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INSIDE

**MONEY 10**  
EXPENDITURE AT MAHA KUMBH TO  
PUSH GDP GROWTH IN Q4: CEA

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## SENSEX IN A TAILSPIN

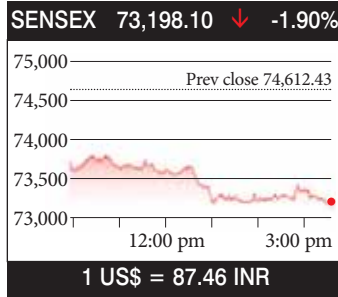


PRASANNA SINGH  
GUEST REPORTER

September. So if the Nifty Mid-cap and small cap indices both hit their peaks early in September, the broader indices comprising the BSE Sensex and the Nifty 50, comprising larger cap stocks, actually hit their highs in the final week of September, on September 27. Today, while the large caps indices are down 155 points from their peaks, the mid cap and small cap indices are down 21 per cent and 25 per cent respectively. Of course, the correction in many hyped stocks is even worse. For crores of retail investors who had piled into stocks after watching a breathless post-COVID rally that rarely stuttered, it has been agonising, watching their 'wealth' evaporate. Especially when we consider how even at the peak,

many complained that the rise has been driven by a few, select stocks disproportionately. Leaving only index fund holders uniformly happy. **SO WHY DID THE MARKETS CORRECT SO STEEPLY?** The answer lies in the previous rise itself. Like almost all sustained bull markets, the highs the market saw in September was the fag end of a period of sustained growth, a lot of it is not justified anymore by the quarterly results many key sectors and firms showcased between Q2 and Q3. Worse, when compared to global peers, India's markets were once again trading at a premium, at par with, or higher than most global markets bar the still frothy US markets. A premium, most foreign investors seem to have

### MARKETS



decided, is not justified in a volatile global environment. And followed it with almost 2 Lakh Crores of sustained selling since. All the anecdotal and actual signals were blinking red, namely, the stamped like rush for IPOs

among firms and investors alike, and perhaps the worst of all, a quiet reducing of stakes in many firms by promoters. As always, among all the reasons trotted out to explain these warning signs, perhaps the most silly, and eventually foolish one as always, was that 'this time it's different'. It never is. India's growth prospects have become almost mythical now, in how there is a bull case for 10 per cent GDP growth, yet, we always find our economy overheating at the first signs of a sustained period of 8 per cent growth or even less. Brought down by rising inflation, corruption scandals, or yet another election or oil price spike. The recent trend towards giveaways without a funding plan

has not helped. The final trigger for the slide in 2025 has largely been the Trump administration and its actions, threatened or otherwise. If there is one thing that the market does not like, it is uncertainty. And the Trump administration has added dollops of it to global trade and markets including India with its tariff threats and actions. For many investors this is their first experience with a correction this sharp and long. And they will seek to find answers in every argument, right from the decision to raise capital gains tax on stock market gains, to the tougher rules for FII investments, or the government's apparent pause on further public sector privatisation. Perhaps all of these make a good

point, or perhaps not. After all, wasn't this the year when domestic investors had all but made foreign investors irrelevant according to many claims, including from the government? Clearly not, as we can see. Quite simply, sentiment has turned, and from a change in direction, taken a complete U-turn it would appear. That is not quite as uncommon or improbable as it seems, as stock markets are prone to going to extremes in either direction. One feels we are quite close to the point where the downturn might have gone well beyond what fundamentals justify. But readers will do well to remember that eventually, one thing that the stocks markets do best consistently is reward performance. So firms that meet their projections for three or more quarters without fail, will eventually find their efforts rewarded.

## 41 trapped in Uttarakhand avalanche

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ DEHRADUN/NEW DELHI

Heavy snowfall in Uttarakhand resulting in an avalanche led to at least 41 Border Roads Organisation workers (BRO) being buried in the high altitude border village of Mana, Chamoli district on Friday. The workers were clearing snow when they were trapped. The snowslide had initially buried 57 men but 16 were pulled out safely. There was no immediate news of casualties and rescue efforts were on. Later, 32 of total 57 workers were rescued on Friday, sources said. The avalanche has buried a camp of the BRO between Mana and Badrinath and multiple teams battled



Rescue operation underway after BRO labourers got trapped under an avalanche, in Chamoli district of Uttarakhand

tough terrain, heavy snow and rain to rescue the workers, sources said. Mana, three kilometres from Badrinath, is the last village on the India-Tibet border at a height of 3,200 metres. It was also learnt rescue

operations have been halted due to bad weather and the impending danger of more avalanches. It will restart when the weather improves, sources said. Himachal Pradesh and higher reaches of Jammu and Kashmir also saw snowfall and rain. Several northern states including Delhi, Punjab and Haryana received rainfall leading to a dip in temperature. As regards the mishap in Uttarakhand, the avalanche buried a camp of the BRO between Mana and Badrinath, Chamoli District Magistrate Sandeep Tiwari said as multiple teams battled tough terrain, heavy snow and rain to rescue the workers.

## HM directs Delhi Govt, Police to act tough on Bangladeshis

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI



HM Amit Shah with Delhi CM Rekha Gupta chairs a meeting to review law and order situation in Delhi

**RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI**  
Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Friday reviewed law and order situation in the national Capital with Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta while directing Delhi police to take action against the networks that help illegal Bangladeshis and Rohingyas entering India, to take measures to ensure women safety, and

ensure ruthless action against inter-state gangs. It was the first top level interaction after BJP came to power. The AAP regime did not attend such meetings in its 10-year rule. A key decision taken in the meeting was regarding the expeditious disposal of the 2020 Delhi riots cases. Shah urged the Delhi government to appoint special prosecutors to ensure speedy trials, as per the MHA. Another policy shift was announced regarding construction-related matters, where it was decided that Delhi police permission would no longer be required. The Union Home Minister said strict action should also be taken against police stations and sub-divisions that consistently perform poorly. On traffic congestion, Shah said the Delhi Police should identify the places witnessing traffic jams daily and the Delhi police commissioner and chief secretary should meet and find a quick solution to this.



## Bureaucrat back at SEBI, after stormy Buch era

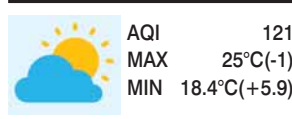
PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Tuhin Kanta Pandey, the government's divestment man who played a key role in sale of Air India as well as listing of the Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC), has been appointed as head of SEBI, marking return of bureaucrat at the helm of market regulator. Pandey, the top bureaucrat in the Finance Ministry, will replace Madhavi Puri Buch, whose term ends Friday as chairman of the SEBI. Buch, 60, who was the first woman and the only person from the private sector to head SEBI, had a tumultuous three-year term marked with allegations of conflict of interest as well as sweeping overhaul of regulations. Prior to her, the position was mostly held by bureaucrats. A career bureaucrat, Pandey, 59, is currently the finance secretary and is known to be stickler for rules and a clean image. He will have a three-year term. He is the second bureaucrat from the finance ministry to have been appointed to key roles in the financial sector since December. His colleague in charge of the revenue department Sanjay Malhotra was in December appointed as Governor of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI). A 1987-batch Odisha-cadre Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer, Pandey has been the longest serving secretary, serving for over five years. The role of finance secretary was added to his portfolio in September last year by virtue of him being the senior most among the secretaries in the finance ministry.

## Heatwave days ahead in March

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

### WEATHER



India is likely to witness above-normal maximum temperatures in most parts between March and May. According to the India Meteorological Department (IMD), more heatwave days are also likely to be witnessed across most parts of the country during the months. IMD data shows India also recorded its warmest February in 124 years with an average temperature of more than 22°C. For the first time, the average minimum temperature across the country was recorded at over 15°C, which is the warmest, recorded ever. In terms of the average maximum temperature, February 2025 has been the second warmest, just behind the corresponding month in 2023. In terms of the average maximum temperature, February 2025 has been the second warmest, just behind the corresponding month in 2023. The reverse happened in 2022. April of that year in north India was the hottest on record, while temperatures in Feb were close to normal. The IMD attributed the unusual rise in temperature to a presence of strong easterly winds, which they said were blocking the cool sea breeze. The IMD declares a heatwave

most parts of the country except some parts of Northwest India and South Peninsula, where normal minimum temperatures are most likely," the IMD said. According to IMD, above-normal heatwave days are likely over most parts of central India and adjoining northern parts of South Peninsula and some areas of northwest and east India.. Analysis of IMD's century-long temperature data shows the October-December post-monsoon season is warming at a rate of 1.01°C per century, followed by the January-February winter months at 0.73°C. Pre-monsoon (March-May) and monsoon (June-September) seasons are warming at relatively slower rates of 0.62°C and 0.45°C respectively. Delhi recorded its warmest February night in 74 years, with the minimum temperature at Safdarjung reaching 19.5°C on Thursday — the highest for the month in the period between 1951 to 2025, according to the IMD. Meanwhile, the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) said, "Delhi recorded its lowest AQI in 2025, today, with average AQI clocking 121, as per the daily AQI Bulletin by CPCB. Average AQI of 121 for Delhi on Friday is the lowest during January - February in last three years since 2023."



(Left to right): LoP Atishi interacts with police personnel after allegedly being stopped from entering the state Vidhan Sabha premises on Friday and Delhi Assembly speaker, Vijendra Gupta



Delhi Assembly speaker, Vijendra Gupta

## Delhi Speaker, Atishi engage in letter war

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

A letter war erupted between the Delhi Assembly speaker, Vijendra Gupta and the Leader of Opposition (LoP), Atishi on Friday, following the suspension of 21 MLAs from the Vidhan Sabha, with Atishi calling it an "insult to the people's mandate" while Speaker Vijendra Gupta defended the move, citing parliamentary rules and past disruptions. The controversy deepened when the suspended MLAs including former chief minister Atishi were prevented from entering the Assembly premises the next day while attempting to hold a protest at the Mahatma Gandhi statue. The LoP termed the move "unprecedented" and accused the BJP government of "crossing all limits of dictatorship" by stifling the Opposition's voice.

"The Opposition was expelled from the House for chanting 'Jai Bhim' slogans, while BJP MLAs continued raising 'Modi-Modi' slogans without any repercussions. Preventing Opposition MLAs from entering the Assembly premises is a blatant insult to democracy," Atishi asserted. "This is an insult not only to the MLAs but also to the mandate given by the people," she said. Responding to Atishi's claims, the Speaker rejected the allegations of bias and accused the Opposition of disrupting the proceedings of the House. He defended the decision to bar the suspended MLAs from the premises, citing Assembly Rule 277, which states that "A member who has been suspended from the service of the House shall be barred from entering the premises of the House and from taking part in the proceedings of the

House and Committees". Gupta also criticised the Opposition's conduct, stating that disruptions had begun even before the LG's address. Referring to the Speaker's election on February 24, he wrote, "It should have been a dignified process. Unfortunately, the process was marred by sloganeering and disruption by the opposition members. Despite this unbecoming conduct, I exercised restraint and did not take any disciplinary action." Regarding the LG's address on February 25, Gupta pointed to the fifth schedule (code of conduct rules), which mandates that interruptions during the LG's speech be treated as "disrespect towards the Lt Governor and contempt of the House". He said suspending the MLAs was not an arbitrary decision but based on clear parliamentary rules.

## A home preserved to keep identity alive

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ITANAGAR

In a fast-changing world, where traditions are often forgotten, a young woman is ensuring her community's heritage lives on—not in books or behind glass, but within the very walls of her home. Leike Chomu, a 24-year-old from the Monpa community in western Arunachal Pradesh, has turned her 200-year-old ancestral house into a living museum. More than just a collection of artefacts, the museum itself is a piece of history—built using ancient Monpa techniques with mud and stone. "It's about keeping our cultural identity alive," Chomu said. The idea was mooted by WWF India as part of its efforts to safeguard the unique heritage of the Monpa community. However, the transformation of the house into a museum was something she took on personally.

From restoring the structure, conserving artefacts and setting up the space to make it accessible to visitors, Chomu has been actively involved in every step. "For me, this is more than just a project. It is my family's legacy," she added. With modernisation rapidly changing traditional lifestyles, she wanted to safeguard Monpa knowledge and everyday practices before they faded away. Instead of creating a conventional museum with only artefacts, this initiative preserves the house itself, showcasing Monpa architecture, lifestyle, and traditions, Chomu said. Visitors don't just see historical objects. They can experience how the Monpa people lived centuries ago, she added. After months of dedication, the museum was formally launched on October 5 last year. Since then,



Artifacts displayed inside the museum that Leike Chomu, a 24-year-old woman from the Monpa community, created after transforming her 200-year-old ancestral home, at Chug Valley in the Dirang area of West Kameng district, Arunachal Pradesh

many tourists and culture enthusiasts have visited. "They are amazed that the museum isn't just about objects but the house itself, its architecture, the way of life, and the stories it holds. Visitors appreciate the authenticity, often describing it as a rare and immersive experience that feels like stepping back in time," Chomu added. Some have even mentioned that walking through the house gives them a deep sense of connection to the Monpa heritage. Originally from Chug Valley under Dirang in West Kameng district of the northeastern state, Chomu holds a BSc degree in agriculture with a background in agroecology. Her deep connection to the land and traditional knowledge has fueled her passion for heritage preservation. "The museum is my ancestral house. I have worked to preserve and transform it into a living museum," she explained.

## Chess colossus, Boris Spassky dies at 88

PTI ■ MOSCOW

Boris Spassky, a Soviet-era world chess champion who lost his title to American Bobby Fischer in a legendary 1972 match that became a proxy for Cold War rivalries, died Thursday in Moscow. He was 88. The death of the one-time chess prodigy was announced by the International Chess Federation, the game's governing body. No cause was given. Spassky was "one of the greatest players of all time," the group said on the social platform X. He "left an indelible mark on the game." The televised 1972 match with Fischer, at the height of the Cold War, became an

international sensation and was known as the "Match of the Century." When Fischer won the international chess crown in Reykjavik, Iceland, the then-29-year-old chess genius from Brooklyn, New York, brought the US its first world chess title. Fischer, known to be testy and difficult, died in 2008. After his victory of Spassky, he later forfeited the title by refusing to defend it. Former world champion Garry Kasparov wrote on X that Spassky "was never above befriending and mentoring the next generation, especially those of us who, like him, didn't fit comfortably into the Soviet machine."

# CM highlights India's scientific rise on National Science Day

**STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL**

Chief Minister Mohan Yadav stated that a structured, science-based approach, encouragement of curiosity, and the adoption of advanced technologies have paved the way for India to be counted among the world's leading nations. He emphasized that this achievement has been made possible under the leadership and guidance of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The state government is continuously striving to enhance the lives of ordinary citizens by maximizing the use of science in governance, education, and public administration.

Yadav addressed students and youth at an event organized at Vigyan Bhawan in Bhopal on National Science Day, based on the theme "Empowering

Indian Youth for Global Leadership in Science and Innovation for a Developed India." He inaugurated the program by lighting a lamp and offering floral tributes to Goddess Saraswati. Prior to this, he also paid tribute to the great Nobel Prize-winning scientist, C.V. Raman, by garlanding his statue.

On the occasion of National Science Day, Dr. Yadav inaugurated the "Center of Excellence in STEM Education" at Vigyan Bhawan. During his visit, he observed various models and scientific equipment that help students easily understand different scientific principles. He also toured an exhibition showcasing scientific models and innovations created by students, engaging with them in discussions about their projects.

As part of the event, Dr. Yadav planted a tree under the "One Tree in the Name of Mother" initiative. He also interacted with progressive farmer Puralal Kushwaha from Tikamgarh, who demonstrated his innovative wind and water-powered irrigation pump.

The event was attended by several dignitaries, including Ashok Kadel, Director of the Madhya Pradesh Hindi Granth Academy; Shriram Tiwari, Director of Vikramaditya Research Institute and Cultural Advisor to the Chief Minister; and Anil Kothari, Director General of the Madhya Pradesh Council of Science and Technology.

Yadav launched several science-based initiatives, including Capacity Development Program for Crop Insurance, 13th Madhya Pradesh Artisans'

Science Conference, Science Exploration Journey, Entrepreneurship Development Program, National Science Conference under Vikramotsav-2025, Science Festival, and Patent & Technology-Based Training-Center Establishment Posters.

During the event, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between the Madhya Pradesh Council of Science & Technology and VIT Bhopal to foster academic and scientific collaboration. The Chief Minister also unveiled "Rachna," a magazine of the Madhya Pradesh Hindi Granth Academy.

Yadav highlighted that India is experiencing a golden era under Prime Minister Modi's leadership, making significant strides in science at a global level. He cited India's remarkable achieve-

ments in vaccination and digital payments during the COVID-19 pandemic, noting that while countries like the United States and the United Kingdom faced disruptions, India efficiently and successfully managed its vast population with commitment and expertise. He emphasized that India has a long tradition of curiosity-driven scientific advancements. Long before the invention of the telescope in the West, India practiced Navagraha (nine-planet) worship and made pioneering contributions to astronomy. Lord Krishna's teachings in "Yat Pinde Tat Brahmam" reflect the interconnectedness of the universe and the human body, while "Charaiveti-Charaiveti" signifies the continuous flow of time. He also pointed out that the law of gravity was already present in ancient Indian scriptures.



Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav inaugurates center of excellence in STEM education during a programme at Madhya Pradesh Council of Science and Technology (MAPCST) on the occasion of National Science Day in Bhopal on Friday.

## State Election Commissioners to meet at Pench National Park

**STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL**

The 31st conference of State Election Commissioners from various states will be held at Pench National Park in Seoni district from March 1 to 4. A total of 22 State Election Commissioners will participate in the event, where discussions will focus on challenges encountered during local body elections and strategies to address them. The conference will also highlight innovations, reforms, and the integration of new technologies in the electoral process.

According to the schedule set by the commission, the conference will commence on March 2. In the first session, Madhya Pradesh State Election Commission

Secretary Abhishek Singh will present a demonstration on conducting panchayat elections through e-polling booths and paperless booths. A film showcasing the process will also be screened. Additionally, Andhra Pradesh State Election Commissioner Neelam Sahni will present insights on the automated local body election process. The second session will feature a meeting of the Standing Committee of State Election Commissioners to deliberate on challenges faced during local body elections and their solutions.

On March 3, subject experts will present strategies to enhance transparency in the election process, strengthen democracy, facilitate remote voter registration, and implement online voting. Discussions will also include

the adoption of new technologies in local elections. Representatives from organizations such as Electronics Corporation of India Limited (ECIL), Bharat Electronics Corporation (BEL), and ITI Limited, Bangalore, will introduce new innovations in election management.

On March 4, the State Election Commissioners will embark on an educational tour, during which the Madhya Pradesh State Election Commission will showcase a demonstration of a paperless booth. Key attendees of the conference will include Andhra Pradesh State Election Commissioner Neelam Sahni, Dr. Vijay Dev (Delhi-Chandigarh), Daulat Havaldar (Goa), Dr. B.K. Tiwari (Jharkhand), G.S. Sangreshi (Karnataka), Madhukar

Gupta (Rajasthan), Madhusudan Padhi (Odisha), I. Rani Kumudini (Telangana), Anil Kumar Khanchi (Himachal Pradesh), Alok Kumar (Assam), B. Jothi Nirmalasamy (Tamil Nadu), Dinesh T. Waghmare (Maharashtra), K.C. Lepcha (Sikkim), B.R. Sharma (Jammu & Kashmir), Sudhanshu Pandey (Dadra & Nagar Haveli, Daman & Diu), Sharadendu Chaudhary (Tripura), Dr. S. Muralikrishnan (Gujarat), Raj Pratap Singh (Uttar Pradesh), Sushil Kumar (Uttarakhand), Dr. Deepak Prasad (Bihar), and A. Shahjahan (Kerala). The host, Madhya Pradesh State Election Commissioner Manoj Kumar Srivastava, along with secretaries and officials from various election commissions, will also participate in the conference.

## 150 staff allegedly confined over Holi event dispute

**PNS ■ INDORE**

Four student leaders from the Government Science College in Indore were suspended for allegedly holding more than 150 staff members hostage after they denied permission to celebrate a Holi programme. Official sources said that the students had planned to organise the 'Holkar Ka Holi Fest' on March 7, featuring DJ performances and a "rain dance". A civil services examination co-sponsored the event, which also demanded an entry fee of Rs 150. The college administration denied permission for the event, but the students ignored it and pasted posters on the campus

about the event, sources said. "The students had put up posters on February 23, announcing a Holi event at the college on March 7 without the permission of the principal. These posters were removed on the instructions of the college head," an official said citing an administration's investigative report. A protest was organised by the students against the administration's decision to remove the posters. The door of the college's Yashwant Hall was closed from outside and its power supply was also cut off on February 24, the report said. Officials said that a meeting of about 150 was underway when the incident happened, and peo-

ple, including female professors, were trapped for about 30 minutes due to heavy screaming and heckling by the students. Principal of the college, Anamika Jain, said an investigation conducted by the district administration found four students guilty of "gross indiscipline." The investigation report termed this act as a serious indiscipline and recommended strict action against the four student leaders. Thus, all four were expelled and were instructed to collect their transfer certificates, she added. The college was established in 1891 by the then Holkar rulers of Indore. The district administration has launched an investigation into the incident.

## BMC frees public spaces across city

**Bhopal:** The Bhopal Municipal Corporation (BMC) on Friday carried out anti-encroachment operations in several areas of the state capital, removing kiosks, carts, shops, and structures from roads, footpaths, and public spaces. As part of an ongoing drive to free public spaces from the clutches of encroachers, BMC teams targeted AIIMS Gate Nos. 2 and 3, Jahangirabad, Chhola Dussehra Ground, Ratnagiri, Anand Nagar, Gandhi Nagar, ISBT, Karond Square, Station Bajarria, Link Roads 1, 2, and 3, Jawahar Chowk, and more. The teams dismantled unauthorised signboards, sugarcane crushers, and kiosks while preventing further encroachments on stormwater drains, ensuring better public accessibility and safeguarding urban infrastructure from illegal construction and misuse. BMC officials said, "Strict action will continue against encroachments to maintain public order. The corporation is committed to ensuring smooth movement for pedestrians and vehicles by keeping public spaces free from unauthorised occupation." Also on the day, BMC honoured five retiring employees for their dedicated service at a ceremony held at the Mata Mandir municipal office, where they were presented with shawls, coconuts, certificates, flower bouquets, and sweets as tokens of appreciation for their contribution to civic administration. Assistant Commissioner R.D. Sharma bid farewell to Afroz Ali, Hargovind Rajput, Ganesh Ram, Jamuna Prasad, and Kiran Pradhan, acknowledging their invaluable service. Officials including S. Nazeer Ahmed, Shamim Qureshi, Anand Kumar Phoolwani, O.P. Saxena, Rajendra Saxena, and others attended the event. The BMC extended its best wishes, encouraging them to enjoy well-earned relaxation, pursue hobbies, and cherish time with loved ones.



Shahar Qazi Maulana Syed Mushtaq Ali Nadvi and other clerics gather for sighting of the moon and to announce the beginning of the holy month of Ramadan at Moli Masjid in Bhopal on Friday. Pioneer photo

## Preparations underway for National Rowing Championship

**STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL**

Cooperation, Sports, and Youth Welfare Minister Vishvas Kailash Sarang reviewed the preparations for the 42nd National Rowing Championship in a meeting with senior officials of the Sports and Youth Welfare Department on Friday. He instructed officials to ensure proper arrangements for the accommodation, food, security, and other essential facilities for players and coaches. Additionally, the championship will be broadcast live on LED screens at Boat Club and major intersections across the city, allowing sports enthusiasts to witness the thrilling competition. The meeting was attended by Sports and Youth Welfare Department Director Ravi Kumar Gupta, Joint Director B.L. Yadav, and other senior officials. Sarang announced that the 42nd National Rowing Championship will be held

from March 3 to 7 at the Madhya Pradesh State Water Sports Academy, Boat Club, situated on the Upper Lake in Bhopal. Chief Minister Dr. Mohan Yadav will inaugurate the event on March 3. The opening ceremony will feature special demonstrations of rowing, kayaking-canoeing, sailing, and slalom sports by the athletes of the Madhya Pradesh State Water Sports Academy, offering spectators a spectacular display of water sports. The championship will witness participation from around 500 athletes representing 25 states, competing in a total of 14 rowing events. This national competition will provide an excellent platform for the country's top rowers to showcase their talent. The 42nd National Rowing Championship will feature competitions in senior men's, senior women's, and para rowing categories, with all races covering a distance of 2000

meters. In the Senior Men's category, events will include Single Sculls (M1X), Double Sculls (M2X), Coxless Pairs (M2-), Coxless Fours (M4-), Lightweight Men's Double Sculls (LM2X), Open Double Sculls (M2X - Civilian), Coxless Fours (M4 - Civilian), Quadruple Sculls (M4X), and Coxed Eights (M8+). The Senior Women's category will feature Single Sculls (W1X), Double Sculls (W2X), Coxless Pairs (W2-), Coxless Fours (W4-), Lightweight Women's Double Sculls (LW2X), Quadruple Sculls (W4X), and Coxed Eights (W8+). For Para Rowing, competitions will include Para Men's Single Scull (PR3M1X) and Para Women's Single Scull (PR3W1X). With extensive preparations in place, the championship is set to be a grand sporting spectacle, attracting top rowing talent from across the country.

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I, Syed Naved Alam, hereby declare that the particulars given above are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

**Syed Naved Alam PUBLISHER THE PIONEER**

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## Police takes action on viral video girl

**STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL**

A video of a girl standing and dancing on a moving bike while hurling abuses along with two male companions on VIP Road has sparked outrage among commuters. The video, which has gone viral on social media, shows the girl giving flying kisses to pedestrians while the bike speeds through the busy road. Eyewitnesses reported that the girl's co-riders misbehaved with pedestrians and taunted them when they tried to capture the incident on camera. The reckless stunt and public nuisance have drawn strong criticism from the public, who have demanded strict action against the offenders. Following the video's circulation, traffic police officials have taken cognizance of the matter. Additional DCP Traffic Basant Kaul stated that action will be taken against the trio based on the bike's registration number. "A viral video of a girl and two youths riding a black bike on VIP Road has come to our notice. The girl is seen standing on the moving bike, creating a dangerous situation for herself and others. Based on the vehicle's registration number, all three will be identified and arrested."

## Notorious vehicle thief arrested with weapon, stolen vehicles recovered

**STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL**

The Nishatpura police have arrested a vehicle thief in possession of weapons and three stolen vehicles, recovering stolen goods worth approximately Rs 3 lakh. The accused, identified as Mohammad Fazal alias Fajju, was caught with a sharp-edged weapon, a stolen Hero Dio scooter, an e-rickshaw, and a Splendor motorcycle. Police records reveal that Fajju has been booked in more than eight cases related to theft, kidnapping, and violations of the Arms Act across multiple police stations, including Nishatpura, Shahjehanabad, Tilajamalpur, and Jahangirabad. According to officials, the accused had no permanent address and frequently changed his rented accommodation after committing crimes. More than five of his hideouts have been verified by the police. On February 27, the police received intelligence about a suspicious youth roaming around Housing Board Colony on a motorcycle

without a registration plate while carrying a sharp knife, allegedly planning a crime. Acting on this tip-off, the Nishatpura SHO dispatched a team to the location. The suspect was detained near Dussehra Maidan, Housing Board Colony. Upon frisking, police recovered a sharp iron knife from the accused. During interrogation, he admitted to stealing the motorcycle without a registration plate. Further questioning led to his confession of stealing a total of three vehicles. Subsequently, police seized a Hero Dio scooter, an e-rickshaw, and a Splendor motorcycle from his possession. Fajju has been booked under multiple cases related to the Arms Act and theft. He was produced in court following his arrest. Police officials confirmed that the accused has a long history of criminal activities, with multiple cases registered against him at Nishatpura, Shahjehanabad, and Tilajamalpur police stations. Investigations are ongoing to determine his involvement in other crimes.



Members of Dawoodi Bohra Community break their fast on the first day of the beginning of the holy month of Ramadan, in Bhopal on Friday. Pioneer photo

## Government under fire over Class 12 exam paper leak

**STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL**

The education system in Madhya Pradesh has come under serious scrutiny following the leak of MP Board Class 12 exam papers, which are allegedly being sold openly on Telegram. NSUI National Spokesperson Viraj Yadav said that according to several news reports more than 2 lakh students are connected to various

illegal Telegram groups where exam papers are being sold for amounts ranging from Rs 200 to Rs 2000. Despite the alarming scale of the leak, the state government and the Cyber Cell have failed to take effective action, raising questions about their ability to monitor digital activities. Critics argue that the ongoing racket suggests a collapse in the state's education system and raises concerns over possible involvement or negligence by authorities. In response to the controversy, Yadav has submitted a memorandum to Education Minister Uday Pratap Singh and ADG Cyber Cell A. Sai Manohar, demanding immediate intervention. The protest highlights growing public frustration over the education mafia's unchecked operations and the government's apparent inaction.

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# Political row over Carbide waste disposal intensifies in MP

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Even as the Supreme Court granted the Madhya Pradesh government permission to dispose of Union Carbide India Ltd (UCIL) waste at the Pithampur industrial site, the political controversy surrounding the issue continues to escalate. The opposition Congress has accused the ruling BJP of presenting "incorrect data" and "misleading reports" before the court while allegedly concealing facts about water contamination in the Pithampur industrial area. State Congress president Jitu Patwari on Friday criticized the BJP government, questioning its silence despite Indore and Pithampur being its strongholds. "At present, there are two

senior ministers from Indore, and they should speak up to protect public health. This UCIL waste will cause cancer among the people of Pithampur," Patwari alleged. The Congress leader challenged the BJP government to conduct a groundwater survey around the Ramky factory premises to reveal the truth. "I challenge the MP government to conduct a groundwater survey around the Ramky factory. If there is no poison in Union Carbide's waste, then Ramky should get the water tested within a 10 km radius. If cancer-causing elements are not found, I will publicly apologize! The court directed the state government to decide based on facts, but critical information is being suppressed," he claimed. The Supreme Court on

Thursday refused to interfere with the Madhya Pradesh High Court's order allowing the shifting of toxic waste from the 1984 Bhopal gas tragedy site to Pithampur in Dhar district for disposal. A bench of Justice B.R. Gavai and Justice Augustine George Masih disposed of a petition challenging the December 3, 2024, High Court order, which directed the state government to remove the toxic waste from the UCIL site. The bench noted that the High Court's order was based on recommendations from an expert committee comprising directors from the National Environmental Engineering Institute (NEERI), the National Geophysical Research Institute (NGRI), and the chairman of the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB).

The court observed that NEERI and NGRI are "institutes of repute and recognition," and courts have often relied on their expert opinions in environmental matters. It stated that the Madhya Pradesh government had made its decision based on the expert panel's approval. The High Court had expressed concerns over the slow progress in handling the waste disposal issue and was actively monitoring the matter. "It is evident that only after the High Court's intervention did the process move forward. Since the High Court is overseeing the matter, we find no reason to interfere with its order," the bench ruled. The Supreme Court also directed civil society members and other intervenors to present their concerns before the High

Court, which would take them into consideration. It further allowed parties to submit suggestions to the High Court or the state government, which would then forward them to the expert committee for review. On January 1, around 377 tonnes of hazardous waste from the defunct UCIL factory were transferred to the Pithampur industrial area, about 250 km from Bhopal and 30 km from Indore, for disposal. The 1984 Bhopal gas tragedy, one of the world's worst industrial disasters, occurred when highly toxic methyl isocyanate (MIC) gas leaked from the Union Carbide factory on the intervening night of December 2-3. The disaster claimed 5,479 lives and affected over five lakh people.



Governor Mangubhai Patel presenting degrees to students during the 7th Convocation Ceremony of Nanaji Deshmukh Veterinary Science University, Jabalpur. Pioneer photo



Visitors go through the stalls at Anant Mahotsav organised at Gauhar Mahal in Bhopal on Friday. Pioneer photo

## Marathon to enhance Lok Adalat awareness

PNS ■ INDORE

A grand Mediation and Lok Adalat Awareness Marathon is set to take place on March 2 from the High Court Campus, Indore, under the leadership of Justice Sanjeev Sachdeva and Justice Vivek Rusia. The event aims to promote legal awareness and alternative dispute resolution mechanisms. The marathon will see enthusiastic participation from Honourable Justices, District Court Judges, Administrative Officers, Police Officers, and Advocates. Community Mediators, Panel Advocates, Para Legal Volunteers, and students from Force Academy and Law Colleges will also join the initiative, making it a significant legal awareness effort. To ensure smooth execution, a high-level meeting was held at the Registrar/Secretary's office,

## 7th Convocation of NDVSU organised

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Jabalpur: The 7th Convocation Ceremony of Nanaji Deshmukh Veterinary Science University was held on February 28, 2025, in the university premises under the esteemed chairmanship of Chancellor and Governor of Madhya Pradesh, Mangubhai Patel. The event was graced by the presence of Hon'ble Minister of Animal Husbandry, Lakhman Singh, as the chief guest. The ceremony commenced with floral tributes to Bharat Ratna Nanaji Deshmukh and a tree plantation in the university premises by the Chancellor. Following this, the convocation procession reached the stage, led by the Chancellor, the Animal Husbandry Minister, the Vice-Chancellor, former Vice-Chancellors, and members of the Management and Executive Council. The event formally began with the lighting of the ceremonial lamp before Goddess Saraswati by the dignitaries. Dr. S.S. Tomar, Registrar of the university, announced the formal commencement of the ceremony with the Chancellor's approval. In his address, Vice-Chancellor Mandeep Sharma presented the university's progress report, highlighting achievements in

## Fear grips Banganga as a 'shadow' allegedly targets women

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Residents of the Banganga area in the state capital are living in fear due to a bizarre and alarming situation. Locals claim that an unidentified figure, described as an 'unknown shadow', has been roaming the area, allegedly targeting girls and women. According to reports, this mysterious figure appears in the evening and is said to harass and molest women before vanishing without a trace. Shockingly, incidents of molestation and sexual assault are being reported not only at night but also in broad daylight, raising serious concerns about women's safety in the area. For the past three to four

## CM reviews Ravidas temple construction

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Bhopal: Chief Minister Mohan Yadav inspected the ongoing construction of the Sant Ravidas Temple in Badtuma, Sagar. He paid floral tributes to the statue of Sant Ravidas in Sagar and appreciated the artisans engaged in the construction of the temple. Dr. Yadav reviewed the temple model and obtained details about the progress of various construction activities. He also watched a video exhibition based on the construction. Yadav stated that under the visionary leadership of PM Narendra Modi, who is committed to refining and preserving Indian culture and fostering social harmony, the grand Sant Ravidas Temple is taking shape. He emphasized that this magnificent temple and museum

## 'Locked out' of party office, AAP refutes rumours

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Bhopal: Amid speculation that the Aam Aadmi Party's (AAP) state office at Subhash Nagar was locked by the landlord due to unpaid rent, party spokesperson Bhupendra Sharma on Friday categorically denied the claims. Speaking to The Pioneer, Sharma stated that the office has been opening regularly at 11 a.m. every day. He suggested that someone might have arrived early in the morning before the office opened, leading to the misunderstanding. He said this after confirming with the office in charge and the secretary. The rumours, which come less than a month after AAP faced an electoral drubbing at the hands of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in the national capital, gained traction after pictures of

## Madhya Pradesh enters a new era of road development with GIS-Bhopal: CM

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Chief Minister Mohan Yadav said that Madhya Pradesh is rapidly entering in a new era of development. The modern road infrastructure is set to connect every corner of the state, driving economic growth to new heights. On the first day of the Global Investors Summit in Bhopal, the government signed a historic MoU worth Rs 1 lakh crore with the National Highway Authority. This agreement will facilitate the construction and development of 4,010 km of road projects across the state, positioning Madhya Pradesh as a key logistics and infrastructure hub, not just for India but for all of South Asia. Yadav emphasized that these agreements go beyond just road construction—they will serve as the foundation for economic

development, industrial expansion, job creation, and an improved quality of life in the state. He said that a robust road network naturally fosters trade, investment, and industrial growth. "Our goal is to make Madhya Pradesh the most developed and modern state in India, and this agreement marks a significant step in that direction," he added. These historic MoUs signed at GIS-Bhopal will lead to the development of several important road projects. MoUs have been signed at GIS-Bhopal for strengthening road infrastructure. These include Indore-Bhopal Greenfield High-Speed Corridor, Bhopal-Jabalpur Greenfield High-Speed Corridor, Prayagraj-Jabalpur-Nagpur Corridor, Lakhnadaun-Raipur Expressway, Agra-Gwalior National Highway, Ujjain-Jhalawar National

Highway, Indore Ring Road (Western and Eastern Bypass), Jabalpur-Damoh National Highway, Satna-Chitrakoot National Highway, Rewa-Sidhi National Highway and 4-lane bypass on the western edge of Gwalior city. The new road projects will not only connect Madhya Pradesh to national and international trade routes but will also provide better connectivity between the major cities of the state. This will reduce travel time, reduce logistics and freight transport costs, and provide new opportunities to the agriculture, industry, tourism, and trade sectors. Yadav stated that the progress of any state depends on a strong infrastructure, an efficient transport system, and a robust economic model. These agreements will accelerate the transformation of Madhya

Pradesh into a new industrial and economic hub. He emphasized that improved road networks would make it easier for industries to transport their products to markets, leading to the establishment of new industries and a surge in trade. Farmers will benefit as they can transport their produce to cities and markets faster, ensuring better prices. Additionally, enhanced connectivity will improve access to tourist destinations, giving a significant boost to the tourism industry. The project is expected to generate thousands of direct and indirect employment opportunities. Engineers, labourers, technical experts, and local entrepreneurs will benefit during the construction phase. Furthermore, new road projects will stimulate growth in logistics, hospitality, and various other businesses.

Chief Minister Yadav emphasized the government's commitment to the swift implementation and timely completion of these projects. He stated that all developments will adhere to world-class technology, sustainable construction practices, and the highest quality standards. To ensure efficiency, the government will extend full support to the National Highways Authority of India and other relevant departments, ensuring that the projects are completed within the stipulated timeframe. Yadav highlighted that the government is actively promoting various infrastructure projects under the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model. This approach will not only accelerate project execution but also enhance transparency in implementation.

## Holy month of Ramadan arrives, bringing bustle across city markets

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

As the month-long Ramadan season commenced in the city, the Dawoodi Bohra community observed the first of their day-long fasts on Friday. The majority of Muslims in the state capital, belonging to the Hanafi school of thought, however, will start their month-long fasting period after the sighting of the Ramadan moon. With the imminent arrival of the month, the ninth on the Islamic calendar, festive shoppers thronged markets in the old city to shop for dates (khajur), feni (a vermicelli-like breakfast food), and sheermal, a mildly sweet bread. Shopkeepers say that the month of fasting used to be the peak business season for traders dealing in these edibles, which are steeped in city tradition.

They lament that their businesses have suffered due to changing eating habits among the city's youth. "Most of our wares are made from flour, which the younger generation has started to avoid due to health reasons," says Shahwar Ali, whose family has been in the bakery business for close to a century. Several customers complain that the traditional flavour of edibles has altered over the years. Ali admits, "It is true that we have moved to packaged yeast and other ingredients, which the younger generation has started to avoid due to health reasons." He adds that the age-old flavour can still be found in the more expensive, made-to-order goods supplied by his family.

Mohammad Amir, an IT professional and a budding Functional Medicine practitioner, says that adulteration and health risks have pushed his family to refresh the traditional Sehri (the pre-dawn meal that precedes the fast) and Iftar (the meal after sunset that ends it) menus. "I no longer trust the colours used by those selling Nukti-Khaare and other Ramadan staples, as they are just not healthy." Nukti-Khaare, a mix of colourful droplets of gram flour batter, deep-fried and soaked in sugar syrup, and deep-fried savouries, however, remain an absolute Ramadan favourite in the city, and their presence on any Bhopali Iftar spread is almost mandatory. Back on the street, makeshift stalls selling these Ramadan goodies are coming up in Ibrahimpura, Imami Gate, Kaziq

Camp, and Itwara to cater to the surge in demand. Meanwhile, hordes of burqa-clad women were shopping at cloth markets on Nadeem Road and in Lakherapura in the Chowk Bazaar. Shopping for clothes traditionally used to be a Ramadan ritual, but in recent times, people try to complete their purchases before the fasting month arrives. While some attribute the shift to affluence, others say that it is best to avoid the markets during Ramadan in stricter adherence to the tenets of purdah, which has become increasingly popular among Muslim women in the city over the past decades. Yet, even as traditions evolve, the spirit of Ramadan in Bhopal remains unchanged—woven into its markets, its meals, and its moments of generosity, which may suffer this time due to an administrative ban on alms-seeking on the city streets.

## ASI line attached

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Bhopal: ASI Pawan Raghuvanshi, posted at Aishbagh Police Station, was line attached on Friday following accusations of taking law action in a fraud case involving a call center operator. He is also accused of colluding with gamblers, prompting an ongoing departmental investigation into his conduct.

months, the people of Banganga have been living under constant fear. Residents allege that this unidentified individual hides in abandoned buildings and carefully selects his victims. Several attempts have been made to catch him, but he has managed to evade capture each time. Locals believe that a perpetrator is highly cautious, avoiding detection until he spots a lone woman or girl, after which he strikes. The fear instilled by this unknown assailant has drastically affected daily life. Women and girls are refrain-

## Locals claim that an unidentified figure, described as an 'unknown shadow', has been roaming the area, allegedly targeting girls and women

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

ing from stepping out of their homes after dusk, and the overall atmosphere in the area remains tense. Concerned residents have submitted complaints to the local MLA, councillor, and TT Nagar police station, demanding swift action to ensure their safety. Authorities are yet to make a breakthrough in identifying and apprehending the suspect. Meanwhile, the community continues to remain on edge, hoping for urgent intervention before the situation escalates further.

## North Central Railway Tender Notice

**NORTH CENTRAL RAILWAY**  
**TENDER NOTICE**

For and on behalf of President of India, the Sr. Division Mechanical Engineer (Diesel) North Central Railway, Jhansi invites open tenders through online (E-Tendering) for the following work:-

**Tender No. :** JHS-M-DSL-WC-T-04-23-24RT

**Description :** Provision of Rain Water Testing Plant for AC Loco maintenance at Diesel Loco Shed, Jhansi.

<b>Tender value :</b> Rs. 16,65,925.33/-	<b>Earnest money :</b> Rs. 33,300/-
<b>Cost of tender Document :</b> Rs. 0.00/-	<b>Completion period :</b> 06 Months
<b>Closing date of tender :</b> 28/03/2025	

● Tenderers will submit the tender online up to 28/03/2025 (15:00 Hrs.). Complete details & for submission of tenders can be seen in Indian Railway website <http://www.irps.gov.in>. **386/25 (AS)**

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# India-EU agree to conclude FTA by year end

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■**  
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen on Friday agreed to conclude an ambitious India-EU free trade deal by this year amid fears that the Trump administration's threat of higher tariffs could adversely impact the global economy. In their talks, both the leaders also decided to expand two-way defence cooperation, especially in the Indo-Pacific with Von der Leyen announcing that the European Union (EU) was looking at firming up a security and defence pact with India in line with its partnerships with close allies Japan and South Korea. The deadline for concluding the trade deal that would be the largest of its kind globally came over 17 years after the two sides first began negotiations for it. Negotiations for the pact was re-launched in June 2022 after

they were suspended in 2013 due to a gap in ambition. "Today, we have decided to create a bold and ambitious roadmap for the India-EU partnership for the period beyond 2025. It will be launched during the next India-EU summit," Modi said. India is set to host the summit later this year. The negotiations for the deal were not moving forward ostensibly in view of the EU's persistent demands to New Delhi cut tariffs on cars, wine and agricultural products. The EU Commission president, accompanied by the College of Commissioners or senior political leaders of the bloc's member nations began her two-day India visit on Thursday. It is the first such visit after the European parliamentary elections in June last. In his media statement, Modi indicated resolve by the two sides also to move forward on negotiations for an investment protection pact as well as on geographical



Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen near a bus powered by hydrogen fuel cell technology at the Hyderabad House in New Delhi on Friday  
Ranjan Dimri

indications as part of broader efforts to boost investments. "We have prepared a blueprint for collaboration in the areas of trade, technology, investment, innovation, green growth, security, skilling and mobility," he said. "We have directed our teams to conclude a mutually beneficial bilateral free trade agreement by the end of this year," he said. Echoing Modi, Von der Leyen said, "We have tasked our teams to build on this momentum and finalise our free trade agreement before the end of this year." "We are expecting a lot of our trade negotiators, we told them they should surprise us," she said.

The Prime Minister described the growing India-EU cooperation on defence and security as a symbol of "mutual trust" and that both sides will take forward the engagement in areas of cyber security, maritime security and counter-terrorism. "Both sides agree on the importance of peace, security, stability and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific region," he said, welcoming the EU's decision to join the India-backed Indo Pacific Oceans Initiative. "We will work together on triangular development projects for sustainable and inclusive development in the Indo-Pacific region and Africa," Modi said. Von der Leyen said now is the time to step up India-EU security and defence cooperation on land, sea and in space. She called the Indian Ocean as a "lifeline for global trade" and said ensuring its security is vital, not just for India but for the whole world. The remarks came amid China's increasing

forays into the region. "We should also explore expanding our joint naval exercises, building on our very successful operations in the Gulf of Guinea and the Red Sea," the European Commission chief said. Finally, we should deepen cooperation in protecting the cables that ensure data connectivity between India and the European Union, she said. In his remarks, Modi said the India-EU strategic partnership is "natural and organic" and that it is based on "trust" and shared belief in democratic values. "We welcome the new visa cascade regime of the EU. This will provide better mobility to the abilities of India's talented youth," he said. On connectivity, Modi said concrete steps will be taken to take forward the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEEC). "I firmly believe that 'IMEEC' shall serve as an engine that drives global commerce, sustainable growth and prosperity in the days to come."

# EU exploring security, defence pact with India

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■**  
NEW DELHI

The European Union (EU) is exploring a security and defence pact with India in line with its similar partnerships with close allies Japan and South Korea. The announcement, seen as significant, was made by European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen ahead of her wide-ranging talks with Prime Minister Narendra Modi. In an address at a think-tank, she pitched for taking the EU-India strategic partnership to the next level to effectively deal with various geopolitical headwinds. Security should be a core part of our new strategic partnership with India, Von der Leyen said. "This is why I can announce that we are exploring a future Security and Defence Partnership with India in the mould of the partnerships we have with Japan and South Korea," she said.

"This will help us step up our work to counter common threats whether on cross-border terrorism, maritime security threats, cyber-attacks or the new phenomenon we see: attacks on our critical infrastructure," she said. The president said there is a lot that both India and the EU can build on. "For instance, the recent collaboration on maritime security. And I am delighted at India's interest in joining defence industrial projects under the EU's Permanent Structured Cooperation," she said. Von der Leyen said India is working hard to diversify its military supply and to access new capabilities and that both sides can help each other to deliver on "our security objectives". "For instance, we can join forces where we have technology and expertise, such as on cyber security, space and drones. This is not only about stability in our respective regions," she said.

# Technology to play pivotal role on combat future: CDS

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■**  
NEW DELHI

With warfare increasingly becoming "networked, digitised and intelligent", technology would play a pivotal role in deciding the outcome of combats in the future, Chief of Defence Staff General (CDS) Anil Chauhan said here on Friday. Addressing the Chanakya Dialogues conclude here on the "Bharat 2047: Atmanirbhar In War" theme, he said data-centric warfare includes looking at network security, redundancy, latency in data flow and the use of artificial intelligence as well as storage, collection and analytics of data. Pitching for developing indigenous capabilities for defence manufacturing, IAF Chief Air Marshal AP Singh said the Indian Air Force would prefer a "homegrown" system even if it gives "slightly lesser performance." He made this assertion in his address at the Chanakya Dialogues. Referring to the trends in robotics and automation, General Ghouhan told the gathering that it presents a possibility of combat between humans and machines, and among machines in the future. "We all know that warfare is

increasingly becoming digitised, networked and intelligent. So in future, I think technologies like artificial intelligence, data analytics and supercomputing will play a pivotal role in deciding the outcome of combat," Chauhan said. "The Indian armed forces actually want to transit to data-centric warfare or intelligent warfare." Explaining the concept of Theater Commands, the Chief of Defence staff described it as an attempt to separate force generation from force application. "Till now, both these responsibilities were vested with the service headquarters or the service chiefs. He was responsible for recruitment, training, equipment acquisition and maintenance, among others," the CDS said. "So force generation and force application was one responsibility. Now, we are trying to separate that. We are trying to nominate a theatre commander who would be capable of carrying out multi-domain operation, that means in all the three domains, including support from space and cyber," he said. General Chauhan said, "In future wars, one may be able to use data analytics so that decisions taken during combat are better and faster," adding

that with advances in drone technology, the speed of warfare may also be higher. IAF chief said there is a need for manufacturing at least 35-40 military aircraft in India every year and stressed the target is not impossible to meet. He said the IAF's first priority when it comes to acquisition, is "anything that is home grown". "So I'm very convinced in my mind that even if a home grown system gives me a slightly lesser performance... If it is 90 per cent or 85 per cent of what I get in the world market, we will go for home grown system because that is the only way we can get over with always looking outward to get our systems," he said. "But at the same time, a home grown system cannot just happen overnight. It will take time and it needs to be supported. So for that, Indian Air Force is fully committed to any R&D project," he said. He said India needs to develop capability to produce at least 35-40 fighter aircraft every year to meet the requirements of replacing aging fleets. "If some private industry comes in for a make in India, let's say, we add another maybe 12-18 aircraft per year from their side. So we are reaching that number. So that is possible," he said.

# Systems needed to check suicides in IITs, IIMs: SC

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■**  
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday said incidents of suicides in IITs and IIMs were "extremely unfortunate" and assured a robust mechanism to check such cases. A bench of Justices Surya Kant and N Kotiswar Singh was informed by senior advocate Indira Jaising that in past 14 months, 18 suicides took place in Indian Institutes Technology (IITs) and Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs). "It is extremely unfortunate what is happening. We will create a robust mechanism to check this situation. We will take this issue to the logical conclusion," said the Bench. Jaising, appearing for the mothers of students Rohith Vemula and Payal Tadv, who allegedly died by suicide after facing caste-based discrimination, said universities and colleges hadn't given entire data on suicides taking place in their campuses despite a court order. While Vemula, a PhD scholar at Hyderabad Central University died on January 17, 2016, Tadv, a student at TN Topiwala National Medical College, died on May 22, 2019, after she was subjected to purported discrimination by three doctors in her college. Solicitor general Tushar Mehta, appearing for the

Centre, said the University Grants Commission (UGC) had formulated draft regulations, which took care of majority of the concern raised by the petitioners, and were uploaded on its website inviting suggestions and objections from the public. Jaising said 40 per cent of the universities and 80 per cent of the colleges had not created equal opportunity cells in their campuses. The bench asked Jaising and other counsel appearing in the matter to give suggestions on the draft regulations and directed the UGC to look into these suggestions. Jaising urged the court to give a hearing before finalisation of the regulations, but Mehta opposed it saying every other person would seek a personal hearing, if allowed. "If they want to give any suggestions, then they can do so through the website but personal hearing cannot be allowed," he submitted. The bench told Jaising it appreciates the cause raised by the petitioner and assured that court would take it to its logical conclusion. The matter was posted after eight weeks. On January 3, the court called it a sensitive issue and offered to devise an effective mechanism to combat caste-based discrimination in educational institutions in the country.

# New financial laws pave way for investment in India: Birla

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■**  
NEW DELHI

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla on Friday stressed that the recent initiatives in simplification and transparency in financial laws have provided an enabling environment for investment in India. Today's India with deeper democratic spirit, stable Government and visionary leadership, is a land of immense opportunities for the investors, he noted. The fastest growing economy in the world is a favourite destination for investment across the world, he added. Birla made these remarks in his inaugural address at the two-day symposium on 'Adoption to Changing Landscape: My Viksit Bharat - 2047' organised by the Northern India Regional Council, Institute of Cost Accountants of India (ICAI) at New Delhi. Members of Parliament Faggan Singh Kulaste, Bansuri Swaraj also spoke on the occasion. Referring to legal reforms in India, Birla noted that for the first time in India, an effort has been made to change colonial laws, to repeal the redundant laws and to make new laws which are in sync with the hopes and aspirations of people of New



LS Speaker Om Birla addresses the inaugural session of a two-day symposium on 'Adoption to Changing Landscape: My Viksit Bharat - 2047' Pioneer photo

India. Mentioning about GST, proposed income tax legislation, changes in labour laws and company laws, Lok Sabha Speaker emphasised that these initiatives reflect the vision of the leadership to take the country on the path of progress and prosperity. New laws are not only simple, transparent and progressive but also inclusive to improve the life of the last person in the society, he observed. Progressive laws always take into consideration the changing requirements of the country and the society and the changing international scenario, he added.

Mentioning that India's financial institutions are its strength, Birla noted that our financial institutions command respect all over the world. Hailing the contributions of the ICAI, Birla opined that this institution not only plays an important role in ensuring transparency in financial system but also for guiding the country on mass production with minimum cost. Playing a vital role in strengthening economic potential of the country, the ICAI, with its management skills, is improving the lives of the people.

# SC relief for Isha Foundation in environment norms violations

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■**  
NEW DELHI

In a relief to Isha Foundation, the Supreme Court refused to interfere with a Madras High Court order quashing notices of the TN pollution body over the alleged violation of environmental norms and ordered no against its yoga and meditation centre. A bench of Justices Surya Kant and N Kotiswar Singh upheld the Madras High Court order quashing notices of the Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board (TNPCB) against Jaggi Vasudev's Isha Foundation over the construction in the foothills of Velliangiri mountains in Coimbatore without prior environmental clearance. While asking for no coercive action against the yoga and meditation centre, it asked for compliance with all the environmental norms and directions of the TNPCB. The top court, however, said its order was not a precedent



File photo

for regularising illegal construction as it ruled in the peculiar facts and circumstances of the case. Tamil Nadu advocate general PS Raman said the government only wanted the order not to be treated as a "permanent gate pass" and shouldn't inhibit any future inspection of the properties and the centre should comply with environmental norms. The bench said there was no immunity or exemption from compliance with environmental norms. The court's concern only

related to the dismantling of the structure. Senior advocate Mukul Rohatgi, appearing for Isha Foundation, said the state authorities should not be allowed to inspect the centre as the same thing would happen. Raman said the town and country planning authorities should be allowed to carry out the inspection so to prevent the construction of any other building in the area for the area was in the vicinity of a protected forest. The bench said a prior nod of the competent authority

would be required in case of expansion of the centre. On February 14, the bench pulled up the state pollution control board for moving after two years against an order that quashed a showcause notice issued against Isha Foundation for allegedly flouting environmental norms. It termed the petition filed by the TNPCB as a "friendly match" played by bureaucrats wanting the apex court's stamp on the petition's dismissal. The showcause was issued to the foundation for constructing buildings between 2006 and 2014 without reportedly obtaining mandatory environmental clearances but the Madras High Court quashed it. On December 14, 2022, holding that the facilities set up by Isha Foundation in Coimbatore would fall under the education category, the high court set aside the TNPCB notice.

# Storage capacity of 155 reservoirs improved compare to last year: CWC

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■**  
NEW DELHI

The total live storage capacity of the 155 reservoirs monitored by the Central Water Commission (CWC) stands at 180,852 Billion Cubic Meters (BCM), which is approximately 70.15 per cent of the total estimated live storage capacity in the country, according to the latest bulletin of the CWC. While the overall storage has improved compared to the same period last year, significant regional disparities highlight the challenges faced by certain states. As of Thursday, the live storage available in these reservoirs is 93,529 BCM, representing 52 per cent of their total capacity. This is a notable improvement compared to the same period last year when the live storage was 78,633 BCM and the normal storage (average of the last ten years) was 81,497 BCM.

The current storage is 119% of last year's storage and 115% of the normal storage. Water stress continues in the northern region that encompasses the states of Himachal Pradesh, Punjab and Rajasthan. The 11 reservoirs in this region have a total live storage capacity of 19,836 BCM, but only 28 per cent of this capacity is currently filled. This is significantly lower than last year's 37 per cent and the normal storage of 40 per cent. Key reservoirs like Pong Dam and Thein Dam are reporting storage levels as low as 40 per cent and 32 per cent of their capacity, respectively. The eastern states, including Assam, Jharkhand, Odisha, West Bengal, Tripura, Nagaland and Bihar, have 25 reservoirs with a total capacity of 20,798 BCM. The current storage is 51 per cent of capacity, slightly lower than last year's 53 per cent and the normal storage of 55 per cent.

Reservoirs like Chandan Dam in Bihar are critically low, with 0% storage, while others like Maithon Dam in Jharkhand are nearly full. The western states of Gujarat, Maharashtra and Goa are faring better, with 50 reservoirs holding 64 per cent of their total capacity of 37,357 BCM. This is higher than last year's 54 per cent and the normal storage of 49 per cent. Major reservoirs like Sardar Sarovar in Gujarat and Jayakwadi in Maharashtra are reporting healthy storage levels. The central states of Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh have 26 reservoirs with a total capacity of 48,227 BCM. The current storage is 54 per cent of capacity, better than last year's 51 per cent and the normal storage of 48 per cent. However, reservoirs like Omkareshwar in Madhya Pradesh are struggling, with only 32 per cent storage.

# Rajnath releases 'Sashakt Bharat' magazine

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■**  
NEW DELHI

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh released the first edition of Ministry of Defence's bi-annual Hindi magazine 'Sashakt Bharat.' The magazine comprises poems on the valour, patriotism and sacrifices of the Armed Forces personnel as well as articles on the policies of the Government written by the personnel of the Ministry, irrespective of their ranks, showcasing inclusivity and unity in diversity. The defence minister appreciated the efforts of the Ministry of Defence wing of the Department of Official Language towards promoting Hindi. The objective of magazine is to highlight the creative talent of the employees of the defence ministry. The e-version of the magazine will be available on the official MoD website (https://mod.gov.in/).

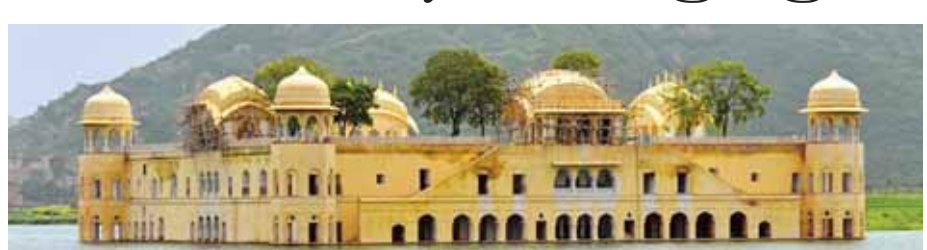
# Wonder how Jaipur becomes 'smart' by damaging Jal Mahal lake?: SC

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■**  
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday slammed the Nagar Nigam Jaipur Heritage for damaging Jal Mahal lake and contaminating its water by permitting a night market in the vicinity. A bench of Justices Abhay S Oka and Ujjal Bhuyan said due to the negligence and illegal acts of the Nagar

Nigam Jaipur Heitage, Jal Mahal lake was "completely destroyed". "Today, we see municipal commissioner appearing online with a board of smart city behind him. We wonder how will the city of Jaipur become 'smart' by damaging Jal Mahal lake virtually behind repair. We note that an appeal filed by Nagar Nigam Jaipur Heritage challenging November 3, 2023 order of the

of the lake," it said. The court, therefore, directed the Jaipur civic body to appoint National Environmental Engineering Research Institute to give a comprehensive report on immediate measures to stop pollution and restoration and preservation of the lake. The top court was hearing an appeal filed by Nagar Nigam Jaipur Heritage challenging November 3, 2023 order of the



File photo

National Green Tribunal which banned the night

market and other activities near the lake while directing

the civic body to seek permission from the eco-

sensitive zone (ESZ) monitoring committee. The top court noted the municipal corporation headquarter released dirty sewage water into the lake from time to time. It also examined an affidavit of the civic body's chief executive officer in which he referred to a project report by the tourism department and said the project had nothing to do with restoration and preservation of the lake.

The NGT had found the night market was organised within the eco-sensitive zone of Nahargarh Wildlife Sanctuary without obtaining permission as per eco-sensitive zone and without consent of ESZ monitoring committee. The tribunal's order came on a plea filed by RTI activist Rajendra Tiwari against the night market and discharge of untreated water into the water body.

# Bihar Governor addresses joint session of Assembly

PNS ■ PATNA

Bihar Governor Arif Mohammad Khan on Friday asserted that "rule of law" and "sustained development" have been taking place in the state since November 24, 2005, the date on which Nitish Kumar won his first floor test.

Khan's customary address to the joint session of the legislature, marking the beginning of the budget session, prominently referenced this date multiple times in his 30-minute speech.

"Ever since the formation of a new government on November 24, 2005, the state has been experiencing rule of law and sustained development. The state government has always emphasised development with justice and good governance, which implies growth of all classes in all spheres", the Governor said in his opening remarks.

Khan spoke in the midst of slogan-shouting by legislators of the CPI(M) Liberation, who had reached the Vidhan Sabha premises wearing handcuffs and chains, as a mark of protest against the shabby treatment meted out to Indian nationals sent back by the Donald Trump administration in the United



Bihar Governor Arif Mohammad Khan, CM Nitish Kumar pay tribute to President Rajendra Prasad on his death anniversary PTI

States.

Highlighting the extent to which things have looked up since "formation of the new government on November 24, 2005", the Governor claimed that "the state was then being manned by just 42,481 police personnel. The number has now reached 1.10 Lakh. Similarly, the number of police stations has risen from 841 to 1,380. The number of teachers has

grown significantly, 3.22 Lakh were recruited till 2022, another 2.17 Lakh in two subsequent phases. The results of the third phase have been declared, which will pave the way for the appointment of another 66,800 candidates".

Kumar, the JD(U) president and the longest serving chief minister who will seek a fifth consecutive term in office in the Assembly polls due later

this year, smiled at the repeated mention of the date. Members of the RJD-Congress combine, blamed for the alleged "jungle raj" before Kumar's tenure, were seen whispering among themselves, wondering if they were being indirectly acknowledged given that Kumar has twice allied with them, albeit briefly. However, the CPI(M) Liberation, which is an

alliance partner of the RJD-Congress, came out with a strongly worded statement later, describing the governor's address as a "bundle of lies" intended to cover up the failures of the JD(U)-BJP government in the state.

The Governor also spoke of steps to improve agriculture through detailed five-year "road maps" and enhance healthcare with the establishment of new medical colleges.

He also made a mention of the government's commitment to maintaining "social and communal harmony", underscoring steps like "fencing of kabristans (Muslims' places of burial)" and construction of boundary walls for "Hindu temples registered 60 years ago or earlier with the state religious trust board".

The Governor's address also spoke of "9.35 Lakh government jobs already created" and promised "the total number will rise to 12 Lakh, not just 10 Lakh, before the assembly elections due later this year". A promise of "10 Lakh government jobs" has been the poll plank of Tejashwi Yadav, the leader of the opposition in the state assembly who served as the deputy CM on the

two occasions when the RJD shared power with JD(U).

Women's empowerment, which Nitish Kumar counts on as one of his main achievements in the traditionally patriarchal state, was also mentioned prominently in the speech by the governor who mentioned "50 per cent reservations in civic bodies, announced in 2007", followed by "35 per cent quotas brought in 2013 in police recruitments and in all government departments since 2016".

The governor also said financial aid of ₹2 Lakh was being given to "94 Lakh poor families, from all social segments-Dalits, backward classes, upper castes and minorities", which were identified in the ambitious caste survey conducted in 2023.

The Governor's address concluded with a word of thanks to the Centre for the "generous help extended to Bihar" in the Union budget presented recently by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman who came up with "announcements like setting up of a Makhana board, new airports, economic assistance for a canal in the flood-prone Kosi region and expansion of IIT, Patna".



Veteran lyricist Javed Akhtar during celebrations of 'Marathi Bhasha Gaurav Diwas' in Mumbai PTI

# Javed, Kangana settle defamation case

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Actress Kangana Ranaut on Friday settled the defamation case filed against her by veteran lyricist Javed Akhtar, which had been ongoing for over four years, through mediation. The BJP MP also apologised for the "inconvenience" caused to the screenwriter.

The duo appeared before a special court here on Friday and informed it of their decision to withdraw the complaints they had filed against each other. After the court appearance, the actor also posted a photo on her social media platform along with Akhtar, stating that they have resolved the legal matter.

The court will pass a formal order on this later in the day.

The actor said she made the statement against Akhtar due to misunderstanding, and apologised for the inconvenience caused to him due to it. Akhtar had filed a complaint against Ranaut in 2020, alleging that she had defamed and damaged his 'immaculate reputation' by dragging his name into actor Sushant Singh Rajput's death in an interview with a news channel in July that year.

Ranaut had later filed a cross complaint against Akhtar, alleging criminal intimidation and insult to modesty.

She had claimed that during her meeting with Akhtar at his residence in 2016, he criminally intimidated her, demanding that she apologise to a co-star.

Ranaut's lawyer Rizwan Siddiquee and Akhtar's advocate Jay Kumar Bhardwaj said the

matter was settled through an hour-long mediation before a special magistrate court in Bandra.

Ranaut stated before the mediator that she made the statement due to misunderstanding and she has decided to withdraw it, Bhardwaj said.

Ranaut has apologised to Akhtar for inconvenience caused to him due to her statement, he said, adding that she has undertaken not to make such a statement in future.

Siddiquee said, "We were looking for mediation for a long time. We had exchanged drafts also. Finally we have resolved the case."

"There were no issues, only the wordings were to be decided, which was done today. We prepared the draft, signed it and both the cases were withdrawn today," he added.

The case was initially heard by a magistrate court in Andheri. In 2024, after she was elected as a Member of Parliament (MP) from the Mandi Lok Sabha constituency in Himachal Pradesh, the matter was transferred to a special magistrate court designated for matters involving MPs and MLAs.

In his complaint, Akhtar claimed that Ranaut dragged his name during an interview while referring to a 'coterie' existing in Bollywood, following the alleged suicide by actor Sushant Singh Rajput.

Ranaut posted a photo with Akhtar on Instagram and said the cinema veteran was "kind and gracious" during the mediation process.

# Manipur extends deadline for surrender of illegal arms

PTI ■ IMPHAL

Manipur Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla on Friday extended the deadline for the surrender of looted and illegal arms until 4 pm on March 6 following demands by people from both hill and valley areas for additional time, an official statement said.

"Upon the expiry of the seven-day deadline for the voluntary surrender of arms, there have been requests from both the valley and hill areas to extend the period. I have considered these requests and decided to extend the deadline until 4 pm on March 6," the statement read.

It further assured that no punitive action would be taken against those who surrender their

weapons within this period, emphasising that "this is the last opportunity for everyone concerned to contribute to peace, communal harmony, the future of our youth, and the security of our society," Bhalla had on February 20 urged warring groups to voluntarily surrender weapons robbed from security forces and other illegally held arms within seven days, the deadline of which ended on Thursday.

During the seven-day period, more than 300 weapons were surrendered by the public, primarily in the valley districts. More than 250 people have been killed and thousands rendered homeless in ethnic violence between Meiteis and Kuki-Zo groups since May 2023.

# BJP urges Karnataka CM for increased Bengaluru budget

PTI ■ BENGALURU

A delegation of BJP legislators and MPs from Bengaluru on Friday met Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, and sought higher allocation of funds in the upcoming state budget for the city's development.

The delegation led by party state BJP President BY Vijayendra and Leader of Opposition in the Legislative Assembly R Ashoka asked for allocation of ₹150 Crore for each Assembly segment in the city.

Relook into the Metro fare hike, allocation of funds for constituencies represented by first time MLAs, and holding of Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) polls at the earliest are among the issues that were highlighted at the meeting. Siddaramaiah who also holds the finance portfolio is scheduled to

present the budget for 2025-26 on March 7, marking his 16th birthday.

"All our MLAs, MPs, MLCs and district unit presidents from Bengaluru met the Chief Minister and requested for more funds in the budget, funds to the legislators for the development of their constituencies, keeping in mind the development of Bengaluru," Vijayendra said.

Speaking to reporters here after meeting the CM, he said, when BJP's B S Yediyurappa and Basavaraj Bommai were Chief Ministers earlier ₹6,000-8,000 Crores were given to Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) for the development of Bengaluru in every budget.

"No such allocations have been made for Bengaluru in the last two years, so we have requested ₹6,000-8,000 Crores for Bengaluru city in the budget," he

said.

Noting that infrastructure projects like flyovers and others are going on at a slow pace, the state BJP chief said, priority should be given for completion of such projects by allocating more funds for them.

He said, during the meeting, Bengaluru MPs PC Mohan and Tejasvi Surya suggested that the Chief Minister send necessary communication to the fare fixation committee to reduce the metro fare that was hiked recently.

"Requests were made to the CM for enhanced allocation in the budget for Bengaluru's development and to the constituencies represented by first time MLAs. We have also requested that the BBMP polls should be held at the earliest," he said, adding that the CM has responded positively and has assured that he will

ensure allocation of funds within limitations.

Claiming that never had such a plight come for Bengaluru and ₹6,000-8,000 Crore was allocated to the city in every budget. When BJP was in power allocations were made to the constituencies irrespective of the party of MLAs who represent them, he said.

"Keeping in mind Bengaluru's global and national reputation, we have urged the CM to give more funds to the city, and we are hopeful that the Chief Minister will consider it," he added.

Vijayendra in response to a question said, the party will discuss the proposal to divide BBMP into multiple corporations.

"BBMP polls should not be postponed citing creation of Greater Bengaluru Authority as the reason," he said.

# Gurugram police arrest employee for ₹23 Lakh software hacking fraud

PARVESH SHARMA ■ GURUGRAM

A cyber crime police station (south) of the Gurugram police has arrested a former employee with his accomplice for fraudulently transferring ₹23 Lakh from a company account by hacking the company's software, police said.

According to the police, a complaint was registered on Thursday regarding fraudulent transfer of huge amounts from the account of the company to various bank accounts.

During prompt action, police seized ₹9 Lakh out of ₹23 Lakh, which was defrauded by transferring in the matter and nabbed the two culprits from the Badshahpur area of Gurugram on Friday.

The accused were identified as Rohit Gupta, a resident of Sonia Vihar, Delhi, and Jatin Malik, a resident of New Roshanpura Najafgarh, Delhi. During the probe, it was found that the accused, Rohit, was working in the company till a month ago.

Due to his quarrelsome behaviour, the company fired him.

In revenge, the accused, along with his other

partner, Jatin, committed the crime of fraudulently transferring money to various bank accounts by hacking the company's software in this case.

"One laptop used by the accused to commit fraud by hacking the company's software in the case has also been recovered from the possession of the accused.

Further action is being taken by the police to recover the remaining amount," a spokesperson of the Gurugram police said.

Senior police officers of Gurugram claimed that the police are closely working with other agencies and organisations to counter cyber fraud.

"The cyber fraudsters commit fraud by luring people with good profits, investing in the stock market, task-based fraud, in the name of buying/selling cheap goods online, sextortion through video calls on WhatsApp, morphing, sending links through various means, posing as a customs officer or police officer in the name of implicating false case, in the name of issuing a No-Objection Certificate, digitally arresting people by showing the fear of implicating them in a criminal case, etc," Priyanshu Diwan, ACP (cybercrime), said.

Following the grand conclusion of Maha Kumbh 2025, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has launched a 15-day special cleanliness drive to ensure that the festival grounds remain pristine.

The initiative aligns with his vision of a clean and divine Maha Kumbh, reinforcing his commitment to hygiene and environmental sustainability.

During the closing ceremony, Chief Minister Yogi honoured sanitation workers for their relentless service and directed officials to maintain the sanctity of the Mela grounds. The clean-up operation is being led by Special Officer Akanksha Rana, with Swachhata Mitras and Ganga Sewa Doots actively engaged in restoring cleanliness. The Sangam ghats, Mela ground roads, and temporary as well as permanent infrastructure are

# Cleanliness drive launched in Prayagraj after Maha Kumbh

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

being thoroughly cleaned. Over 15,000 sanitation workers and 2,000 Ganga Sewa Doots played a crucial role in maintaining hygiene during Mahakumbh, which saw a record-breaking 66



Worker collects garbage during cleanliness drive after the conclusion of the Maha Kumbh Mela in Prayagraj PTI

Creo devotees take a holy dip at the Triveni Sangam. The post-festival drive aims to ensure that pilgrims visiting Prayagraj after Maha Kumbh continue to experience a clean

and sacred environment. On Friday, following the chief minister's directives, Special Officer Akanksha Rana officially flagged off the cleanliness campaign. The focus is on clean-

ing Sangam ghats, Mela grounds, temples, and roads, both permanent and temporary. The drive also includes the removal of 1.5 Lakh temporary toilets, with systematic waste disposal at the Baswar plant in Naini.

As part of the clean-up operation, all temporary pipelines installed by the Urban and Rural Water Corporation, streetlights put up by the electricity department, and tents and pavilions used by saints, monks, and Kalpvasis are being dismantled.

The Prayagraj Municipal Corporation is also intensifying efforts to enhance greenery and sanitation, ensuring that the city retains its aesthetic and environmental appeal.

"The drive underscores the state government's commitment to preserving the sanctity and cleanliness of Mahakumbh, leaving a lasting legacy of hygiene and sustainability in Prayagraj," said Rana.

# Andhra Pradesh budget prioritises welfare of farmers, fishermen

PTI ■ AMARAVATI

The Andhra Pradesh budget for the fiscal 2025-26 tabled on Friday by the TDP-led NDA government accorded top priority to welfare schemes, promising to dole out ₹20,000 per annum for farmers, doubling financial relief for fishermen during a ban period, and ₹15,000 to school going children

up to the intermediate level under "Talliki Vandanam" scheme. The "Talliki Vandanam" scheme is one of the Super Six schemes made by the ruling bloc during the 2024 Assembly polls. Finance Minister Payyavula Keshav tabled the ₹3.22 Lakh Crore budget and proposed ₹20,281 Crore for the Scheduled Caste (SC) component, ₹8,159

crore for the Scheduled Tribes (ST) component, ₹47,456 crore for the Backward Classes (BC) component and ₹5,434 Crore for the welfare of minority communities.

"I take pride in announcing that the government is launching the Talliki Vandanam scheme, to provide financial support of ₹15,000 in the academic year 2025-26. The scheme will cover children enrolled in Classes I to XII in both government and private schools," Keshav said.

"No matter in what financial situation we are in, our farmers will receive ₹20,000 annually under the Annadata Sukhibhava scheme," he said.

Super Six schemes, pledged in the run up to the 2024 polls, include ₹1,500 monthly aid to every woman in the age bracket of 19 to 59 years, 20 Lakh jobs for youth or ₹3,000 monthly unemployment aid and free bus travel for women.

Other schemes under 'Super Six' are ₹15,000 to every school-going child per annum (Talliki Vandanam), three free gas cylinders to every household (Deepam - 2) and ₹20,000 annual financial assistance to every

farmer (Annadata Sukhibhava). He also announced doubling of financial relief to ₹20,000 for fishermen during the fishing ban period.

Keshav told the House that the TDP-led NDA government is planning to implement insurance-based health coverage of ₹25 Lakh per family in the next fiscal.

The budget of over ₹3.22 Lakh Crore encompasses an estimated revenue expenditure of ₹2.51 Lakh Crore and capital expenditure of ₹40,635 Crore.

Keshav, while presenting the budget said the estimated revenue deficit is around ₹33,185 Crore (1.82 per cent of the Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP)) and the fiscal deficit is around ₹79,926 Crore (4.38 per cent of the GSDP).

The budget proposed an allocation of ₹31,805 Crore for school education and ₹19,264 Crore for the Health, Medical and Family Welfare Department.

The Panchayati Raj and Rural Development Department, a portfolio held by deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan, got ₹18,847 Crore.

Allocating ₹13,862 Crore to the Municipal Administration and

Urban Development Department, Keshav asserted that the greenfield capital city Amaravati has proved to become a self-financing project without state budget assistance as the financing has been secured through the Centre from the World Bank, Asian Development Bank and HUDCO. For the Energy Department, he proposed a sum of ₹13,600 Crore. According to Keshav, AP's energy sector is undergoing a transformative revival, with the state aiming to emerge as a green hydrogen hub.

Other major allocations included ₹8,785 Crore for the Department of Transport, Roads and Buildings and ₹8,570 Crore for the Home Department. For Deepam - two scheme, which offers three free gas cylinders per year to over 90 Lakh eligible beneficiaries, Keshav allocated ₹2,601 Crore . In his speech, Keshav said the government was presenting the budget in the backdrop of the "financial destruction caused by the previous (YSRCP) regime". "It has been a highly complex task, because the previous regime created financial chaos in every department," he alleged.

# Railway joins tunnel collapse rescue

PTI ■ NAGARKURNOOL

South Central Railway (SCR) has joined the rescue teams that are engaged in locating the eight persons who remain trapped in the partially collapsed Srisailem Left Bank Canal (SLBC) tunnel for the past six days, with necessary equipment, a senior official said on Friday.

Railways has the expertise in cutting heavy metals using equipment such as plasma cutter and Brocho cutting machine, SCR Chief Public Relations officer A Sridhar said.

"District Collector, Nagar Kurnool sought the help of South Central Railway in rescue operation by clearing iron and steel debris that have been hindering the rescue works at the site," A Sridhar said.

He further said that the SCR quickly responded to the call and deployed two teams of metal cutting experts in the rescue mission.

The first batch led by S Murali, Divisional Mechanical Engineer, consisting a senior Section Engineer, 13 Welders and two technicians from Secunderabad have reached the site and have



Rescue operation underway to trace workers trapped inside the collapsed tunnel in Nagarkurnool PTI

taken up the required works. The second batch of experts also reached the site to support the first team, last night, he further said.

Meanwhile, Nagarkurnool Superintendent of Police Vaibhav Gaikwad said the metal cutting and debris clearing process is continuously going on.

"One team went into the tunnel at 7 am. The clearing of debris has been going on since yesterday morning. Dewatering is also going on," he said. Telangana irriga-

tion Minister Uttam Kumar Reddy on Thursday said the rescue and relief operations are in full swing, and that the operation would be completed in two days.

The Minister on Wednesday said the Tunnel Boring Machine (TBM) that is struck inside will be cut into pieces by using gas cutters and removed.

After this, the Army, Navy, Rat Miners and NDRF teams will make another serious effort to rescue the eight persons who are missing, without compromising their own safety.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

## Lawbreakers as lawmakers

Eradication of the influence of criminality in politics must be taken up on priority

In recent years, the issue of criminalisation in politics has increasingly come under scrutiny. With more politicians facing criminal charges and convictions, questions have arisen about whether the legal framework governing their disqualification from contesting elections is adequate. The ongoing debate, highlighted by a recent Supreme Court case challenging the constitutional validity of limiting disqualification periods, brings to the fore not only legal interpretations but also the broader menace of criminal influences in our political system. A petition filed before the Supreme Court has argued for a lifetime ban on convicted politicians from contesting elections. The petitioner contends that limiting disqualification to a fixed period—currently six years after release for offenses under Section 8 of the Representation of the People Act, 1951—undermines constitutional provisions designed to keep criminals away from power. In response, the Centre has defended the existing provisions, arguing that a lifetime ban is “unduly harsh” and that it would amount to directing Parliament to frame a law in a particular manner—an overreach of judicial power. The government’s counter-affidavit emphasises that there are numerous penal laws that operate within a time-bound framework, ensuring that deterrence is balanced against the need to avoid undue severity.

This legal tussle highlights a crucial policy debate: should convicted politicians face an indefinite prohibition from electoral participation, or is a fixed term of disqualification both constitutional and proportionate? The government argues that the current system, which temporarily excludes convicted individuals, respects the principles of proportionality and reasonability. In its view, the legislative choice to limit the disqualification period is designed to offer both a punitive and rehabilitative measure while preserving democratic participation. Beyond legal debates, the deeper issue remains the rising tide of criminality within political circles. Criminal elements entering politics not only threaten the integrity of democratic institutions but also erode public trust. Politicians with a history of criminal behaviour may be more likely to engage in corrupt practices, undermining the rule of law. As criminalisation in politics becomes more pronounced, the call for stringent measures intensifies. Addressing the criminalisation of politics requires a multi-pronged approach that extends beyond the question of lifetime bans. Parliament could consider revisiting and potentially tightening the eligibility criteria for political candidates. Whether through a longer ban or additional restrictions for those convicted of certain serious crimes, legislative reforms should aim to disincentivise criminal conduct. There may be strong arguments for and against the life ban of convicted persons becoming lawmakers but one thing all can agree upon is that we do not need them in our parliament or state assemblies. How to do it is not difficult but who will bell the cat?

### PICTALK



Tourists at the Taj Mahal, in Agra

PTI

## Rupee depreciation calls for structural reforms

Despite notable gains such as a reduced trade deficit, emerging challenges including global tariff tensions highlight the urgent need for comprehensive policy reforms

Over the past decade (2014-2024), the compounded annual growth rate (CAGR) of India’s exports of goods and services in USD terms has fallen sharply to about 5 per cent, compared to 17.9 per cent during 2004-2014 and 12.7 per cent in the period 1994-2004. This decline in export growth has coincided with a significant depreciation of the Rupee, which now trades at roughly Rs 86/87 per USD, a stark contrast to the Rs 60.50 per USD seen in 2013-14. In contrast, between 2000 and 2012, the Rupee remained relatively stable with occasional appreciation driven by robust export growth at an impressive 19.5 per cent CAGR in USD terms.



exports forward while maintaining Rupee stability. A weak Rupee, however, tends to deter global investors. Given that domestic savings alone cannot fulfill India’s vast investment requirements, a steady inflow of global funds remains essential until the country transitions into a “Trade-Surplus Nation.” Recent changes in US leadership have sparked a tariff war, adding another layer of complexity to India’s export environment.

Despite the sluggish export performance in the past decade, the country achieved a notable reduction in its trade deficit—from 4.3 per cent of nominal GDP in 2004-2014 to an average of 2.5 per cent in 2014-2024—primarily due to lower import volumes. In 2024, inward foreign remittances surged to \$129 billion, the highest globally, which

played a crucial role in reducing the current account deficit (CAD) from 1.7 per cent of GDP in 2013-14 to about 0.7 per cent. Consequently, Forex reserves swelled to 18.3 per cent of nominal GDP, underscoring the positive impact of these remittances.

Looking ahead, potential challenges loom. Aggressive deportation policies by the US could discourage migration, thereby diminishing remittance flows. Moreover, if India shifts its oil and gas import sources from Iran, Gulf nations, and Russia to the US, the resulting higher import bill may widen the trade deficit. In response, India must marshal all available policy tools to boost exports, reduce imports, and eventually become a trade-surplus nation. Facilitating legal migration remains crucial until domestic job creation can sustain remittance inflows, which are vital for curbing the CAD.

To further stimulate export growth, targeted export incentives for manufactured and agro-based goods should be implemented, while the untapped potential of service exports—ranging from

tourism and healthcare to education and professional consultancy—must be unlocked through dedicated policies. Additionally, reducing petroleum imports requires massive investments in railway infrastructure and expanded public transportation to lower fuel demand, and increased spending on petroleum exploration is the need of the hour.

Enhancing domestic production of thermal coal and adopting innovative measures to reduce gold imports, such as a revised gold deposit scheme, are also essential steps. Finally, attracting global funds through measures like reducing capital gains tax on foreign portfolio investments (FPIs) and encouraging long-term borrowing via bonds backed by sovereign guarantees will help meet India’s investment needs. Overcoming outdated colonial-era business and taxation laws remains critical. A second wave of structural reforms is needed to stabilise the Rupee, secure higher GDP growth, and elevate India’s stature on the global stage.

(The writer is an industrialist; views are personal)



R P GUPTA

## Strengthening public institutions in the digital age

Digital transformation is reshaping public policy, it is imperative that we embrace it without compromising our enduring commitment to integrity



O P SINGH



I am a civil servant passionate about governance, institutional resilience and public policy, exploring how institutions can adapt to the digital age. Imagine a world where policies are debated, revised and reshaped in real time—governance moving as quickly as a trending hashtag. That world isn’t coming; it’s already here. Public institutions, once the reliable backbone of governance, are now transforming rapidly.

Social media, instant communication, and shifting public expectations have redefined how governments interact with citizens. Decision-making, once a structured process guided by expertise and long-term planning, now occurs in an environment where public sentiment can change overnight. This new landscape offers both opportunities and challenges. Increased public engagement promotes transparency and participation but also demands rapid responses. Today’s challenge isn’t just about efficient policy implementation—it’s about balancing speed with thoughtful deliberation and adaptability with established structure.

### A New Era of Governance

Historically, governance followed a deliberate, structured path. Political leaders set broad directions, while institutions provided continuity, expertise, and safeguards. Decision-making

was data-driven and refined through expert consultation with a focus on long-term national interests. Then the digital revolution changed everything. Social media now plays a central role in shaping public discourse, often setting the agenda before formal institutions can respond.

A 2023 Pew Research study noted that nearly two-thirds of adults in democratic nations now rely on social media for political news. This shift has empowered citizens and made governance more transparent and participatory, but it has also heightened expectations and pressured institutions to act swiftly.

### Adapting Without Losing Purpose

The solution is not to resist change but to adapt strategically. Governments worldwide are using digital platforms to improve service delivery and civic engagement. For instance, India’s Digital India initiative has streamlined public services online, while Singapore’s Smart Nation program uses data analytics to enhance urban planning and governance. These examples show that when technology is integrated thoughtfully, it can boost both effectiveness and accessibility. Adaptation goes beyond dig-



DECISION-MAKING, ONCE A STRUCTURED PROCESS GUIDED BY EXPERTISE AND LONG-TERM PLANNING, NOW OCCURS IN AN ENVIRONMENT WHERE PUBLIC SENTIMENT CAN CHANGE OVERNIGHT

ital tools—it requires maintaining the integrity of governance. Institutions must prioritise expert-driven decision-making to ensure that policy shifts are well-considered rather than merely reactive. Preserving institutional memory through thorough documentation and continuous training ensures that experienced civil servants provide continuity, anchoring governance in expertise rather than short-term trends.

### The Importance of Public Trust

At its core, governance depends on public trust. Institutions thrive when they are seen as credible, reliable, and fair. Trust is built through transparency, efficiency, and ethical practices. Governments that openly communicate their policies and decision-making processes foster confidence among citizens. Estonia’s e-Governance model, which gives citizens real-time access to government records, is a prime example. Efficiency is equally critical. Reducing administrative delays, streamlining processes, and making governance accessible are key to maintaining public trust. When institutions deliver results fairly and efficiently, they not only function better—they strengthen democracy.

### Finding the Right Balance

The digital age demands a balance between responsiveness and deliberation. Institutions must embrace innovation without becoming reactionary, listening to public sentiment while ensuring that policies are grounded in data, analysis, and long-term planning. Quick decision-making should never come at the expense of depth and foresight. This balance distinguishes effective governance from mere administration. Institutions that thoughtfully adapt are not just keeping pace with change—they are actively shaping the future of governance.

### Looking Ahead

Public institutions are more than policy enforcers; they are the foundation of national stability and progress. As governance continues to evolve, these institutions must lead through innovation, efficiency, and an unwavering commitment to public trust. The digital age presents both challenges and opportunities. Institutions that adapt wisely will define the future of governance—not solely through speed or efficiency, but with foresight, trust and enduring strength.

(The writer is DGP & Head of Haryana State Narcotics Control Bureau; views expressed are personal)

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### TRUMP’S GOLD CARD PLAN

Madam — US President Donald Trump has announced a new visa program that will offer a ‘gold card’ with a potential pathway to US citizenship for \$5 million (approx Rs 43 crores), which could significantly benefit Indian graduates and investors. It seems like a sale of citizenship for money. He is not even asking them to start a business, create jobs, or anything. Moreover, why should one spend 5 million dollars to go to the USA? With that money, they can lead a royal life (invest 5 million in India and get 14 per cent annualised ROI compared to 5 per cent in the US) in India itself, with their own thriving business and stay close to near and dear ones, which is a much better place now than the US. This is a simple sale of citizenship. This is nothing, but this Trump statement looks a bit stupid! Because, how many students in India will have 5 million dollars to buy a gold card? And which company will be ready to pay 5 million dollars for hiring an Indian employee in the US on a gold card? Is Trump thinking logically, or is he just high on the dose of fake nationalism? This far-right politics is turning the politicians into real fools. Whatsoever, Golden Visa is very expensive.

Bidyut Kumar Chatterjee | Faridabad

### BRUTAL MURDERS SHOCK NATION

Madam — The nation is shocked at the brutal and spine-chilling crime of a 23-year-old man, who killed as many as five people, including his close relatives and girlfriend, within a few hours at various places in a radius of 15 kilometres in Thiruvananthapuram. By using a simple mallet, he has repeatedly hammered and finished the victims and then coolly surrendered at the police station on his own. It was by sheer luck that the sixth victim, his own mother, survived the attack, though she is still in serious condition. Even though the family was reportedly facing financial hardship, what prompted the man to commit such a heinous

## CBSE clarifies language policy



Refers to Editorial ‘Simmering Linguistic Tension’ (February 28), first Tamil Nadu and now Punjab is raising unnecessary controversy over regional languages, that too owing to the CBSE draft norms (not final) for conducting the 10th class board exams. The Punjab government’s hasty decision of imposing the Punjabi language on all 10th class examinations in the state of all

boards, whether Central or State, is uncalled for. This irrational decision has been announced without taking stakeholders—students and teachers—into confidence. It is nothing else but the imposing of the state’s will and Punjabi language on innocent students.

How can a student who has never studied Punjabi suddenly take an examination of the same language in the 10th class? It is impossible and irrational. The CBSE was quick to clarify and assure that all regional languages, including Punjabi, will be included in the class 10 board exam. After this clarification and assurance, the Punjab government should immediately withdraw its decision of making Punjabi a mandatory language in all boards’ examinations in Punjab.

Vinay Kr Malhotra | Ambala Cantt

crime was nothing but the grave impact of drugs. In fact, Kerala has been reeling under the threat of drugs for quite some time now.

All kinds of drugs have been flowing into the state purportedly with the connivance of those in authority. It is a painful truth that a large number of youngsters, including students, are under the influence of drugs. However, the government has not taken any concrete steps to contain this serious menace. The present situation in the state is bound to ruin the young generation completely. As such, the government must take prompt and stern action against the drug mafia.

T T Sakaria | Delhi

AFGHANISTAN STUNS ENGLAND  
Madam — Afghanistan pulled off a historic eight-run victory over England, proving once again that cricket is a game of glorious uncertainties. The hero of the night was 23-year-old Ibrahim Zadran, who played a breathtaking knock of 177 off 146 balls, the highest individual score by any Afghanistan batsman in ODIs. His fearless stroke play propelled Afghanistan to a challenging total of 325 for 7 despite England’s experienced bowling attack. England’s chase was anchored by Joe Root, who counterattacked with a brilliant 120 off 111 balls, keeping his team in the hunt.

However, Afghanistan’s fiery fast bowler Azmatulla Omarzai turned the game on its head with a sensational 5/58. This is the second time in a row that Afghanistan has beaten England in an ICC tournament. This and Zadran’s pedigree once again advertised Afghanistan’s evolution as a rapid cricketing force. Despite a late fightback, England fell short by eight runs, handing Afghanistan one of their most significant victories in cricket history. This match will be remembered as a testament to Afghanistan’s rising stature and the sheer unpredictability that makes cricket a thrilling spectacle.

Gopalaswamy J | Chennai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

THREE LEVELS OF CONTROL

Beyond our inner self, natural and material limitations shape our behaviour and outcomes



AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

We, human beings, are under control at three levels. The first one is at the level of self. We have been blessed with faculties such as mind, intelligence, etc. And we have free will to decide what we would like to think, decide and do. However, thinking and deciding are in our control, but being able to do is not. Our actions are limited by circumstances, instruments we have, how much we can apply ourselves and providence of course. Then, there are constraints like limited knowledge, facilities, nature, etc. Knowledge is unlimited, but we can have very limited knowledge only. Even good knowledge of a subject is difficult, never mind of countless subjects. This restricts us greatly. Nature is another limiting factor. The three modes of material nature, which are goodness, passion and darkness, determine how we would act. For example, a man predominantly in the mode of goodness will generally act wisely. The same cannot be said about persons under the control of the modes of passion and darkness. They make many mistakes. And we all generate 'karmas' (deeds) by minds, words and bodies (senses). These actions of ours, both good and bad put us in the control of the Divine Authority, appointed by God; it works under the superintendence of God. (The Bhagavad-Geeta 9.10) Imagine the extent of their work.



They have to be alert to record all our actions 24x7. This is nothing compared to what they have to do to decide our rewards and punishments, their timings, etc. In this, they have to correlate how these will impact others associated with us. Therefore, the Divine Authority may delay the punishment to make its effect on the family a little less harsh. But the guilty person has no hope of reprieve even if the punishment is to be delayed to the next life. Our 'karmaphalas' (fruits of actions) are carried from life to life. If the job of the Divine Authority is mind-boggling, what God does is simply unimaginable. God has to watch the interest of all His devotees, no matter where they are. Then, He must appropriately respond to our prayers every time. He must also guide us if we sincerely seek it. Additionally, God must help if we deserve to come out of troubles we have gotten into due to our past 'karmas'. This is nothing compared to what God does for the Creation; He has to keep it going for millions of years for us souls. Imagine if there was dissolution every hundred years or so. How will we feel? Then, God has innumerable galaxies to control. He has many planets where we can go to from the earth planet. There is heaven, where pious acts take us for limited periods. This is like going on a vacation to a dream place. There are many such planets which are higher and higher ending in the 'Vaikuntha' planet, which is the abode of God. Only those, who have been liberated reach there. They get freed from the cycle of birth and death. They remain there for good. Knowing all this, we must become wise, really wise. We must seek the shelter of God beginning now, not later. We must follow dharma to please God. God will guide and help. The divine Authority will be giving us more rewards than punishments, which we can tolerate easily. And we will be our best friends. (The writer is a spiritual teacher; views are personal)

Finding money for 'freebies': BJP faces an uphill task



UTTAM GUPTA

The challenge now is not just about delivering on electoral promises but also about balancing an already precarious fiscal equation that could see deficits skyrocket



Having swept the polls in the National Capital Territory (NCT) of Delhi with a clinching 2/3rd majority, Rekha Gupta-led BJP - government faces the daunting challenge of having to find money to fulfil its poll promises. Amongst others, the BJP had promised Rs 2,500 a month to women under Mahila Samridhi Yojana (MSY); Rs 21,000 to pregnant women; LPG cylinders for Rs 500 and free cylinder on Holi and Diwali; a stipend of Rs 1000 a month to SC students pursuing technical and vocational courses; free education for needy students from KG to PG; free travel for students on Delhi Metro; Atal Canteens in Jhuggi Basti clusters providing nutritional meals for Rs 5 only; implementation of Ayushman Bharat scheme and additional cover of Rs 5 lakh for senior citizens. BJP had also vowed to continue all existing schemes such as free electricity and free water (for monthly consumption up to a specified threshold) run by the erstwhile AAP - dispensation under the then Chief Minister, Arvind Kejriwal.

**How much will these freebies cost?** Let us look at the Mahila Samridhi Yojana (MSY) under which the party has promised to give cash assistance of Rs 2500 per month to every woman. The number of women above the age of 18 years in Delhi is around 67,00,000. @ Rs 2500 per month or Rs 30,000 annually to each woman, giving cash assistance to them all will require Rs 20,100 crore per annum (0.67x30,000). The assistance to pregnant women @Rs 21,000 per woman, taking a total of about 1,500,000 pregnant women will cost around Rs 3150 crore annually. As for subsidy on LPG, take consumption of 4 cylinders (14 kg each) per household (HH) in a year. The current cost of supplying a cylinder is around Rs 1000. For two cylinders (Holi and Diwali) promised to be given free, the subsidy will be Rs 2000 whereas for the other two to be given @ Rs 500 each, the outgo will be Rs 1000. This gives an annual subsidy of Rs 3000 per HH. The current population of Delhi is 330 lakh. Taking an average of 4 members per HH,



NOW, CONSIDER THE IMPACT OF BJP PROMISES. MODI HAS GUARANTEED THAT EXISTING SCHEMES WON'T BE DISCONTINUED. SO, FREE ELECTRICITY/WATER COSTING RS 11,000 CRORE WILL STAY. ADD TO THIS, THE FRESH GUARANTEES WHICH WOULD BE AT LEAST ABOUT RS 30,000 CRORE

we get a total of over 82.5 lakh HHs. Multiplied by Rs 3000 being the subsidy per HH, the annual outgo comes to Rs 2500 crore. Look at free education for needy students from KG to PG. According to the latest data available, around 10 per cent of Delhi's population was considered below the poverty line in 2011-12. On this basis, the number of poor persons comes to 33 lakh (330x0.1). About one-third of this or 11 lakh would be persons in the studying age 4 - 25 years. Taking the average expense of educating a child in India at the bare minimum of Rs 20,000 per annum, the total annual expense on "needy students" in the city would be about Rs 2200 crore (0.11x20,000). The additional burden of these four promises alone on the Delhi government's budget is Rs 27,950 crore (20,100+3150+2500+2200). Other freebies would blot this figure by several thousand crore. Let us take the total to be around Rs 30,000 crore. **What is the current state of Delhi's finances?** For the current financial year (FY) 2024-25, the total expenditure of the Delhi government is estimated at Rs 76,000 crore. This includes revenue expenditure (RE) of Rs 61,000 crore and capital expenditure (CE) of Rs 15,000 crore. Against this, the total revenue receipts or RR (tax plus non-tax receipts including transfer from the Central government) is estimated at around Rs 58,000 crore. That leaves a revenue deficit or RD (RR - RE) of Rs 3000 crore. This is disconcerting when seen in the backdrop of Delhi's potential to generate substantial surplus given two fundamental factors working to its advantage. First, due to its special status of being NCT, three major functions namely law and order, police and land

come under the Centre's jurisdiction hence, the latter foots the bill for expenses on those functions. Second, Delhi being a major hub of economic activity, its propensity to garner its tax revenue in terms of higher GST collection besides VAT on petrol and diesel and excise duty and VAT on alcohol (these products are outside the GST regime) is greater. The RD will increase drastically when we consider the cost of servicing the loans taken by various departments of the Delhi government such as the Delhi Jal Board (DJB); over Rs 70,000 crore and Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC); Rs 60,000 crore (according to the CAG, these are cumulative losses of DTC as at end of FY 2021-22 and would have ballooned further during the following three FYs till end March 2025). The liability for servicing those debts is vested entirely in the NCT government and should be reflected in its balance sheet. Look at the fiscal deficit (FD) which is the excess of total receipts over total expenditure. For FY 2024-25, it is estimated at Rs 18,000 crore which is 80 per cent higher than the FD during FY 2023-24 at Rs 10,000 crore. The surge is despite a steep reduction of over 30 per cent in CE from the budget estimate (BE) of Rs 22,000 crore for FY 2023-24 to Rs 15,000 crore for FY 2024-25. If interest payments on loans taken by DJB and DTC (Rs 130,000 crore plus) which are merely adding to the mountain of debt on the books of those departments year after year are also included, the FD would be much higher. The situation had come to such a pass that the then CM Atishi had approached the Centre seeking a loan of Rs 10,000 crore from the National Small Savings Fund (NSSF). The precarious

ness of the state's finances has a lot to do with the galloping freebies and irregularities and mismanagement in running various schemes and overall governance on a monumental scale. During 2024-25, the cost of free electricity and free water alone is estimated to be about Rs 11,000 crore. According to CAG, during 2015-16 and 2021-22, the losses of DTC went up by Rs 35,000 crore and that was due to both free bus rides and misgovernance. Now, consider the impact of BJP promises. Modi has guaranteed that existing schemes won't be discontinued. So, free electricity/water costing Rs 11,000 crore will stay. Add to this, the fresh guarantees which would be at least about Rs 30,000 crore. This takes the RE from Rs 61,000 crore during FY 2024-25 to Rs 91,000 crore during FY 2025-26 (assuming all other things remain unchanged). The RR is Rs 58,000 crore, we get RD of Rs 33,000 crore - up from Rs 3000 crore budgeted for FY 2024-25. The incumbent government has also promised to clean Yamuna River, clean the air, renovate/build roads, cleanse the drainage systems, build and renovate hospitals and schools in fact, take up and complete a host of physical and social infrastructure projects needed for ensuring a good quality life for Delhiites. That means even if CE is restored to 2023-24 level Rs 22,000 crore, that won't be enough. Even with this insufficient level, the total expenditure will be Rs 113,000 crore. Minus RR of Rs 58,000 crore, we get FD of Rs 55,000 crore. Put simply, the Centre will have to arrange for at least Rs 55,000 crore to enable the BJP to live up to its promises for Delhi. (The writer is a policy analyst; views are personal)

India's solar surge: Powering the journey to net zero 2070  
India is charting an ambitious course toward Net Zero 2070, with solar energy emerging as the mainstay of its renewable revolution

India's steadfast commitment to achieving Net Zero by 2070 is catalysing a dramatic shift in its energy sector, with solar power emerging as the principal driver of this transformation. Abundant sunlight, rapidly decreasing technology costs, strong government support, and an expanding skilled workforce have combined to place solar energy at the heart of India's renewable strategy. While the country has celebrated significant milestones in solar adoption, it also faces multifaceted challenges that require innovative policy interventions and strategic foresight to sustain its momentum. Over the past decade, India has achieved remarkable progress in solar energy. The nation not only met its ambitious renewable



DISHHA SHARMA

targets but exceeded them, with solar power now accounting for over 60 per cent of its renewable energy mix. By 2024, India surpassed the 100 GW milestone, establishing itself as a global leader in solar energy. For example, Rajasthan's solar capacity exceeds 24 GW. Rapid expansion is evident in a 19 per cent increase in solar generation from 2023 to 2024, with solar installations making up over two-thirds of new renewable capacity. India's role in the International Solar Alliance underscores its commitment to global solar collaboration, as the initiative seeks to mobilise over \$1 trillion in investments for developing countries. National agencies, particularly the Solar Energy Corporation of India,

restricts the country's ability to fully exploit its vast solar potential. Moreover, there are stark regional disparities in solar development. While states like Rajasthan and Gujarat lead the charge, many eastern and northeastern regions lag behind, resulting in an uneven distribution of renewable resources. Financial hurdles also pose serious challenges. Although government subsidies help reduce costs, the high initial capital required for large-scale installations, coupled with elevated interest rates and delayed payments, discourages private investment. Manufacturers struggle with a shortage of competitively priced solar cells, a problem compounded by strict Domestic Content Requirements that strain pro-



duction capabilities. These financial constraints not only hinder current project deployment but also threaten future expansion in the sector. Another critical issue is India's heavy reliance on imported components. Despite having a domestic module production capacity of around 11 GW, India still depends on global supply chains for essential items such as polysilicon,

wafers, and solar cells. This dependency leaves the country vulnerable to supply chain disruptions, particularly amid geopolitical tensions and trade imbalances, as China continues to dominate global solar manufacturing. Furthermore, the scarcity of critical minerals like cobalt, nickel, and lithium—vital for solar panel production—further complicates efforts to build a self-sufficient solar industry. Local challenges add another layer of complexity. Land acquisition for solar projects often faces resistance from local communities and farmers, leading to protests, legal disputes, and, in some cases, violent confrontations. In Rajasthan, disputes over land rights have led to project cancellations, highlighting the

need for transparent and inclusive processes that respect local interests and ensure fair compensation. Addressing these local concerns is essential for fostering community support and facilitating smoother project implementation. To overcome these challenges, India must adopt a multifaceted strategy. Strengthening policy frameworks to provide long-term stability is crucial, as is enhancing inter-state cooperation and ensuring reliable access to energy data for effective monitoring. Public-private partnerships can expand solar adoption in underserved regions by providing risk mitigation instruments to attract investment. Promoting domestic manufacturing of solar panels and key compo-

nents will reduce import dependency and bolster energy security. Additionally, investing in workforce development to build a skilled labor pool for solar installation, maintenance, and manufacturing will be vital for sustaining industry growth. By focusing on robust policy support, financial innovation, domestic manufacturing, and community engagement, India can significantly unlock the full potential of its solar resources. With sustained government backing and strategic collaboration between public and private sectors, the nation is well-positioned to lead the global solar revolution. (The writer is assistant professor IIM Mumbai; views are personal. Inputs from Supriya Kaushik and Asmita Tewari)

# Israel's army admits failures leading to Oct 7 attack

PTI ■ TEL AVIV

An investigation by the Israeli military has determined that Hamas was able to carry out the deadliest attack in Israeli history on October 7, 2023, because the much more powerful Israeli army misjudged the militant group's intentions and underestimated its capabilities. The findings, released Thursday, could pressure Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to launch a widely demanded broader inquiry to examine the political decision-making that preceded the attack, which triggered the war in Gaza. Many Israelis believe the mistakes of October 7 extend beyond the military, and they blame Netanyahu for what they view as a failed strategy of deterrence and containment in the years leading up to the attack. That strategy included allowing Qatar to send suitcases of cash into Gaza and sidelining Hamas' rival, the internationally recognised Palestinian Authority. The prime minister has not taken responsibility, saying he will answer tough questions only after the war, which has been

paused for nearly six weeks by a tenuous ceasefire. Despite public pressure, including from the families of the roughly 1,200 people killed in the October 7 attack and the 251 taken as hostages into Gaza, Netanyahu has resisted calls for a commission of inquiry. The military's main findings were that the region's most powerful and sophisticated military misread Hamas' intentions, underestimated its capabilities and was wholly unprepared for the surprise attack by thousands of heavily armed militants in the early morning hours of a major Jewish holiday. In comments made to military commanders Monday, and shared with the media on Thursday, the army's chief of staff, Lt. Gen. Herzi Halevi, said he took responsibility for the army's failures. "I was the commander of the military on October 7th, and I have my own responsibility. I also carry the weight of all your responsibility — that, too, I see as mine," said Halevi, who announced his resignation in January and is set to step down next week. The military's findings are in line with past

conclusions reached by officials and analysts. The military released only a summary of the report and military officials outlined its findings. "October 7 was a complete failure," said one military official, who spoke on condition of anonymity in line with regulations. A central misconception was that Hamas, which seized control of Gaza from the Palestinian Authority in 2007, was more interested in governing the territory than fighting Israel, the inquiry found. The military also misjudged the militant group's capabilities. Military planners had envisioned that, at worst, Hamas could stage a ground invasion from up to eight border points, the official said. In fact, Hamas had more than 60 attack routes. Intelligence assessed in the aftermath of the attack has shown Hamas came close to staging the offensive on three earlier occasions but delayed it for unknown reasons, the official said. The official said that in the hours before the attack, there were signs that something was amiss, including when Hamas fighters switched their phones over to the



Israeli network.

The perception that Hamas did not want war guided decision makers away from taking action that night that might have thwarted the attack. The Israeli military official said intelligence shows that Yahya Sinwar, a mastermind of the October 7 attack who was killed last October, had begun planning it as early as 2017. With the military off guard on a holiday weekend, Hamas launched a heavy wave

of rockets that allowed thousands of fighters to burst through the security fence or fly over it on hang gliders. They knocked out surveillance cameras and quickly overwhelmed hundreds of soldiers stationed along the border. From there they advanced to key highway intersections and attacked troops dispatched to the area, including some senior officers, disrupting the military's command and control, according to a sec-

ond military official, who also spoke on condition of anonymity. For the first three hours after the attack, Hamas fighters marauded through border communities and a music festival with little resistance. That was when most of the 251 hostages were taken and most people were killed, the official said. The official said the chaos led to friendly fire incidents, although he said there were not many, without disclosing a figure. It took hours for the military to regain control and days until the area was fully cleared of militants. According to the first official, the report blamed the military for being overconfident in its knowledge and not showing enough doubt in its core concepts and beliefs. The summary said a key lesson was that Israel could not let a threat develop on its border. It spelled out several recommendations, including creating special units meant to prepare for such surprise and large-scale events, as well as reform in the military intelligence department that would foster "openness, scepticism, listening, learning." It did not place blame on any individual soldiers or officers, but is likely to pave the way for a reckoning in the military and eventual dismissals. Some high-ranking officers other than Halevi have also resigned, including the former head of military intelligence.

# Israel, Hamas have begun negotiating next phase of Gaza ceasefire, says Egypt

PTI ■ KHAN YOUNIS (GAZA STRIP)

Negotiations between Israel and Hamas on the next phase of the Gaza ceasefire began Thursday, Egypt said, averting a collapse ahead of Saturday's expiration of the agreement's first phase. Officials from Israel, Qatar and the United States started "intensive discussions" on the ceasefire's second phase in Cairo, Egypt's state information service said. "The mediators are also discussing ways to enhance the delivery of humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip, as part of efforts to alleviate the suffering of the population and support stability in the region," its statement said. Phase 2 talks are meant to negotiate an end to the war, including the return of all remaining hostages in Gaza who are alive, and the withdrawal of all Israeli troops from the territory. Return of remaining deceased hostages would happen in Phase 3. According to Israel, there are 59 remaining hostages — 24 of whom are still believed to be alive. It will be difficult to reconcile a deal with the war objectives of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who has called for dismantling Hamas' governing and military capabilities. After suffering heavy losses in the war, Hamas has nonetheless emerged intact during the ceasefire, and the group says it will not give up its weapons. Hours before talks began, an Israeli official said the country would not withdraw from a strategic corridor in the Gaza Strip as called for under the ceasefire, a refusal that could severely complicate negotiations with Hamas and key mediator Egypt at a sensitive moment for the fragile truce. Overnight, Hamas released the remains

of four hostages in exchange for over 600 Palestinian prisoners, the last planned swap of the ceasefire's first phase. US President Donald Trump's Mideast envoy, Steve Witkoff, was expected in the region in the coming days. **Blatant violation:** An Israeli official, speaking on condition of anonymity in line with regulations, said the army needed to remain in the so-called Philadelphi corridor, on the Gaza side of the border with Egypt, to prevent weapons smuggling. Separately, Defense Minister Israel Katz said at a meeting with local leaders that he had seen tunnels penetrating the border on a recent visit to the corridor, without providing evidence or elaborating on Israel's plans. Egypt says it destroyed the smuggling tunnels from its side years ago and set up a military buffer zone to halt smuggling. Hamas said any Israeli attempt to maintain a buffer zone in the corridor would be a "blatant violation" of the ceasefire agreement. The militant group says that sticking to the agreement is the only way for Israel to secure the release of dozens of hostages still held in Gaza. Israel was supposed to begin withdrawing from the Philadelphi corridor on Saturday, the last day of the first phase, and complete it within eight days. There was no immediate comment about the corridor from Egypt, which is opposed to any Israeli presence on the Gaza side of its border. **Remains of 4 hostages identified:** The remains released Thursday were confirmed to be those of Ohad Yahalomi, Itzhak Elgarat, Shlomo Mantzur and Tachi Idan, according to the Hostages and Missing Families Forum, which represents families of the captives.

# China to send Pak astronaut as first foreign guest to its space station

PTI ■ BEIJING/ISLAMABAD

China plans to send an astronaut from its ally Pakistan as the first foreign guest to its space station Tiangong. China and Pakistan on Friday signed an agreement including bilateral efforts to select and train Pakistani astronauts and then send some of them to Tiangong, currently orbiting 400 kilometres above the earth, China Manned Space Agency (CMSA) said in a news release here. The agreement to send the Pakistani astronaut in space was signed by the China Manned Space Agency (CMSA) and Pakistan's Space and Upper Atmosphere Research Commission (SUPARCO) at a ceremony attended by Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif in Islamabad, state-run China Daily reported. China has been launching satellites for Pakistan for the past few years to help its close ally. The Chinese space station, which has been in orbit for nearly four years, is regarded as a rival to Russia's international space station Mir, currently in orbit. China built Tiangong after the country was reportedly excluded from the International Space Station (ISS) over concerns that China's space programme is manned by its military, the People's Liberation Army (PLA). China's space station is also seen as a new field of competition between China and the US. The two robotic arms of the station, especially the long one which has the ability to grab objects including satellites from space, drew international concerns. China has earlier announced plans for the further development of space programmes, which included launching a manned lunar mission, construction of a lunar space station, exploration of habitable planets and extra-terrestrial life to expand its space programme in the next few decades. Deputy Director of the Chinese Manned Space Agency Lin Xiqiang told media here earlier that China plans to land astronauts on the moon before 2030 while the US plans to put its astronauts back on the lunar surface in 2025.

# Students-led political party to be launched amid unrest in Bangladesh

PTI ■ DHAKA

Bangladesh on Friday is set to witness emergence of a political party led by students who spearheaded the 2024 street campaign that led to the toppling of the then prime minister Sheikh Hasina's Awami League regime. A large stage is ready in central Dhaka's Manik Mia Avenue for the launch of 'Jatiya Nagorik Party' or National Citizen Party (NCP) led by the key-figures of the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement, also called Students Against Discrimination (SAD). The Anti-Discrimination Student Movement led a mass uprising leading to the ouster of Hasina's over 15 years of rule on August 5 last year. Three days later, Muhammad Yunus assumed charge as the Chief Adviser of the Interim government, effectively the prime minister.

NCP leaders said they expected around 3,00,000 people, including students from across the country, at the launch event. "People from all the 64 districts are to join our inaugural alongside the family members of those who gave their lives in the July-August mass uprising," a spokesman of the new party's media cell said. "We have also invited the leaders of major political parties," he added. The new party is being launched with the blessings of Yunus, who took over as the Chief Adviser as the SAD nominee in August 2024. NCP leaders said Yunus was also invited to their launch ceremony. The other high-profile invitees include Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) chairperson and ex-premier Khaleda Zia; her son and acting BNP chairperson Tarique Rahman; BNP secretary general Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir; Jamaat-

e-Islami ameer Shafiqur Rahman, and leaders of several Islamic, rightist and leftwing parties and groups. BNP had earlier expressed skepticism about the neutrality of the Yunus' interim administration ahead of expected general elections in December this year, particularly after he extended his support for the proposed student-led party while three of their representatives were serving as advisers, equivalent to ministers, in his government. One of the advisers, entrusted with the portfolio of information ministry, Nahid Islam, however, resigned earlier this week to head the NCP amid the criticism that the new party was being floated using the advantage of being part of the government. A recent UN fact-finding report suggested politicised actions during the uprising and subsequent violence

claimed nearly 1400 lives. Bangladesh witnessed a resurgence of unrest since February 5 this year when protestors burned and demolished the residence of the country's founding father Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, coinciding with her daughter Hasina's previously announced virtual address to students from India. The protestors set on fire or ransacked the houses and business establishments of the Awami League leaders and supporters across the country. Bangladesh's security forces have arrested over 8,600 people in a two-week crackdown named 'Operation Devil Hunt' that targeted gangs allegedly linked with the ousted Hasina government. The arrests came amid growing concerns about rising crime levels, particularly in Dhaka, with police saying the number of robberies had doubled since January last year.

# 5 killed, 20 hurt in Pak mosque blast

PTI ■ PESHAWAR

A powerful blast killed at least five people and injured 20 others during Friday prayers at a mosque in north-west Pakistan's restive Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province ahead of the fasting month of Ramadan, police said. The blast claimed the life of Hamidul Haq Haqqani, chief of his own faction of the Jamiat Ulema Islam (JUI) and caretaker of the Madrasa-e-Haqqania, located in Akora Khattak town

of Nowshera district, Chief Secretary Shahab Ali Shah confirmed. Born in 1968, Hamidul Haq became chief of his JUI (Sami Group) after the death of his father Maulana Sami ul Haq. IGP, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Zulfiqar Hameed said the blast is suspected to be a suicide bombing and Hamidul Haq appeared to be the target. "We had provided six security guards to Hamidul Haq," he said. DPO Nowshera district Abdur Rasheed said the blast occurred

during 'Jumma' prayer. The Darul Uloom Haqqania madrasa propagates the Hanafi Deobandi school of Sunni Islam. It was founded by Maulana Abdul Haq along the lines of the Darul Uloom Deoband seminary in India, where he had taught. It has been dubbed the "University of Jihad" due to its methods and content of instruction, along with the future occupations of its alumni. A number of leading members of the Taliban, including

former chief Akhtar Mansour, studied here. Rescue teams rushed to the site and removed the bodies and evacuated the injured to the hospital. An emergency was declared in both Nowshera and Peshawar hospitals. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur and Governor Faisal Karim Kundi have condemned the suicide blast. The Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam leaders have appealed for blood donation for the injured.

# Quake rattles Kathmandu

PTI ■ KATHMANDU

At least four people were injured in Kathmandu and elsewhere due to a strong earthquake in the neighbouring Sindhupalchowk district early Friday morning. The quake measuring 6.1 magnitude was recorded at 2.51 am with its epicentre at Bhairabkunda, Sindhupalchowk district, 65 km east of Kathmandu, according to the National Earthquake Monitoring and Research Centre. Some houses in Sindhupalchowk district developed cracks after the tremor hit the district. Besides Kathmandu valley, the earthquake was also felt by people in southern and eastern Nepal, according to officials. The earthquake prompted many people in Kathmandu and nearby areas to come out of their houses in panic. Two people were injured in Kathmandu while an inmate of Chautara prison was injured as he tried to escape following the earthquake. An elderly man was injured in a village in Sindhupalchowk district as he tried to exit his house soon after the earthquake, officials said. Nepal lies in one of the most active tectonic zones, making the Himalayan nation extremely vulnerable to earthquakes. The worst quake it has so far witnessed was in April 2015 when a 7.8 magnitude quake killed more than 9,000 people and damaged over 1 million structures.



Indonesian Muslim women buy vegetables to prepare for the holy month of Ramadan at a market in Jakarta, Indonesia on Friday. AP/PTI

# Russian, US diplomats meet in Istanbul

PTI ■ ISTANBUL

Russian and US diplomats met in Istanbul on Thursday to discuss normalising the operation of their respective embassies after years expelling each others' diplomats. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said the talks followed an understanding reached during President Donald Trump's call with Russian President Vladimir Putin and contact between senior Russian and US diplomats and other officials in Saudi Arabia. Speaking during Thursday's

meeting of the Federal Security Service, Putin hailed the Trump administration's "pragmatism and realistic view" compared with what he described as the "stereotypes and messianic ideological clichés" of its predecessors. "The first contacts with the new US administration encourage certain hopes," Putin said. "There is a mutual readiness to work to restore relations and gradually solve a colossal amount of systemic strategic problems in the global architecture." Putin said that "part of Western elites are still determined to

maintain global instability" and could try to "disrupt or compromise the dialogue that has begun," adding that Russian diplomats and security agencies should focus their efforts on thwarting such attempts. **Return to civilised communication:** In Riyadh, Moscow and Washington agreed to start working toward ending the war in Ukraine and improving their diplomatic and economic ties. That includes restoring staffing at embassies, which in recent years were hit hard by mutual expulsions of large numbers of diplomats, closures of offices, and other

restrictions. A US Embassy official in Ankara confirmed that the Istanbul talks focused on the issues affecting the operation of respective diplomatic missions. Later Thursday, a spokesman for the US State Department said: "The United States raised concerns regarding access to banking and contracted services as well as the need to ensure stable and sustainable staffing levels at the US Embassy in Moscow. Through constructive discussions, both sides identified concrete initial steps to stabilize bilateral mission operations in these areas."

# Panama, Costa Rica turning into 'black hole' for migrants, deportees from US, observers warn

PTI ■ MIRAMAR (PANAMA)

Officials in Costa Rica and Panama are confiscating migrants' passports and cell-phones, denying them access to legal services and moving them between remote outposts as they wrestle with the logistics of a suddenly reversed migration flow. The restrictions and lack of transparency are drawing criticism from human rights observers and generating increasingly testy responses from officials, who say their actions are aimed at protecting the migrants from human traffickers. Both countries have received hundreds of deportees from

various nations sent by the United States as President Donald Trump's administration tries to accelerate deportations. At the same time, thousands of migrants shut out of the US have started moving south through Central America — Panama recorded 2,200 so far in February. "We're a reflection of current United States immigration policy," said Harold Villegas-Román, a political science professor and refugee expert at the University of Costa Rica. "There is no focus on human rights, there is only focus on control and security. Everything is very murky, and not transparent." **Deportations and reversed**

**migration:** Earlier this month, the US sent 299 deportees from mostly Asian countries to Panama. Those who were willing to return to their countries — about 150 to date — were put on planes with the assistance of United Nations agencies and paid for by the US. Carlos Ruiz-Hernandez, Panama's deputy foreign minister, said Thursday a small number are in contact with international organisations and the UN Refugee Agency as they weigh whether to seek asylum in Panama. "None of them wants to stay in Panama. They want to go to the US," he said in a phone interview from Washington. "We cannot

give them green cards, but we can get them back home and for a short period of time provide them with medical and psychological support as well as housing." Despite Trump's threats to retake control of the Panama Canal, he said Panama had not acted under US pressure. "This is in Panama's national interest. We are a friend of the US and want to work with them to send a signal of deterrence." Ruiz-Hernandez said some of the deportees remaining in Panama would be given the option of staying at a shelter originally set up to handle the large number of migrants moving north through the Darien

Gap. One Chinese deportee currently detained in the camp, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to avoid repercussions, said she wasn't given a choice. She was deported to Panama without knowing where they were being sent, without signing deportation documents in the US and without clarity of how long they would be there. She was among the deportees who were moved from a Panama City hotel where some held up signs to their windows asking for help to a remote camp in the Darien region. Speaking to the AP over messages on a cellphone she kept hidden, she said authorities con-

fiscated others' phones and offered them no legal assistance. Others have said they've been unable to contact their lawyers. "This deprived us of our legal process," she said. Panama President Jose Raul Mulino, asked about the lack of access to legal services on Thursday, questioned the idea that migrants would even have lawyers. "Doesn't it seem like a coincidence that those poor people have lawyers in Panama?" Mulino said. **Black hole for deported migrants:** Costa Rica and Panama have so far denied press access to facilities where they are holding migrants. Panama had

initially invited journalists to the Darien this week, but ultimately canceled the visit. "Panama cannot end up becoming a black hole for deported migrants," said Juan Pappier, deputy director of Human Rights Watch in the Americas. "Migrants have the right to communicate with their families, to seek lawyers and Panama must guarantee transparency about the situation in which they find themselves." Costa Rica has faced similar criticisms from the country's independent human rights entity, which has raised alarm over "failures" by authorities to guarantee proper conditions for deportees arriving.



Doctors suggest pope may overcome the first

Pope Francis reached the two-week mark recovery from pneumonia Friday as doctors suggested he had overcome the most critical phase of the infection while holding out on declaring him out of danger entirely.

doctors avoided saying Francis was in critical condition, suggesting he had overcome the most acute phase of the infection. But given the complexity of his lung infection, they said "further days of clinical stability are needed" before they revise their prognosis officially and say he is out of danger.

we feel so concerned for him." Maria Teresa Sánchez, who was visiting from Colombia with her sister, said that she has always felt close to Francis — the first Latin American pope. "That's like having a relative within the higher-ups, with God," she said. "He has done so much for religion; he's such a humble person."

and presiding over prayers in the solemn period in which the faithful commemorate Christ's crucifixion and resurrection. Beyond that, Francis has a few major events coming up that he presumably would hope to keep if well enough. On April 27, he is due to canonize Carlo Acutis, considered to be the first millennial and digital-era saint. The Vatican considers the Italian teenager, who died of leukemia in 2006 at the age of 15, an inspiration for young Catholics.

84 Indonesians freed from scam centers in Myanmar set to return home

Eighty-four Indonesians freed from scam centers in Myanmar were set to return home Friday as the repatriation of thousands of such workers after a crackdown strains regional resources. The Indonesians were among more than 7,000 people being held in the Myanmar border town Myawaddy following a crackdown on the scam centers by Thailand, Myanmar and China.

North Korea says it performed cruise missile tests

North Korea said Friday it had test-fired strategic cruise missiles to demonstrate its nuclear counter-attack capability, days after it vowed to respond to what it called escalating U.S.-led hostilities since the start of the Trump administration. The official Korean Central News Agency said leader Kim Jong Un oversaw the missile tests off the country's west coast Wednesday.

confrontation environment" of the North Korean military's counterattack capability and the readiness of its nuclear operations, KCNA said. Kim expressed satisfaction over the results of the drills and said the military must be battle-ready and prepared to use its nuclear weapons, the report said.

Ukraine with supply of weapons and troops, won't likely embrace Trump's outreach anytime soon. They say Kim could reconsider if he doubts he'll maintain North Korea's current solid cooperation with Russia after the war ends.

Judge finds mass firings of federal probationary workers likely to be unlawful

A federal judge in San Francisco on Thursday found that the mass firings of probationary employees were likely unlawful, granting temporary relief to a coalition of labor unions and organizations that has sued to stop the Trump administration's massive dismantling of the federal workforce.

officials with civil service protection. Lawyers for the government agree that the office has no authority to hire or fire employees in other agencies. But they said the Office of Personnel Management asked agencies to review and determine whether employees on probation were fit for continued employment.

for patriotic Americans across this country who were illegally fired from their jobs by an agency that had no authority to do so," said Everett Kelley, national president of the American Federation of Government Employees. "These are rank-and-file workers who joined the federal government to make a difference in their communities, only to be suddenly terminated due to this administration's disdain for federal employees and desire to privatize their work."

ber of federal agencies represented by the five nonprofits that are plaintiffs in the lawsuit, which include veterans, parks, small businesses and defense. He seemed particularly troubled by firings expected at the Department of Defense.

Hundreds of thousands of people are believed to have been lured to work in Myanmar, Cambodia and Laos to commit global scams through false romances, bogus investment pitches and illegal gambling schemes. Many of the workers were recruited under false pretenses, only to find themselves trapped in virtual slavery. The Indonesian Foreign Affairs Ministry said the 84 Indonesians, which included 69 men and 15 women, were healthy and will fly to Jakarta on three commercial flights Friday. The ministry had said last week as many as 270 Indonesians were stranded in Myanmar after leaving the scam centers, but it was not clear why only 84 were being repatriated.

PUBLIC NOTICE Notice is hereby given that my client Deepak Kumar Yadav and Manju Devi are in process to purchase the Entire Third Floor built on Front Side Portion of Property bearing Municipal Qid No. 7/P3, New No. S-4, area measuring 80 Sq. Yds., Out of Khazra No. 133, situated in the area and abadi of Srinivasapur, New Delhi...

PUBLIC NOTICE This is to inform to the public at large that Mr. Dipak Kumar and Mrs. Arti Kumari who are the owners of Entire Third Floor, with roof terrace rights, area measuring 110 Sq. Yds. I.E., 91.971 Sq. Mtrs., out of Property Bearing No. RZ-22117, Street No. 5, out of Khazra No. 4472, situated in the area of Village Nasipur, Delhi state, colony known as Mahavir Enclave, New Delhi-110045 vide Sale Deed dated 31.05.2023 (Vide Doc. No. 5937) executed by Mrs. Geeta Kohari and same to be financed & mortgaged by Aditya Birla Housing Finance Ltd. That Original Sale Deed dated 31.05.2023 executed by Mrs. Geeta Kohari in favour of Mr. Dipak Kumar and Mrs. Arti Kumari in respect of said property vide Registration No. 5937, Book No. 1, Vol. No. 12178, on pages 191-199, on date 31.05.2023. SR-I, New Delhi is lost/misplaced. So, to comply the requirements of BANK/NBFC, we give this public notice that if any Person having any type of claim/rights/interest/creating mortgage over the said property, may inform in writing, at the address mentioned below, about his objections, within 15 days from today, failing which it shall be presumed that the said property is free from all type of Encumbrances, liens etc. Lucem Legal LLP

Social Security Administration could reduce 50% workforce

The Social Security Administration is preparing to lay off at least 7,000 people from its workforce of 60,000, according to a person familiar with the agency's plans who is not authorised to speak publicly. The workforce reduction, according to a second person who also spoke on the condition of anonymity, could be as high as 50%.

request for comment. The people familiar with the agency's plans say that SSA's new acting commissioner Leland Dudek held a meeting this week with management and told them they had to produce a plan that eliminated half of the workforce at SSA headquarters in Washington and at least half of the workers in regional offices. In addition, the termination of office leases for Social Security sites across the country are detailed on the DOGE website, which maintains a "Wall of Receipts," which is a self-described "transparent account of DOGE's findings and actions."

PUBLIC NOTICE It is to inform to the public at large that Mr. Gaurav Tonger is the owner of House No. 307, area measuring 170 Sq. Mtrs., covered area 70.27 Sq. Yds., situated at Block - 6, Sector/Village Kansha Greater Noida, District Gautam Budh Nagar, U.P. through Transfer Deed dated 02.05.2022 as doc. No. 527 registered at Ashok Kumar in favour of Mr. Gaurav Tonger in respect of said Property. The above said owner has misapplied the (1) Original Regd. GFA dated 14.08.2010 as doc. No. 1011 & ATS & WILL dated 14.06.2010 executed by Sh. Member in favour of Sh. Narendra Kumar in respect of said property. (2) Original Transfer Deed dated 21.03.2013 executed by Sh. Narendera Kumar in favour of Sh. Ashok Kumar in respect of plot no. 307, total plot area 170 Sq. Mtrs. Application No. - 2611137/2025, registered at P.S. Crime Branch, Delhi on dated 23.02.2025. Anyone who finds the above-mentioned documents, kindly handover the same to the Manager of Aditya Birla Housing Finance Limited, Bahadurgarh, New Delhi-110059. Sh. Sheoran is in the process of mortgaging the said property with Aditya Birla Housing Finance Limited. Any objections or concerns regarding this transaction should be raised within a period of 15 days from the date of this public notice. Any objection that is not considered binding with respect to the said property or the interests of our client. If anyone wishes to raise an objection, please do so within the stipulated 15-days period by contacting the undersigned after the completion of the 15-day period in writing to the undersigned at (address), (phone number) or (e-mail) of the undersigned. The undersigned is a Chartered Accountant and is a member of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India, New Delhi-110002. Contact No. +91 99716 26457

PUBLIC NOTICE My client HDFC Bank Ltd, Capital Circle, Munirka, New Delhi, in the business of Housing Loan, from whom Mrs. Sangeeta Khandelwal and Naveen Khandelwal has taken a housing loan against Flat No. DM309A, Tower-3A, 9th Floor, DLF THE CAMELLIAS M SUBVENTION, S. No. DLF5, Gurgaon, Haryana-122001 but in the internal movement of file one file containing the original Flat Buyer Agreement is not traceable which was lost/misplaced, if any body find the same may return to the undersigned, if anybody misuses the same, the same shall be at his/her own risk and cost. Karnail Singh, (Advocate) K-8, LGF Jangpura Extn, New Delhi-110014

Form No. UR-2 Advertisements giving notice about registration under Part 1 of Chapter XXI [Pursuant to section 374(b) of the Companies Act, 2013 and rule 4(1) of the Companies (Authorised to Register) Rules, 2014] 1. Notice is hereby given that in pursuance of sub-section (2) of section 366 of the Companies Act, 2013, an application is proposed to be made after fifteen days hereof but before the expiry of thirty days hereafter to the Registrar at NCT of Delhi that HOREKAM TECHINDOOR LLP (LLPIN: ACH-5205) a (LLP) business entity may be registered under Part 1 of Chapter XXI of the Companies Act 2013, as a company limited by shares. 2. The principal objects of the company are as follows: Manufacture or Trading of tableware, kitchenware and other household articles and toilet articles of plastic, including manufacture of vacuum flasks and other vacuum vessels, gas stoves, cooking/kitchen appliances, metal household articles (plates, saucers, pots, kettles, saucepans, frying pans and other non-electrical utensils, small hand-operated kitchen, appliances and accessories). 3. A copy of the draft memorandum and articles of association of the proposed company may be inspected at the office at House No. 2/11 Model Town-2, Block D Lodi Road, Near McDonalds, New Delhi-110003. 4. Notice is hereby given that any person objecting to this application may communicate their objection in writing to the Registrar at (address), (phone number) or (e-mail) of the undersigned. The undersigned is a Chartered Accountant and is a member of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India, New Delhi-110002. Contact No. +91 99716 26457

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THE PIONEER CLASSIFIEDS CHANGE OF NAME I Shivani Balhara W/o Sh. Ravi Kumar R/o H. No. 310, Sector 45, Gurugram, have changed my name Shivani Solanki to Shivani Balhara. Shivani Solanki to Shivani Balhara is one and the same person. Kindly note. PD(1599)C I, Shobha Sharma W/o Brij Behari Sharma R/o H.No.46, Vijay Block, Laxmi Nagar Delhi-110092 declare that Shobha Sharma & Shobha Sharma both names are same & One Person i.e. myself. PD(1600)C I, JC-472891X Sub Sachin Kumar R/o- Vill- Jagahari, PO- Kajikhhera, Teh & Dist- Muzffarnagar, U.P.- 251001 have changed my daughter's name from Seneha Kumari to Sneha Malik, vide affidavit dated 28/02/2025 before Notary Public Delhi. PD(1601)C I, Badarn Nisha, Mother of No.16017500W Hav Meraj Ahamad, R/o- Vill- Tandpur, Post- Ekai, Teh- Sikanderpur, Dist- Ballia, U.P.- 221711, have changed my name from Badarn Nisha to Badrun Nisha, vide affidavit dated 28/02/2025 before Notary Public Delhi. PD(1602)C I, Ram Nath Yadav, F/No-10136992Y RFN Sumit Yadav, R/o- H-33, Prem Nagar-1, Kirari Suleman Nagar, North West Delhi, Delhi- 110086, have changed my name from Ram Nath Yadav to Ram Nath, vide affidavit dated 28/02/2025 before Notary Public Delhi. PD(1603)C

M.P. POWER GENERATING COMPANY LIMITED Office of the Addl. C.E. (P&W), Shree Singaji Thermal Power Project Donglaja Distt. Khandwa (M.P.), E-mail ID : sepnw.sstp1@gmail.com No. 515-1700/SSTPP/MPPGCL/P&W/9195 Date : 28.02.2025 Tender Particulars/Tender Number Estimated Cost (Rs.) (including GST) Tender Cost & EMD in Rs. Last date and time for closing of online submission

BSES Rajdhani Power Limited, New Delhi TENDER NOTICE Date: 01.03.2025 Sealed tenders under two parts (Un priced & priced) are invited for the supply of following materials from all bidders:- NIT No. Brief Tender Description Estimated Cost Cost of EMD Due Date & Time of Submission Date & Time of Opening

VERKA Notice Inviting Tender www.verka.coop e tenders are hereby invited for the purchase and supply of following items:- Sr. No. Name of Work/Item Period/Tentative Qty





PHOTOS : PANKAJ KUMAR

Amit Singh's Rhythmic of Marble explores nature's essence through intricately carved sculptures with deep symbolism, writes SAKSHI PRIYA

# Chromalogue: Art in Every Shade



BY TEAM VIVA

Colours hold memories, emotions and unspoken stories. At *Chromalogue - Colours & Conversations*, they take centre stage, shaping a dialogue beyond words. The group exhibition presented by *The Art Exchange Project* and curated by *Aarti Uppal Singla*, brings together 15 artists who use colour as their language, creating an immersive experience where shades and textures communicate in their own quiet yet powerful way. The gallery becomes a world of shifting moods and narratives. *Neelesh's Echoes of Dawn 1* fills the space with deep blues, evoking the quiet beauty of early mornings. *Aarti Uppal Singla's Lotus Pond 1* captures resilience in soft yet striking tones. *Silence Speaks in Colour* by *Madhav Bhardwaj* invites viewers to listen beyond the visible, while *Portal of Peace* by *Himani Pasricha* offers a sense of stillness. *Nikita Gambhir's Smell the Coffee* warms the senses, drawing on the simple joys of everyday life. These works do not just exist on the wall, they engage, they invite and they stay with those who witness them. Beyond paint, mixed media adds depth and dimension. *Priya Bery's Poppies: The Intoxicators* bursts with life on Waterford paper, while *Winnie Singh's Meditative Reveries 9* softens the senses, creating a quiet space within. *Babita Varma's Aswan*, sculpted in clay on wood, and *Kripal Mathur's Spring Dance*, work with hand-dyed goat's wool, show that colour is not just seen, it is felt. The exhibition stretches further into digital and graphic precision. *Khushroo Kalyanwala's The Blues That Bring Cheer* across fine paper, while *Sushil Basin's Trance Dance* moves with an almost hypnotic rhythm. *Pragati Gupta's Paws-1*, a pen drawing on textured paper, proves that even in black and white, colour is imagined. *Chromalogue* is a celebration of this language, a space where colours speak and those who listen will hear.

# Patience in Every Cut

THE EXHIBITION CAPTURES THE HUMAN EXPERIENCE, OUR CONNECTION WITH NATURE, THE PASSAGE OF TIME AND THE PATIENCE REQUIRED TO SHAPE BEAUTY FROM RESISTANCE, MUCH LIKE LIFE ITSELF

Marble has a way of holding stories within its veins, waiting for the right hands to bring them to life. *Rhythmic of Marble*, the solo exhibition by *Amit Singh* at *Triveni Kala Sangam*, was a breathtaking display of patience, devotion and an artist's relentless pursuit of expression.

*Amit Singh's* work is about preserving the delicate balance between nature and human intervention. When asked about the concept behind his exhibition, he spoke with a quiet intensity. "Nature has always been my priority," he said. "My work is about our connection with it."

Each sculpture told a different story, some reflecting the tranquillity of nature, others capturing its raw beauty. His intricate carvings on marble ranged from smooth, flowing forms that mimicked water's grace to bold, angular pieces that seemed to resist time itself. The detailing was mesmerising, delicate veins running through stone, each mark a reminder of the patience and precision it took to create. His *Nature Series* was particularly striking, with sculptures inspired by the elements, wind, water, and earth, translated into marble with astonishing delicacy.

The dedication behind the exhibition was staggering. *Singh* revealed that it took him five years to complete the entire body of work. "Some pieces were done in minutes," he admitted. "A simple idea, a quick execution. But others, some marble works

demanding days, even weeks. Patience is the key."

His favourite piece? He smiled at the question. "That's like asking a parent to choose their favourite child," he said. "Every sculpture is a part of me."

The sculptures seemed to hold an unspoken dialogue with their surroundings. Natural light filtered through, casting shifting shadows on the marble, adding depth and movement to the stillness. The play of light and texture gave each piece a different life depending on the time of day, a quiet reminder of the ever-changing nature of art and perception.

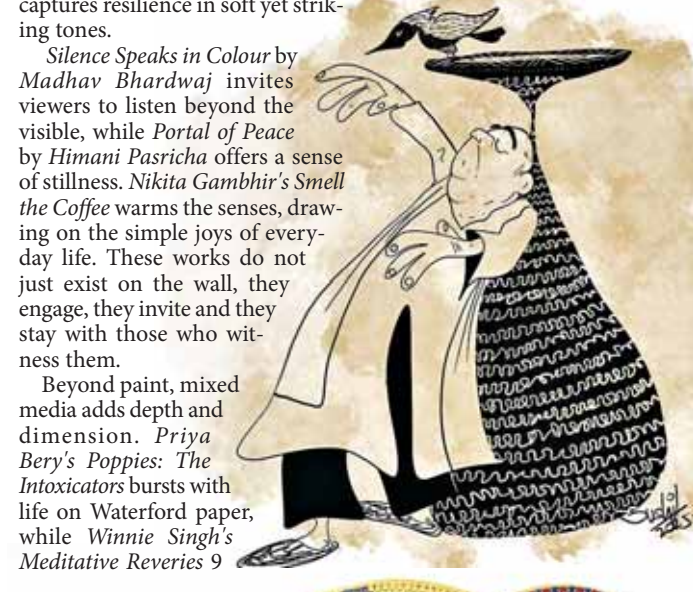
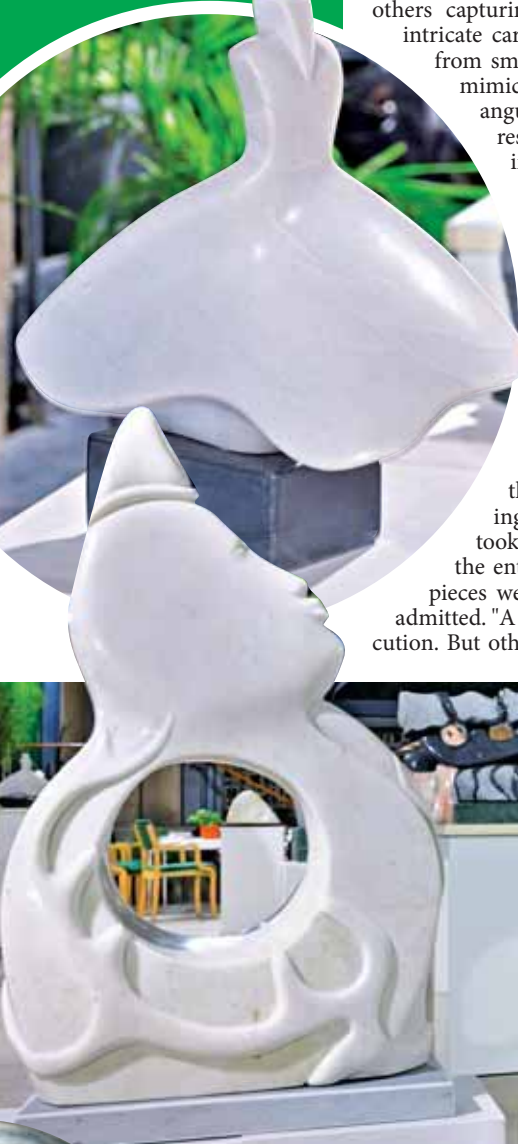
Beyond the aesthetic, *Singh's* work carried an undeniable emotional weight. Some pieces felt serene, almost meditative. Others had a raw intensity, as though the stone itself resisted the chisel before surrendering to form. His ability to extract such depth from a material as unyielding as marble was nothing short of extraordinary.

At a time when mass production dominates, *Singh's* art stands as a craftsmanship that cannot be rushed. His exhibition was an experience, a moment of stillness in a world that rarely pauses. As I left, I couldn't help but glance back one last time. The sculptures stood there, unmoving yet alive, each a quiet reminder of the hands that



MARBLE, BOTH FRAGILE AND ENDURING, MIRRORS HUMAN EXISTENCE, SHAPED BY TIME, PATIENCE AND THE ARTIST'S SKILLED HANDS

had shaped them, the time they had endured and the stories they would continue to tell long after the exhibition ended.



# Experience the evolution of art

At *India Design 2025* in New Delhi, *Masha Art* reinterprets artistic heritage through bold experimentation, transforming tradition into a dynamic, sensorial experience, says SAKSHI PRIYA

Art has always been a reflection of time, culture and identity. At *India Design 2025*, an exhibition brings this idea to life in a way that feels both rooted in tradition and open to reinvention. Walking through the space, the artworks create a sense of connection between past and present, between intricate craftsmanship and bold contemporary expression. It is a meeting point of heritage and innovation, where stories unfold through colour, form and texture.

The collection, curated with a thoughtful eye, features works by 21 artists including *Seema Kohli*, *Chandrashekar Morkondo* and *Sanjay Chakraborty*. Every piece feels like a conversation, one that speaks of history, personal narratives and the evolving artistic language of the sub-continent. Some paintings draw from mythology, their golds and deep blues reminiscent of temple murals, while others break away from convention with striking abstraction. The sculptures add another dimension, their forms shifting between realism and imagination, inviting the viewer to explore beyond the surface.

There is an undeniable energy in the way these works come together.

A painting depicting a celestial dance, its intricate lines almost breathing on canvas, sits beside an abstract piece where colour dominates form, challenging perception. A sculptural installation nearby, crafted from repurposed materials, transforms discarded objects into something unexpected and powerful. The juxtaposition of mediums and styles creates a dynamic interplay, one that encourages curiosity and dialogue.

Some pieces invite stillness, their subtle shade and delicate strokes evoking a quiet reverence for nature and tradition. Others disrupt

this calm with bold, unrestrained strokes of pigment, where movement and emotion take precedence over precision. The diversity in expression makes the exhibition feels alive, constantly shifting in meaning depending on who is viewing it.

*Samarth Mathur*, the mind behind this showcase, describes art as an investment in culture and creativity. His approach moves beyond traditional curation, treating each

piece as part of a larger dialogue. This is not art placed on walls to be admired from a distance, it is art meant to be lived with, engaged with and understood.

The exhibition respects artistic heritage but does not hesitate to push boundaries. It does not try to define what Indian art should be, instead offering a glimpse into what it can become.



A DYNAMIC INTERPLAY OF TRADITION AND INNOVATION, WHERE 21 ARTISTS REDEFINE ARTISTIC BOUNDARIES THROUGH COLOR, FORM AND TEXTURE

DESIGN IS NOT ONLY ABOUT AESTHETICS, IT IS ABOUT CREATING MEANING. THIS EXHIBITION BRINGS ART TO LIFE

# Hockey India unveils performance-based system for national championship

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Hockey India on Friday unveiled a new format with a promotion and relegation system for the Senior Women's National Championship to be held in Panchkula from March 1 to 12.



The competition will feature 28 teams divided into three divisions titled 'A', 'B' and 'C'. The new format aims to enhance competition but also provides intends to provide a pathway for teams to ascend to higher divisions or risk relegation based on their performances.

"The introduction of the promotion and relegation system is a significant step in raising the standard of hockey across the country," Hockey India President Dilip Tirkey said.

"It ensures that every match in the Championship holds importance, whether it's a battle for the title or to avoid relegation. We look forward to an exciting tournament where teams can showcase their skills and aim for the top."

The top 12 teams will compete in Division A which will be further split into four pools of three teams each and will play in a league format within their respective pools. The top two teams from each pool will advance to the quarterfinals, scheduled for March 9, followed by the semifinals on March 10 and the final and 3rd/4th place play-off on March 12.

The bottom two teams will be relegated to Division B for the next edition. Nine teams will compete in Division B, with the goal of earning promotion to Division A. Here, five teams are in Pool A and four are in Pool B.

no points for a loss. In Division A, the league stage will culminate with the knockout rounds, while Divisions B and C will conclude with final standings determined solely by league matches.

- Division A**  
Pool A: Hockey Haryana, Hockey Association of Odisha, Hockey Karnataka
- Pool B: Hockey Maharashtra, Manipur Hockey, Hockey Punjab
- Pool C: Hockey Jharkhand, Hockey Mizoram, Hockey Unit of Tamil Nadu
- Pool D: Hockey Madhya Pradesh, Hockey Bengal, Uttar Pradesh Hockey
- Division B  
Pool A: Telangana Hockey, Hockey Uttarakhand, Assam Hockey, Hockey Rajasthan, Hockey Association of Bihar
- Pool B: Delhi Hockey, Chhattisgarh Hockey, Hockey Chandigarh, Hockey Himachal
- Division C  
Pool A: Kerala Hockey, Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu Hockey, Hockey Gujarat
- Pool B: Hockey Andhra Pradesh, Le Puducherry Hockey, Hockey Arunachal, Hockey Jammu and Kashmir.



## Praggnanandhaa draws against Gurel Ediz

PTI ■ PRAGUE

Grandmaster R Praggnanandhaa played out a second straight draw against Turkey's Gurel Ediz while Aravindh Chithambaram crashed through the defences of Germany's Vincent Keymer in the second round of the Prague Masters here.

Chithambaram's victory had traits of the Russian's style of play to go for the kill at the first opportunity and not let it slip. The Queen's gambit accepted may have a solid reputation with black pieces but the young Indian cavalry is all out to breakout of that stereotype. How else could one explain Chithambaram's choice of move order that gave white the luxury of a dynamic centre? It was an inch-by-inch invasion that won Chithambaram a pawn in the middle game and the trade of queens was later forced by the Indian to harp on the better possibilities for his troupe. Chithambaram was quite unstoppable as he kept increasing the pressure till Keymer walked in to a lost rook and pawns endgame — it took 45 moves in all. Praggnanandhaa has shown his ability to play all openings with either colour and his choice of French defence turned out to be a good one guaranteeing an equal game. The lone problem was to make something out of an equal position and the 16-year old Turk proved why he is hailed as one of the brightest among young Europeans, as he gave a little away. The players signed the peace on move 46 when it was evident the rook endgame did not offer chances for either of them.

# New Zealand excited to play in different conditions: Bracewell

PTI ■ DUBAI

New Zealand off-spinner Michael Bracewell on Friday brushed aside any talks about India getting an unfair advantage in the ongoing Champions Trophy by playing all their games in Dubai, simply saying that his team was "excited to try and play in different conditions".

Pakistan. Some cricketers, including South African top-order batter Rassie van der Dussen and former Australia skipper Pat Cummins, have said India are in an advantageous position as they have played all their games at one venue while other teams have had to travel to different venues in Pakistan. India had refused to travel to Pakistan for the tournament citing security reasons. "Look, it is what it is. It's been decided, and that's the way it is, and there's no point dwelling on that," said Bracewell, when asked if India have unfair advantage



in Dubai. "It's part of what makes it exciting. I personally think it's coming to a different ground and trying to figure out those different conditions. Yeah, not much more to say on that

other than we're excited to try and learn and play in different conditions," added the 34-year-old off-spinner. The New Zealander opined that the pitches here would aid spin and it would be a

good idea to train hard before the game against India. "The wickets here have looked like they've taken a bit of a spin. So, it'll be good to try and get used to the wickets as quickly as we can. We've obviously enjoyed the pitches in Pakistan. "And I think we've got a pretty well-balanced side to play in any condition. So hopefully, we can continue to do that and adjust to what's in front of us. I think that's been the strength of our side, adjusting to the surface. So, hopefully, we continue to do that as a side," he added. He said New Zealand doing consistently well against India

in ICC tournaments was because of his players not putting themselves under pressure. New Zealand recently inflicted a humiliating 3-0 Test defeat on India, becoming the first touring side to seal a series win in India in 13 years. He said the Test series win would give the Black Caps confidence going into Sunday's game. "I think we don't like to put too much pressure on ourselves. Obviously, coming off a great Test series win, it gives us a lot of confidence that we can, and we've got a really good record against India in ICC events.

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सबके लिए समृद्ध भविष्य**

**किसान सम्मेलन**

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**मुख्यमंत्री**

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मध्यप्रदेश, भोपाल, मार्च 1, 2025