder Pal Singh and Mrs. Dilpreet Kaur, has disowned and debar her daughter Tanveen Kaur Sandhu aged about 35 years, from inheriting all their movable and immovable properties as well as from business also.
- That it is further informed to the public at large, Mr. Rajinder Pal Singh and Mrs. Dilpreet Kaur, has disowned and debar their daughter Tanveen Kaur Sandhu from all his banking investments/savings / mutual funds / shares / negotiable instruments and from all kinds of investments.
- That it is further informed to the public at large, Mr. Rajinder Pal Singh and Mrs. Dilpreet Kaur, has severed all their relations with her.
- That it is further informed to the public at large, anybody dealing with her, shall do so at his/her own cost and risk.
- That Mr. Rajinder Pal Singh and Mrs. Dilpreet Kaur, shall not be responsible for any act done by her.
- That it is further informed for any act done by Tanveen Kaur Sandhu, the police shall not enquire, investigate anything from (Mr. Rajinder Pal Singh and Mrs. Dilpreet Kaur). They are senior citizens.

Sunil Kumar (Advocate) Of: 242A, Pocket-F, Dilshad Garden, Delhi-110095, M: 9811092792

PIRAMAL CAPITAL & HOUSING FINANCE LIMITED
Registered Office Address: Unit No.501, 6th Floor Piramal Amli Building, Piramal Agastya Corporate Park, Kamani Junction, Opp Fire Station, LBS Marg, Kurli (West), Mumbai- 400 070. CIN: L65910MH1984PLC032639, Website: www.piramalfinance.com
Branch Address: Dhiraj Baug, Building "A" Ground & 1st Floor, Beside Axis Bank, Opp. Monalisa Building, Agra Road, Hari Niwas Circle, Naupada, Thane (West) - 400 602.

DEMAND NOTICE
Under Section 13(2) of the Securitisation And Reconstruction of Financial Assets And Enforcement Of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with Rule 3 (1) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002. The undersigned is the Authorised Officer of Piramal Capital & Housing Finance Limited (PCHFL) under Securitisation And Reconstruction of Financial Assets And Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 (the said Act). In exercise of powers conferred under Section 13(2) of the said Act read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002, the Authorised Officer has issued Demand Notices under Section 13(2) of the said Act, calling upon the following Borrower(s) (the "said Borrower(s)"), to repay the amounts mentioned in the respective Demand Notice(s) issued to them that are also given below. In connection with above, notice is hereby given, once again, to the said Borrower(s) to pay to PCHFL, within 60 days from the publication of this Notice, the amounts indicated hereon below, together with further interest as detailed in the said Demand Notice(s), from the date(s) mentioned below till the date of payment and/or realization, payable under the loan agreement read with other documents/writings, if any, executed by the said Borrower(s). As security for due repayment of the loan, the following assets have been mortgaged to PCHFL by the said Borrower(s) respectively.

Name of the Borrower(s)/ Guarantor(s) / Loan Code	Demand Notice Date and Amount With NPA Date	Property address
(LC No. 01400005002 of Noida - Sector 2 Branch) Abdul Hussain (Borrower) Shanno Hussain (Co Borrower 1)	20-12-2024 / ₹ 737467 /- ₹ Seven lakh Thirty Seven Thousand Four Hundred Sixty Seven Only) NPA (09-12-2024)	Flat No. 389, First Floor, Sector A-6 Pocket-11, Block - 7 Dda Flats Narela Delhi New Delhi Delhi - 110040
(LC No. 19600043572 of Gurugram - MG Road Branch) Namd Lal Prasad (Borrower) Dewanti Devi (Co Borrower 1) Loveshuk (Co Borrower 2)	20-12-2024 / ₹ 2105558 /- ₹ Twenty one lakh Five Thousand Five Hundred Fifty Eight Only) NPA (09-12-2024)	Plot No. Rzf-77/17-d, 3rd Fr Floor Kharsa No. 43/ 15, Gali No. 11 Raj Nagar-2, Palam Colony New Delhi New Delhi Delhi - 110075
(LC No. 19700044244 of Gurugram - MG Road Branch) Bhagwanti. (Borrower) Ravi Kumar (Co Borrower 1)	20-12-2024 / ₹ 1420202 /- ₹ Fourteen lakh Twenty Thousand Two Hundred Two Only) NPA (09-12-2024)	Propno.-65-2nd Fr Without Roof Kh No.224, village Bindapur Anup Nagar Uttam Nagar New Delhi Delhi - 110059
(LC No. 19700044419 of Gurugram - MG Road Branch) Ramesh Kumar (Borrower) Suman Devi (Co Borrower 1)	20-12-2024 / ₹ 1471977 /- ₹ Fourteen lakh Seventy One Thousand Nine Hundred Seventy Seven Only) NPA (09-12-2024)	Plot No-RZ-C-15, Second Floor, Kharsa No. 261, Village Bindapur, Bindapur Extn. Uttam Nagar, New Delhi New Delhi Delhi - 110059
(LC No. 23400002298 of Noida - Sector 2 Branch) Zeeshan Khan (Borrower) Mahenzab Subhani (Co Borrower 1)	20-12-2024 / ₹ 581888 /- ₹ Five lakh Eighty One Thousand Eight Hundred Eighty Eight Only) NPA (09-12-2024)	Second Floor Flat No. 203 On Khet No. 87kh, 88kh,89,90,90k,92, Etc. Classic green Apartment Maheshpur Anoushahr, Koil Aligarh Aligarh Uttar Pradesh - 202001
(LC No. 27900001638 of Noida - Sector 2 Branch) Anil (Borrower) Kanta Devi (Co Borrower 1)	20-12-2024 / ₹ 835599 /- ₹ Eight lakh Thirty Five Thousand Five Hundred Ninety Nine Only) NPA (09-12-2024)	Flat No. 1F01, Third Floor Rhs, Kharsa No. 206/9,ambuj City, Akbarpur Beharapur Ghaziabad, Ghaziabad Uttar Pradesh - 201009
(LC No. 13100001613 of Delhi - Pitampura Branch) Kapil Manchanda (Borrower) Sandeep Manchanda (Co Borrower 1)	20-12-2024 / ₹ 1413769 /- ₹ Fourteen lakh Thirteen Thousand Seven Hundred Sixty Nine Only) NPA (03-11-2024)	Plot No -4-47-a, First Floor (rhs), Ram Dutt Enclave Uttam Nagar Delhi New Delhi Delhi - 110059
(LC No. 24900001493 of Delhi - Pitampura Branch) Jeetender (Borrower) Rajinder Kumar (Co Borrower 1)	20-12-2024 / ₹ 1317886 /- ₹ Thirteen lakh Seventeen Thousand Eight Hundred Eighty Six Only) NPA (03-10-2024)	Rz-231-b, 2nd Floor (Front Side) Kh No-67/11, Gali No. 6, Vill-palms Sadh Nagar New Delhi New Delhi Delhi - 110045
(LC No. 24900001498 of Delhi - Pitampura Branch) Jeetender (Borrower) Rajinder Kumar (Co Borrower 1)	20-12-2024 / ₹ 1171611 /- ₹ Eleven lakh Seventy One Thousand Five Hundred Eleven Only) NPA (03-10-2024)	Rz-231-b, 2nd Floor (Front Side) Kh No-67/11, Gali No. 6, Vill-palms Sadh Nagar New Delhi New Delhi Delhi - 110045
(LC No. 13000002250 of Gurugram - MG Road Branch) Rr Engineering Works (Borrower) Raj Kamal (Co Borrower 1) Satya Prakash Sharma (Co Borrower 2) Sangeeta Sharma (Co Borrower 3)	20-12-2024 / ₹ 119306 /- ₹ One lakh Nineteen Thousand Three Hundred Six Only) NPA (09-09-2023)	M. Machine. Name :- Vertical Machining Centers / Cosmos CNC Vertical Machining Center;Ap_Model_No. :- Model CVM 640,
(LC No. 13000002599 of Gurugram - MG Road Branch) Kuku Embroidery (Borrower) Sukhbir (Co Borrower 1) Gaurav Titoria (Co Borrower 2) G R Enterprises (Co Borrower 3)	20-12-2024 / ₹ 216275 /- ₹ Two lakh Sixteen Thousand Two Hundred Twenty Five Only) NPA (09-02-2023)	M. Machine. Name :- Star Kahoinar Machinery; Ap_Model_No. :- Computerised Embroidery Machine,
(LC No. 1960004541 of Gurugram - MG Road Branch) Deepika (Borrower) Pramod Kumar (Co Borrower 1)	20-12-2024 / ₹ 288496 /- ₹ Twenty Eight lakh Eighty Four Thousand Nine Hundred Sixty Eight Only) NPA (08-09-2022)	Plot No. C-157, Ugf, Rear Side Block-c, Mansa Ram Park,uttam Nagar,kharsara 10/3/5 Saikn Nagar, Uttam Nagar New Delhi New Delhi Delhi - 110059
(LC No. 24900001724 of Delhi - Pitampura Branch) Sita Ram Verma (Borrower) Anita Devi (Co Borrower 1)	20-12-2024 / ₹ 160126 /- ₹ Sixteen lakh One Thousand Two Hundred Sixty Six Only) NPA (20-07-2022)	C-132, 3rd fr front side with roof blk-C Gali No-36 kh no.117/9 vil- Palam Mahavir Enclave-III New Delhi Delhi - 110045
(LC No. HLSA0003857/B of Delhi - Shahdara Branch) Anil Kumar Srivastava (Borrower) Kiran Srivastava (Co Borrower 1)	20-12-2024 / ₹ 1719506 /- ₹ Eleven lakh Seventy Nine Thousand Five Hundred Sixty Eight Only) NPA (04-12-2024)	FF-B, First Floor Without Roof Rights, H No.18 & 19, Kharsa No.504/1, Near-Shalimar Tower, Extended Lal Dora, Village Barhi, Delhi North Delhi - 110084
(LC No. HLSA0003857/B of Delhi - Shahdara Branch) Anil Kumar Srivastava (Borrower) Kiran Srivastava (Co Borrower 1)	20-12-2024 / ₹ 1386983.14 /- ₹ Thirteen lakh Eighty Six Thousand Nine Hundred Eighty Three Only and Fourteen Paise) NPA (04-12-2024)	FF-B, First Floor Without Roof Rights, H No.18 & 19, Kharsa No.504/1, Near-Shalimar Tower, Extended Lal Dora, Village Barhi, Delhi North Delhi - 110084
(LC No. BLSA00017604 of Moradabad Branch) Sarfaraj Hussain (Borrower) SHAMEEM NAZ (Co Borrower 1)	20-12-2024 / ₹ 855032.62 /- ₹ Eight lakh Fifty Five Thousand Thirty Two Only and Sixty Two Paise) NPA (03-11-2024)	Gata no 25, Village sherpur mft Near ever green inter college Moradabad Uttar Pradesh 244411
(LC No. M0277942 of Bahadurgarh Branch) Manu Manchanda (Borrower) Bhavya Manchanda (Co Borrower 1)	20-12-2024 / ₹ 5259527.56 /- ₹ Fifty Two lakh Fifty Nine Thousand Five Hundred Twenty Seven Only and Fifty Six Paise) NPA (04-12-2024)	Flat No. 1 on 3rd Floor with Roof Rights, Left Side Of Built Up Property Bearing No.262, Out Of Kharsa No.47/3, Village Hastal, Land Measuring 121 Sq. Yds., West Delhi-110059

If the said Borrowers shall fail to make payment to PCHFL as aforesaid, PCHFL shall proceed against the above secured assets under Section 13(4) of the Act and the applicable Rules, entirely at the risks of the said Borrowers as to the costs and consequences. The said Borrowers are prohibited under the Act from transferring the aforesaid assets, whether by way of sale, lease or otherwise without the prior written consent of PCHFL. Any person who contravenes or abets contravention of the provisions of the said Act or Rules made there under, shall be liable for imprisonment and/or penalty as provided under the Act.

Date : 21-01-2025 Place: Delhi

Sd/- (Authorised Officer) Piramal Capital & Housing Finance Limited

KSOLVES
Emerging Ahead Always
Regd. Office: 317/27, Second Floor, Lane X, 3, Mehrauli Road, Saidulajab, Saket, New Delhi, South Delhi DL -110030, IN
Corp. Office : 2nd Floor, Smartworks, Tower D, Logix Cyber Park, C Block, Phase 2, Industrial Area, Sector 62, Noida, Uttar Pradesh 201301
Tel No. : 0120-4983581, E-mail: cs@ksolves.com, Website: www.ksolves.com

Extract of Unaudited Consolidated Financial Results for the Quarter & Nine Months ended on December 31, 2024 (Amount Rs. in Lakhs)

Particulars	Quarter ended on	Quarter ended on	Quarter ended on	Year to date figures for the year ended on	Year to date figures for the year ended on	Year to date figures for the previous year ended
	31/12/2024	30/09/2024	31/12/2023	31/12/2024	31/12/2023	31/03/2024
	Unaudited	Unaudited	Unaudited	Unaudited	Unaudited	Audited
Revenue from operations	3770.07	3482.05	2841.92	10409.15	7819.09	10,863.73
Profit before tax	1360.17	1358.54	1188.01	3802.11	3315.31	4586.70
Profit after tax	1031.77	919.01	893.59	2846.00	2475.62	3415.96
Total comprehensive income for the period	1003.36	915.31	888.11	2798.03	2463.44	3388.90
Paid up equity share capital (Face value: Rs. 10 per share)	1185.60	1185.60	1185.60	1185.60	1185.60	1185.60
Total reserves (including non-controlling interests)	2098.69	2043.77	1818.39	2098.69	1818.39	1197.62
Earnings per equity share Basic and diluted	8.70	7.75	7.54	24.00	20.88	28.81

Extract of Unaudited Standalone Financial Results for the Quarter & Nine Months ended on December 31, 2024 (Amount Rs. in Lakhs)

Particulars	Quarter ended on	Quarter ended on	Quarter ended on	Year to date figures for the year ended on	Year to date figures for the year ended on	Year to date figures for the previous year ended
	31/12/2024	30/09/2024	31/12/2023	31/12/2024	31/12/2023	31/03/2024
	Unaudited	Unaudited	Unaudited	Unaudited	Unaudited	Audited
Revenue from operations	3751.39	3477.16	2814.85	10374.88	7770.88	10807.34
Profit before tax	1346.08	1260.76	1179.17	3789.04	3300.68	4589.33
Profit after tax	1016.95	921.79	884.22	2834.93	2464.88	3422.95
Total comprehensive income for the period	988.54	910.09	878.74	2786.96	2452.70	3412.81

1. The full format of the quarterly Un-audited financial results is available on the website of the Stock Exchange (www.bseindia.com) and www.nseindia.com and also on the Company's website www.ksolves.com

By order of the Board
For Ksolves India Limited
Sd/-
Ratan Kumar Srivastava
Managing Director

Date : 19.01.2025
Place : Delhi

PUBLICATION
DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL
(Area of Jurisdiction- Part of Uttar Pradesh)
600/1, University Road, Near Hanuman Setu Mandir, Lucknow - 226007

Notice Under Rule 2 Of Second Schedule To The Income Tax Act, 1961 Read With Section 29 Of The Recovery Of Debt Due To Banks And Financial Institutions Act, 1993.
DRC No. 767/2023
ICICI BANK LTD.
Vs
AMIT NAMDEV & OTHERS
1. AMIT NAMDEV S/O HEMRAJ NAMDEV, R/o 153, Patelpuri Kanker Khera, Meerut, Cantt Meerut, U.P.-250001
2. NAMDEV TRIPSPORT CORPORATION, 153, Sardhana Road Kanker Khera, Meerut, Hanuman Mandir, Meerut-250001, Through its Sole Proprietor Amit Namdev,
3. RAJNI W/O AMIT NAMDEV, R/o 153, Patelpuri Kanker Khera, Meerut, Cantt Meerut, U.P.-250001
...Defendants

1. This is to notify that a sum of Rs. 21,75,511/- (Rs. Twenty one Lac Seventy Five Thousand, Five Hundred Eleven Only) together with pendente lite and future interest @10.00% per annum with monthly rest from the date of filing 11-05-2022 original application till full realization is made jointly & severally has become due from you as per the Certificate bearing No. 767/2023 dated 16.01.2023 in Original Application No. 643/2022 passed against you by the D.R.T., Lucknow.
2. You are hereby directed to pay the sum within 15 days of the receipt of this Notice, failing which the recovery shall be made in accordance with the Recovery of Debts Due to Bank and Financial Institution Act, 1993.
3. You are hereby ordered to declare on Affidavit the particulars of asset on or Before 09.05.2025.
4. You are hereby ordered to appear before the undersigned on 09.05.2025 at 10.30 A.M.
5. In addition to the sum aforesaid you will also be liable to pay the following Costs:-
Details of costs:-
Application fee Rs. 25,000/-
Counsel fees & Clerks Rs. NIL
Publication charges Rs. NIL
Miscellaneous Expenses Rs. NIL
Clerical Charges Rs. NIL
Given under my hand and seal at Lucknow this 26th day of November, 2024.
Recovery Officer-I
Debts Recovery Tribunal, Lucknow

Format C-1
(for candidate to publish in Newspapers, TV)
Declaration about criminal cases

(As per the judgment dated 25th September, 2018, of Hon'ble Supreme Court in WP (Civil) No.536 of 2011 (Public Interest Foundation & Ors. Vs. Union of India & Anr.)

Name and address of candidate: Pushpa Singh W/o Late Satbir Singh R/o. 301, Ward No.4, Mehrauli, New Delhi-30

Name of political party: **INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS**

Name of Election: **DELHI ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS 2025**

*Name of Constituency: **AC 45, Mehrauli, Vidhasabha I, Pushpa Singh, a candidate for the above mentioned election, declare for public information the following details about my criminal antecedents:**

A. Pending Criminal Cases

Sl. No.	Name of Court	Case No. and dated	Status of case(s)	Section(s) of Acts concerned and brief description of offence(s)
1.	In the Court of Judicial Magistrate first class Patiala House Court	Cr Case No. 54538/2024, Case Title State VS Priyanka Aggarwal & Others	Charge have not framed	FIR NO. 0048/ 2024, DATED 10/08/2024 POLICE STATION NAME - NORTH AVNUE, DISTRICT- DELHI, STATE, U/S 223(A)/ 3(S) OF BHARATIYA NAGARIK SANHITA 2023 False Disobeying an order from a public servant charges against the candidate

B. Details about cases of conviction for criminal offences

Sl. No.	Name of Court & (date(s) of order(s)	Description of offence(s) & punishment imposed	Maximum punishment imposed
1.	NA	NA	NA

*in the case of election to Council of States or States or election to Legislative Council by MLAs, mention the election concerned in place of the constituency.

Format C-1
(for candidate to publish in Newspapers, TV)

Declaration about criminal cases
(As per the judgment dated 25th September, 2018, of Hon'ble Supreme Court in WP (Civil) No. 536 of 2011 (Public Interest Foundation & Ors. Vs. Union of India & Anr.)

Name and address of candidate: **ABHISHEK DUTT S/O LATE KAMAL K DUTT, House No. D-18, Third Floor, South Extension Part 2, New Delhi -110049**

Name of political party: **INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS**

(Independent candidates should write "Independent" here)

Name of Election: **ELECTION OF LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF NCT 2025**

*Name of Constituency: **AC-42-KASTRUBA NAGAR CONSTITUENCY**

I **ABHISHEK DUT** (name of candidate), a candidate for the above mentioned election, declare for public information the following details about my criminal antecedents:

(A) Pending criminal cases

Sl. No.	Name of Court	Case No. and dated	Status of case(s)	Section(s) of Acts concerned and brief description of offence(s)
1.	COURT OF SH KARTIK TAPARIA JMFC-03/SED/SAKET ii	4995/2021	CASE IN INVESTIGATION PHASE & CHARGES NOT FRAMED	-IT IS THE CASE OF PROSECUTION THAT ON 15.07.2021, AT AROUND 3.00 PM TO 5.00 PM ACCUSED PERSONS WERE FOUND VIOLATING COVID-19 NORMS BY NOT WEARING MASK AND FOLLOWING SOCIAL DISTANCING.THEY WERE ALSO FOUND TO BE GOING IN A LARGE GROUP AND TAKING OUT A POLITICAL RALLY.

(B) Details about cases of conviction for criminal offences - NOT APPLICABLE

Sl. No.	Name of Court & (date(s) of order(s)	Description of offence(s) & punishment imposed	Maximum Punishment Imposed
1.	NA	NA	NA

*In the case of election to Council of States or election to Legislative Council by MLAs, mention the election concerned in place of the constituency.

Public Notice
This is to inform the general public that Sh. Satya Narayan is the GPA Holder of Plot Bearing No. 55-A, area measuring 65 Sq. Yds. out of Plot No. 65, Killa no. 10, situated in the revenue estate of Village Hastal, Delhi Colony Known as Zaidar Enclave, Mohan Garden, in Block-K/-1, Extn. New Delhi. He is in possession through GPA, ATS & WILL dated 10.02.2003 executed by Sh. Shambhu Nath in favour of Sh. Satya Narayan in respect of said Plot. Sh. Satya Narayan intends to transfer the ownership of aforesaid plot by way of Registered Gift Deed to Mrs. Guddi. Subsequently, Mrs. Guddi is in the process of mortgaging the said property with SBFM India Home Finance Co. Ltd. (Formerly Fullerton India Home Finance Co. Ltd.). Any objections or concerns regarding this transaction should be raised within a period of 07 days from the date of this public notice. Any objections submitted after the completion of this 07-day period will not be considered binding with respect to the said property of the interests of our client. If anyone wishes to raise an objection, please do so within the stipulated 07-days period by contacting Law Veritas (Advocates & Legal Consultants) at Office No. 11, 1st Floor, Building No. A-44/A, Sector-16, Noida, Uttar Pradesh-201301; Landline(s): +910120-3101683, e-mail: accounts@lvorth.in

PUBLICATION
DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL
(Area of Jurisdiction- Part of Uttar Pradesh)
600/1, University Road, Near Hanuman Setu Mandir, Lucknow - 226007

Notice Under Rule 2 of second Schedule to the Income Tax Act, 1961 Read with Section 29 of the Recovery of Debt due to Banks and Financial Institutions Act, 1993
DRC No. 541/2023
ICICI BANK LTD.
Vs
Mr. ASHISH KUMAR SARDANA & OTHERS

1. Mr. Ashish Kumar Sardana S/o Vinay Kumar Sardana R/o House No. C-16-435, Milan Vihar, Plot No. 72, IP Extension, Pratapnagar, Delhi - 110092. Also at- Flat No. 1/1201 A, 13th Floor, Block A-1 Gh-11, Ahinsa Khand-2, Indira Puram Ghaziabad-201010.
2. Mrs. Vikram Kumar Sardana S/o Jagan Nath Sardana R/o House No. C-16-435, Milan Vihar Plot No. 72, IP Extension, Pratapnagar, Delhi-110092
Also at- Flat No. 1/1201 A, 13th Floor, Block A-1 GH-11 Ahinsa Khand-2, Indira Puram, Ghaziabad-201010. ...Defendants

This is to notify that a sum of Rs. 1,24,42,959/- (Rupees One Crore Twenty Four Lac, Forty Two Thousand, Nine Hundred and fifty Nine Only) together with pendente lite and future interest @6.00% per annum with monthly rest from the date of filing 31.01.2022 original application jointly & severally with its cost succeeds in fully till realization is made has become due from you as per the Certificate bearing No. 541/2023 dated 02.01.2023 in Original Application No. 121/2022 passed against you by the D.R.T., Lucknow.
2. You are hereby directed to pay the sum within 15 days of the receipt of this Notice, failing which the recovery shall be made in accordance with the Recovery of Debts Due to Bank and Financial Institution Act, 1993.
3. You are hereby ordered to declare on Affidavit the particulars of asset on or Before 21/04/2025
4. You are hereby ordered to appear before the undersigned on 21/04/2025 at 10.30 A.M.
5. In addition to the sum aforesaid you will also be liable to pay the following Costs.
Details of costs:-
Application fee Rs. 150,000/-
Counsel fees & Clerks Rs. NIL
Publication charges Rs. NIL
Miscellaneous Expenses Rs. NIL
Clerical Charges Rs. NIL
Given under my hand and seal at Lucknow this 20th day of December, 2024.

PUBLICATION
DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL
(Area of Jurisdiction- Part of Uttar Pradesh)
600/1, University Road, Near Hanuman Setu Mandir, Lucknow - 226007

Notice Under Rule 2 of Second Schedule to the Income Tax Act, 1961 Read With Section 29 of The Recovery of Debt due to Banks and Financial Institutions Act, 1993.
DRC No. 592/2023
ICICI BANK LTD.
Vs
Mr. VIKR

Infrastructure sector needs ₹15 Lakh Crore annual outlay to achieve Viksit Bharat target: Mandaviya

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Union Minister Mansukh Mandaviya on Monday said the government's infrastructure investment budget should be Rs 15 lakh crore per annum, against Rs 11.5 lakh crore at present, for the next 25 years to achieve 'Viksit Bharat @2047' and social security for all.

This assumes significance in view of India's 100 years of independence in 2047 and the government's goal of 'Viksit Bharat@2047'.

Addressing the inaugural of ISSA-ESIC International Seminar 'Formalization & Social Security Coverage for Workers in the Informal Sector Challenges & Innovation', Mandaviya stated that the infrastructure investment budget was Rs 1.2 lakh crore in 2012 and this budget was Rs 2.4 lakh crore in 2014 under the Narendra Modi-led government.

"In 2024, the budget has been pegged at Rs 11.5 lakh crore.



We have to take it to Rs 15 lakh crore. When the government will invest Rs 15 lakh crore on infrastructure for the next 25 years, only then India will become a developed country (by 2047)," he said. He pointed out that the Indian economy is rapidly expanding, increasing the people's purchasing power and creating new jobs in the new sector. The minister is of the view that the government would have to

provide social security to workers in these new sectors. He noted that these gig workers who would be part of new sunrise sectors need social security under the government schemes. Mandaviya noted that the social security coverage was 24 per cent a decade ago, in 2014. Now, he said, it is 48 per cent which excludes food security and if we add food security to this, then the social security

coverage in the country is 68 per cent, which is a big achievement.

India has 1.4 billion population and under these circumstances, the government has done unmatched work in providing social security in the last decade, he noted.

Social security means health, pension, livelihood and food security. Today 600 million population have health security in India who get free treatment of up to Rs 5 lakh, he explained. India has brought 800 million people under the food security ambit. Every citizen gets 5 kg of foodgrains free of cost, he noted.

He said that informal workers are getting benefits from all these schemes in the country. In the last 10 years of the Modi government, 250 million people have come above the poverty line, mainly because of getting social security, he pointed out.

Today 630 million people are in the workforce in India and the female ratio in the workforce

participation has increased from 22 per cent a decade ago to 44 per cent at present, he noted.

India is emerging as a big market with FDI flowing and ease of doing business ranking has improved to 63 rank from 140 a decade ago, he noted.

The number of startups has increased here. Indian companies are going to become global companies, he stated. Stressing that Social security should be available to all workers, he stated that about 2000 years ago, Chanakya talked about it saying that an ideal government or economy is the one which makes provisions and ensures that the lowest strata of society or people living below the poverty line, live life with dignity.

"Now we see those people as formal or informal sector workers or government employees. Those people who are self-employed also come under the definition of workers and should get social security," he said.

Volta, Lumax among 18 firms selected in PLI scheme in third round

PTI ■ NEW DELHI



As many as 18 companies, including Volta, MIRC Electronics, Lumax and UNO Minda, with a committed investment of Rs 2,299 crore, have been selected to avail benefits under the production-linked incentive (PLI) scheme for white goods sector, an official said on Monday.

In October last year, 38 companies had filed applications with proposed investments of Rs 4,121 crore under the scheme in the third round.

"In the third round of the online application window of the PLI scheme, a total of 38 applications were received. After reviewing these applications, the government has provisionally selected 18 new companies. These companies include 10 manufacturers of components of air conditioners and eight manufacturers of LED Lights, with committed investment of Rs 2,299 crore," the commerce and industry ministry said. In addition, it said, six existing

PLI beneficiaries have been provisionally selected to upgrade to higher investment categories, committing an additional investment of Rs 1,217 crore.

It added that for air conditioners, companies will be manufacturing components like compressors, copper tubes, and heat exchangers among others. Similarly, for LED lights, LED chip packaging, drivers, engines, light management systems and metallised films for capacitors will be manufactured in India. "Altogether, 84 companies under the PLI Scheme for White Goods are set to bring investments of Rs 10,478 crore, resulting in production worth Rs 1,72,663 crore," it

said. According to the ministry, Volta Components has committed to invest Rs 256.73 crore to manufacture compressors. With Rs 51.5 crore investment, MIRC Electronics has proposed to make AC products like motors and heat exchangers.

The other applicants which are provisionally selected in the third round of PLI scheme for Air Conditioners included Jupiter Aluminium Industries with a committed investment of Rs 618 crore, Ram Ratna Wires (Rs 253 crore), SMEL Steel Structural (Rs 541.29 crore), and Next Generation Manufacturers (Rs 121.35 crore).

Similarly in the LED lights category, Lumax Industries has committed Rs 60 crore investment to make LED drivers. UNO Minda would invest Rs 19.82 crore. Out of 38 applications received during the third round, 11 are being referred to the Committee of Experts (CoE) for examination and its recommendations.

Settlement with borrowers only after exhausting all options, RBI to ARCs



PTI ■ MUMBAI

The Reserve Bank on Monday asked Asset Reconstruction Companies (ARCs) to go for settlement with borrowers only after exhausting all possible ways to recover dues.

The central bank has revised the 'Master Direction - Reserve Bank of India (Asset Reconstruction Companies) Directions, 2024 dated April 24, 2024'. Every ARC should frame a board-approved policy for the settlement of dues payable by the borrowers.

The policy should, inter alia, cover aspects like a cut-off date for one-time settlement eligibility, permissible sacrifice for various categories of exposures while arriving at the settlement amount and the methodology for arriving at the realisable value of the security, said the revised

guidelines on settlement of dues of borrowers by ARCs. "Settlement with the borrower shall be done only after all possible ways to recover the dues have been examined and settlement is considered as the best option available," it said.

Further, the settlement amount should preferably be paid in a lump sum. Where the settlement does not envisage payment of the entire amount agreed upon in one instalment, the proposals should be in line with and supported by an acceptable business plan (where applicable), projected earnings and cash flows of the borrower.

The guidelines provide procedures to be followed in cases where the settlement of accounts pertaining to a borrower with an aggregate value of more than Rs one crore or less.

Sensex rallies 454 points, Nifty ends above 23,300 on gains in banking shares, firm global trends

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark Sensex spurted by 454 points and Nifty closed above 23,300 on Monday following gains in banking, financial and power stocks amid firm global trends.

The 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 454.11 points or 0.59 per cent to settle at 77,073.44 as its 17 components advanced and 13 declined. Intra-day, it surged 699.61 points or 0.91 per cent to 77,318.94.

The NSE Nifty climbed 141.55 points or 0.61 per cent to 23,344.75 with 29 of its constituents ending higher. Among Sensex shares, Kotak Mahindra Bank jumped over 9 per cent after the firm posted a 10 per cent growth in its consolidated net profit at Rs 4,701 crore, aided by performance of capital markets-linked arms.

Bajaj Finance, Bajaj Finserv, NTPC, State Bank of India, Power Grid, HDFC Bank, Tech Mahindra and Asian Paints were the other gainers. However, Zomato fell the most by 3.14 per cent after food delivery platform reported weaker-than-expected financial results for the December quarter. Adani Ports, Tata Consultancy Services, Mahindra & Mahindra, Maruti and Tata Motors were also among the laggards. "A strong positive



sentiment from Asian markets bolstered domestic markets, starting the week on a healthy note. Further, a robust initial set of earnings from the banking and financial sectors triggered a broad-based rally, driven by the likelihood of improved earnings in the near future.

"However, uncertainties surrounding Trump's policies continue to linger, with investors eagerly waiting for more clarity," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services, said. The BSE smallcap gauge jumped 0.82 per cent and midcap index climbed 0.66 per cent.

Among BSE sectoral indices, telecommunication surged the most by 2.18 per cent, followed by bankex (2.03 per cent), power (1.39 per cent), financial services (1.24 per cent), utilities (1.17 per cent) and capital goods (0.96 per cent). BSE consumer discretionary, auto and FMCG were the laggards.

As many as 2,503 stocks advanced while 1,557 declined and 168 remained unchanged on the BSE. Global markets also advanced ahead of the inauguration of President-elect Donald Trump.

Trump announced that he had a 'very good' telephone call with Chinese President Xi Jinping and that the outcome was positive. Analysts said that it indicates that initially Trump would go slow on tariffs and would prefer to negotiate.

In Asian markets, Tokyo, Shanghai and Hong Kong settled in the positive territory while Seoul ended lower. Markets in Europe were trading higher. US markets ended in the green on Friday. Global oil benchmark Brent crude dipped 0.36 per cent to USD 80.50 a barrel. Foreign institutional investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 3,318.06 crore on Friday, according to exchange data.

Rupee further rises five paise to close at 86.55 against US Dollar

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The rupee appreciated five paise to close at 86.55 (provisional) against the US dollar on Monday, as an overnight decline in crude oil prices and the US dollar index supported investor sentiments.

Besides, a positive trend in domestic equities also helped the local currency, Forex traders said the rupee is likely to trade within a volatile range of 86.20-86.80 ahead of key events in the global and domestic economic landscape. At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened on a strong note at 86.48 against the greenback. During the day, the local unit touched an intraday high of 86.46 and a low of 86.57.

It finally closed at 86.55 (provisional), a rise of five paise against the US dollar. In the previous session on Friday, the rupee settled at 86.60.

According to Anuj Choudhary - Research Analyst at Mirae Asset Sharekhan, the rupee strengthened against the greenback on the weak tone in the US Dollar index and positive domestic markets. Overnight decline in crude oil prices also supported the rupee.

"We expect the rupee to remain weak on underlying strength in the US Dollar and importer demand for Dollars. However, any further correction in crude oil prices and extended gains in the domestic markets may

support the rupee at lower levels," Choudhary said. The US markets will remain closed due to the Martin Luther King Junior Day holiday.

USD/INR spot price is expected to trade in a range of 86.40 to 86.75.

Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading down 0.17 per cent to 109.16. Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, fell 0.50 per cent to USD 80.39 per barrel in futures trade.

In the domestic equity market, the 30-share BSE Sensex rose 454.11 points, or 0.59 per cent, to settle at 77,073.44 points, while the Nifty rose 141.55 points, or 0.61 per cent, to 23,344.75 points.

Engineers to protest privatisation of discoms

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Lakhs of power engineers will hold a nationwide agitation on Thursday against the government's attempt to privatise two discoms in Uttar Pradesh, a statement said.

Members of National Coordination Committee of Electricity Employees and Engineers (NCCOEEE) will also protest against the

government's move to hand over the power department of Chandigarh to a private entity.

The protest will be held in the state/ UT capitals on January 23, the statement by All India Power Engineers Federation (AIPEF), a part of NCCOEEE said.

NCCOEEE has demanded cancellation of pre-bidding conference for appointing a transaction consultant for

privatization of UP's Purvanchal Vidyut Vitran Nigam Ltd (PVVNL) and Dakshinanchal Vidyut Vitran Nigam Ltd (DVVNL), AIPEF Chairman Shailendra Dubey said. "On what basis will the assets worth billions of rupees of UP discoms PVVNL and DVVNL be handed over to private houses through their privatisation?"

Agriculture ministry launches first-ever national edible oil consumption survey



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Union agriculture ministry has launched its first-ever survey to assess edible oil consumption patterns in India, aiming to effectively implement the new Mission on Edible Oils-Oilseeds (NMEO-Oilseeds), a senior government official said.

The 45-day questionnaire-based survey, which began on January 9, will continue until

February 23. The initiative comes as India - the world's largest consumer and importer of edible oils - lacks recent data on consumption patterns.

"The survey aims to capture the consumption pattern and choice of edible oils, which will help in policy decisions," the official told PTI.

Industry reports indicate that per capita annual consumption of edible oil has risen to over 20 kg in India, significantly exceeding the recommended limits of 12 kg by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) and 13 kg by the World Health Organisation (WHO).

This marks a substantial increase from 2.9 kg in 1950-60, driven by factors such as rising incomes, urbanisation,

and changing dietary habits. The comprehensive survey focuses on household cooking oil preferences and includes questions about demographic details, domicile, and residence type.

It explores specific aspects such as types of oils used, deep-frying frequency, seasonal usage patterns, and factors influencing oil selection, including health benefits and price considerations.

The questionnaire also assesses public awareness about health risks like trans fats, attitudes toward oil reuse, and concerns about oils in packaged foods. Additionally, it examines consumer behaviour related to advertisements, label-reading practices, and

willingness to pay premium prices for healthier oil options. Survey results will help determine priority oilseeds under the NMEO-Oilseeds programme, scheduled to launch in the upcoming kharif (summer) season starting July. The mission, with a financial outlay of Rs 10,103 crore over seven years, aims to increase domestic oilseed production from 39 million tonnes in 2022-23 to 69.7 million tonnes by 2030-31.

Currently, India imports 55-60 per cent of its edible oil requirements from countries, including Indonesia, Malaysia, Argentina, Brazil, Russia, and Ukraine. In the 2023-24 oil marketing year, India's edible oil imports reached approximately 15.96 million tonnes.

Hindenburg says not under investigation by US SEC

PTI ■ TORONTO/NEW DELHI

US short-seller Hindenburg Research has said it is not under investigation by the US SEC as it rubbished alleged links of its founder to a hedge fund for preparing reports targeting companies.

"Hindenburg is not under investigation by the SEC, to our knowledge, and any suggestion to the contrary is false," the firm said after a Canadian portal cited documents filed before a court in Ontario to allege that its founder Nate Anderson was under cloud for alleged links with hedge funds.

Citing a cache of documents filed at the Ontario Superior Court of Justice in a complex defamation lawsuit, the Market



Frauds portal said the head of Canada's Anson hedge fund, Moez Kassam admitted his firm has shared research "with a wide variety of sources" including Hindenburg's Nate Anderson. Hindenburg colluded with Anson while preparing a report.

The preparation of bearish reports without disclosure of

participation can be charged as securities fraud by the US Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC).

Hindenburg said the report "is largely based on an anonymous Tongan blog that is rife with factual errors, wild theorizing, and demonstrates a complete lack of understanding of US law" and that it was "irresponsible" to "syndicate such rumours".

While short sellers borrow security, sell it on the open market, and expect to repurchase it for less money after their damning report against the company brings stock down, involvement of hedge funds raises eyebrows as they could also place parallel bets, putting more downward pressure on stock prices.

Kotak Mahindra bank shares surge post earning report

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Shares of Kotak Mahindra Bank on Monday jumped more than nine per cent after the firm posted a 10 per cent growth in its consolidated net profit at Rs 4,701 crore, aided by the performance of capital markets-linked arms.

The stock surged 9.15 per cent to settle at Rs 1,919.60 apiece on the BSE. During the day, it zoomed 9.68 per cent to Rs 1,929.

On the NSE, it soared 9.06 per cent to Rs 1,918 per share. The stock was the biggest gainer among the BSE Sensex and NSE Nifty firms.

The company's market valuation rallied Rs 31,999.66 crore to Rs 3,81,649.82 crore. The 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 454.11 points or 0.59 per cent to settle at 77,073.44. The NSE Nifty climbed 141.55 points or 0.61 per cent to 23,344.75.

The firm announced the earnings on Saturday. On a stand-alone basis, the private sector lender's net profit for the October-December period rose by 10 per cent.

The capital market arms - Kotak Securities and Kotak Mahindra Capital - delivered a 59 per cent growth in its profit at a combined Rs 542 crore.

Central Bank of India Q3 profit jumps 33 per cent to ₹959 Crore

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

State-owned Central Bank of India posted a 33 per cent increase in its profit at Rs 959 crore in the third quarter ended December 2024.

The bank had earned a net profit of Rs 718 crore in the same quarter a year ago. Total income increased to Rs 9,739 crore during the quarter under review against Rs 9,139 crore in the same period last year, the Central



Bank of India said in a regulatory filing. The interest income of the bank also rose to Rs 8,509 crore during the quarter compared to Rs 7,809 crore in the same period a year ago.

Operating profit of the bank improved to Rs 1,963 crore as against Rs 1,931 crore in December 2023.

On the asset quality side, the bank's gross Non-Performing Assets (NPAs) declined to 3.86 per cent of the total loans at the end of December 2024 from 4.50 per cent a year ago. Net NPAs or bad loans also came down to 0.59 per cent from 1.27 per cent at the end of the third quarter of the previous fiscal.

Paytm Q3 consolidated loss narrows to ₹208.5 Crore

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Fintech firm One97 Communications, which owns Paytm brand, has reported a narrowing of consolidated loss to Rs 208.5 crore in the third quarter ended December 31, 2024 mainly on account of reduction in expenses across the board, mainly on payment processing charges and employee costs.

The company had posted a loss of Rs 221.7 crore in the same period a year ago, the company said. The revenue from operations



of Paytm declined by 35.8 per cent to Rs 1,827.8 crore during the reported quarter, from Rs 2,850.5 crore in the December 2024 quarter driven by dip in revenue from payments and financial services (34 per cent), payment services (40 per

cent) and marketing services (48 per cent). The revenue was, however, up 10 per cent on a quarter-on-quarter basis showing a sign of recovery in the company's business.

The company is also looking for international expansion. It has set-up three overseas step-down subsidiaries of Paytm Cloud Technologies in the United Arab Emirates, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Singapore.

"We believe that our technology-led merchant payments and financial services distribution business

model has the potential for expansion in similar international markets.

"We have developed a portfolio of innovative hardware, software and services stack in India, which can be deployed and monetised internationally. We are exploring various approaches, including organic expansion/local licenses, strategic investment and partnerships," the filing said. During the quarter, Paytm's gross merchandise value (GMV) reached record high to touch the Rs five lakh-crore mark.

Praggnanandhaa defeats Harikrishna; Gukesh, Erigaisi draw in second round of Tata Steel Chess

PTI ■ WIJK AAN ZEE

Indian Grandmaster R Praggnanandhaa defeated compatriot Harikrishna, while Arjun Erigaisi settled for a draw in the second round of 87th Tata Steel Chess Tournament here. This was after world champion D Gukesh played out a draw with Russian-turned-Slovenian Vladimir Fedoseev while Leon Luke Mendonca lost another game, this time to Nodirbek Abdusattorov of Uzbekistan. The 19-year-old Praggnanandhaa's win over Harikrishna was a masterclass on defence and counter-attack. Playing white for the second time in as many days, Harikrishna could not find his magical touch even though he performed slightly better in the middle game. The younger Indian took him to the ropes and eventually the endgame, which should have been drawn. Harikrishna faltered when it

was necessary to put up resistance and Praggnanandhaa made the most of it to emerge victorious. Erigaisi pressed hard against local hero Anish Giri, who was almost winning against Gukesh in the opening round. The battle took a steep turn with both players fighting for advantage in the rook and knight endgame but as it turned out, the draw was a result that most experts expected. Fabiano Caruana was the player of the day as he gradually crushed second best Dutchman Jorden van Foreest right from the early middle game. It was an innocuous London system that Caruana started with and then capitalised on an unforced error to win a pawn which proved decisive. Earlier, after a tension filled game against Giri, Gukesh relaxed with his black pieces and was never in any problem against Fedoseev,



who is perceived as a strong opponent at all levels. With black, Gukesh was

looking only optically worse but the Indian equalised without much trouble



leading to an endgame with rook and four pawns apiece where the draw was a just

result. For Mendonca it was a bad day in office as he chose to

play the French defense and faced some new ideas by the Uzbek, who has been constantly working to get positions in which he can out-calculate his opponents. The early middle game saw both players castling on opposite flank and it was Mendonca's king that came in to scrutiny soon. Abdusattorov is a fierce attacker and he pounced on his chance to score his first victory. This was the first game to end in the day. In the challengers' section, R Vaishali was forced to split the point with 14-year-old Chinese sensation Miaoyi Lu after an intense battle with white pieces. Divya Deshmukh also opened her account in this section drawing with top seed Nguyen Thai van Dam of Czech Republic. After her first-round loss, this was an easy comeback for Divya, who is having her second stint here. **Results round 2:** Masters: Vladimir Fedoseev

(Slo, 1) drew with D Gukesh (Ind, 1.5); Erigaise Arjun (Ind, 0.5) drew with Anish Giri (Ned, 0.5); P Harikrishna (Ind, 1) lost to R Praggnanandhaa (Ind, 1.5); Nodirbek Abdusattorov (Uzb, 1.5) beat Leon Luke Mendonca (Ind, 0); Vincent Keymer (Ger, 1.5) drew with Max Warmerdam (Ned, 1); Fabiano Caruana (Usa, 1.5) beat Jorden van Foreest (Ned, 0.5); Alexey Sarana (Srb, 1) drew with Wei Yi (Chn, 1). **Challengers:** Divya Deshmukh (Ind, 0.5) drew with Nguyen Thai van Dam (Cze, 1.5); R Vaishali (Ind, 1.5) drew with Miaoyi Lu (Chn, 1.5); Nodirbek Yakubov (Uzb, 1.5) drew with Nodirbek Kazybek (Kaz, 0.5); Benjamin Bok (Ned, 1.5) beat Ediz Gurel (Tur, 1); Arthur Pijpers (Ned, 0.5) drew with Aydin Sulemanli (Aze, 1); Svane Frederik (Ger, 1.5) beat Oro Faustino (Arg, 0); Irina Bulmaga (Rom, 0) lost to Erwin LAmi (Ned, 1.5).

Satwik-Chirag eye first title of season, Lakshya Sen aims to bounce back

PTI ■ JAKARTA

Star Indian men's doubles pair of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty will be eying its maiden title of the year while Lakshya Sen will look to put behind a disappointing start to the season when the Indonesia Masters Super 500 tournament gets underway here on Tuesday. The world No 9 duo of Satwik and Chirag has been in a fine form, reaching semifinals of the last two tournaments — Malaysia Open Super 1000 and India Open Super 750 — over the last as many weeks and will be keen to cross the final hurdle. Satwik-Chirag had lost each of the two semifinals in straight sets and their aim would be to go the distance in the upcoming tournament. They will open their campaign with a round of 32 clash against Chinese Taipei's Chen Zhi-Ray and Yu Chieh



Lin. The challenge, however, would be greater for India's singles players Sen and PV Sindhu when they take the court here. The 23-year-old Sen, who had finished fourth in last year's Paris Olympics has lost twice in the first round over the last two weeks, will be determined to put his best foot forward in the round of 32 clash. Priyanshu Rajawat will also begin his campaign at the same stage, taking on Japan's

Kodai Naraoka. However, two other Indians will face off in the men's singles qualification round as Kidambi Srikanth, who did not feature in India Open, will look to get the better of Kiran George. In women's singles round of 32, Sindhu will open her campaign against Chinese Taipei's Sung Shuo Yun, Aakarshi Kashyap will face Japan's world No 19 Nozomi Okuhara and Anupama Upadhyaya will take on local

player Gregoria Mariska Tunjung. Sindhu lost in the quarterfinals of the India Open and the two-time Olympic medallist Indian star will be keen to make amends. In women's singles qualification, Isharani Baruah will face compatriot Rakshitha Ramraj while Tanya Hemanth will clash against Chinese Taipei's Tung Ciou-Tong. Tanisha Crasto and Ashwini Ponnappa will begin their women's doubles campaign in round of 32 against Thailand's Ornicha Jongsathapornpan and Sukitta Suwchai. Tanisha will team up with Dhruv Kapila for their mixed doubles' round of 32 game against Indonesia's Adnan Maulana and Indah Cahya Sari Jamil. In the same round, Rohan Kapoor and Ruthvika Gadde will face off against England's Gregory Mairs and Jenny Mairs.

Skater Shruti Kotwal hopes to qualify for Winter Olympics through AWG

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Indian skater Shruti Kotwal has set her sights on the Asian Winter Games (AWG) in Harbin, China, next month as a platform to qualify for the 2026 Winter Olympics to be held in Italy. Kotwal, who is training in the United States, will be leading the country's 41-member athlete contingent in the AWG to be held from February 7 to 14. Kotwal said the AWG will be a big opportunity for her to test herself against the best skaters in the world. "I'm focusing on the 500m and 1000m events for Olympic qualification. The timing requirements are incredibly challenging - sub-40 seconds for the 500m and under 1:20 for the 1000m. My Indian national record is 41.97 seconds and I need to skate under 40 seconds to qualify," Kotwal told SAI Media. This will be Kotwal's



second appearance in the AWG after 2017, when the Asian meet was held in Japan. "Countries like South Korea, Japan, and China consistently produce strong skaters who are technically and physically exceptional. I've faced some of these competitors in previous events and understand their strengths. It's a tough field," said the 33-year-old from Pune. Several Indian speed skaters are training in Korea

for AWG and contestants from at least 24 nations are expected to take part in the continental event. Kotwal said the Khelo India Winter Games have been an ideal platform for skaters aspiring to make a mark at the international level. "Khelo India Winter Games brings everybody together. It really helps to promote the sport. We didn't have that when we started and I think the skaters now are very lucky," said Kotal.

Singapore signs Anup Sridhar as additional singles coach



PTI ■ SINGAPORE

India's Asian Championships Bronze-winning former shuttler Anup Sridhar was on Monday roped in as a singles coach by the Singapore Badminton Association (SBA). However, South Korean Kim Ji-hyun will continue to be the head coach for SBA's men's and women's teams. "We do not have a start date as it is dependent on the work visa approval, and we certainly want Anup to join us as soon as possible," Prof David Tan, SBA's Vice President (Business Development and Communications), told PTI. "All I can say is that it is not a short-term contract, and all other terms are confidential," he added. Tan also refuted media reports that the 41-year-old Sridhar, who has three international titles and a Commonwealth Games mixed team bronze to his credit, was going to be the men's singles head coach. "SBA is indeed appointing Anup Sridhar to this role as Singles Coach, but this is not as men's singles head coach as erroneously mentioned by the media in India, as well as by the commentator during the live telecast of the quarterfinals match between Loh Kean Yew and Viktor Axelsen in the India Open," Tan said. SBA had advertised for the position of an additional singles coach. The required qualifications included a minimum of five years' experience within a national badminton team structure with a primary focus on singles. Sridhar was captain of the Indian Thomas cup team in 2006 and 2008.

Sunrisers Eastern Cape beat Durban Super Giants by six wickets in SA20

PTI ■ GQEBERHA

Sunrisers Eastern Cape defeated Durban Super Giants by six wickets to enter the playoffs of the SA20 here. After three consecutive defeats, the defending champions have certainly turned the corner and seemed to have peaked form, that has seen them win back-to-back SA20 championships in the last two seasons. Last season's leading wicket-taker Marco Jansen (2/23) led the comeback by delivering a special new-ball performance for the Sunrisers Eastern Cape on Sunday night. Jansen was well supported by Englishmen -- pacer Richard Gleeson (2/19) and left-arm spinner Liam Dawson (2/11) along with Otneil Baartman (2/30) as they restricted the visitors to 115/8. Sunrisers Eastern Cape then chased down the target with six wickets in hand with as many as 28 balls remaining.



Asked to bowl, Jansen knocked over Durban Super Giants opener Brandon King with the second ball of the innings which sent a near-capacity St George's Park crowd into raptures. "Glad to have it on a string. Going well at the moment. It's not easy to bowl in the powerplay, for me it's all about taking wickets and everything just falls in place," Jansen said. "I try to bowl in the channel consistently. We have the best crowd in the country, appreciate them coming out." Durban Super Giants innings was held together by New

Zealand international Kane Williamson (44 off 45 balls), but received precious little support until last-man Naveen-ul-Haq struck 30 not off just 15 balls. Sunrisers Eastern Cape's reply was led by opener David Bedingham's rapid 39 at the top of the order before Jordan Hermann maintained the momentum with 23 in the middle-order. But it was left to captain Aiden Markram to provide the finishing touches as Sunrisers chased the bonus point with the skipper finishing unbeaten on 31 off just 20 balls.

Iga Swiatek's drug-case ruling will not be appealed by World Anti-Doping Agency

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Iga Swiatek's one-month suspension for failing a drug test will not be appealed by the World Anti-Doping Agency because her explanation "is plausible," WADA announced on Monday. WADA released its decision just minutes after Swiatek, a five-time Grand Slam champion and former No. 1-ranked women's tennis player, sealed a 6-0 6-1 victory against Eva Lys to reach the Australian Open quarterfinals. Unlike the Swiatek case, WADA did appeal the exoneration of current men's No. 1 Jannik Sinner and a hearing is scheduled to be heard at the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) in Lausanne, Switzerland, in April. Sinner was not suspended because the International Tennis Integrity Agency (ITIA) determined he was not negligent for two positive tests



for an anabolic steroid in March. The resolution of Swiatek's case was made public by the ITIA in late November. She already had been sidelined provisionally, missing three tournaments in October, and finished her ban during the sport's offseason. "WADA sought advice from external legal counsel, who considered that the athlete's contamination explanation was well evidenced, that the ITIA decision was compliant with the World Anti-Doping Code, and that there was no

reasonable basis to appeal it to the CAS," Monday's statement from WADA said. Swiatek accepted a one-month suspension after testing positive for the banned substance trimetazidine, a heart medication known as TMZ. Swiatek failed an out-of-competition drug test in August, and the ITIA accepted her explanation that the result was unintentional, and caused by the contamination of the non-prescription medication melatonin that she was taking for issues with jet lag and

sleeping. The ITIA said it determined her level of fault was "at the lowest end of the range for no significant fault or negligence." That "scenario," WADA said on Monday, "is plausible and that there would be no scientific grounds to challenge it." On the eve of the Australian Open, Swiatek described the initial period she was sidelined, which she chalked up at the time to personal reasons, as "pretty chaotic" and said, "For sure, it wasn't easy; it was probably, like, the worst time in my life." "It got pretty awkward. Like, we chose for the first tournament to say personal reasons because we honestly thought the suspension is going to be lifted soon," Swiatek said in Melbourne. "From the beginning it was obvious that something was contaminated because the level of this substance in my urine was so low that it had to be contamination.

Novak Djokovic is ready to concentrate on his quarterfinal showdown with Carlos Alcaraz

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Novak Djokovic got the mea culpa he wanted from the Australian Open's local broadcaster and its employee who insulted him on the air and so, according to tournament organisers, the 24-time Grand Slam champion is ready to concentrate on his quarterfinal showdown with Carlos Alcaraz. "Novak acknowledges the apology has been given in public as requested," read a statement issued Monday by Tennis Australia, "and is now moving on and focusing on his next match." That, perhaps, will draw a curtain on the bizarre off-court distraction as Djokovic pursues what would be an 11th championship at Melbourne Park and a record 25th major trophy overall. After winning at Rod Laver Arena on Sunday evening to set

up the contest against No. 3 Alcaraz, Djokovic declined to do the customary post-match on court TV interview, but didn't immediately say why, eliciting some jeering from spectators. Only later that night, at his news conference, did Djokovic explain that he was taking a stand to protest comments made by Tony Jones on Channel 9 on Friday. Djokovic, a 37-year-old from Serbia, did not name Jones, but said a "famous sports journalist who works for official broadcaster Channel 9... Made a mockery of Serbian fans and also made insulting and offensive comments toward me." Jones called Djokovic overrated and a has-been and made what seemed to be a reference to when the player was deported from Australia in 2022 because he was not vaccinated against COVID-19. Djokovic added that he would



continue to avoid speaking to the network without an apology from it and Jones.

Those finally arrived on Monday. Nine Network said in a statement it apologised "for any offense

caused from comments made" while live on air. "No harm was intended towards

anything. I genuinely feel for those fans." Serbia's ambassador to Australia, Rade Stefanovic, even got involved Monday, telling the Sydney Morning Herald newspaper that Jones' comments were "clearly unprofessional," including a "most concerning" reference to what happened three years ago when Djokovic was kicked out of the country ahead of the tournament amid the pandemic. Before Jones and his employer offered their apologies, Djokovic posted a message on social media reiterating why he declined to speak. That drew a reply from billionaire X owner Elon Musk, who said, "It's way better just to talk to the public directly than go through the negativity filter of legacy media." Djokovic replied to Musk's tweet with "Indeed" and a raised-hands emoji.

Novak or his fans," the statement continued. "We look forward to further showcasing his Australian Open campaign at Melbourne Park." During an appearance on a TV show Monday, Jones said he intended his words as "banter" and apologized to Djokovic "if he felt that I disrespected him." "I considered it to be humor, which is consistent with most things I do," Jones said. "Having said that, I was made aware ... That the Djokovic camp was not happy at all with those comments. I immediately contacted the Djokovic camp and issued an apology to them. And as I stand here now, I stand by that apology to Novak." Jones also offered words to Serbians. "I do feel as though I've let down the Serbian fans," he said. "I'm not just saying this to try and wriggle out of trouble or

Mbappé puts on a show again with two goals as Real Madrid beats Las Palmas

PTI ■ MADRID

With Kylian Mbappé putting on a show again, Real Madrid returned to the top of the Spanish league. Mbappé continued his scoring streak with a brace as Madrid routed 10-man Las Palmas 4-1 on Sunday, prompting a big ovation at Santiago Bernabeu stadium for the France star who has struggled at times in his first season with the Spanish powerhouse. "It's always a dream to get a standing ovation at this stadium," Mbappé said. "I'm really happy, I've adapted to the team and I can play the way I want to. Everyone enjoys the team's game. All the Real Madrid players are leaders because it's the best team in the world. We have to be united because we have to win a lot of things. You always have to win at Real Madrid." Mbappé now has scored four goals in his last four matches with Madrid.

Brahim Díaz and Rodrygo also scored for Madrid as it overtook Atletico Madrid to begin the second half of the league season. Madrid is two points ahead of city rival Atletico, which on Saturday saw its record 15-game winning streak end in a 1-0 loss to Leganes. Madrid opened a seven-point lead over third-placed Barcelona, which drew 1-1 at Getafe on Saturday. "It was an important match for us," Mbappé said. "We knew what happened yesterday with Atletico's defeat and Barcelona's draw and we wanted to get the win. We started badly because we conceded an early goal, but the team's reaction was outstanding. We looked for space and played fast and with quality." It was the second straight victory for Madrid after an embarrassing 5-2 loss to Barcelona in the Spanish Super Cup final in Saudi Arabia on Jan. 12. After Rodrygo was fouled,



Mbappé converted an 18th-minute penalty kick on Sunday after the visitors had taken the lead through Fábio Silva one minute into the match at the Santiago Bernabeu stadium. Díaz put Madrid ahead in the 33rd and Mbappé added his second goal in the 36th after an assist by Rodrygo. Rodrygo scored his third goal in three matches in the 57th. Mbappé thought he had scored a hat trick near the end of the first half but his goal was disallowed for offside. He also hit the woodwork in first-half stoppage time. Jude Bellingham had a goal disallowed after video review in the second half. "Mbappé's great form is helping us a lot," Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti said. "Our work today was very good. We managed to get the right balance to handle the good moments and the difficult ones." Las Palmas, sitting in 14th place

and enduring a three-game losing streak across all competitions, had Benito Ramirez sent off for a high kick in the 64th. He initially was shown a yellow card but video review determined he deserved a red card. Defender David Alaba made his return to action after a long knee-injury layoff in the 77th. He hadn't played since December 2023. Madrid was without forward Vinicius Júnior because of a suspension. **President Pérez** As the only candidate, Florentino Pérez was reelected Madrid president on Sunday, securing his control of the club until 2029. Other results Earlier Sunday, fourth-place Athletic Bilbao won 2-1 at 13th-place Celta Vigo, while ninth-place Rayo Vallecano drew 1-1 at 10th-place Osasuna. Valencia moved out of last place by beating Real Sociedad 1-0 at home for its first league win since November.



Elena Svitolina rallies to reach the Australian Open quarterfinals for third time

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Elena Svitolina was 4-1 down before she went on a roll and took 11 of the next 12 games in a 6-4 6-1 victory over Veronika Kudermetova on Monday to reach the Australian Open quarterfinals for the third time. The 30-year-old Ukrainian is into the last eight at a Grand Slam for the 12th time and will next play No. 19 Madison Keys, who had a 6-3 1-6 6-3 win over Elena Rybakina, the 2022 Wimbledon champion and 2023 Australian Open runner-up. Keys has twice reached the semifinals in Australia, in 2015 and 2022, and entered the season's first major with a title in Adelaide earlier this month. Svitolina is back in the quarterfinals in Australia for the first time since 2019. "Feels like a lifetime ago," Svitolina said. Since then, she has married French player Gael Monfils in 2021 and the pair had a daughter, Skai, in 2022. "Many things happened and I'm really pleased with the performance throughout the tournament. Really enjoying this win today." After dropping two early service games to Kudermetova, she said her only goal "was just trying to fight." "It's the only thing I can do when things are not going your way, put your head down and get back to work," she said. "Really happy I could come (back) into the match and then win in straight sets." In a message written on a TV camera lens after the match,

the No. 28-seeded Svitolina wrote "The Spirit of Ukraine" and drew a heart shape. Svitolina, the No. 28 seed, wore a red dress, red shoes and a red cap for the match. People in the crowd waved the yellow and blue Ukraine flag. Kudermetova took a medical timeout for on-court treatment on her abdomen after falling behind 5-4 the first set. She left the court for treatment after losing the first set. Kudermetova saved a breakpoint and held for 1-1 in the second set, following up a forehand winner down the line with a loud roar. That was the end of her celebrating. It wasn't just power and pace from Svitolina that was the difference between the pair. After bringing Kudermetova to the net with a drop shot and then lobbing over her to start the next game, Svitolina punched the air. There was no handshake at the net with Kudermetova, a 27-year-old from Russia, but no animosity, either. Svitolina's husband, Monfils, was playing later Monday against No. 21 seed Ben Shelton on Margaret Court Arena. The 38-year-old Frenchman reached the fourth round with an upset over fourth-seeded Taylor Fritz, the US Open runner-up last year. Other quarterfinalists will be decided when defending champion Jannik Sinner and No. 13 seed Holger Rune meet in an afternoon match and five-time major winner Iga Swiatek takes on Eva Lys, the lucky loser from qualifying, in a night match.

Rishabh Pant named captain of Lucknow Super Giants for upcoming IPL 2025

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Dynamic keeper-batter Rishabh Pant was on Monday named the captain of Lucknow Super Giants for the upcoming IPL and he vowed to give his "200 percent" to win the team's maiden title. Pant was picked at the mega auction for an IPL record Rs 27 crore by the franchise owner Sanjiv Goenka. "I will give my 200 percent. That's my commitment to you. I will try whatever is there in my power to repay the faith. I am really excited and looking forward to new beginning and new energy. And have a blast out there with lot of fun," Pant told mediapersons after being unveiled as the new skipper. "We start with new hope and aspirations. And most importantly, new confidence. I wanted to introduce you all to our new captain Rishabh Pant," Goenka said. This is Pant's second stint as a



leader in the IPL. At his former franchise Delhi Capitals, the captaincy became a point of contention, leading the 27-year-old Pant to opt out of DC's retention plans after unsuccessful negotiations. Pant beat Nicholas Pooran to secure the top job after Rahul didn't feature in the list of LSG's retained players. LSG had retained Pooran, Mayank Yadav, Ravi Bishnoi, and Ayush Badoni before the auction.

Right after the auction, Goenka made a cryptic remark that the franchise wanted to keep players who put the team first ahead of their personal goals and milestones, which was construed as a dig at Rahul who often struggled to score at a brisk pace. Asked about his new team going the distance in the IPL, Pant sounded optimistic. "Definitely happy with the team. We have a mix of youth and experienced players. We

have not been there where we wanted to be... That's the journey how we can take this franchise to newer heights. Despite DC's interest in keeping him, they were not fully committed to him leading the side, prompting Pant to re-enter the auction. At the auction, they pipped Sunrisers Hyderabad, LSG to get Pant for Rs 20.75 crore, eventually they had to raise their price to Rs 27 crore to outbid Delhi Capitals' right-to-match card. "I know it's a new beginning for me, new franchise, new owner. The ideology of captaining the side doesn't change. We will add a lot of things which we will discuss with the management and will see how we would take this forward in a better way." Speaking about his captaincy mantra, "I've learnt from a lot of captains, seniors. You don't only learn from captains, a lot of senior players are also there.



Rohit Sharma, Yashasvi named in Mumbai squad for next Ranji game

PTI ■ MUMBAI

India captain Rohit Sharma will show up in a Ranji Trophy match for the first time in almost a decade after he and rising star Yashasvi Jaiswal were named in Mumbai's squad for their fixture against Jammu and Kashmir, starting January 23 at MCA-BKC Ground here. The team will continue to be led by the seasoned Ajinkya Rahane, the Mumbai Cricket Association (MCA) said while announcing the squad on Monday. Rohit had confirmed his participation for the next round of the Ranji Trophy match on Saturday during a press conference to announce India's squads for limited-overs series against England and the Champions Trophy next month. When asked if he would play in the next domestic game for his state team, Rohit replied, "I will". Of late there have been questions over Rohit's form in the longest format after his forgettable outing in his last eight Tests, including against New Zealand at home and against Australia Down Under. The India skipper had showed up for a training session for Mumbai on January 15 as it became clear after the team's disastrous tour of Australia that the BCCI has made it mandatory for the players to feature in domestic circuit. Soon after, Jaiswal too joined the Mumbai camp which trained at the BKC ground as he had a few batting sessions

with his domestic team. The BCCI recently made it mandatory for all contracted India players to participate in domestic cricket except when there are fitness issues. Rohit had cited a busy schedule with the national team among reasons for not playing domestic cricket. "(In) the last 6-7 years, I can at least tell about what has happened with me since I've started playing Test cricket regularly, which is from 2019, you hardly have any time (in hand)," he told media. "And then, when you play so much international cricket through the year, you need some time off as well as a cricketer just to refresh, get your mind right, just to be ready for the upcoming season." "But we have addressed it now and nobody takes it for granted or anything like that. It is just based on looking at how one has gone through the season, how much rest he needs. "Based on all of that, we decide what is going to happen with certain players. Now it's been made mandatory that if there is time, you have to play domestic cricket," he said. Mumbai squad: Ajinkya Rahane (captain), Rohit Sharma, Yashasvi Jaiswal, Ayush Mhatre, Shreyas Iyer, Siddhesh Lad, Shivam Dube, Hardik Tamore (wk), Akash Anand (wk), Tanush Kotian, Shams Mulani, Himanshu Singh, Shardul Thakur, Mohit Awasthi, Sylvester Doueza, Royston Dias, Karsh Kothari.

Yes, transition phase is coming but I don't need to prove anything to anyone: Axar Patel

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Contender to take veteran Ravindra Jadeja's place permanently at some point, spin-bowling all-rounder Axar Patel is aware of the possibilities that may arise during India's big Test transition but he doesn't feel the need to prove "anything to anyone" to make his case. Axar, who turned 31 on Monday, has been Jadeja's under-study for the past decade with same skill-sets but with a bit of less finesse than his fellow senior Gujarati. In his 11-year-international career, Axar has taken 184 wickets across three formats and 55 of them have come in 14 Tests, two of which were in Bangladesh when Jadeja was unfit. Talk about Indian cricket's transition and whether he stands to gain, India's T20 vice-captain's offered a matter of fact response. "Yes, a transition phase is coming, and ultimately, it's the selectors' and captain's call. I don't feel the need to prove anything to anyone," Axar gave an uncomplicated answer. "My approach is to focus on fulfilling the role assigned to me and continuously improving myself. If I perform well, my



place in the team will take care of itself automatically." In his mind, he is an all-format player and that belief is unshakable. "I just keep telling myself that I have played all three formats be it Tests, ODIs, or T20s. My focus is on doing well whenever I get an opportunity, rather than feeling the need to prove anything to anyone, whether I'm picked or not. "I don't take the pressure of thinking that I deserve a spot. It is always about the team combination and whether there is any room for me." He wasn't disappointed when he didn't make the cut for Border-Gavaskar

Trophy as it was not meant to be. Instead, he concentrated on a T20I series in South Africa where he played all the games. "When it comes to selection or the Australia series, I think more about where I can get opportunities rather than whether I deserve a place. "It's all part of a cricketer's journey -- only 15 players can be in the squad and you can't take your place for granted. I don't think in those terms." There has been a lot of chatter about communication between the Gautam Gambhir-led support staff and the players during the series Down Under. When asked about it, Axar carefully sidestepped the issue but did say that in a fast-paced format like T20, it is more about specific strategic inputs and roles. In that regard, he felt that "communication is pretty clear." "I was not with the team for last two and half months so I do not have much idea what was going on in Australia. But it's the same support staff, we just have the inputs that is required from bowling coach and the batting coach. "T20 is a fast-paced format, so it's about making correct decisions, so we discuss that only. What role do I have to play?"

Champions League makes January debut with high-stakes clash of PSG and Manchester City

PTI ■ GENEVA

The first Champions League games to be played in January include one with shocking possible consequences in an unpredictable debut season for the 36-team format. Paris Saint-Germain vs Manchester City on Wednesday is a clash of super-wealthy state-backed teams currently a barely believable 25th and 22nd in the standings. If the 2020 beaten finalist and 2023 champion play to a draw at Parc des Princes, both could start the 18-game final round on January 29 outside the top-24 places that qualify for the knockout stage. The new format that replaced the

traditional groups — now with eight games instead of six, facing eight different opponents, and two in January — is unknown territory even for UEFA, whose preseason prediction that eight points should ensure advancing likely will fall short. However, few imagined what would play out in the first six rounds. Man City and PSG have struggled, Real Madrid has lost half its games in 20th place despite adding Kylian Mbappé to a title-winning team, and lowest-ranked debutant Brest has cruised to four wins and seventh in the standings, just ahead of Lille. "It would have been impossible to list these eight clubs as being in the top eight

positions," Giorgio Marchetti, the UEFA deputy general secretary, told The Associated Press in a recent interview. "There is a lot of new fresh air." "I think the format has an impact," Marchetti said, pointing to comments by Inter Milan coach Simone Inzaghi that it is more difficult to prepare for eight different opponents instead of three. "It is more of a challenge." Which positions are teams playing for? The top eight in the standings on January 29 advance directly to the round of 16 that starts in March. They will likely include current leader Liverpool and second-place Barcelona which are the only two teams already certain to finish in the top 24. Liverpool is the only team to



win all six games. Teams placed from ninth to 24th go into the new knockout playoffs round. Nos. 9-16 will be seeded in the draw on January 31 and will play the second leg at home. Teams

placing 17 to 24 host the first legs. Nos. 25-36 in the standings are eliminated and do not transfer to the Europa League. Already out are Leipzig, Slovan Bratislava and Young Boys

which each lost all six games. Tuesday games Liverpool hosts Lille and Barcelona is at 15th-place Benfica. Atletico Madrid in 11th place can rise above visiting Bayer Leverkusen, which is in fourth place with just one point more. Aston Villa, the 1982 European Cup winner, can qualify for the round of 16 with a win at 16th-place Monaco. Stuttgart, in 26th place, is favored to win at Slovan and move to 10 points, which would put pressure on PSG and Man City. Wednesday games Real Madrid hosts struggling Salzburg, and third-place Arsenal can secure its round of 16 entry — and do Man City a

favor — by winning at home against 24th-place Dinamo Zagreb. Sixth-place Inter Milan goes to Sparta Prague, and Bayern Munich, in a surprising 10th place with 12 points, travels to Feyenoord which is 18th with 10 points.

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JPHCL
JHARKHAND POLICE HOUSING CORPORATION LIMITED
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House No. 399/B, Road No.-4/C, Ashok Nagar, Ranchi-834002
0651-2214712, Fax:0651-2202400 (CIN: U45200JH2002SGC012154)

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